

# Govt sanctions 2 new battalions for CISF



NEW DELHI, Jan 14 (PTI)

THE Union Government has sanctioned two fresh battalions comprising more than 2,000 personnel for the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) guarding vital installations like airports and nuclear power plants.

Once raised, the strength of the force will touch about 2 lakh personnel.

“The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has sanctioned significant expansion of the CISF by giving the go-ahead for creation of two new battalions.

“This decision, coupled with the recently-approved mahila (women) battalion, will augment the force’s capacity, strengthen national security and create new employment opportunities for over 2,000 persons,” a CISF spokesperson said on Tuesday.

The sanction was received on Monday, the spokesperson said.

Late last year, an all-women

battalion was sanctioned for the force.

The force currently has 12 reserve battalions on ground with a strength of 1,025 personnel in each.

These upcoming battalions, the spokesperson said, will also be vital in catering to the “increasing” demands on the CISF by creating a pool of trained personnel to fulfill immediate induction requirements relating to internal security.

The reserve battalions consist of personnel specifically trained and equipped who are experienced in handling security of high security hails and other undertakings, the spokesperson said.

The additional battalions will significantly improve the CISF’s “rapid response” capabilities during emergencies, spokesperson said.

The two new reserve battalions and the all-women unit will take at least a year before they are deployed on ground. The process to hire the new manpower comprising both men and women and training them will be initiated soon, a senior officer told PTI.

# India has potential to double turmeric production: Goyal

NEW DELHI, Jan 14 (PTI)

THE National Turmeric Board will help develop new markets internationally to promote exports and double production to about 20 lakh

tonnes in the next five years, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Tuesday.

Inaugurating the Board, he also said that it would promote research and development into

new products and develop on the country's traditional knowledge for value-added turmeric products.

"Turmeric is also called a golden spice. India accounts for 70 per cent of global turmeric pro-

duction. We are looking to double the production to 20 lakh tonnes in five years," he told reporters here.

The Government in October notified the constitution of the National Turmeric Board.

Hailing the establishment of the Board, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said it would ensure better opportunities for innovation, global promotion and value addition in turmeric production.



# Hamas accepts draft agreement for GAZA CEASEFIRE, RELEASE OF HOSTAGES

CAIRO, Jan 14 (AP)

HAMAS has accepted a draft agreement for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and the release of dozens of hostages, two officials involved in the talks said on Tuesday.

Mediator Qatar said the negotiations were at the "closest point" yet to sealing a deal.

The Associated Press obtained a copy of the proposed agreement, and an Egyptian official and a Hamas official confirmed its authenticity. An Israeli official said progress has been made, but the details are being finalized. The plan would need to be submitted to the Israeli Cabinet for final approval.

All three officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the closed-door talks.

The United States, Egypt and Qatar have spent the past year trying to mediate an end to the 15-month war and secure the release of dozens of hostages captured in Hamas' October 7, 2023, attack that triggered it.

Some 100 Israelis are still cap-

tive inside Gaza, and the military believes at least a third of them are dead.

Officials have expressed mounting optimism that they can conclude an agreement ahead of the January 20 inauguration of US President-elect Donald Trump, whose Mideast envoy has joined the negotiations.

Qatari Foreign Ministry spokesman Majed al-Ansari said at a weekly briefing Tuesday that the ongoing negotiations are positive and productive, while declining to get into the details of the sensitive talks.

"Today, we are at the closest point ever to having a deal," he said. Hamas, meanwhile, said in a statement that the ongoing negotiations had reached their "final stage".

The offensive has reduced large areas of the territory to rubble and displaced around 90 percent of Gaza's population of 2.3 million, with hundreds of thousands packed into tent camps along the coast where hunger is widespread.

Israeli strikes across Gaza overnight and into Tuesday killed at least 18 Palestinians, including two women and four children, while Yemen's Houthi rebels fired two missiles at Israel, setting off sirens and sending people racing into shelters. No one was wounded by the projectiles.

A three-phase agreement

The three-phase agreement—based on a framework laid out by US President Joe Biden and endorsed by the UN Security Council—would begin with the gradual release of 33 hostages over a six-week period, including women, children, older adults and wounded civilians in exchange for potentially hundreds of Palestinian women and children imprisoned by Israel.

Among the 33 would be five female Israeli soldiers, each of whom would be released in exchange for 50 Palestinian prisoners, including 30 convicted militants who are serving life sentences. By the end of the first phase, all civilian captives—living or dead—will have been released.

## Mission Mausam

# Need to develop quake warning systems: PM Modi

NEW DELHI, Jan 14 (PTI)

**PRIME** Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday urged scientists to develop warning systems for earthquakes while noting that advanced weather forecasts have significantly reduced casualties and minimised economic losses caused by cyclones.

Addressing a function to celebrate 150 years of the India Meteorological Department (IMD), he also lauded the insti-

Celebrating  
150 years of IMD



tution as a symbol of India's scientific journey.

Modi noted how advanced weather forecasting has significantly reduced casualties during cyclones and minimised economic losses, boosting investor confidence and building economic resilience.

The Prime Minister also launched 'Mission Mausam' for

developing cutting-edge weather surveillance technologies and systems, implementing high-resolution atmospheric observations, next-generation radars and satellites, and high-performance computers. "We have launched 'Mission Mausam' to make India weather ready and climate smart," Modi said.

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), Celeste Saulo during the 150th Foundation Day celebrations of India Meteorological Department, at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi on Tuesday. (ANI)

## Paris Agreement in grave danger, says WMO chief

NEW DELHI, Jan 14 (PTI)

**THE** Paris Agreement is in grave danger and the world must mark 2025 as the year of decisive climate action to reduce greenhouse gases and speed up the transition to renewable energy, World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) Secretary-General



# Paris Agreement in grave danger, says WMO chief

NEW DELHI, Jan 14 (PTI)

**THE** Paris Agreement is in grave danger and the world must mark 2025 as the year of decisive climate action to reduce greenhouse gases and speed up the transition to renewable energy, World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) Secretary-General Celeste Saulo said on Tuesday.

Saulo, who attended events to mark the IMD's 150th anniversary here, said the celebration comes at a crucial moment for the planet.

She pointed out that 2024 was the hottest year on record in India and globally too.

In 2024, India suffered prolonged extreme heat, which greatly impacted human health, agriculture, water supply and energy supplies, she recalled.

"Heavy monsoon rains caused disruption and death, as we saw with tragic landslides in Kerala in July. More recently, air pollution hit alarming and dangerous levels in many parts of the country," Saulo said.

The WMO chief said 2024 also became the first calendar year with an average temperature of 1.5 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial average but this does not mean that the Paris Agreement is dead.

# India, Oman holding fifth round of talks for free trade agreement

NEW DELHI, Jan 14 (PTI)

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INDIA and Oman are holding the fifth round of talks for a proposed free trade agreement here to boost bilateral economic ties, an official said on Tuesday.

The two-day talks started on January 13, the official said.

The negotiations for the agreement, officially dubbed as Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), formally began in November 2023. Oman is the third largest export destination among the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.

According to the think tank GTRI (Global Trade Research Institute), Indian goods worth USD 3.7 billion like gasoline, iron and steel, electronics, and machinery will get a significant boost in Oman, once both sides reach a comprehensive free trade agreement.

Currently, over 80 per cent of its goods enter Oman at an average of 5 per cent import duties, a GTRI report has said.

Oman's import duty ranges from 0 to 100 per cent, along with the existence of specific duties. A duty of 100 per cent is applicable on specific meats, wines and tobacco products.



# Veterans can contribute to nation-building: Army chief

PUNE, Jan 14 (PTI)

THE experience and commitment of Armed Forces veterans can be harnessed for nation-building, Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi said here on Tuesday.

Speaking at a gathering of veterans on the 9th Veterans Day, General Dwivedi said the day has immense significance as it is meant to honor brave warriors who dedicated their lives to the service of the nation.



"It is a privilege to address and pay tribute to all of you, the valiant protectors of our country who continue to contribute to society even after retirement," he added. India is progressing steadfastly towards realising the vision of becoming a developed nation, and active participation of every citizen is vital for this, the Army chief said.

## ARMY CHIEF INAUGURATES

**TRAINING LAB AT ARTIFICIAL LIMB CENTRE IN PUNE:** General Dwivedi inaugurated a new upper limb training lab at the Artificial Limb Centre (ALC) in Pune. The visit highlighted the latest advancements in prosthetic care, with General Dwivedi being briefed on the centre's cutting-edge computer-aided designing and manufacturing workshops, a release stated.

Chief of the Army Staff General Upendra Dwivedi during his visit to the Paraplegic rehabilitation centre in Pune on Tuesday. (PTI)

# FTA talks with India have been relaunched: UK

LONDON, Jan 14 (PTI)

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THE UK Government on Tuesday told Parliament that the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) talks with India have been relaunched to deliver a joint ambition of taking the bilateral relationship to “even greater heights”.

During a debate on UK economic growth in the House of Commons, British Indian Labour MP Jeevun Sandher asked Foreign Secretary David Lammy about the steps being taken to get a “good UK-India trade deal over the line”.

Describing 2025 as an “exciting year” for the UK’s trading relationship with India, the co-chair of the India All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) flagged the “exchange of green technologies to help prevent and reduce the warming of our planet” among the areas of focus.

“We are two nations with an intertwined history and common democratic ideals and we face the risks of a dangerous world and a warming planet,” said Sandher, a first-time member of Parliament from Loughborough, in the East Midlands region of England.