

IAF chief undertakes flying sortie with NCC cadet

NEW DELHI, Oct 23 (IANS)

THE Chief of Air Staff (CAS), Air Chief Marshal AP Singh, undertook a flying sortie with a senior wing cadet, Jakkula Tejasvi Reddy of the National Cadet Corps (NCC), at the Air Force Academy in Dundigal (Hyderabad) on Friday.

This comes days ahead of the Air Chief's final flying sortie with his first flying instructor. With this one-of-a-kind initiative, NCC cadet Jakkula Tejaswi Reddy got an opportunity to get a closer understanding of the world of aviation. Before boarding the Kiran aircraft, the IAF chief briefed her on its specifications, major components, engine functioning, cockpit procedures and safety mechanisms.

Notably, the Chief of the Air Staff is set to retire this month. Air Marshal Ashutosh Dixit will be the next Chief of the Air Staff



and is slated to take charge on October 31. As part of the pre-flight preparations, the NCC cadet first underwent cockpit familiarisation, safety briefings, ejection-procedure familiarisation and medical checks.

Before boarding the Kiran aircraft, the Indian Air Force (IAF) chief briefed her on its specifications, major components, engine functioning, cockpit procedures and safety mechanisms. During the sortie, he explained various flight manoeuvres, flight angles and steep turns. He also gave the cadet an opportunity to practise manoeuvres under his

guidance.

The sortie provided Cadet Tejasvi with practical exposure to aviation, encouraging her to pursue her aspiration of becoming an aviator. It also highlighted the opportunities available to NCC Air Wing cadets to gain experience in aviation and explore careers in the Defence Forces.

This experience helped Tejaswi realise that flying an aircraft requires not only technical knowledge but also the ability to make sound decisions, remain vigilant, and the need to strictly adhere to safety protocols.

The initiative also highlighted the opportunities available in the aviation sector for cadets in the Air Wing of the NCC. Through the NCC, young people get the chance to gain practical flying experience and explore the possibilities of pursuing a career in the defence services.

Border situation gets disturbed when Chinese forces diverge from patrolling patterns: MEA

NEW DELHI, Oct 23 (PTI)

INDIA on Friday said the situation along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) is disturbed from time to time when Chinese forces diverge from established patrolling patterns, asserting that the maintenance of peace and tranquillity in the border areas is essential for the overall development of bilateral relations.

The remarks by External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal came in response to a question on comments by Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) Director General Shatrughat Kapur that confrontations with Chinese troops continue to take place in a number of sites along the border in Arunachal Pradesh.

“As we have noted in the past,

the situation in the India-China border areas gets disturbed from time to time when Chinese forces diverge from established patrolling patterns,” Jaiswal said at his bi-weekly media briefing.

“Both sides continue to use existing diplomatic and military mechanisms to resolve outstanding issues and avoid misunderstanding and miscalculation along the Line of Actual Control (LAC),” he said.

Jaiswal said the two sides have also agreed to discuss ways to improve understanding of LAC in appropriate areas for better border management.

“I would also like to emphasise that the maintenance of peace and tranquillity in the border areas is essential for the overall development of bilateral relations,” he said.

ITBP has raised drone platoons, building bunkers along LAC: ITBP DG

NEW DELHI, Oct 23 (PTI)

THE ITBP has raised drone platoons in all its border units, prepared a new 'Strike' course to better handle Galwan-like battles and is creating underground infrastructure along the front "in a big way" as part of the new warfare to counter India's "biggest adversary" China, the force's chief said on Thursday.

ITBP Director General (DG) Shatrुjeet Singh Kapoor told his troops at a force base in Rajasthan's Alwar that countering China through "traditional" means of warfare was a thing of the past and hence they were investing in modernizing the force, its weapons, vehicles and border posts.

The Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), raised in 1962, guards the 3,488-km-long Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China.

The DG noted that the recent Ukraine-Russia and Iran-US wars have shown the importance of drone and anti-drone technology through which a small country can overwhelm a bigger nation during conflict.

Kapoor, who is set to retire from service on October 31, addressed his troops

during an investiture ceremony held leading up to the force's 65th Raising Day on October 24.

He said the China front was our "most difficult" border, and China was a "powerful" neighbour and India's "biggest adversary," requiring enhanced capabilities to "counter" it.

"Drones have become a major challenge and an opportunity also. It will be difficult to compete with China using traditional methods... They have modernised and invested heavily in their PLA but drones are such that a small country can give a befitting contest to a bigger nation," he said.

He noted that almost 10,000-15,000 Russian troops are killed in the war with Ukraine every month.

"This is despite the fact that it (Russia) is a big country and a superpower. They (Russia) thought that they would capture (Ukraine) in 1-2 months but it is the fourth year counting, and every month they (Russians) have 10-15 thousand bodies reaching them," the DG said.

He added that this caused such "big damage" and that Russia was suffering because of that one decision.

Govt sets rules for Rs 84,084 cr offshore oil hunt, will share deepwater drilling risk

NEW DELHI, Oct 23 (PTI)

THE Government will share the cost of high-risk deepwater oil and gas exploration with energy companies under the Rs 84,084-crore Samudra Manthan scheme, offering to pay part of the cost of risky exploration wells, fund seismic mapping of offshore basins and help build shared production facilities.

The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas issued operational guidelines for the Samudra Manthan programme, which aims to improve the economics of exploring India's deepwater and ultra-deepwater basins, where high drilling costs and uncertain geological prospects have constrained investment.

The scheme aims to cut India's heavy reliance on imported hydrocarbons. The guidelines say it will run through FY2030-31, with FY2026-27 as a preparatory year and spending in FY2027-28 to FY2030-31 as Phase I. Petroleum Secretary Neeraj Mittal, in the preface to the guidelines, called the scheme "the most ambitious upstream oil and gas intervention undertaken in recent times" and said it could add "more than 600 million tonnes of oil equivalent" to India's reserves.



Under the scheme's central component, the Government will provide financial support for 56 exploratory wells and four stratigraphic wells in deepwater and ultra-deepwater areas. The guidelines define the two categories as waters deeper than 400 metres and 1,500 metres, respectively.

For the 56 exploratory wells, Government funding will cover up to 50 per cent of actual costs, subject to a ceiling of Rs 675 crore per well. The four stratigraphic

wells, which are drilled primarily to study subsurface rock formations and geological structures, will be eligible for support covering up to 100 per cent of costs, capped at Rs 1,350 crore per well. Only state-owned companies, or consortia led by them, can apply for funding for these wells.

At the maximum permitted amounts, support for the 60 wells could total Rs 43,200 crore, more than half the scheme's overall outlay. Operators will receive 40 per cent of the approved support when drilling reaches 40 per cent of the sanctioned depth, with the remaining 60 per cent payable after completion of the well and approval of the well report.

Pak refused to accept bodies of its own soldiers killed in Kargil war: India at UN

UNITED NATIONS, Oct 23 (PTI)

INDIA slammed Pakistan at the UN, reminding the country that it did not even accept the bodies of its own soldiers killed in combat in the 1999 Kargil war but speaks about faith, religious freedom and burials.

The interim report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion and belief, Nazila Ghanea, said that "Reports of systemic denial of funeral rights in the context of individuals killed in security operations in Jammu and Kashmir, India, including denial of return of bodies to families and remote and secret burials, disproportionately affecting Muslims and notably inconsistent with their practices, raise serious concerns."

"A State that cannot ensure the safety of its own minorities has no standing to lecture India," Bhavika said.



Responding to the report, First Secretary at the Permanent Mission of India to the UN Bhavika Mangalanandan said here on Thursday, "It is deeply ironic that a State that did not even accept the bodies of its own soldiers who were killed in combat in 1999 in Kargil unabashedly speaks with fervour on faith, religious freedom, and burials."

Indian Army recovered bodies of Pakistani soldiers who died in the Kargil War and provided them with burials after Pakistan refused to acknowledge the involvement of Pakistan Army personnel in the war.

Addressing the interactive dia-

“A State that cannot ensure the safety of its own minorities has no standing to lecture India”

- Bhavika Mangalanandan

logue with the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion and belief on the topic of funeral rights in exceptional circumstances, Mangalanandan reminded Pakistan that it was the Indian Army that buried several Pakistani soldiers with military honours and in accordance with Islamic rites.

"Pakistan's deep obsession with what is happening in the Indian Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir should be actually directed at the developments that are underway in the parts of Jammu and Kashmir under its illegal occupation, such as Rawalakot," she said.

India's para-athletes surpass expectations WITH BEST EVER HAUL OF 114 MEDALS

NAGOYA, Oct 23 (PTI)

INDIA'S para-athletes surpassed all expectations to deliver their best ever show at the Asian Para Games, ending their campaign with a mammoth haul of 114 medals, including 30 gold, following a record-shattering final day flourish here on Friday.

India had sent 168 athletes for this edition, which was nearly half of the contingent size that went to the Hangzhou Games in 2023 and returned with the then best ever of 108 medals, including 27 gold.

For the first time in the ongoing Games, para-athletics was not the dominant gold contributor with shuttlers, archers and shooter Mona Agarwal doing their bit to shore up the overall tally on India's final day that



(L) Sandeep poses for a photograph with the national flag after winning a gold medal in the men's 400m T64 final event, with a world-record time of 52.28 seconds. (C) Sumit Antil leads India's medal sweep in men's javelin throw F42-44/61-64 combined event. (R) Pranav Soorma wins gold medal in men's club throw F51 event at Asian Para Games. (PTI)

closed with 30 gold, 35 silver, and 49 bronze. India are currently placed fourth on the table but the position might change given that finals in a few events would be conducted on



Saturday and the country does not have a presence in any of those competitions.

On the last day of their campaign, India collected nine gold medals, their highest single-day haul in the

ongoing edition, with top finishes registered in archery, shooting, badminton and athletics. Athletics, as always, ended up being the driving force snaring 65 medals in all, 12 more than 2023.

On Friday though, shuttlers (Contd on page 3)

India, Azerbaijan vow to boost ties

■ EAM Jaishankar meets Azerbaijan President Aliyev and Foreign Minister Bayramov to discuss connectivity, North-South transport corridors

BAKU, Oct 23 (IANS)

EXTERNAL Affairs Minister (EAM) S Jaishankar held a meeting with his counterpart from Azerbaijan, Jeyhun Bayramov, on Friday with discussions held on bilateral ties, including political dialogue, trade, investment, energy, transport, tourism, education, science and cultural cooperation.

Jaishankar also called on Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev in Baku, with discussions



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar with Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev (L) and Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov (R) during a meeting in Baku. (X via PTI)

held on strengthening ties between the two nations. During the meeting, EAM Jaishankar conveyed the greetings of President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi to President Aliyev.



"Pleased to call on @presidentaz Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan in Baku this morning. Conveyed the greetings of President Droupadi Murmu and PM Modi. Discussed strengthening the relationship between our two

countries. Appreciate his positive sentiments for this shared endeavour," EAM Jaishankar posted on X.

According to Azerbaijan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, during the meeting, EAM Jaishankar and Bayramov discussed opportunities offered by Azerbaijan's East-West and North-South transport corridors, the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway, the Port of Baku, the Alat Free Economic Zone and other industrial zones. The two Ministers discussed regional and international developments, including cooperation within the United Nations (UN), the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), and the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA).

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