

Counter terrorism focus of China-Nepal military drills

BEIJING, SEP 30—/ The Chinese military said on Thursday that the focus of its 12-day military drill with the Nepal Army was to jointly combat international terrorism. The second edition of the Nepal-China joint military exercise began on September 17 in the Chinese city of Chengdu in southwest Sichuan province and ended on Friday.

"The main purpose of this exercise is to jointly fight against international terrorism and the main subject is metropolitan counter terrorism," Chinese military spokesman Gen Ren Guoqiang said. Ren said that the drill was within the planned defence exchanges between the two countries. "It is within the planned exchange between Nepal and Chinese militaries, Ren said, adding that the exercise included building a main command post and close search and rescue operations.

He declined to respond a question from the Chinese official media citing reports that China was behind Nepal's decision to withdraw from the military exercises of the BIMSTEC countries which was held for the first time in India recently. "The question should be referred to Nepal," he said. The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is a regional grouping comprising Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Bhutan and Nepal.

The defence forces from Nepal and China have increased their engagement of late. The first such exercise was held in April last year. Nepal has been conducting battalion-level exercises named 'Surya Kiran' with the Indian Army for the last 13 years, engaging some 300 personnel from both the sides. PTI

Sikkim Cabinet approves Tibetan rehab policy, refugees to get more benefits

EOI CORRESPONDENT

GANGTOK, SEP 30—/ With the Sikkim Cabinet on Saturday approving the Tibetan Rehabilitation Policy of 2014, Tibetan refugees in Sikkim would now be entitled to more benefits in terms of land and access to trade and commerce.

The policy of 2014 is a guideline to different state governments to sign a lease rehabilitation pattern for Tibetan refugees. It was formulated after the Union Home Ministry found in consultation with Tibetan representatives that the level of assistance extended to Tibetan refugees was not uniform. The Centre framed the Tibetan Rehabilitation Policy, 2014, to provide a uniform guideline demarcating the facilities to be extended to Tibetan refugees living within the jurisdiction of each State Government.

Under the policy, all state governments must sign a lease document for land occupied by these refugees, not with individuals but with the Dharamsala-based Central Tibetan Relief Committee. Land under the occupation of Tibetan refugees should not be disturbed. State governments were also advised to provide infrastructural facilities and basic amenities like road, electrification and drinking water



A view of Buddha park at Ravanga (File Photo)

schemes in and around Tibetan settlements.

State governments were advised to extend benefits of government schemes of the states concerned as well as Central schemes like 100 days' guaranteed work, the public distribution system and Indira Awas Yojana. State governments were advised to allow Tibetans to undertake economic activities and issue trade licences and permission on the basis of their Registration Certificates.

Refugees may be given trade licences on the basis of their

Registration Certificates so that they can participate in economic activities. They can also seek employment in private and non-government sectors and would be eligible for driving licences and business permits. State Governments were also advised to give permission to Tibetan Refugees to run Tibetan bazars to trade in Tibetan artifacts, handlooms and handicrafts. Qualified professionals from amongst Tibetan refugees were advised to be permitted to take jobs in private and non-government sectors in any field for

which they were qualified. State governments were advised to undertake upgrading of skill and training programmes for Tibetan refugees. In Sikkim, there are two Tibetan settlements; one is in Ravanga which is listed as an agriculture-based settlement. The other is in Gangtok which is listed as a cluster settlement. The total number of Tibetan refugees in Sikkim is estimated to be about 5,000, with the settlement in Ravanga accommodating over 1,000 refugees.

Last year, the Arunachal Pradesh Cabinet had adopted the Tibetan Rehabilitation Policy of 2014, extending facilities to the refugees under the Central guideline, Arunachal being another state where many Tibetan refugees had settled down since 1959. But, some organizations in Arunachal had protested against the extension of additional benefits to Tibetan refugees in the State, fearing that this would affect the interests of indigenous people of Arunachal. In July this year, the Students United Movement of All Arunachal served quit notices on Tibetan refugees in Bomdila, prompting the Deputy Commissioner of West Kameng district to promulgate prohibitory orders under section 144 CrPc. This was an exception, however, as Tibetan refugees have generally lived in peace and harmony with indigenous communities in different parts of the country.

Sikkim launches transparent pension disbursement platform

EOI CORRESPONDENT

GANGTOK, SEP 30—/ Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Chamling on Saturday launched a platform for the disbursement of Pensions under National Social Assistance Program (NSAP) at a function held at Mintogang in Gangtok on Saturday evening. With this launching, Sikkim has become a pioneer state to introduce a transparent system of direct benefit transfer through which beneficiaries will directly receive pension amounts in their bank account in real time. The Aadhar-linked platform has been created by National Informatics Centre in collaboration with the Union Ministry of Rural Development.

Four schemes would be covered under this online



Pawan Chamling launching the system -- EOI Photo

payment platform: Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme, Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme, Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme and National Family Benefit Scheme.

Chief Economic Advisor Rural Development Ministry Sudhakar Shukla said that Sikkim had been a pioneer state and one of the first to achieve 97 per cent of Aadhar seeding for Direct Benefit Transfer Schemes. It had shown the way to the rest of the States, he added. The Unmarried Women Pension Scheme initiated by the Sikkim Government was the first of its kind in the country.

Tourist arrival to Sikkim likely to cross two million in '18: Gyatso

SILJALPRADHAN
GANGTOK, SEP 30—/ The foothall of tourists to Sikkim is likely to cross the two million mark in 2018, Sikkim Tourism Minister Ugen T. Gyatso said on Saturday while inaugurating two wayside tourism facilities in the State. With events like A. R.

Rahman concert and the Red Panda Winter Festival and visits by Bollywood stars Priyanka Chopra and Sanjay Dutt, there would be ever-growing events of tourist attraction in the coming months in Sikkim. Among the two tourism facilities that Gyatso inaugurated during the day

were a cafeteria at Bakhthang waterfalls near Gangtok and Oasis Cafe at Rangpo along the National Highway 10. The maxim seemed to be that wayside amenities were a great way to promote tourism. Principal Engineer Tourism Department T. T. Bhutia said the cost of the Bakhthang



café was around Rs 1.3 crore and that of the Oasis (Pix:Shekhar Khawas)

Khadi India in Leh to help in countering Chinese goods

NEW DELHI, SEP 30—/ Leh, a bustling tourist town in Jammu and Kashmir, has got a helping hand from the Khadi India to counter the dominance of Chinese goods in its market. A top official of the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) said the Khadi India has been in discussion with the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC) to help artisans and craftsmen in Leh, the erstwhile Capital of Himalayan Kingdom of Ladakh, to overcome the infiltration of Chinese goods.

KVIC chairman Vinai Kumar Saxena said the Khadi



A view of Leh market (File Photo)

India was committed to cooperate with the LAHDC so that traditional art and craft of Leh regains its lost glory. He said the KVIC was exploring all means to reach to the remotest corner of the country and during a four-day tour to Jammu and Kashmir he visited Leh and held discussion with Dorjey Mutup, the Chief Executive Councillor of LAHDC on September 27 for starting Khadi developmental activities at the outmost hill hamlets there.

A KVIC statement said a first-ever district-level Khadi exhibition was also inaugurated to establish the Gandhian tool of self-reliance in the hilly land of Buddha. "Had long and fruitful discussion with Chief Executive of the LAHDC Dorjey Mutup and his council colleagues at Leh for starting Khadi developmental activities," Saxena said.

He said the KVIC has initially decided to give 25 charkhas and five looms to one village of the Leh region, 20 electric potter wheels to other one and 500 bee-boxes to the third village in a month's time - after imparting proper training to the beneficiaries.

"While through spinning activities the villagers will start earning from Rs 150 to Rs 200 per day, the electric potter wheel will enhance per day income of a potter from Rs 100 to at least Rs 300. Similarly, from 10 bee boxes to one person, he will start earning a minimum of Rs 50,000 per year" the statement quoted the Chairman as saying.

KVIC is also reaching to other villages of Jammu and Kashmir which has been affected by militancy and provide help to the artisans of Kashmir's Kraals (potters), by distributing one electric potter wheel, one set of pong mill, one set of Blunger and one set of gas-fired kiln to each group of 10 potters in altogether 160 beneficiaries in Pamore district. PTI

IN BRIEF

Armed forces to give befitting reply to proxywar: Modi

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi asserted on Sunday that the armed forces would give a befitting reply to any attempt to destroy the atmosphere of peace in the country. Recalling the 2016 surgical strikes, he said Indian troops gave a befitting reply to the "audacity of a proxy war" under the "garb of terrorism." PTI

American tourist rescued in U'khand

GOPESHWAR: An American tourist who was stranded for the past two days in Alkapuri glacier in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district was evacuated by paramilitary soldiers on Saturday. Jeffrey Kim, 55, was spotted by a group of Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) soldiers who were out on a training schedule near Alkapuri bank, the point where the Alaknanda river originates. PTI

SAARC has suffered due to 'one nation': V K Singh

NEW DELHI, SEP 30—/ Flaging the issue of cross-border terrorism from Pakistan, India on Friday said the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) has "suffered" because of "one nation" that continues to give problems. Minister of State for External Affairs V K Singh, during his address at the annual session of the PHD Chamber of Commerce here, also asserted that a "greater engagement" with China is happening, as one cannot stay in a "state of perpetual enmity or seeming enmity."

"The SAARC has suffered because of one nation, and that nation continues to give problems. You cannot indulge in terror against countries with whom you want to take the

grouping forward," he said in a veiled reference to Pakistan. "Therefore, the SAARC has suffered despite the secretariat being there, and all the mechanisms existing. Because of this one nation, with whom a couple of other nations cannot get together. Therefore, it will take a little time to even out, to look at it," Singh said.

The SAARC is the regional intergovernmental organisation and geopolitical union of nations in South Asia. Its member states include Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, the Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

On Thursday, in a veiled attack on Pakistan, External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj in New York told a meeting of

the SAARC foreign ministers that the scourge of terrorism remains the single largest threat to peace and stability in the South Asian region and it is necessary to eliminate the ecosystem of its support.

India had boycotted the 2016 SAARC summit citing Islamabad's unrelenting support to terrorist activities in India and after Pakistan-based terrorists attacked an Indian Army base in Uri in Jammu and Kashmir. Bhutan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan had also joined India in boycotting the summit. Union minister Singh made his address during a session on 'India's strategic approach towards neighbouring countries: challenges and way forward.' He said, BIMSTEC, on the other hand is "thriving" and getting



better, getting more attention, because there is no such problem there. The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is an international organisation of seven

nations of South Asia and South East Asia. Its member states are - Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Nepal and Bhutan.

On relationship with China, he said, India has "consciously taken a decision that China needs to be engaged, you cannot stay in a state of perpetual enmity, or seeming enmity. Therefore, a greater engagement has taken place in manners that were not thought of earlier. So, who would have thought of the unofficial summit at Wuhan, where the Chinese President and Prime Minister Narendra Modi sat together without any agenda, taking things forward from there," he said. The minister said India's economic engagement with China has "increased" and similarly,

China's engagement with India has increased. "And, that is the way forward, where you can have people-to-people contacts, better understanding, and can have economics dictating how relations will pan out in the future," he said.

On the land boundary with China, Singh said, its "complex issue" for many reasons. "There is history to it, ego's to it, many things to it. That needs to be settled when the atmosphere can be made conducive, and that is what is being attempted with the greater engagement with China," he said.

The minister earlier in his speech also highlighted the nature of ties India now enjoys with other neighbours, including Nepal, Bhutan and Myanmar. Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. With

Bhutan India has "excellent relationships", strategic and otherwise, he said.

"Relationships with Myanmar were slightly wavering at a particular period of time where we took a particular line, propagated by people who did not know Myanmar... Today, it firmly believes its best friend is India," Singh said. On ASEAN ties, he said, "We are firmly plugged into various calculations for ASEAN. We have a much deeper understanding of them and they have a much deeper understanding of us. Ten heads of states from ASEAN attended the Republic Day celebrations in India." "Our resolve to break the barriers and reach out to ASEAN is much more feasible earlier," he said.