

Major blow to Assad.....

Rebels capture Syria's Aleppo



Syrian Opposition fighters stand atop a captured Syrian army tank in Aleppo on Sunday.

(AP/PTI)

ALEPPO, Dec 1 (Agencies)

REBELS have captured majority of Aleppo in major blow to President Assad's forces. The surprise offensive, launched by a rebel alliance earlier this week, saw fighters push eastward through surrounding villages, reigniting a conflict that had largely been stagnant in recent years, CNN reported.

This marks the first time rebel forces have entered Aleppo since Government troops regained control of the city in 2016 during the civil war.

Rebels had taken control of significant parts of Aleppo, with videos showing fighters at key locations, including one where armed men waved an Opposition flag and chanted "God is great" in Arabic at a central square, CNN reported.

According to CNN, the only area still under Government and Iranian militia control appears to be the northeastern part of the city, where some neighbour-

hoods remain intact under Assad's forces.

In response to the city's changing dynamics, the rebels imposed a 24-hour curfew, citing "the safety of the residents of the city and to secure private and public property from tampering or harm."

Syria's Defence Ministry acknowledged the rebel offensive and reported the deaths of dozens of soldiers. While confirming the rebels had entered Aleppo, the Ministry claimed that the Opposition forces "were unable to establish solid positions" and said reinforcements were on the way for a counteroffensive, as reported by CNN.

As a countermeasure, Russia's air force launched strikes against Opposition fighters in Aleppo and Idlib provinces.

Kurdish forces, meanwhile, have expanded their control over parts of Aleppo, moving into areas that had been controlled by the Syrian Government prior to this week's offensive. The Kurdish YPG militia, which has historically clashed with other rebel factions in northern Syria, is now engaged in tensions with the rebel alliance.

The loss of Aleppo is a significant blow to Assad's forces. Once Syria's largest city and its economic hub, Aleppo is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world.

The city was a key rebel stronghold until it fell to Government forces in 2016.

LANDMARK CLIMATE CASE TO OPEN TODAY at top UN court amid fear of rising seas

THE HAGUE, Dec 1 (AP)

THE top United Nations court will take up the largest case in its history on Monday, when it opens two weeks of hearings into what countries worldwide are legally required to do to combat climate change and help vulnerable nations fight its devastating impact.

After years of lobbying by island nations who fear they could simply disappear under rising sea waters, the UN General Assembly asked the International Court of Justice last year for an opinion



on “the obligations of States in respect of climate change.” “We want the court to confirm that the conduct that has wrecked the climate is unlawful,” Margaretha Wewerinke-Singh, who is leading the legal team for the Pacific island nation of Vanuatu, told The Associated Press.

In the decade up to 2023, sea levels have risen by a global aver-

age of around 4.3 centimeters (1.7 inches), with parts of the Pacific rising higher still. The world has also warmed 1.3 degrees Celsius (2.3 Fahrenheit) since pre-industrial times because of the burning of fossil fuels. Vanuatu is one of a group of small States pushing for international legal intervention in the climate crisis. From Monday, the Hague-based court will hear from 99 countries and more than a dozen inter-governmental organisations over two weeks. It’s the largest lineup in the institution’s nearly 80-year history.

BSF deploys 2 more battalions in Jammu to check infiltration from Pak

■ By Neelabh Srivastava
NEW DELHI, Dec 1 (PTI)

THE Border Security Force (BSF) has completed the deployment of two fresh battalions, comprising more than 2,000 personnel, in the Jammu region to better plug infiltration from across the Pakistan front and check the recent spurt of terrorist activities in the area.

Officials in the security establishment told PTI that the new

troops of these units have been deployed "in depth areas" as the "second line of defence" just behind the BSF border deployment along the international border (IB) with Pakistan.

These two BSF battalions were recently withdrawn from the anti-Naxal operations theatre of Odisha and have now been deployed fully in the Jammu region. This was a task to be accomplished before the onset of winters when securing the IB



against infiltration from Pakistan becomes challenging, the

sources said. The personnel of the new units have been deployed around the Samba area, some other vulnerable patches in the Jammu region of Jammu and Kashmir and along the Punjab boundary that abuts Jammu, they said.

Multiple deployment points aided by CCTV cameras have also been created, the sources said. The force guards more than 2,289 km of the international boundary that runs along

Jammu, Punjab, Rajasthan and Gujarat along India's western flank. The Jammu region accounts for 485 km of this border interspersed with dense forests and mountainous terrain. About a dozen BSF battalions are deployed along the Jammu IB region.

Making logistical arrangements for the personnel of these two units is going on. Temporary and permanent bases and patrolling halts are being prepared, they

said. These two battalions were withdrawn in July-August from the Koraput and Malkangiri districts of Odisha where they were deployed for conducting anti-Naxal operations. Security in Jammu area came into focus following a series of terror attacks in Rajouri, Poonch, Reasi, Udhampur, Kathua and Dodadistricts this year that has killed more than 40 people, including 18 security personnel and village defence guard (VDG) members.

Trump picks Indian American Kash Patel as FBI Director

WASHINGTON, Dec 1 (AP)

PRESIDENT-ELECT Donald Trump has picked Indian American Kash Patel to head the FBI, turning to a fierce ally to upend America's premier law enforcement agency and rid the Government of perceived "conspirators".

It's the latest bombshell Trump has thrown at the Washington establishment and a test for how far Senate Republicans will go in confirming his nominees.

The selection is in keeping with Trump's view that the Government's law enforcement and intelligence agencies require a radical transformation and his stated desire for retribution against supposed adversaries.

It shows how Trump, still fuming over years of federal investigations that shadowed his first administration and later led to his indictment, is moving to place atop the FBI and Justice



Department close allies he believes will protect rather than scrutinise him.

Patel "played a pivotal role in uncovering the Russia, Russia, Russia Hoax, standing as an advocate for truth, accountability, and the Constitution," Trump wrote.

The announcement means current FBI director Christopher Wray must either resign or be fired after Trump takes office. Wray had previously been named by Trump and began the 10-year term in 2017.