



Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and the Defence Minister of Singapore Ng Eng Hen at a bilateral meeting at South Block, New Delhi on Wednesday.

## India, Singapore vow to deepen defence ties

**NEW DELHI, NOV 29 /-/-** India and Singapore today signed an agreement to deepen cooperation in the maritime security domain and called for ensuring freedom of navigation in critical sea lanes against the backdrop of China's increasing military manoeuvres in the Indo-Pacific region. The two countries also resolved to boost overall defence cooperation with a particular focus on combating terrorism during wide-ranging talks between Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and her Singaporean counterpart Ng Eng Hen. The pact on naval cooperation provides for increased engagement in the maritime security sphere, joint exercises,

temporary deployments from each other's naval facilities and logistics support. "India and Singapore remain strongly committed to tackle the transnational security threats," Sitharaman said at a joint media interaction with Ng, noting that both sides agreed to ramp up overall defence cooperation. The Singaporean defence minister called the talks "overwhelmingly successful and productive" and emphasised the need for concerted regional and global efforts to deal with terrorism and other challenges such as tackling chemical and biological weapons.

Referring to regional security scenario in the maritime domain, both ministers reaffirmed the importance of maintaining freedom of navigation and trade consistent with international law, a joint statement issued after the talks said. Appreciating India's leading role in the Indian Ocean Region, Ng agreed to India's proposal for continuous and institutionalised naval engagements in shared maritime space of the two countries, including establishing maritime exercises with like-minded regional and ASEAN partners. However, Ng, speaking at a think-tank yesterday, had expressed Singapore's reservation over the proposed quadrilateral coalition of India, the US, Japan and Australia. Both sides also signed

the revised Defence Cooperation Agreement (DCA) to further strengthen the longstanding defence relationship between the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) and the Indian armed forces. The joint statement said both ministers look forward to the commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the Singapore-India maritime bilateral exercise next year. They welcomed the renewal of agreement between the air forces of the two countries earlier this year and look forward to the successful renewal of a similar pact between their armies, the statement said. The two ministers also discussed Singapore's proposal to expand the Code of Un-

## Time for dialogue between India and Pak to find solution to Kashmir problem: Farooq

**SRINAGAR, NOV 29 /-/-** National Conference president Farooq Abdullah today said time had come for India as the bigger country to find ways of talking with Pakistan and finding a solution to the Jammu and Kashmir problem. War has not and cannot provide a solution to the problems as confrontation only leads to increase in tragedies, the former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister said. "... if you have to fight terrorism, which Prime Minister (Narendra Modi) has said is a world over thing, then time has come for the government of India, which is the bigger country than Pakistan, to find ways and means of talking with Pakistan and finding a way forward," Abdullah told reporters at the National Conference headquarters here.

The time had come, he added, for finding a final solution acceptable to the people of Pakistan, India and Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. The Lok Sabha member from Srinagar hit out at those who criticised him for his statements on Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). Abdullah in recent comments has dared the centre to hoist the national flag at Lal Chowk in the heart of Srinagar city before talking about unfurling it in PoK. He has also claimed that PoK cannot become a part of India. "I am not saying anything which is irrational. For 70 years, PoK has been part of Pakistan and this (J&K) has been part of India. "Four wars have been fought and in those four wars, nothing has happened. They hold that territory and we hold this territory," Abdullah said.

Abdullah said his statements were based on the "tragedy" of the people of Jammu and Kashmir on either side of the Line of Control face due to hostilities along the border. "I see the tragedy my people have to face, not only in the Valley but in rest of the areas. Look at our borders, Shells come. Our women, our children, our people die... What are we trying to achieve?" he asked.

Discussing allegations that Kashmiri prisoners were thrashed inside Tihar Jail, Abdullah said Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti should visit prisoners from the state lodged in jails outside the state as her government had sent them there. "If she is concerned about their plight, she should go there. If she finds that they are facing harassment in those jails, she should bring these prisoners back to the state's jails," he said.

Abdullah expressed the hope that the visit of the Centre's special representative Dineshwar Sharma to the state would result in people telling him about their problems. He also expressed the hope that Sharma understands the need for finding a solution. Responding to former Pakistan president Pervez Musharraf calling himself the biggest supporter of the Lashkar-e-Taiba, Abdullah said the group was a creation of Pakistan.

"Due to it (L&T), Pakistan is getting destroyed. They had dug a grave for others but they are themselves falling into it," he said. (PTI)

## Singapore expresses reservation over proposed quadrilateral coalition

**NEW DELHI, NOV 29 /-/-** Singapore has expressed its reservation over the proposed quadrilateral coalition of India, the US, Japan and Australia, with the country's defence minister saying it is not useful to cast one bloc against another. In an address at a think tank here, Singapore's defence minister Ng Eng Hen pitched for an "inclusive regional security architecture" to ensure peace and stability in the region. He said Singapore was open to multilateral exercises in the Indian Ocean region. Delving into regional security issues, he sounded critical of the proposed quadrilateral coalition, saying it is not useful to cast one bloc against another.

He said "polarising defence and trade" would not be helpful for the region and called for crafting a "stable system" wherein all small and large states have ways and means to resolve disputes through peaceful means. He also called India a "regional power" in the Indo-Pacific region and said the country was a "natural partner" of all countries in Southeast Asia. "We are trying to craft a system under which we can ensure peace and progress for everyone," Ng said.

In an apparent reference to China's growing assertiveness in the disputed South China Sea, he said freedom of navigation and over flight must be respected. Ng's remarks yesterday came a day before his talks with Indian counterpart Nirmala Sitharaman. Widening the security cooperation under the proposed quadrilateral coalition, officials of India, the US, Japan and Australia had held extensive talks on the sidelines of the ASKAM summit in Manila earlier this month, for pursuing common interests in the strategically important Indo-Pacific region where China has been aggressively expanding its military presence.

Singapore is a key member-country of the 10-nation ASEAN grouping with which India has been intensifying its defence and security ties. The move to set up the quadrilateral comes in the backdrop of growing Chinese assertiveness in the South China Sea. The US has been favouring a larger role for India in the strategically important Indo-Pacific region. Ng, in his address, also complimented India's Act East policy, saying it is making an impact. He paid rich tributes to Jawaharlal Nehru, saying his country was inspired by the first prime minister of India. (PTI)



Japan Ambassador to India Kenji Hiramatsu meeting Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan in Thiruvananthapuram on Wednesday.

## Three lakh migratory birds throng Kashmir Valley

**SRINAGAR, NOV 29 /-/-** The gloomy winter landscape of the Kashmir Valley has come alive with a myriad of colours with the arrival of three lakh winged visitors from across Central Asia and Europe after arduous efforts by the Wildlife Department to restore their natural habitat. Tufted Duck, Gadwall, Brambling Duck, Garganey, Greylag Goose, Mallard, Common Merganser, Northern Pintail, Common Pochard, Ferruginous Pochard, Red-Crested Pochard, Ruddy Shelduck, Northern Shoveler, Common Teal, and Eurasian Wigeon are some of the most sighted

(Wetlands) Roanuff Zargar said. More birds are likely to arrive in the next 45 days as the temperature is expected to drop in some of the places where these birds come from.

The birds - which feed on insects, worms and fish in these water bodies - present a beautiful picture, changing the colour of the valley landscape. The Wildlife department took a series of steps to restore the natural habitat of these birds where they were threatened by encroachments, unscientific waste disposal and noise pollution interfering with the ecosystem of the wetlands. "We have completed works at

around the wetlands, however, continues to be a irritant as it is putting off the visiting birds. "Noise of all kinds causes disturbance to the birds. This can lead to the birds finding alternate places to spend the winters in," Zargar said. To tackle the more obvious threat of poaching, the department has set up teams to maintain vigil around the wetlands of Kashmir. "We have so far recovered four guns from Wullara area. We have also set up teams to keep an eye on any poaching attempts not only within the wetlands but even in the areas surrounding them," Zargar added.

## Maharashtra CM, political parties hail Kopardi gangrape verdict

**MUMBAI, NOV 29 /-/-** Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis and other political leaders today hailed the court verdict in the case of gangrape and killing of a 15-year-old girl in Ahmednagar in which the three accused were awarded death sentence. A sessions court today awarded death sentence to Jitendra Babulal Shinde (25), Santoshi Gorakh Bhawal (30) and Nitin Gopinath Bhalume (23) for brutally raping and killing a 15-year-old girl in Kopardi village in 2016. The incident had triggered protests across the state. "Kopardi was an extremely unfortunate incident which resulted in massive riotous crimes in the state," Fadnis told reporters here.

The chief minister said the investigating agencies conducted a swift inquiry and arrested the accused immediately. Lauding special public prosecutor Ujjwal Nikam and the police officials involved in the case, he said exceptionally good work was done and the trial was completed in a record time. He claimed the lawyers of the accused tried everything possible to prolong the case, but it failed miserably. Claiming that the court even fined the lawyers of the accused twice for delaying the trial, he said the perpetrators of the heinous crime were finally awarded capital punishment. After the judgement, the victim's soul will find peace, the chief minister said, adding that people's faith in the judicial system would increase. Senior Congress leader Ashok Chavan also welcomed the decision of the fast track court. He claimed that the case could be fast tracked as the previous Congress-NCP government had made suitable changes in law. "It is the government's responsibility to ensure that higher courts uphold the death punishment of the accused," he said, adding that the government should fast track other cases of atrocities against women.

NCP leader Dhanraj Munde said complete justice would be meted out only when higher courts uphold the judgement and the accused would be hanged. He said this judgement would serve as a lesson to criminals and instill faith in law and order of judiciary. Hailing the court's judgement, Shiv Sena spokesperson Neelam Ghorse said cases involving crime against women should be handled in a sensitive manner by the police so that victims and their families do not undergo mental harassment. She demanded that "gram rakshak dal" be formed in all rural areas to help investigate instances of such brutalities. (PTI)

## 4 American satellites on board India's PSLV-C40

**HYDERABAD, NOV 29 /-/-** Planet Labs Inc, a US-based integrated aerospace and data analytics company today said four of its satellites will be launched aboard India's PSLV-C40 mission, scheduled to fly on January 15 next. The primary payload for this mission is Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) Cartosat-2 Series satellite, and Planet's four satellites will ride as secondary payloads. In February this year, Planet's 88 Dove satellites travelled on the PSLV-C37 as part of ISRO's record-breaking launch of 104 satellites. The four Dove satellites on the upcoming launch are tech demos responsible for testing improvements to several of the satellite subsystems, including camera technology, thermal control, and altitude determination & control system. Planet said in a statement.

The company, founded in 2010, said it launches tech demo satellites several times a year to ensure they are using the latest and most advanced technology. These advancements are then incorporated into future operational fleet. The company operates the best earth imaging satellites, collecting a massive amount of information about the planet. "We've been very pleased with our working relationship with Antrix Corporation Limited (Antrix), the commercial arm of ISRO. When Planet proposed to send a record-breaking 88 satellites to orbit on a single launch, they accepted the challenge without hesitation, and they delivered," said Karthik Govindhasamy, chief technology officer and executive vice president of engineering at Planet. "We have a rich history with Planet and we are proud to be a reliable launch partner that they can count on for consistent and timely launches," Rakesh S, chairman and managing director, Antrix, was quoted as saying in the statement. "The Planet's appetite for launch capacity is impressive and we're excited that the PSLV continues to meet their needs," he said. (PTI)

## Only 8 of 100 malaria cases detected in India: WHO

**NEW DELHI, NOV 29 /-/-** Only eight per cent of malaria cases were diagnosed last year in India, which accounted for 26 per cent of the 216 million new cases globally, a World Health Organization (WHO) report has said. India was the third on the list of 19 countries which accounted for 80 per cent of all malaria cases in the world in 2016, the WHO's World Malaria Report 2017 said. The report stated that the surveillance mechanism in India was weak as it detected a mere 8 per cent of malaria cases. Countries with the most malaria surveillance systems include India and Nigeria, two major contributors to the global burden of malaria, with 6 per cent and 18 per cent of cases, respectively, detected by the surveillance system," the report stated.

## Killing militants won't wipe out militancy in JK: Mehbooba

**KATHUA (JK), NOV 29 /-/-** Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti today said militancy cannot be wiped out by killing militants alone, adding that a more "humane approach" was needed to tackle the problem. She said drug menace and a growing graph of violence against women were the biggest challenges in the Valley after militancy. "You have to eliminate militancy in Kashmir. But militancy cannot be wiped out by killing militants alone," the PDP leader said while addressing the attestation-cum-passing out parade of recruits at the Police Training School here. Nearly 200 militants, the highest number in years, were killed by security forces in Kashmir this year. "We need to understand the reason and the real problem behind militancy," Mehbooba said.

Advocating a "soft" approach for dealing with extremism in the state, the chief minister referred to the government's recent decision to revoke cases against first-time stone-pelters in the Valley. "The police has to engage in parenting and counselling of these children. I had invited pellet victims to my home recently. I was surprised to know that most of them were minors (14, 15 or 16 years of age)," she said. Mehbooba also lauded the state police force for demonstrating discipline and restraint in the face of serious provocations. She said the job of the police was very sensitive in Jammu and Kashmir, where the challenges were much more than the usual policing in other parts of the country.

Reacting to reports of roughing up of Kashmiri prisoners in Delhi's Tihar Jail, the chief minister said, "The shameful incident not only mangled the name of the policemen and their state, but the entire police force. "In comparison, our (Jammu and Kashmir) police is doing a wonderful job despite being faced with difficult situations. They are dealing with stone-pelting and bullets (militancy) with great determination, discipline and restraint which is praiseworthy. There is no match for our police force," she said.

Asking the police recruits to have a humane approach in dealing with public, Mehbooba said the real test for them would be outside the training school. "I have heard about your training and skills... It is not just about firing SLR and AK-47, but how you behave when you face a 9-year-old and an 80-year-old. The real test awaits you outside," she said. Mehbooba added that the drug de-addiction centres run by the police in Srinagar were doing a wonderful job. "I salute district police chiefs, who despite facing financial constraints, are helping drug addicts to overcome the problem. I would like the officers at district level to supervise such de-addiction centres." The chief minister expressed concern over the growing graph of crime against women. They are dealing with the fact that the victims were not coming forward with their complaints.

## MHA seeks answers from Tihar over reports of assault on Kashmiri prisoners

**NEW DELHI, NOV 29 /-/-** The Union Home Ministry today sought a report from the Director General of the Tihar jail in the wake of media reports that a scuffle involving Kashmiri prisoners took place at the prison, leading to injuries. However, official sources said, as per the preliminary information, Syed Shahid Yusuf, son of Hizbul Mujahideen chief Syed Salauddin, who is also lodged in Tihar jail in connection with terror funding cases, was not assaulted. The ministry has asked the Director General of the Tihar jail to submit a report as early as possible detailing the incident and the action taken so far.

The home ministry has also requested Delhi Lieutenant Governor Anil Bajaj to direct the appropriate authority to review the security arrangements in the high security prison and take necessary measures where ever needed, the sources said. They said, as per the preliminary information, three prisoners were found to be having unauthorised materials and when the jail officials tried to remove them, the inmates resisted and had to be overpowered.