

Any issue can be resolved only through talks: Ladakh LG to agitating groups

LEH, Oct 1 (PTI)

URGING Leh Apex Body (LAB) and Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA) to reconsider their decision to stay away from talks with the Centre, Ladakh Lt Governor Kavinder Gupta on Wednesday said any matter can be resolved by sitting across the table.

He lashed out at Rahul Gandhi for his remarks on the Ladakh situation, alleging that the Congress leader was trying to "vitiating the atmosphere" in the country as he did during the farmers' agitation and other protests.

With the agitating groups demanding a judicial inquiry into the September 24 violence and the release of detainees, including activist Sonam Wangchuk, the LG said a magisterial probe has already been announced

"and it will start very soon".

A semblance of normalcy was witnessed in curfew-bound Leh town since Tuesday morning after authorities relaxed week-long curbs for seven hours and also ordered the reopening of shops and business establishments.

The relaxation period was further extended by one more hour from 10 am to 6 pm on Wednesday. However, mobile internet services remain suspended, and stringent prohibitory orders banning the assembly of five or more people are still in effect across much of the Union Territory, including Kargil.

The dialogue between the Ministry of Home Affairs and Ladakh representatives, scheduled for October 6, hit a roadblock with both LAB and KDA,



A man walks through a market during relaxation in curfew, in Leh on Wednesday. (PTI)

which are leading the agitation for statehood and Sixth Schedule safeguards for Ladakh, announcing suspension of the talks until a conducive atmosphere is created.

They demanded a judicial probe into the violence and the release of over 50 detainees, including Wangchuk who was booked under the National Security Act (NSA) for allegedly instigating the violence.

The two outfits have alleged that "highhandedness" by authorities and security forces led to the violence during a shutdown called by a constituent of the LAB. "The administration has not made the situation worse, nor did we want it to be like this. What led to the violence is a matter of investigation," the Lt Governor told PTI Videos in an interview here.

India-EFTA trade deal couldn't have come at better time, it will be like a booster: Swiss State Secretary

NEW DELHI, Oct 1 (PTI)

THE free trade deal between four European nations (EFTA) and India will bring in transformative changes in boosting two-way economic ties and could not have come at a better time, Switzerland State Secretary for Economic Affairs Helene Budliger said as the ambitious pact came into effect on Wednesday amid trade disruptions caused by the US tariff tussle.

The Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) inked between New Delhi and the European Free Trade Association, comprising Switzerland, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein, is expected to cut tariffs on 92.2 per cent of Indian product categories.

Under the provisions of the pact that was sealed in March last year,

the four countries pledged to invest a whopping USD 100 billion in India in the next 15 years, besides enhancing trade engagement in areas of technology, manufacturing, textiles, leather and food products.

"It will be like a booster. There is a kind of massive interest coming from Switzerland for investing in India. I think it is safe to say that it is even more meaningful for us (in view of the current state of global trade)," Budliger told PTI in an interview. The trade pact came into effect amid a severe downturn in India's ties with the US after President Donald Trump slapped a 50 per cent tariff, including a 25 per cent addi-

tional duty for its purchase of Russian crude oil. In her remarks, Budliger, however, said the India-EFTA trade pact is not at all related to the current situation arising out of Washington's trade policy as the deal is the result of 16 years of negotiations.

"This is really an excellent moment and it will give additional emphasis to what we are trying to do. But it is wrong to say that it was a response to what has been going on in the world," she said. India is the fifth-largest trading partner for the EFTA and the two-trade has been on an upswing between the two sides in the last few years.



Helene Budliger

150 years of Vande Mataram to be celebrated across India

NEW DELHI, Oct 1 (PTI)

THE Union Cabinet on Wednesday decided to celebrate 150 years of the national song, 'Vande Mataram', across India.

The Constituent Assembly had accorded 'Vande Mataram', composed by Bankimchandra Chatterji, the status of national song. Briefing reporters on the decisions taken by the Union Cabinet, Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said that keeping in mind the role played by the song during the freedom struggle, a decision was taken to hold country-wide celebrations to mark its 150th year.

According to the 'India.Gov' portal, Vande Mataram was composed in Sanskrit by Chatterji.

It has an equal status with the national anthem, Jana-gana-mana.

Govt raises wheat MSP by 6.59 pc to Rs 2,585 per quintal for 2026-27

THE Government announced a 6.59 per cent increase in the minimum support price (MSP) for wheat to Rs 2,585 per quintal for the 2026-27 marketing year, up from Rs 2,425 per quintal last

year. The decision was taken at a Cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Briefing the media, Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said the Cabinet had approved the MSP for six rabi crops for 2026-27 based on recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP).

In absolute terms, the highest increase has been announced for safflower at Rs 600 per quintal, followed by lentil (masur) at Rs 300 per quintal. For rapeseed and mustard, the increase is Rs 250 per quintal; gram Rs 225 per quintal; barley Rs 170 per quintal; and wheat Rs 160 per quintal.

The MSP for barley has been increased to Rs 2,150 per quintal from Rs 1,980 per quintal.

Among key rabi pulses, the support price for gram has been fixed at Rs 5,875 per quintal, up from Rs 5,650 per quintal, while lentil MSP has been raised to Rs 7,000 per quintal from Rs 6,700 per quintal.

For oilseeds, the MSP of rapeseed and mustard has been raised to Rs 6,200 per quintal from Rs 5,950 per quintal, while safflower support price has been increased

CABINET DECISIONS

to Rs 6,540 per quintal from Rs 5,940 per quintal.

Approval for Rs 11,440 cr Mission to make India self-sufficient in pulses

THE Union Cabinet approved a six-year central scheme aimed at achieving self-sufficiency in pulses production, with a financial outlay of Rs 11,440 crore.

The "Mission for Aatmanirbharta in Pulses", approved by the Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, will be for the period from 2025-26 to 2030-31. The mission follows Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's announcement in the 2025-26 Budget. The mission will particularly focus on increasing production of tur, urad and masur, with assured procurement by Government agencies National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (Nafed) and National Cooperative Consumers' Federation of India Ltd (NCCF) from registered farmers.

"We are going to start a mis-

sion on pulses for six years. Several initiatives will be taken under this," Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw told reporters after the Cabinet meeting.

Under the mission, the Government has set a target to increase pulses production to 350 lakh tonnes by 2030-32 from 242 lakh tonnes achieved in 2023-24, according to an official statement.

Approval for widening of Kalibor-Numaligarh NH in Assam to 4-lane

THE Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on Wednesday approved widening, to four-lane, and improvement of the existing carriageway of the Kalibor-Numaligarh section of NH-715 in Assam, including the implementation of wildlife-friendly measures proposed on the Kaziranga National Park stretch.

The project will be developed on Engineering, Procurement and Construction Mode with a total length of 85.675 km at Rs 6,957 crore, according to a Cabinet communique.

The project will also generate approximately 15.42 lakh person-days of direct and 19.19 lakh person-days of indirect employment, and will open new avenues of growth, development and prosperity in surrounding regions.

Cabinet approves opening of 57 new KVs

THE Union Cabinet approved opening of 57 new Kendriya Vidyalayas (KVs) which would benefit over 86,000 students, Union minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said. Out of the 57 new KVs, seven will be sponsored by the Union Home Ministry, and the rest by State Governments.

Twenty of the newly approved KVs are proposed to be opened in districts where no KV presently exists despite a significant number of Central Government employees. "The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has approved opening of 57 new Kendriya Vidyalayas under Civil sector across the country to facilitate the educational needs of the wards of increased number of Central Government employees," Vaishnaw said.

With new camps, stronger roads C'garh pushes deeper into Maoist zones

- Ten new camps have been set up
- CRPF, ITBP and BSF tasked to choke transit corridors

■ Staff Reporter
RAIPUR, Oct 1

THE counter-insurgency grid in south Chhattisgarh is being steadily tightened with new security camps, roads and choke points, even as heavy monsoon rains strain supply lines. Ten new

posts have already been set up in Bijapur, Sukma and Narayanpur, while expansion on the Belnar-Pidiya and Golapalli-Kistaram routes is planned.

Forces like CRPF, ITBP and BSF are strengthening these positions to cut Maoist movement and enter their strongholds.

According to a classified Chhattisgarh Police dossier accessed by 'The Hitavada', these camps act as bases for patrols, intelligence gathering and civic works, ensuring sustainability alongside deployment.

A key instruction is to pair camp establishment with road and bridge projects under Special Central Assistance (SCA) so that logistics are not locked in from the outset. Narayanpur, Kakur and Pariyadi have been prioritised for SCA-funded road corridors. In Bijapur, the Belnar-Pidiya sector has been tagged for parallel infrastructure to prevent isolation during the wet season. And in Sukma, the Golapalli-Kistaram arc has been spotlighted as a pri-

ority grid, with bridge and culvert works to be aligned with troop presence.

Security planners say, the new camp grid is being designed as

overlapping arcs rather than isolated posts. A recent confidential review has directed forces to plug gaps between camps, block Maoists from using forest routes for long movements, and ensure faster access for civilians to Government facilities. Officials describe these deployments as

"forward extensions of governance," where setting up water points, roads and mobile towers is seen as important as the soldiers' presence.

The dossier notes that the CRPF, ITBP and BSF have been asked to sustain high coordination and ensure that new camps are not left vulnerable during supply runs. Instances where personnel stepped out casually for rations have already drawn red flags, with commanders warned that such lapses provide Maoists easy targets. Troop sen-

sitisation, combined with better logistics, is being treated as essential to prevent reverses.

Commanders say new security camps bring a psychological edge, aiming to deter Maoists while reassuring villages of the state's permanent presence. Along with troops, medical camps, water projects and school repairs are being pushed to break fear and isolation. Officers stress that denying Maoists space is as much about civic outreach and perception as firepower.

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**EXCLUSIVE
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