

For N-E's Peace

Centre, Tripura sign pact with 2 insurgent groups



Union Home Minister Amit Shah with Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha and others during the signing of peace agreement between Central and Tripura Governments and two insurgent groups NLFT and ATTF in New Delhi on Wednesday. (PTI)

NEW DELHI, Sept 4 (PTI)

A **PEACE** agreement was signed between the Central and

Tripura Governments and two insurgent groups of the State here on Wednesday in the presence of Union Home Minister

Amit Shah to end violence and bring peace in the North-eastern State.

Tripura Chief Minister Manik

Saha and senior officials of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and the State Government were also present during the signing of the Memorandum of Settlement with the representatives of National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) and All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF).

Addressing those present on the occasion, Home Minister Shah said, the Modi Government has given highest priority to peace and development in the North-eastern region. "All peace agreements signed in the North-East has been implemented by the Government," he said.

The Home Minister said a Rs 2,500 crore development package announced by the Central Government has been implemented in the North-East.

INDIA SOARS TO NEW PARALYMPIC HEIGHTS

22 medals (4 gold, 8 silver, 10 bronze) so far at Paris Paralympics is India's best-ever haul, surpassing the previous edition's tally of 19, mainly due to outstanding performances by shuttlers and track & field athletes. **Sabi Hussain** outlines the major factors behind this medal glut and the country's steady rise in Paralympics

KEYS TO SUCCESS

Govt Support: All 84 participating athletes supported by govt schemes, given foreign exposure, mainly in form of international competitions, & guided by international experts

Recovery Centre: Set up for the 1st time at Games Village for Indian athletes to ensure they have full support for in-competition injury rehab

More Coaches & Support Staff: 77 in total, up from 45 in Tokyo 2020

Sports Science: Extensive use of data & timely intervention to identify injuries

Para-Badminton: Introduced in Tokyo, where Indian shuttlers bagged 4 medals. In Paris, they have won 1 more

Close Tab: Review of performance of athletes on a weekly basis at national camps and on exposure trips

Selection Policies: Based on best international practices

184% More Funds: ₹74cr spent in Paris Paralympics cycle (2021-'24), up from ₹26cr in Tokyo cycle



22X RISE... AND COUNTING

Medals won by India at each Paralympics

London 2012

1

Rio 2016

4

Tokyo 2020

19

Paris 2024

22*

*as on 11pm, Sept 4

Harvinder Singh (above) became the first Indian ever to win an archery gold in Paralympics. (Below-left) Ajeet Singh Yadav (right) and Sundar Gurjar won silver and bronze in javelin

Medallists Over Multiple Paralympics

Avani Lekhara (women's shooting): 3 (2G, 1 B); Mariyappan Thangavelu (men's high jump): 3 (1G, 1S, 1B); Sumit Antil (men's javelin): 2G; Manish Narwal (shooting): 2 (G & S); Suhas Yathiraj (men's badminton): 2S; Yogesh Kathuniya (men's discus): 2S; Nishad Kumar (men's high jump): 2S; Sharad Kumar 2 (S & B); Sundar Singh Gurjar: 2B

400m bronze medallist Deepthi Jeevanji buys back half of plot in Warangal's Kalleda village that her daily wager parents sold 8 years to fund her track-and-field dream **FULL COVERAGE: P 19**



Oil prices lowest since Jan, create room for price cut

Decline In Crude Rates Has Boosted Fuel Retailers' Profits

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New Delhi: Oil prices slumped to their lowest since Jan, boosting profitability of fuel marketing companies and creating enough headroom for a reduction in pump rates — possibly ahead of the Maharashtra and Haryana state polls.

Benchmark Brent crude, which has a bearing on India's crude purchase cost, hit \$73.6 on Wednesday, remaining near the record low level this year seen after Tuesday's 5% drop on heightened worries over tepid demand growth, especially in China.

Analysts said prospects of oversupply caused by Libyan supplies returning to the market, the Opec+ grouping unwinding the voluntary production cut from Oct and rising output from sources outside the grouping have been adding to the downward pres-

PRICES TO REMAIN VOLATILE: UBS



Note: The Indian basket represents a mix of sour grade (Oman & Dubai) and sweet grade (Brent Dated) crude in the ratio of 78.50:21.50 processed in Indian refineries

Source: PPAC

> Benchmark Brent crude hit \$73.6 on Wednesday

> Worries over tepid demand growth, especially in China, are rising

> Govt will be comfortably placed even if current low prices do not last long but stabilise at \$85

> This will give it space to tell state-run retailers to keep pump prices frozen 'voluntarily'

sure on oil prices.

The decline in oil prices since Jan led to positive marketing margins for the fuel retailers, especially the state-run entities who cater to 90% of the market. Govt took advantage by leaning on them to cut petrol and diesel prices by Rs 2 per litre on March 14, just ahead of the

generalelection.

Even after first reduction in pump prices since May 2022, a Motilal Oswal Financial Services report in April had projected a gross marketing margin of more than Rs 2 per litre in April when the Indian Basket, or the mix of crude processed by Indian refiners, averaged \$89.4 per bar-

rel. This would have swollen further by now as the basket, which trails Brent by \$2-4 per barrel, averaged \$76 in Sept.

But the jury is out on whether the govt would capitalise on the situation by seeking another cut in pump prices again in view of analysts predicting oil price volatility. Projecting prices to remain volatile in the near-term, financial services company UBS bet on the oil market remaining under-supplied. Goldman Sachs too has forecast \$70-85/barrel price range.

Govt will be comfortably placed even if the current low prices do not last long but level out at \$85, which will give it the leeway to ask the state-run retailers to keep pump prices frozen 'voluntarily' as, what oil minister Hardeep Singh Puri describes as 'good corporate citizens' — as has been seen in the last three years.

Integrated theatre commands plan ready for govt nod

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New Delhi India's military brass is now taking a final look at the blueprint for the proposed theatre commands for China, Pakistan and the Indian Ocean Region, with the aim to ensure a well-integrated war-fighting machinery, at the two-day joint commanders' conference (JCC) that kicked off in Lucknow on Wednesday.

With defence minister Rajnath Singh slated to attend the JCC on Thursday, senior officers told **TOI** that it will take 12-18 months for the tri-Service theatre commands to take concrete shape on the ground after the final approval by govt.

"The blueprint, with the requisite command, control and operational structures for the theatre commands, prepared by CDS General Anil Chauhan, is more or less ready. Presentations have been made to the defence minister and others. Govt will now have to take the final call," an officer said.

As per the existing plan, which entails the most radical military reorganisation in the country since Independence, the China-specific northern theatre command will come up in Lucknow, while the western one for Pakistan will be based in Jaipur. The maritime theatre command, in turn, will be located at Thiruvananthapuram.

This will involve the IAF giving up its Southern Air Command at Thiruvananthapuram and the Army its South-Western Command at Jaipur for the theatre commands. The Army's Central Command at Lucknow will be shifted to some other location. At present, India has as many as 17 single-Service commands (Army 7, IAF 7 and Navy 3), which have little synergy in operations, planning and logistics.

A sticking point, howev-



TIME FRAME: It will take 12-18 months for the tri-Service theatre commands to take concrete shape on the ground after the final approval by govt

er, could be the recommendation that the three theatre commanders-in-chief and a vice CDS should be four-star generals like CDS and three Service chiefs, who rank above the secretaries to Union govt.

At present, the chiefs of 17 single-service commands and two tri-Service commands (Strategic Forces Command and Andaman Nicobar Command) are senior three-star officers (Lt-Generals, Air Marshals or Vice Admirals).

"A four-star officer is needed for the requisite command and control of a theatre since he will have all the three Services under him in that geographical region," a top officer told **TOI**.

"The maritime theatre command chief, for instance, will have the entire Navy as well as parts of Army and Navy under him. Whether the politico-bureaucratic establishment agrees to four more four-star officers remains to be seen," he added.

With the three Services "initiating numerous measures" on the roadmap for integration, CDS said it was "a step-by-step process, beginning with cross-service cooperation, leading to a 'joint culture', and finally achieving integration of forces for conduct of joint operations".

India tightens check to ensure no Chinese parts in def drones

'Working On Appropriate Methodology'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The Indian defence establishment is now working out a stringent mechanism to ensure that military drones being acquired from domestic private sector companies do not have Chinese components in them, even as the Army has called drone manufacturers to showcase their products in a high-altitude area in Ladakh later this month.

An "appropriate methodology", with the requisite technical evaluation parameters, is being formulated to prevent Chinese components and electronics from finding their way into the drones. Various methods are being deliberated upon to strengthen this framework, Army Design Bu-



The move comes after the MoD recently put an order for 200 medium-altitude logistics drones for the Army on hold, asking the maker to prove it had not used Chinese components. The drones were primarily meant for deployment along the northern borders with China

reau additional director general Major General C S Mann said on Wednesday.

This urgent requirement has come to the fore after the defence ministry recently put an order for 200 medium-altitude logistics drones for the Army on hold, asking the manufacturer to prove it had not used Chinese components. The drones were pri-

marily meant for deployment along the northern borders with China.

The MoD's department of defence production has also asked industry bodies Ficci, CII and Assocham to "sensitise and caution" their member companies from procuring Chinese components for drones and other related equipment.

Amid the military confrontation with China in eastern Ladakh, which is into its fifth year now, the armed forces have gone in for the procurement of a wide array of drones. These range from nano, mini and micro drones to kamikaze, logistics, armed swarms and fighter-size MALE (medium-altitude, long-endurance) and HALE (high-altitude, long-endurance) UAVs.

Maj General Mann said the Army will host the 'Him-Drone-A-Thon' for domestic companies to showcase their "drone solutions for high-altitude areas" at Wari La, near Leh, on Sept 17-18.

"For drone operations, a rarefied atmosphere results in reduced lift and degraded engine performance, which are further accentuated by extreme cold temperatures and high wind speeds. These conditions are unique for the Indian Army and demand systems that can adequately perform in these conditions," he said.

Modi in Singapore, semiconductor pact set to be inked today



DINNER DIPLOMACY: PM Modi with his Singapore counterpart Lawrence Wong at the Istana on Wednesday

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: PM Narendra Modi met his Singapore counterpart Lawrence Wong over dinner, ahead of their formal bilateral meeting and exchange of agreements on Thursday. The visit will see the two sides making efforts to boost cooperation in areas like advanced manufacturing, maritime connectivity, aviation, skills and healthcare.

Among the big take-aways will be an MoU for cooperation in the semiconductor sector in which Singapore is a global leader.

"Landed in Singapore. Looking forward to the various meetings aimed at boosting the India-Singapore friendship. India's reforms and the talent of our Yuva Shakti makes our nation an ideal investment destination. We also look forward to closer cultural ties," said the PM in a post on X.

On cooperation in semiconductor manufacturing,

India is considering collaboration in talent development as Singapore universities have developed customised courses for the semiconductor sector. Knowledge sharing about best practices of managing semiconductor industrial parks in another opportunity India is looking at, according to govt sources.

"In terms of factors of production, Singapore has limitations on land and labour. India, with abundant land and skilled labour, can be part of Singapore's semiconductor value chain. Semiconductor companies in Singapore can be encouraged to consider India for their expansion plans," said a source, adding Singapore also has semiconductor equipment and material manufacturers.

"For the development of the semiconductor manufacturing ecosystem in India, engagement and collaboration with such companies may also be helpful," said the source.

‘Enhanced Partnership’

India’s policy is of development, not expansionism: PM in Brunei

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, Sept 4 (PTI)

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi Wednesday said that India supports a “policy of development, and not expansionism”, a remark that appeared directed at China as he wrapped up a bilateral visit to Brunei, where the two countries also reiterated their commitment to “freedom of navigation” in the region.

India and Brunei elevated their ties to “enhanced partnership” as Prime Minister Modi held wide-ranging talks with Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah covering defence, trade and investment.

“We support the policy of development, and not expansionism,” Prime Minister Modi said at a banquet hosted by Sultan Bolkiah, without naming any country.

China is engaged in hotly contested territorial disputes in the South China Sea (SCS) and the East China Sea (ECS). China claims most of the South China Sea, while the Philippines, Malaysia, Vietnam, Brunei and Taiwan have counterclaims.

“We agree that a Code of Conduct should be finalised in this region,” Modi said, adding that India has always given priority to ASEAN Centrality and will continue to do so.

“We support freedom of nav-



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Sultan of Brunei Hassanal Bolkiah during a meeting in Brunei on Wednesday. (R) PM Modi tries his hands at playing a dhol on arrival at hotel in Singapore on Wednesday. (PTI)

igation and overflight under international laws like UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea),” said
(Contd on page 5)

Modi gets warm welcome in Singapore

SINGAPORE, Sept 4 (IANS)

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi arrived in Singapore on Wednesday afternoon, marking the second leg of his two-nation visit after a historic trip to Brunei. His visit to Singapore is at the invitation of Prime Minister Lawrence Wong.

Upon his arrival, Modi was warmly welcomed by members of the Indian diaspora with
(Contd on page 5)

