

India, China look to restart cultural, people exchanges

New Delhi: With the resumption of direct flights between India and China, both countries are looking to resume the high-level mechanism for cultural and people-to-people exchanges early next year.

The mechanism chaired by the foreign ministers has met twice so far – in 2018 and 2019 – and its resumption is key to advancing cooperation in a range of areas like tourism, culture, media and academic exchanges.

The next, or third, meeting is expected to take place in Delhi. The decision to restart direct air services saw China Eastern launching on Sunday its first Shanghai-Delhi flight, which witnessed 95% occupancy.

Since they resolved the military standoff in eastern Ladakh, India and China have taken a series of steps to normalise the relationship.

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Pak's parl panel okays amendment to introduce 'chief of defence forces'

Islamabad: Pakistan's joint parliamentary committee of the senate and national assembly on Sunday approved the 27th constitutional amendment bill with the opposition alleging that govt was sounding "the death knell for the Supreme Court." The amendment proposes a change in Article 243, seeking to abolish the 'chairman, joint chiefs of staff committee' and introduce a new 'chief of defence forces.' Other proposals under the same amendment include establishing a federal constitutional court and reducing the powers of the supreme court.

Senator Farooq Naek of Pakistan Peoples Party, who chaired the mee of joint parliamentary panel, told the media after it was over that "the meeting unanimously approved the basic draft of the bill." "There are some minor sections which the committee authorised me (Naek) and law minister (Azam Nazir Tarar) to settle," he said. "Everything has been done with consensus."

The senate is scheduled to meet at 11am on Monday to take up the bill the light of the committee report and pass it by a two-thirds majority. After the Senate, it would be presented before the national assembly, where it must pass a two-thirds majority again. Then, it must get the president's approval to become a legislation. PTI

INS Sahyadri docks at Guam as Quad's Malabar naval exercise kicks off today

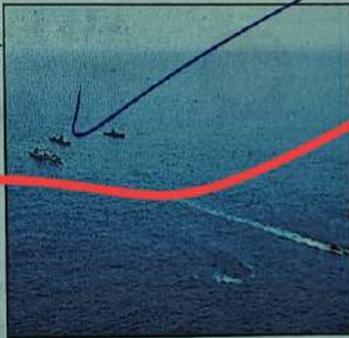
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New Delhi: The Quad leaders' summit that was to be hosted by India may no longer be taking place this year, but navies of the four countries are set to kick off their top-notch Malabar exercise off Guam in western Pacific Ocean from Monday.

Indian guided-missile stealth frigate INS Sahyadri has joined the American Aegis guided-missile destroyer USS Fitzgerald, Australian Anzac-class frigate HMAS Ballarat and Japanese helicopter destroyer JS Hyuga at Guam, a strategic US military base, for the intense combat manoeuvres from Nov 10 to 18.

However, the 'Cope India' air combat exercise between India and the US that was slat-

File photo



It comes amid the Trump admin indicating that its long-standing Indo-Pacific strategy to counter China is no longer a top priority

ed to be held in Gwalior from Monday, with Japan and Australia as observers, has been deferred. The US was to deploy F-35 fifth-generation stealth fighters and B-1 Lancer supersonic heavy bombers for the ex-

ercise. Instead, it has sent a solitary B-1 aircraft for "bomber integration sorties" with IAF.

This will be the 29th edition of the Malabar exercise, which began as a bilateral endeavour between India and the US in 1992 but includes all Quad countries now.

"INS Sahyadri's participation reaffirms India's enduring partnership and its commitment to strengthening co-ordination, enhancing interoperability and demonstrating a collective resolve to safeguard regional security," Indian Navy said Sunday.

The exercise comes amid Trump administration indicating its long-standing Indo-Pacific strategy to counter an aggressive and expansionist China is no longer a top priority.

India, Australia and Japan, however, remain concerned about China's continuing 'Grey Zone' tactics to push its vexatious territorial claims in the Indo-Pacific, be it against its neighbours in South and East China Seas or the Line of Actual Control with India.

The 'harbour phase' of the Malabar on Nov 10-12 will feature operational planning and discussions, alignment on communication protocols, familiarisation visits between participating nations and sports fixtures, Navy said. The 'sea phase' from Nov 13 to 17 will see the warships and aircraft taking part in drills focusing on joint fleet operations, anti-submarine warfare, gunnery serials and flying operations, it added.

Pakistan says still 'committed' to dialogue with Afghan Taliban to resolve differences

Islamabad: Pakistan said on Sunday that it was committed to dialogue to resolve differences with the Afghan Taliban but demanded that Kabul must address concerns regarding the use of its soil by terrorists.

Foreign Office (FO) spokesperson Tahir Andrabi issued a statement on different media queries regarding the third round of talks with the Afghan Taliban regime in Istanbul on Nov 6, which concluded a day later. Turkiye and Qatar mediated the parleys.

The peace talks ended without any agreement to tackle the thorny issues of cross-border terrorism, the top officials had said on Saturday. "Pakistan remains committed to the

Taliban govt protests no invite to COP30

The Taliban govt expressed its disappointment Sunday that it was not invited to the COP30 conference despite Afghanistan being one of the nations most vulnerable to climate change. The 30th UN Climate Change Conference opens Monday in Brazil. Last year the Taliban govt, which is currently only recognised by Russia, sent a delegation to COP29 — but as a "guest" of host Azerbaijan rather than a party directly involved in the negotiations. "The exclusion of the Afghan people from the right to participate in this conference contradicts the principles of climate justice, global cooperation, and human solidarity," the Afghanistan's National Environmental Protection Agency said. Afghanistan accounts for nearly 0.06% of global greenhouse gas emissions, according to scientists. AFP

resolution of bilateral differences through dialogue. However, Pakistan's core concern, i.e. terrorism emanating from Afghanistan, needs to be addressed first and foremost," the FO said in a statement.

It also said that Pakistan's Armed Forces and its people were well determined to eliminate the menace of terrorism from its soil and take action against its supporters, abettors and financiers.

In the long statement, the spokesperson said that for the past four years, since the Taliban regime came to power in Afghanistan, there has been a sharp surge in terrorist attacks emanating from Afghan soil. "Throughout these years, Pakistan, despite suffering casualties, exercised maximum restraint and did not retaliate," it said. Pakistan's expectation was that Taliban regime would be able to control these attacks and take concrete actions, the FO said. Pakistan govt last year notified the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) as "Fitna al-Khawarij", a reference to a group in earlier Islamic history which was involved in violence. PH

Super Typhoon Fung-wong threatens Philippines, million people evacuated

MANILA, Nov 9 (AP)

SUPER Typhoon Fung-wong, the biggest storm to threaten the Philippines this year, started battering the country's northeastern coast ahead of landfall on Sunday, knocking down power, forcing the evacuation of more than a million people and prompting the defence chief to warn many others to evacuate to safety from high-risk villages before it's too late.



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Fung-wong, which could cover two-thirds of the Southeast Asian archipelago with its 1,600-kilometre-wide rain and wind band, approached from

the Pacific while the Philippines was still dealing with the devastation wrought by Typhoon Kalmaegi, which left at least 224 people dead in central island provinces on Tuesday before pummeling Vietnam, where at least five were killed.

Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. Has declared a state of emergency due to the extensive devastation caused by Kalmaegi and the expected calamity from Fung-wong, which is called Uwan in the Philippines.

US Govt shutdown reaches its 40th day

WASHINGTON, Nov 9 (AP)

THE government shutdown stretched into its 40th day Sunday even as senators held a weekend session in hopes of finding an end to the impasse that has disrupted flights nationwide, threatened food assistance for millions of Americans and left federal workers without pay.

The Senate has shown few signs of progress over a weekend that could be crucial for the shutdown fight. Republican leaders are hoping to hold votes on bills that would reopen the government into January while also approving full-year funding for several parts of government. The necessary Democratic support for that effort was far from

guaranteed.

“We’re only a handful of votes away” from passing legislation to reopen the government, Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., said Saturday.



Democratic leaders are pushing hard for an extension of subsidies for health plans offered under the Affordable Care Act

marketplace. Republicans have rejected that offer, but signalled openness to an emerging proposal from a small group of moderate Democrats to end the shutdown in exchange for a later vote on the “Obamacare” subsidies that make coverage more affordable. For those enrolled in health exchanges under that law, premiums on average are expected to more than double next year.