

# **DEFENCE FORCES**

## **lead joint effort to contain forest fire in Arunachal**

ITANAGAR, Feb 18 (PTI)

OPERATIONS to contain the massive forest fire that broke out in Arunachal Pradesh's Anjaw district were underway for the fifth consecutive day on Tuesday, officials said. Troops of the Indian Army, the Indian Air Force and civil administration are working in close coordination to control the blaze that broke out in Walong on February 13, they said.

Personnel of the Indian Army's Spear Corps, along with support from the Indian Air Force and district authorities, remain fully engaged in dousing residual flames, preventing fresh flare-ups and securing the affected areas, Defence Spokesperson Lt Col Mahendra Rawat said.

The operations have been progressing with sustained intensity despite difficult terrain and weather conditions, he said.

Over the past five days, fire-fighting efforts have been carried out through the coordinated deployment of manpower, specialised equipment and heavy machinery, while helicopters have been conducting aerial reconnaissance and water-dropping missions, he added. Round-the-clock operations are underway to ensure the fire is completely extinguished and to minimise the risk of re-ignition, Lt Col Rawat. As per initial information gathered from local sources, the fire is suspected to have originated in the forested hills around Walong, likely triggered by dry vegetation and prevailing weather conditions that allowed the flames to spread rapidly across the area, officials said.

The General Officer Commanding of 2 Mountain Division also visited the affected area to review the ongoing firefighting operations and commended the troops for their prompt response and dedication, they said.

# Indian Navy to host key conclave in Goa on 21st

NEW DELHI, Feb 18 (PTI)

THE Indian Navy is set to host on February 21, the fifth edition of the Goa Maritime Conclave - a premier platform that harnesses the collective wisdom and operational experience of security practitioners from the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) to generate practical solutions to contemporary maritime challenges.

The maritime domain in the IOR faces a "wide spectrum of traditional and non-traditional challenges", with significant implications for regional security and livelihoods, the Defence Ministry said on Tuesday.

"The transnational and multi-dimensional nature of these threats necessitates enhanced cooperation and effective collaborative mechanisms among partner countries," it said in a statement. The fifth edition of Goa

Maritime Conclave (GMC 2026) is scheduled to be held at the Naval War College, Goa, on February 21. "As a flagship strategic initiative of the Indian Navy, the conclave has evolved into a premier platform that harnesses the collective wisdom and operational experience of maritime security practitioners from the IOR to generate outcome-oriented ideas and practical solutions to contemporary maritime challenges," the ministry said.

Minister of State for Defence Sanjay Seth will be the chief guest at the event. Navy Chief Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi will host chiefs of Navies, heads of maritime forces, and senior representatives from 14 nations -- Bangladesh, Comoros, Indonesia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Myanmar, Seychelles, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Tanzania.

# India keen to diversify crude oil, coking coal sources: Goyal

NEW DELHI, Feb 18 (PTI)

INDIA wants to diversify its sources of crude oil and coking coal and would “love” to source high-quality coking coal from the US, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Wednesday.

He also said that the US can provide certain goods that India needs desperately for its economic growth. These goods can include Graphics Processing Units (GPUs) for Artificial Intelligence applications, equipment for data centres and high performance computing.

India, he said, can manufacture products that the US cannot compete in, while America can be a strong source of technology and capital.

There is already USD 100 billion in aircraft demand from the US in the next five years and the country needs more to increase local capacity and bring down

fares, Goyal said.

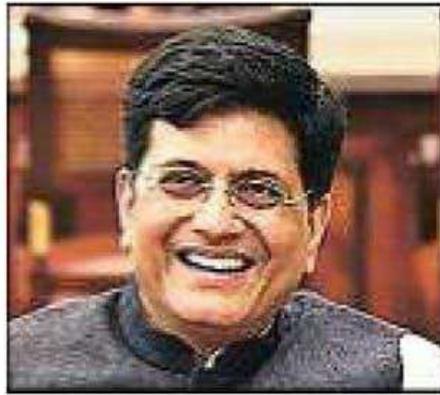
“We want to diversify our oil sources. I want to diversify the source of coking coal for example. I am dependent on 2 or 3 geographies (for that) and prices keep fluctuating. I would love to have

American coking coal which is high quality coming to India,” he said at an event in Mumbai.

Under an interim trade agreement with the US, India has expressed its intention to buy goods worth USD 500 billion in the next five years from

America. The Indian team is visiting the US next week to finalise the legal text of the agreement, which is likely to be signed in March.

“Doing a (trade) deal with America is good for India,” he said, adding it opens huge opportunities for Indian firms, particularly in labour-oriented goods and technology services.



# No breakthrough in ~~Russia-Ukraine~~ talks

GENEVA, Feb 18 (AP)

THE latest US-brokered talks between Russian and Ukrainian envoys over Russia's all-out invasion of Ukraine ended Wednesday with no sign of a breakthrough and with both sides saying the talks were "difficult" as the war's fourth anniversary approaches next week.

The negotiations in Switzerland were the third round of direct talks organised by the US, after meetings earlier this year in Abu Dhabi that officials described as constructive but which also yielded no major progress.

The head of the Russian delegation, Russian President Vladimir Putin's adviser Vladimir Medinsky, told reporters that the two days of talks in Geneva "were difficult but businesslike." He said another round of talks will be held "in the near future."



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy also described the discussions as "difficult," and accused Russia of "trying to drag out negotiations that could already have reached the final stage."

US President Donald Trump's envoy, Steve Witkoff, said on social media that Washington's push for peace in Ukraine over the past year has "brought about

meaningful progress," without elaborating.

The two armies remain locked in battle on the roughly 1,250-kilometre frontline, while Russia bombards civilian areas of Ukraine daily.

Hours after the first day of talks ended on Tuesday, Russian drones killed a woman and injured a 6-year-old girl and 18-month-old toddler in the south-

ern Ukraine city of Zaporizhzhia, officials said.

Overnight, Russia launched one ballistic missile and 126 long-range drones at Ukraine, according to the Ukrainian air force.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters that it's "too early" to speak about the outcome. Putin has been receiving reports about the talks' progress, he said. The head of the Ukrainian delegation in Switzerland, Rustem Umerov, said that officials are trying to bridge their political and military differences.

"Consultations are taking place in working groups by areas within the political and military tracks," the head of the Ukrainian delegation, Rustem Umerov, wrote in English on X. "We are working on clarifying the parameters and mechanisms of the decisions discussed yesterday."