

Defence Ministry clears proposal to buy 'Pralay' ballistic missiles for Indian Army

NEW DELHI, Sept 17 (ANI)

IN A major boost to its firepower, the Defence Ministry has approved the procurement of a regiment of 'Pralay' ballistic missiles for the Indian Army for deployment along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and Line of Control (LoC), that is, borders with China and Pakistan respectively.

"This is a major decision for the Indian Army as the proposal to acquire a regiment of the Pralay ballistic missiles which can hit targets between 150-500 Km, was cleared by the recent Defence Acquisition Council meeting," defence officials told ANI.

The Army would be deploying these missiles with conventional warheads and using them in tactical roles. The decision to buy these missiles comes soon after a similar proposal was cleared by the Government for the Indian Air Force, they said. As per sources, the acquisition of these ballistic missiles is being seen as a big development for the country which now has a policy that allows the use of ballistic missiles in tactical roles.

"Both China and Pakistan have ballistic missiles which are for tactical roles. The missiles developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) is being

further developed and its range can be extended significantly if the forces want it," the sources said. The missile system started developing around 2015 and the development of such a capability was given a push by the late General Bipin Rawat as Chief of Army Staff.

The missile was successfully tested twice on consecutive days last year on December 21 and December 22.

'Pralay' is a quasi-ballistic surface-to-surface missile. The advanced missile has been developed in a way to be able to defeat interceptor missiles. It has the ability to change its path after covering a certain range in midair.

Modi launches Rs 13K cr PM Vishwakarma scheme

■ PM inaugurated Rs 5,400 cr first phase of India International Convention and Expo Centre (IICC) - 'Yashobhoomi' -- at Dwarka in Delhi

NEW DELHI, Sept 17 (PTI)

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday launched Rs 13,000 crore PM Vishwakarma Yojana (scheme) for traditional artisans and craftsmen, and inaugurated the Rs 5,400 crore first phase of state-of-the-art India International Convention and Expo Centre (IICC) -- 'Yashobhoomi' -- at Dwarka, here.

"Today I dedicate 'Yashobhoomi' to every labourer, every 'Vishwakarma' of the



PM Narendra Modi during the inauguration of India International Convention and Expo Centre (IICC) in New Delhi on Sunday. (PTI)

nation," Modi said. The Prime Minister further said that today there is such a Government in

the country that provides recognition to marginalised people. He also unveiled 18

customised stamp sheets covering the 18 traditional trades whose workers are covered under the scheme, along with a toolkit e-booklet on the occasion of the launch of the Vishwakarma scheme. The goal of the Vishwakarma scheme is to enhance the accessibility and quality of products and services offered by traditional artisans and craftsmen. The scheme offers collateral-free enterprise development loans of Rs 1 lakh (first tranche for 18 months repayment) and Rs 2 lakh (second tranche for 30 months repayment). A concessional rate of interest of 5 per cent will be charged from the beneficiary with interest subvention cap of 8 per cent to be paid by the Ministry of Micro Small and Medium Enterprises. The credit guarantee fees will be borne by the Central
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'Project Cheetah set for success despite challenges'

NEW DELHI, Sept 16 (PTI)

CHEETAH reintroduction in India is going to be a success considering the country's strong track record in conserving big cats, the project head has said, countering concerns raised by several experts.

In an interview with PTI, SP Yadav, Additional Director General of Forests at the Environment Ministry, said that South Africa experienced nine failed attempts and more than 200 cheetah deaths over 20 years before developing expertise in the re-introduction of the animal.

"The President of South Africa said India is taking good care of big cats and therefore, they want to donate and support India. We have a good track record of saving and conserving big cats like tiger, lion, leopard, snow leopard, and based on that track record and experience, I can say that cheetah introduction in India is going to be a success," Yadav said.

Project Cheetah, India's ambitious initiative to reintroduce cheetahs after their extinction in the country, marks its one-year anniversary on Sunday. The initiative began on September 17 last year when

Prime Minister Narendra Modi released a group of cheetahs brought from Namibia into an enclosure at Madhya Pradesh's Kuno National Park. Since then, the project has been closely watched by conservationists and experts worldwide.

While the project has faced some serious challenges, including the unexpected deaths of some of the relocated cheetahs, Yadav said it has also achieved significant milestones. "The mortalities so far under Project Cheetah have been within the expected limits. As per the Cheetah Action Plan, which we released before bringing cheetahs to India, we

anticipated approximately 50 per cent mortality, but right now, 14 imported cheetahs are surviving, besides one cub born on Indian soil," he said.

Twenty cheetahs were imported from Namibia and South Africa to Kuno in two batches--one in September last year and the second in February this year.

Since March, six of these adult cheetahs have died due to various reasons. In May, three of the four cubs born to a female Namibian cheetah succumbed to extreme heat. The remaining cub is being raised under human care for future wilding.

'65 countries witnessed record high temp in Aug'

NEW DELHI, Sept 16 (PTI)

THIRTEEN per cent of the Earth's surface, spanning 65 countries, experienced record high temperatures in August, while the rest of the world braved significantly higher temperatures compared to the 1951-1980 average, according to a new analysis conducted by an independent US-based non-profit organisation.

Berkeley Earth, which focuses on environmental data science and analysis, said last month was the warmest August since records began to be kept in 1850, with "particularly warm conditions" prevailing in parts of India, Japan, North Atlantic, Eastern Equatorial Pacific, Northern South America, Central America, parts of Africa and Middle East.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), a US Government agency, said on Thursday that 2023 witnessed Earth's hottest August in its 174-year climate record. The sizzling month also marked Northern Hemisphere's warmest meteorological summer and Southern Hemisphere's warmest meteorological win-



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ter on record, NOAA's National Centres for Environmental Information said.

Berkeley Earth said, August 2023 exceeded the previous record set in August 2016 by 0.31 degrees Celsius, "a surprisingly large margin, well outside the margin of uncertainty".

Its researchers said: "We estimate that 13 per cent of the Earth's surface experienced its locally warmest August average, and 87 per cent of the Earth's surface was significantly warmer when compared to its

local average during the period from 1951 to 1980."

In total, they estimated that 65 countries (mostly in the tropics) witnessed their warmest August on record.

These countries include Bahrain, Barbados, Brazil, Cambodia, Cameroon, Chad, China, Colombia, Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Japan, Kenya, Mexico, Morocco, Niger, Panama, Peru, the Philippines, Qatar, Russia, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Türkiye, Venezuela and Yemen.

Some of these countries broke their August records by extraordinary margins. In Ecuador, close to the strengthening El Niño, the August average temperature record was broken by more than 1.4 degrees Celsius, the analysis showed. An El Niño condition -- periods of unusual warming of waters in the eastern tropical Pacific Ocean -- was officially declared by the NOAA in early June.

Berkeley Earth said the global mean temperature in August was 1.68 (\pm 0.09) degrees Celsius above the 1850-to-1900 average, which is frequently used as a benchmark for the preindustrial period.

'BrahMos manufacturing in Lucknow likely to begin from March'

LUCKNOW, Sept 17 (PTI)

DEFENCE Minister Rajnath Singh on Saturday said the work on the BrahMos missile manufacturing site in Lucknow is likely to be completed by March next year. Singh was speaking in Gomti Nagar here on the second day of the tour of his parliamentary constituency.

"The work on BrahMos missile project is also going on at a fast pace and after next February-March, the missile manufacturing will begin on the soil of Lucknow," the BJP leader said. Developed by an India-Russia joint venture, the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile can be launched from



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh interacts with officials while reviewing the progress of under construction development projects in Lucknow on Saturday. (PTI)

submarines, ships, aircraft or from land platforms.

The work on the Defence Research and Development

Organisation (DRDO) lab will also be completed soon, Singh said. He said there were 11 other projects in Lucknow that have been undertaken.

"Though they will take some time to complete, I can say that people will see a completely different Lucknow in the next few years," the Minister said.

During his visit in June, Singh had said that "everything from nuts and bolts to BrahMos missiles would be manufactured in the Uttar Pradesh Defence Industrial Corridor (UPDIC)".

"We have created a conducive environment for defence manufacturing through the defence corridors in Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. UPDIC has told me that

there is a plan to acquire about 1,700 hectares of land for this corridor, of which more than 95 per cent of the land has already been acquired," he had said. Answering a question on the 'Sanatan Dharma' row, Singh said, "Sanatan Dharma gives the message of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam'. It neither has a beginning nor end. No power in the world can end it. If there is a threat to Sanatan Dharma then it will be a very big threat."

Recently, DMK leaders Udhayanidhi Stalin and A Raja had claimed Sanatan Dharma had sown divisions in society and must be eradicated on the lines of diseases like dengue, malaria and coronavirus.

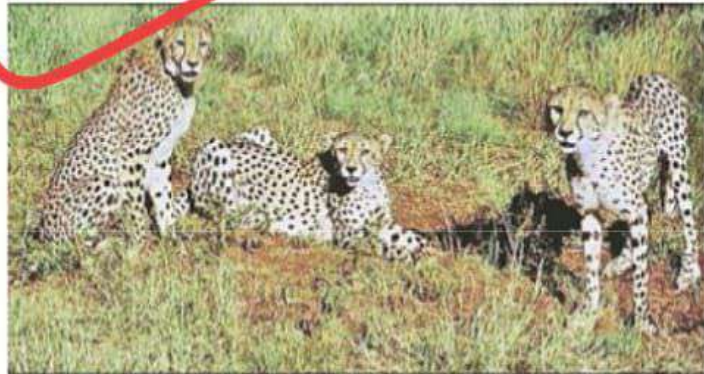
India's Cheetah reintroduction project on course despite challenges: CCF

NEW DELHI, Sept 17 (PTI)

THE cheetah's remarkable journey in the first year of their reintroduction in India has been marked by both setbacks and successes, and the project is on track, according to the Namibia-based Cheetah Conservation Fund.

The CCF has closely assisted Indian authorities in reintroducing cheetahs in India. CCF founder Laurie Marker has been instrumental in drafting plans for the introduction and has travelled to India several times since 2009.

"Bringing back cheetahs to



India was a daring endeavour, full of challenges. We celebrated the birth of the first litter of four cubs born to one of the females from Namibia and the

additional arrival of a group of 12 cheetahs from South Africa. Despite setbacks and difficulties that prompted a decision to retrieve the animals, we are

leveraging these experiences to reassess strategies before the cheetahs are released once again," Marker said in a statement.

"The project is on track, and Namibia is proud to be a part of expanding the cheetahs' territory into India," said Peter Katjavivi, Namibia's Speaker of the National Assembly, and CCF's International Patron.

While the initial year of the historic reintroduction of cheetahs in India has been marked by setbacks, the Project Cheetah team remains dedicated to its mission, the statement said.

India's Santiniketan inscribed on UNESCO World Heritage List

NEW DELHI, Sept 17 (PTI)

SANTINIKETAN, the famed place in West Bengal where poet Rabindranath Tagore built Visva-Bharati over a century ago, has been inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

The world body made the announcement in a post on 'X' on Sunday.

"New inscription on the @UNESCO #WorldHeritage List: Santiniketan, #India. Congratulations!" it posted.

India had been striving for long to get a UNESCO tag for this cultural site located in Birbhum district. Noted conservation architect Abha Narain Lambah, who had worked on preparing a dossier for its inclusion in the list, said she was "dancing with joy" after hearing the news. "We had worked on

the dossier in 2009 and, maybe time wasn't right then, but we always believed in the beauty of Santiniketan, and today we feel vindicated seeing it in the UNESCO list," she told PTI. The decision to include Santiniketan was taken during the 45th session of the World Heritage Committee currently underway in Saudi Arabia, she said.

Mumbai-based Lambah, many of whose work have received awards and recognitions from the UNESCO, said that once the ICOMOS recommended for its inclusion in the list, it was nearly certain that it would happen.

A few months ago, the landmark site was recommended for inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage List by international advisory body ICOMOS.

The France-based

International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) is an international non-governmental organisation that comprises professionals, experts, representatives from local authorities, companies and heritage organisations and is dedicated to the conservation and enhancement of the architectural and landscape heritage around the world.

Santiniketan, a university town over 160 km from Kolkata, was originally an ashram built by Rabindranath Tagore's father Debendranath Tagore, where anyone, irrespective of caste and creed, could come and meditate on the one Supreme God, according to a description of the landmark on the official website of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre.

Debendranath Tagore, also known as 'Maharshi', meaning one who is both a saint and sage, was a leading figure of the Indian Renaissance, it says. "Among the structures built by the Maharshi was the Santiniketan Griha and the beautiful stained glass Mandir, or temple where worship is non-denominational.

"Both structures built in the second half of the 19th century are important in their association with the founding of Santiniketan and the universal spirit associated with the revival and reinterpretation of religious ideals in Bengal and India," the website says. The university was founded by Rabindranath Tagore. It was declared a central university and an institution of national importance by an Act of Parliament in 1951.