

‘I WANT BJP TO BECOME ZERO’

Says Mamata after meeting Bihar CM on forging a united opposition alliance

HINDUSTAN TIMES ONLINE

Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar yesterday met his West Bengal counterpart Mamata Banerjee in Kolkata. The Bihar CM was accompanied by his deputy Tejashwi Yadav during the meeting which focused on forging a united opposition alliance against the Bharatiya Janata Party in 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

After the meeting, the three leaders addressed a joint presser wherein they said the discussions were positive.

“We have held talks, especially about the coming together of all parties and making all preparations ahead of the upcoming Parliament elections. Whatever will be done next, will be done in the nation’s interest. Those who are ruling now, have nothing to do. They are just doing their own publicity. Nothing is being done for the nation’s development”, the Bihar chief minister said.

“I have made just one request to Nitish Kumar. Jayaprakash ji’s movement started from Bihar. If we have an all-party meeting in Bihar, we can then decide where we have



to go next. But first of all, we have to give a message that we are united. I have said earlier too that I have no objections. I want BJP to become zero. They have become a big hero with media’s support and lies”, Mamata said.

“We will go ahead together. We have no personal ego, we want to work together collectively”, she added.

Nitish Kumar and Tejashwi Yadav were also expected to meet Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav in Lucknow yesterday as part of efforts to forge a united opposition for 2024 general elections.

The meeting comes days after Nitish Kumar had met Rahul Gandhi and Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge in the capital. At the press conference held after the meet, Nitish had said, “We will try to unite as many political parties as we can and move forward together”.

Rahul’s disqualification as a Lok Sabha MP recently precipitated a rare show of unity across opposition parties. Nitish has also met with Delhi Chief Minister and Aam Aadmi Party boss Arvind Kejriwal.



French citizens at the air base of the French Army forces stationed in Djibouti after French soldiers evacuate French nationals from Sudan to Djibouti, in Djibouti, on Sunday. PHOTO: REUTERS

Australia buying more missiles to counter China

AFP, Canberra

Australia launched its biggest defence overhaul in decades yesterday, vowing to turn a military that is “no longer fit for purpose” into a fighting force that could deter China or any would-be foe.

Defence Minister Richard Marles unveiled a strategic review that called for a sharp shift toward long-range deterrence – using missiles, submarines and cyber tools to keep adversaries at arm’s length.

“Today, for the first time in 35 years, we are recasting the mission of the Australian Defence Force,” Marles said.

Describing China’s military build-up as the largest and most ambitious of any country since World War II, the review warns “the risks of military escalation or miscalculation are rising”.

Australian planners have viewed China’s military rise warily, fearing Beijing’s now-vast capabilities could effectively cut Australia off from trading partners and global supply chains.

In response to that threat, Australia’s military will develop the ability to strike from air, land and sea, strengthen northern bases and recruit more troops.

“We aim to change the calculus so no potential aggressor can ever conclude that the benefits of conflict outweigh the risks,” the review said.

Asked about the overhaul and the reasons given for it, Beijing said it hoped some countries would “refrain from using China as an excuse to expand their military power or groundlessly hype up the ‘China threat’ theory”.

Black Sea Fleet repels drone attack on Crimea port

Says Russian-backed governor; Ukrainian troops hold Bakhmut as Moscow claims progress

REUTERS, Kyiv

Russia’s Black Sea Fleet repelled a drone attack on the Crimean port of Sevastopol in the early hours of yesterday, the Moscow-installed governor of the city said through social media.

“According to the latest information: one surface drone was destroyed ... the second one exploded on its own,” governor Mikhail Razvozhayev wrote on the Telegram messaging app. “Now the city is quiet.”

No damage was reported, Razvozhayev added.

Passenger ferry transport had been suspended in the Black Sea port city, Russia’s Interfax news agency reported, citing Sevastopol transport authorities. No reason was given, but the agency said traffic had been suspended in the past due to drone attacks or storms.

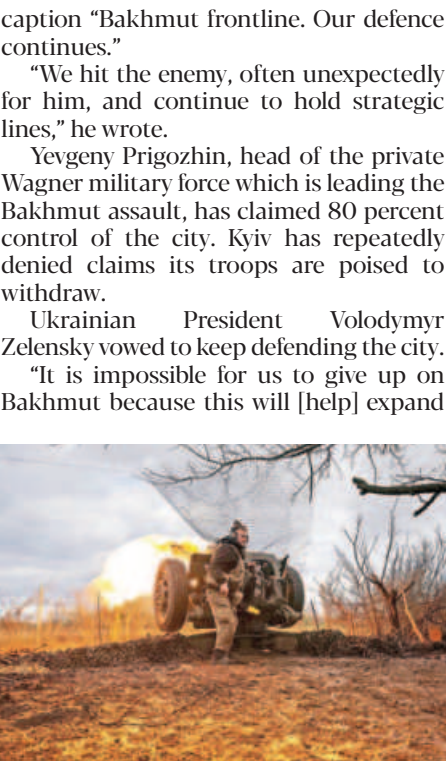
Sevastopol, along with the rest of the Crimean peninsula, was declared annexed by Russia in 2014 but is internationally recognised as part of Ukraine.

There was no immediate reaction from Ukraine.

Russia on Sunday said its forces had advanced in Bakhmut while a top Ukrainian commander said his troops were holding the frontline through the city, all but destroyed in some of the bloodiest combat of the 14-month war.

The Russian defence ministry said its forces had secured two blocks in western districts and airborne units were providing reinforcements to the north and south. Russia sees Bakhmut as a stepping stone to more advances in eastern Ukraine.

Ukrainian Colonel General Oleksandr Syrskyi shared images on the Telegram messaging app of him poring over a map with three other uniformed men, with the



caption “Bakhmut frontline. Our defence continues.”

“We hit the enemy, often unexpectedly for him, and continue to hold strategic lines,” he wrote.

Yevgeny Prigozhin, head of the private Wagner military force which is leading the Bakhmut assault, has claimed 80 percent control of the city. Kyiv has repeatedly denied claims its troops are poised to withdraw.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky vowed to keep defending the city.

“It is impossible for us to give up on Bakhmut because this will [help] expand

Telegram channel.

Citing Russian military bloggers embedded with Moscow’s forces, the Institute for the Study of War said Ukraine had “established positions” on the eastern bank, though it was not clear “at what scale or with what intentions”.

Russia withdrew forces from the western bank last year as part of a series of withdrawals that signified a shift in momentum in Kyiv’s favour.

Natalia Humeniuk, a spokesperson for Ukraine’s southern command, neither confirmed nor denied the report, which she told Ukrainian television foreshadowed “very powerful shelling” in districts around the west bank cities of Kherson and Beryslav.

“Reacting to such information, the enemy has significantly intensified its attacks on the opposite bank,” she said. Civilians had been injured and about 30 buildings destroyed, including a school, she said.

Meanwhile, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told a meeting chaired by Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov yesterday that Moscow’s invasion of Ukraine is “causing massive suffering and devastation to the country and its people” and fueling “global economic dislocation triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic.”

Guterres also urged continued implementation of Ukraine Black Sea grain deal and Russia grain, fertilizer pact.

“Tensions between major powers are at an historic high. So are the risks of conflict, through misadventure or miscalculation,” Guterres also warned the UN Security Council meeting.

Lavrov chaired the meeting on multilateralism and the founding UN Charter because Russia holds the monthly rotating presidency of the 15-member body for April.

Shipwreck off Libya claims 34 lives

AFP, Tripoli

The bodies of a total of 34 migrants have been recovered since their boat sank off Libya’s coast five days ago, the Libyan Red Crescent said yesterday. The latest toll follows the recovery of 11 bodies yesterday, which were “handed over to authorities” in the Mediterranean city of Sabratha, west of Tripoli, the Red Crescent confirmed on Facebook. A security source told AFP “the number of victims could increase” after the “rubber boat carrying dozens of migrants overturned not far from the coast of Sabratha on Wednesday”. Last Wednesday, Red Crescent reported finding six bodies and a further 17 were recovered Sunday. Footage posted to Facebook showed volunteers carrying bodies in black bags to ambulances. Alarm Phone, a hotline used by migrants who run into trouble, said Wednesday it had received a distress call from an inflatable boat that was sinking off Libya’s coast and carrying around 100 passengers.

Ex-UN chief Ban Ki-moon returns to Myanmar Meets ruling general

REUTERS

Former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon met Myanmar’s military ruler yesterday, media reported, part of a trip aimed at promoting peace in a country racked by conflict since a coup two years ago. Ban made the surprise visit late on Sunday, according to state media. He met junta chief Min Aung Hlaing in the capital Naypyitaw, pro-military news portal NP News reported. “They exchanged views on the latest situation in Myanmar and discussed positively and openly,” it quoted junta spokesperson Zaw Min Tun as saying. The spokesperson could not immediately be reached by Reuters. Attempts to reach Ban by phone were unsuccessful. A former diplomat said the trip was arranged a long time ago.

UK tests alert system on mobile phones

AFP, London

The UK conducted its first test of a new emergency alert service on Sunday, with millions of mobile phones emitting a loud alarm and vibrating.

The national system, modelled on similar schemes in Canada, Japan, the Netherlands and the United States, aims to warn the public if there is a danger to life nearby but has generated criticism over “nanny state” intrusion.

The alert was due to go off at 3:00 pm (1400 GMT), although some phones sounded the alarm before the scheduled time, and others minutes later.

Some users on social media complained that they had not received the warning at all.

The passing of a doyen of politics

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put on life support after a cardiac arrest on Saturday morning.

His body has been kept in the mortuary of Samorita Hospital in the capital, said Kajal Debnath, a friend of Pankaj and adviser of Bangladesh Puja Udjapon Parishad.

A civic tribute to the veteran politician will be held at the Central Shaheed Minar from 4:00pm to 6:00pm today, said the Oikya NAP press release.

Later in the evening, the body will be cremated following last rites at the capital’s Postogola Mahashashan, it added.

Pankaj was born in Noapara village of Chattogram’s Raozan in 1939. He had been involved in the democratic political movement since his school days.

He was an active participant in the country’s democratic movements, including the 1952

language movement and the 1969 mass upsurge.

Pankaj served as the executive president of the Chhatra Union from 1963 to 1964 and played an extraordinary role during the 1971 Liberation War, according to the press release.

He also played a key role in the formation of “Tin Joter Ruprekha” -- a 1990 joint declaration of three alliances, led by the AL, BNP, and left-leaning parties, to wage a movement for the restoration of democracy.

Pankaj was involved with different social movements against fundamentalism and communalism, said the press release.

Prime Minister Sheikh

Hasina has expressed profound sorrow at his death.

In a condolence message, she prayed for the salvation of his departed soul and conveyed her sympathy to the bereaved family.

In a separate statement, Awami League General Secretary and Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader also expressed his sorrow at Pankaj’s death.

Main opposition Jatiya Party Chairman GM Quader said Pankaj was a patriotic and people-friendly leader. “His demise will create a vacuum in the country’s political arena.”

Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon, in a condolence

message, prayed for the departed soul and conveyed sympathies.

Different politicians as well as socio-cultural bodies also expressed their condolences.

They include Information and Broadcasting Minister Dr Hasan Mahmud; 14-party alliance spokesperson Amir Hossain Amu; Dhaka University Vice Chancellor Dr Md Akhtaruzzaman; cultural body Bangladesh Udichi Shilpigoshthi; rights body Ain O Salish Kendra; Sushashoner Jonno Nagorik; Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust; Workers Party of Bangladesh; Bangladesh Mahila Parishad; Sectors Commanders Forum, Liberation War-71; Manabadhikar Shongskriti Foundation; National Awami Party; Institute for Environment and Development; Gonoforum (Montu) and Road Safety Foundation.

গ্লোবাল ইন্স্যুরেন্স লিমিটেড-এর সম্মানিত উদ্যোক্তা পরিচালক ও এমপ্লয়িজ প্রভিডেন্ট ফ্রান্স ট্রাস্টি বোর্ডের চেয়ারম্যান, **ইঞ্জিনিয়ার মোঃ আব্দুল খালেক** গত ২১ এপ্রিল, ২০২৩ রোজ শুক্রবার রাত ০৮:০০ ঘটিকায় গাইবান্ধায় নিজ বাসভবনে ইন্তেকাল করেন (ইন্না-লিল্লাহি ওয়া ইন্না ইলাইহি রাজিউন)।

তার আকস্মিক মৃত্যুতে আমরা গভীরভাবে শোকাহত।

আমরা তাঁর বিদেহি আত্মার মাগফিরাত কামনা করছি এবং শোকসন্তপ্ত পরিবারের প্রতি গভীর সমবেদনা জ্ঞাপন করছি। মহান আল্লাহ তায়ালা তাঁকে জান্নাতবাসী করুন। আমিন।

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