

Pak sold \$900m munitions to Ukraine for IMF bailout in US-brokered deal?

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Washington: Pakistan has sold munitions worth \$900 million over the past year to Ukraine in a secret deal under pressure from the US, which in turn helped Islamabad secure an IMF bailout.

The so-called “bombs for bailout” deal, first reported in investigative website The Intercept, forced Islamabad from its neutral position in the Russia-Ukraine conflict, even as Washington prioritised protecting Ukraine over furthering democracy in Pakistan.

The Intercept said records detailing the arms transactions were leaked to it earlier this year by a source within the Pakistani military. The documents describe muni-

BOMBS FOR BAILOUT? THE QUID PRO QUO

➤ A Pakistani military source leaks records to investigative website 'The Intercept' showing munitions sales from Pakistan to Ukraine from summer 2022 to spring of 2023 in a secret deal under US pressure

➤ Use of Pak-produced shells and other ordnances by Ukrainian military has been reported. Intercept report signifies Pak's indirect involvement in Ukraine war



➤ 'Economic capital' and 'political goodwill' generated by the arms sales to Ukraine played a key role in helping secure IMF bailout for Pakistan in July, say sources

tions sales agreed to between the US and Pakistan from the summer of 2022 to the spring of 2023, it added.

The Biden administration and IMF denied the story, but the Intercept said its reporting was based on documents outli-

ning the money trail, American and Pakistani contracts, licensing, and requisition documents related to US-brokered deals to buy Pakistani military weapons for Ukraine.

► **Related report, P 18**

Modi govt clears women's quota bill, 27 years after it was first introduced

But Reservation Won't Happen In Time For '24 Polls

Akhilesh Singh & Dipak Dash

New Delhi: In a big move for women's empowerment, the Narendra Modi government is set to table a constitutional amendment bill in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday for reserving one-third of seats in Parliament and state legislatures across the country.

The decision, pushed by the Prime Minister and cleared by the Union Cabinet at a meeting on Monday evening, aims to secure passage of the bill in the two Houses in the special session, beginning a long process that will entail support, besides two-thirds backing in both Houses and ratification by half of the assemblies. The bill will also provide for sub-quota for SC/STs in proportion to their existing share.

The government refused

YOU READ IT HERE | TOI Sept 2, 2023

Hanging fire for long, women's quota bill may be taken up during special session

Akhilesh Singh
@akhileshsingh



New Delhi: After all the speculation, reserved seats for women in the special Parliament session from September 2023, the Narendra Modi government's reservation bill is set to take its final legislative steps. The government, though it yet to announce the final amendments about the

bill, the bill was not introduced in Lok Sabha even as it was passed with 100% support by the BJP-led NDA government in the upper House.

However, the government's decision to table the bill may not be as straightforward as it seems. The government has already been shuffling its cards and even though it retains the BJP

The bill was first introduced by the late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1996. It was passed by the Lok Sabha in 1996, 2000, 2002 and 2005. In 2006, JDU's NDA government had introduced the bill in the Lok Sabha. However, it was not passed as the NDA government lost its majority in the Lok Sabha in 2009. The bill was reintroduced in 2010 but it lapsed after the Lok Sabha failed to pass it.

STEPS BEFORE IT BECOMES LAW

- 1** The bill will need two-thirds support in each House of Parliament
- 2** It will also need to be ratified by at least half the state legislatures
- 3** Delimitation exercise to identify the seats will be taken up after the freeze is lifted in 2026

to confirm the decision, but sources said that the proposed reservation could come into force by 2029 after the constituencies are redrawn as part of the delimitation exercise based on the decennial census expected to get under way in 2026.

The bill was first introduced in 1996, and even cleared by the Rajya Sabha in March 2010, but lapsed after the Lok

Sabha failed to pass it.

Sources in the government were confident of the prospects of the bill in Parliament this time, as well as of enlisting the necessary support from states. They said Congress would have to come along and pointed to states which are with BJP, its allies as well as parties which though not part of the NDA have been in support of the measure,

Bill could be passed easily as Cong, key INDIA parties back it

Congress on Monday welcomed the move and claimed credit for the landmark legislation. However, the party noted that it will wait to see the details of the provisions made in the bill, before announcing a final decision. The bill, if introduced, seems set for a smooth sail as many member parties of the opposition INDIA bloc have advocated for its passage in the special session. **P10**

The PM himself did not appear to be in doubt as he declared that the special session would be "historic". In his "farewell speech" in the old Parliament, he had dropped a clear hint about what was afoot when he talked about "inclusiveness" as one of the hallmarks of Indian parliamentary democracy and talked about contributions of women lawmakers, two Spea-

Patel doesn't g

kers included. Congress announced its support for the bill as soon as information about the decision filtered out. The bill will be put up for discussion in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday, with the government hoping to secure its passage in the Rajya Sabha on Friday, the concluding day of the special session.

The decision marks fulfilment of the decades-old demand of women's organisations and political parties for decisive affirmative action for enhancing their representation in legislatures. The intent of political parties could not be translated into quota because of the resistance of politicians who feared losing their seats to women once the quota was promulgated.

Many who claimed to represent OBCs and Muslims put a spanner in the works, arguing that "women's quota" would be appropriated by upper caste women.

► Continued on P 13

Indian Army bolsters comms with cutting-edge technology

Will Help Troops On Long-Range Patrols, Surgical Operations

Rajat.Pandit@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: In a major move to provide secure satellite-based communications to troops out on long-range patrols along the Line of Actual Control with China as well as Special Forces deployed for "surgical operations", the Army is now fast acquiring different types of advanced hand-held and lightweight suitcase-based Satcom sets.

The Army on Monday inked a deal for over 160 "cutting-edge mobile secure satellite terminals (MSSTs)" with defence PSU Bharat Electronics (BEL), which is the latest in the series of such contracts sealed in recent months, defence ministry sources told TOI.

The contracts inked earlier include ones for over 150 man-portable Ku-band satellite terminals, around 400 S-band



The older Satcom sets with the Army have become obsolete over the years, with troops on patrols along the LAC often not able to effectively communicate with their operating bases

hand-held terminals, over 300 S-band manpack terminals and over 80 light vehicle-based Ku-band satellite communication terminals, among others.

"These secure portable terminals, by DRDO and BEL, will be a significant force-multiplier as they offer unparalleled resilient military communication support to troops deployed in remote far-flung areas," a defence ministry source said.

"They will also augment communications for Para-Special Forces while being employed for rapid small-

team surgical operations. It's an important step towards leveraging capabilities of Indian SATCOM technologies and advances in the space domain for Army formations deployed in forward and harsh terrain conditions," he added.

The older Satcom sets with the Army have become obsolete over the years, with troops on long-range patrols along the 3,488-km LAC often not able to effectively communicate with their operating bases and the military hierarchy.

"Such forward deployed

troops have to depend on terrestrial radio and satellite phones, which are not secure and have poor connectivity. The new cutting-edge MSSTs, which cannot be intercepted, will plug this void," said the source.

Overall, the forces are slowly but steadily enhancing their capabilities to fight in the increasingly digitised battlefields of the future. Though the armed forces depend a lot on civilian satellites launched by ISRO, they also have a few dedicated military satellites now.

Moreover, the defence ministry in March last year had also given the nod for the Rs 4,600 crore project for a GSAT-7B satellite for the Army, after earlier approving the Rs 2,236 crore project for the GSAT-7C satellite for the IAF in November 2021. "The advanced GSAT-7B satellite should be operational by 2025-26," a source said.

Emotional adieu to Old Parliament

New era in New Parliament to begin today

■ "It is a very emotional moment to bid farewell to this building. As we leave this building our mind is filled with many emotions and memories," PM Modi said in Lok Sabha

NEW DELHI, Sept 18 (PTI)

AS THE old Parliament building hosted a session one last time, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday bid a poignant farewell recalling the country's first PM Jawaharlal Nehru's iconic "trust with destiny" speech for continuing to inspire everyone and another predecessor Atal Behari Vajpayee's "Governments may come and go" remark.

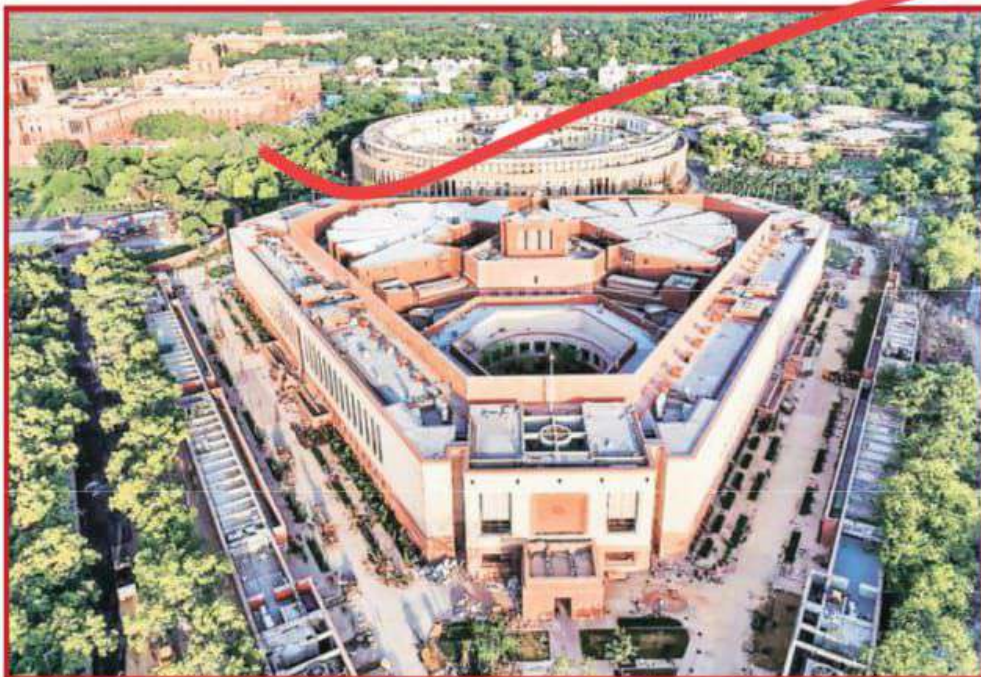
Reminiscing the country's Parliamentary journey of 75 years, Modi at the same time reminded the Lok Sabha about Emergency as well as the 2008 'cash-for-vote' scam during the first term of the Manmohan Singh Government.

As he sang paens to previous Prime Ministers including Lal Bahadur Shastri, Indira Gandhi and PV Narasimha Rao, Modi remembered the journey of India's democracy and said the last day in the heritage building should be dedicated to the over 7,500 parliamentarians who served there since Independence in 1947.

"It is a very emotional moment to bid farewell to this building. As we leave this building our mind is filled with many emotions and memories," Modi said, initiating the discussion on "Parliamentary Journey of 75 years starting from Samvidhan Sabha -- Achievements, Experiences, Memories and Learnings".

Modi paid tributes to "every brick" of the old Parliament building and said MPs will enter the new complex with "new hope and confidence".

The Rajya Sabha and the Lok Sabha will meet again on Tuesday afternoon in the (Contd on page 3)



Prime Minister Narendra Modi speaks in the Lok Sabha during a special session of Parliament, in New Delhi on Monday. It was the last session in the old Parliament building. (PTI)

'Unparalleled contribution'

NEW DELHI, Sept 18 (PTI)

LOK Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Monday said the old Parliament building has an "unparalleled" contribution to India's democratic journey as collective decisions were (Contd on page 3)



Om Birla, LS Speaker

'Seven-decade journey'

NEW DELHI, Sept 18 (PTI)

RAJYA Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Thakkar in his opening remarks, said, "Traversing the seven-decade journey, from Samvidhan Sabha to the present day in Amrit (Contd on page 3)



Thakkar, RS Chairman

Oppn to raise people's issues

NEW DELHI, Sept 18 (PTI)

LEADERS of I.N.D.I.A. bloc met here on Monday ahead of the start of special session of Parliament and decided to participate in the discussions and raise people's issues, sources said.

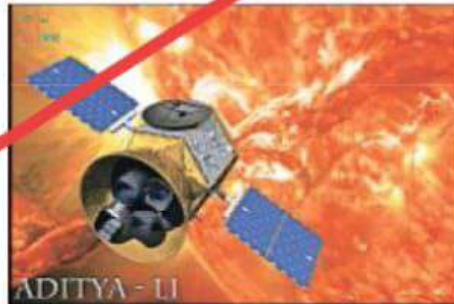
The leaders during the meeting of I.N.D.I.A. alliance in the morning decided to continue with (Contd on page 3)

Aditya-L1 solar spacecraft starts collecting data

BENGALURU, Sept 18 (PTI)

INDIA'S Aditya-L1 solar mission spacecraft has commenced collecting data that will help scientists analyse the behaviour of particles surrounding Earth, ISRO said on Monday. The sensors of an instrument on board India's first solar observatory have begun measuring supra-thermal and energetic ions and electrons at distances greater than 50,000 km from Earth, it said. "This data helps scientists analyse the behaviour of particles surrounding Earth," the Bengaluru-headquartered national space agency said in a post on social media platform X (Twitter).

The Supra Thermal & Energetic Particle Spectrometer (STEPS) instrument is a part of the Aditya Solar Wind Particle Experiment (ASPEX) payload. "These STEPS measurements will persist during



the cruise phase of the Aditya-L1 mission as it progresses toward the Sun-Earth L1 point. They will continue once the spacecraft is positioned in its intended orbit", ISRO said. Data collected around L1 would provide insights into the origin, acceleration, and anisotropy of solar wind and space weather phenomena, it said. STEPS was developed by the Physical Research

Laboratory with support from the Space Application Centre in Ahmedabad. ISRO had launched Aditya-L1 on September 2 using a PSLV-C57 rocket.

The Aditya-L1 spacecraft carries a total of seven different payloads to study the Sun, four of which will observe the light from the Sun and the remaining three will measure in situ parameters of the plasma and magnetic fields.

Aditya-L1 will be placed in a halo orbit around the Lagrangian Point 1 (L1), which is 1.5 million km from the Earth in the direction of the Sun. It will revolve around the Sun with the same relative position and hence can see the Sun continuously. STEPS comprises six sensors, each observing in different directions and measuring supra-thermal and energetic ions ranging from 20 keV/nucleon to 5 MeV/nucleon, in addition to electrons exceeding 1 MeV.

Army gets 600 self-neutralising, indigenous 'Vibhav' anti-tank mines

JAMMU, Sept 18 (PTI)

SIX hundred indigenously-manufactured self-neutralising anti-tank mines, known as "Vibhav", have been inducted into the Army to provide mobility kill against all enemy armoured vehicles, officials said on Monday.

The anti-tank mine is made of new-age plastic, which gives it adequate strength and durability to withstand the requirements of storage, handling and operating in varying field conditions, they added.

"It (the 'Vibhav' anti-tank mine) is already in production. It has been completed. It is now in demand. It has been inducted into the Indian Army. Six hundred mines have been inducted (recently)," an official of the manufacturing company told



PTI. Designed and developed completely indigenously in a joint venture with the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) in India, "Vibhav" is a point-attack anti-tank munition, officials said. They said the mines are designed to provide mobility kill against all enemy armoured vehicles.

"Made from new age plastic, the mines have adequate strength and durability to withstand the requirements of storage, handling and oper-

ating in varying field conditions," the official mentioned above said.

The munition can be laid both mechanically or manually, he added.

A host of safety and actuation mechanisms have been incorporated in "Vibhav" to make it safe to handle, lethal against targets and reliable, the officials said.

The integrated explosive, mechanical and electronic safety features ensure utmost operator safety, they added.

On the other hand, the lethality of the munition ensures effectiveness against all current and futuristic armoured vehicles, the officials said. The munition also incorporates an electronic anti-handling and anti-lift device (EAHALD) that stays active for 120 days once armed, they said.