CRPF withdraws battalion from Chhattisgarh, sends to Manipur

NEW DELHI/RAIPUR, Nov 15 (PTI)

THE CRPF has withdrawn a battalion comprising more than 1,000 personnel from the anti-Naxal operations theatre in Chhattisgarh and sent it to Manipur for deployment.

The development marks the first such de-induction of any Central Armed Police Force (CAPF) unit following the Union Government's declaration that Naxalism in India ended in March.

Temporary withdrawal of companies (part of a battalion) has occurred for various internal security duties, such as the West Bengal elections, the Amarnath Yatra and the protests in Delhi.



'This is the first full withdrawal of any paramilitary unit from the anti-Naxal operations theatre following the declaration that armed Maoism in the country ended in March.'

Officials told PTI that the battalion was based in the former Maoist hotbed of Sukma in the south Bastar region of the central Indian state.

For the past few years, it had been undertaking Left Wing Extremism (LWE) operations, followed by de-mining and defusing improvised explosive devices (IEDs) post-March.

"The CRPF headquarters has ordered the de-induction of a general duty battalion from Chhattisgarh and directed it to move to Manipur, where ethnic violence has been simmering for more than three years now. "This is the first full withdrawal of any paramilitary unit from the anti-Naxal operations theatre following the declaration that armed Maoism in the

(Contd on page 5)

Winter Session likely in first week of Dec

NEW DELHI, Nov 15 (PTI)



THE Winter Session of Parliament is likely to begin in the first week of December, with the proposed delimitation-linked women's reservation bill emerging as the Government's biggest legislative priority amid an increasingly confrontational political atmosphere over the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls.

The Government is keen to push through the Constitution amendment bill, which seeks to expand the Lok Sabha's strength from the existing 543 seats to a maximum of 850 through delimitation, paving the way for the implementation of 33 per cent reservation for women in Parliament and State Legislatures ahead of the 2029 general elections. Sources familiar with the discussions told PTI that the first week of December was emerging as the likely window for the session, with the possible dates discussed at the highest levels of the Government.

However, securing the numbers for the crucial legislation could prove challenging. The bill requires a two-thirds majority in the Lok Sabha, or 361 votes in the present 543-member House. With three vacancies, the House has 540 members at present.

The ruling NDA has 320 members and would need the support

(Contd on page 5)

Egypt will become gateway to Africa for India: Goyal

CAIRO, Nov 15 (PTI)

INDIA and Egypt have significant potential to expand bilateral trade and investments, with Egypt poised to serve as India's gateway to Africa, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Sunday.

He said India and Egypt are not in competition and in fact they compliment each other.

"Egypt will become the gateway to Africa... Increasing engagenent between businesses will take the relation to greater heights," Goyal, who is here on a two-day visit, told reporters here.

To increase ties with Africa, Egypt is a key player, he said, adding that there is a lot of potential to boost trade in goods and services.



Union Minister Piyush Goyal pays tribute to Mahatma Gandhi at Al Horreya Park in Cairo. (PTI)

The African Union (AU) was officially admitted as a permanent member of the G20 on September 9, 2023, during the New Delhi G20 Leaders' Summit, which was hosted under India's presidency.

India and the US have already agreed that Indian goods in the American market will receive preferential market access compared to competitor nations, Goyal said. India and the US finalised the framework for the first phase of the bilateral trade pact in February.

The deal was to be signed earlier, but changes in the US tariff landscape have led to further negotiations on the agreement.

S-E Asian leaders open annual summit

MANILA, Nov 15 (AP)

SOUTHEAST Asian leaders opened their annual summit in the Philippine capital Manila on Sunday for three days of talks, including dialogues with world leaders led by US President Donald Trump, whose crucial trip to Asia could help boost his standing after his party's defeat in the midterm elections.

The talks by the leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and their expanded discussions with Asian and Western heads of state would focus on the world's most troubling conflicts led by the war in the Middle East, according to drafts of post-summit communiques seen by 'The Associated Press'.

Trump is expected to land in Manila with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Tuesday afternoon, after the main ASEAN summit meetings have concluded and Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. Turns over the regional bloc's rotating annual leadership to Singapore, Philippine officials said.

The ASEAN leaders are likely to renew calls for self-restraint and peaceful resolutions of conflicts, including longstanding disputes in the South China Sea and a civil war in Myanmar.

They also are expected to press efforts to shield their economies and citizens from continuing fallout from intractable global conflicts.

"We reaffirmed our shared commitment to upholding international law, including the United Nations Charter," the leaders' draft statement says.

The statement also underlines the "importance of the peaceful resolution of disputes, upholding freedom of navigation and overflight and other lawful uses of the sea, including the right of transit passage in straits used for international navigation."

Pak's Musadik Malik would attend SCO meet in India

ISLAMABAD, Nov 15 (PTI)

PAKISTAN on Saturday announced that Climate Change Minister Musadik Malik would participate in the SCO Civilisational Dialogue Forum hosted by India at the historic Purana Qila in Delhi later this month.

The development comes a day after Union Culture Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat said that he was "hopeful" that Pakistan will also attend the event to be held here from November 20-22. During an interaction with the press in New Delhi ahead of the event, the Union minister on Friday had announced that China, Kazakhstan, Iran, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are among 15 countries that have confirmed participation in the SCO Civilisational Dialogue Forum. India had announced on October 28 that invitations had been extended to all SCO members, including Pakistan, in keeping with established practice.

It was perhaps for the first time that New Delhi extended an invitation to a Pakistani minister to attend an event in India after last year's May 7-10 military hostilities following Operation Sindoor. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will attend the inaugural session of the SCO on November 20.

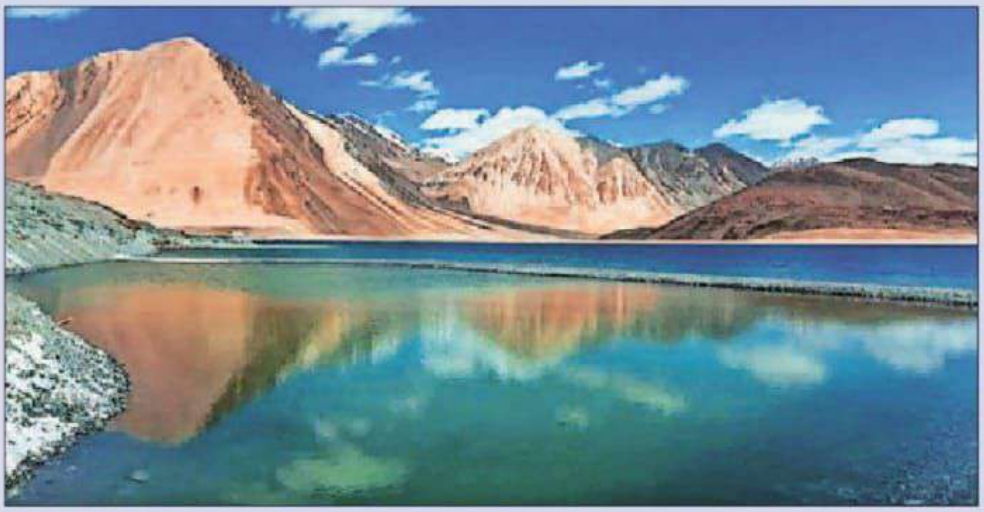
According to a statement by the Pakistan Foreign Office, the event would bring representatives from SCO member states to discuss issues related to civilisational dialogue and cultural understanding.

"The Government of Pakistan remains committed to promoting dialogue among civilisations and fostering people-to-people contacts within the SCO framework in a spirit of mutual respect," the statement said.

LG clears 97 new ponds under project Amrit Sarovar

LEH/JAMMU, Nov 15 (PTI)

LADAKH Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena has approved 97 additional water bodies under Project Amrit Sarovar, taking the total number of ponds slated for operationalisation across the Union Territory to 163 by January next year, an official said on Sunday.



As winter sets in across the high-altitude cold desert, the administration is turning the harsh season into an opportunity to accelerate water conservation efforts, strengthen climate resilience, ensure reliable irrigation and safeguard rural livelihoods, the official said. He said the administration has accelerated Project Amrit Sarovar, with the Lt Governor granting approval for the construction of 97 new water bodies under Project Amrit Sarovar in Ladakh. "This strategic initiative is designed to combat climate change, secure agricultural water supplies, and drive rural sustainability in mission mode, during the peak winter months," the official said. He said the Lt Governor has recently granted approval for the creation of 97 additional ponds across the Union Territory and directed the Public Health Engineering department and authorities to complete these works in mission mode by January 31, 2027.

"This rapid execution will result in a total of 163 ponds getting operationalised by January 2027. This will cover 163 out of 248 villages across Ladakh in just 10 months, with a collective storage capacity of nearly 550 million litres of water. "These 163 ponds will ensure that water scarcity does not disrupt the upcoming sowing season in March and irrigation water is available locally to the farmers," the official said. Building upon the successful operationalisation of 60 water bodies over the past seven months, he said work on six ongoing water bodies in Leh and Kargil is scheduled for completion by December 15 this year. Out of these 60 water bodies, 40 were inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on October 15. The development assumes greater significance in the wake of an acute water crisis in at least 50 to 60 villages in Ladakh, including several villages in Kargil, where people are forced to abandon their villages and migrate to other places due to the unavailability of water, the official said. Designed using advanced scientific methods tailored to Ladakh's fragile climatic conditions,

Project Amrit Sarovar goes beyond immediate irrigation needs. By turning peak winter challenges into an opportunity for proactive resource management, he said Ladakh is setting a historic benchmark in climate resilience and water security.

India should become developer, innovator in advanced tech: Rajnath

NEW DELHI, Nov 15 (PTI)

DEFENCE Minister Rajnath Singh on Sunday called for making India not merely a user of advanced technologies, but also a developer, innovator and global leader in critical domains, as he emphasised the need to strengthen the country's non-destructive testing ecosystem for better preparedness and self-reliance.

He virtually addressed the 36th Annual Conference on Non-Destructive Evaluation & Enabling Technologies and the 15th International Symposium on Non-Destructive Testing in Aerospace.

Singh stressed the importance of developing indigenous capabilities in advanced inspection technologies, promoting consistent quality assurance practices and ensuring the accuracy, reliability and integrity of testing results, particularly in strategic applications.

He asserted that there can be no compromise on the integrity of testing results in strategic applications.

"We must strengthen our indigenous capabilities in advanced inspection technologies, specialised sensors, evaluation equipment and associated software," the Defence Minister asserted.

"Developing domestic capabilities in these areas is essential for reducing technological dependencies and securing critical defence supply chains. We must promote consistent quality assurance practices across the entire defence industrial ecosystem," he said.

Public sector undertakings, private manufacturers, start-ups and MSMEs have an "important role to play" in this endeavour.

"We must ensure that inspection results are accurate, reliable and traceable, and are based on robust procedures and appropriate standards followed by assessment by qualified professionals," the Defence Minister said.

The three-day conference, organised by the Indian Society for Non-Destructive Testing in Hyderabad, Telangana, has brought together over 2,000 professionals, researchers, industry experts and students to deliberate on the latest advancements, emerging technologies and applications in non-destructive testing (NDT), the Defence Ministry said.



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh addresses the 'NDE 2026' conference via video conferencing, in New Delhi. (PIB via PTI)

Singh stressed that the NDT technologies enable examination of the integrity of materials, components and structures without causing any damage to them.

Elucidating the concept, he said that just as ultrasound and X-rays help examine the human body without surgical intervention, NDT techniques enable the detection of internal defects in critical components without dismantling or damaging them.

Singh underlined that as Indian defence systems become increasingly sophisticated, every critical material, component, assembly and manufacturing process must meet the highest standards of quality and reliability.

"Hidden defects can affect operational availability, increase maintenance requirements, reduce the service life of equipment and, in critical situations, jeopardise mission success. We need to move beyond a culture of merely identifying defects towards actively preventing them by embedding quality at every stage of the manufacturing process," he said.

Singh stressed that the progress of a nation depends not merely on the technologies it develops, but also on the quality, reliability and security of the systems it builds.

In defence applications, including missiles, aircraft, naval platforms and spacecraft, quality is not merely a manufacturing requirement but an essential element of operational reliability and national security, he said.

Emphasising the strategic significance of the sector, Singh said that for a country aspiring to achieve technological leadership, the importance of NDT cannot be overstated.

He asserted that India's pursuit of "Aatmanirbharta (self-reliance)" in defence is not merely an economic objective but also a strategic necessity.

Underscoring the importance of keeping pace with the rapidly changing global security environment, Singh said indigenous weapons, platforms and supporting systems "must deliver the highest levels of reliability and performance at all times".

He urged professionals associated with the NDT sector to continuously upgrade their capabilities and keep the spirit of innovation alive in sync with emerging technologies and evolving security requirements.

On the technological transformation underway in the field of non-destructive evaluation, he stressed that artificial intelligence, machine learning, robotics, advanced sensors, digital twins and predictive analytics are significantly expanding the possibilities of inspection and structural health monitoring.

These technologies, he said, can improve the speed and consistency of inspections, facilitate the analysis of complex data and identify patterns that may not be easily detectable through conventional methods.