

India seeks MH 60 Romeo Seahawk helicopters from US

WASHINGTON, NOV 18/-/ India has sought from the US 24 multi-role MH-60 'Romeo' anti-submarine helicopters for its Navy at an estimated cost of USD 2 billion, defence industry sources said Friday. India has been in need of these formidable anti-submarine hunter helicopters for more than a decade now. The deal is expected to be finalised in a few months, informants told PTI, days after US Vice President Mike Pence held a successful meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Singapore on the sidelines of a regional summit. India has sent a letter of request to the US for an "urgent requirement" of 24 multi-role helicopters MH 60 Romeo Seahawk, sources said.

In recent months, there has been acceleration in defence ties between the two countries, with the Trump administration opening up America's high-tech military hardware for India's defence needs. Bilateral relationship was on top of the agenda of the Modi-Pence meeting in Singapore on Wednesday.

The meeting is likely to be followed by a summit-level bilateral between Prime Minister Modi and US President Donald Trump in Argentina, on the sidelines of the G-20 meeting on November 30 and December 1. Neither side has confirmed the meeting yet.

According to sources, the MH-60 Romeo deal is expected to have an offset requirement. Sources indicated that India plans to follow up this urgent requirement with a long-term plan to manufacture 120 of these helicopters in India.

Currently deployed with the US Navy as the primary anti-submarine warfare anti-submarine weapon system in open ocean and littoral zones, Lockheed Martin's MH-60R Seahawk helicopter is considered the world's most advanced maritime helicopter.

According to industry experts, it is the most capable naval helicopter available today designed to operate from frigates, destroyers, cruisers and aircraft carriers. MH-60 Romeo Seahawks would add lethal capabilities of the Indian Navy, which experts say is the need of the hour given the aggressive behaviour of China in the Indian Ocean region.

Locked over the years has emerged as a major American supplier of state-of-the-art defence military equipment.

Pradesh Congress delegation meets Bengal governor in Darjeeling, lambasts Trinamool for violence in Chopra

EOI CORRESPONDENT

DARJEELING, NOV 18/-/ Heaping allegation of Trinamool Congress atrocities, on Sunday a Congress delegation met West Bengal Governor Kesharinarath Tripathi in Darjeeling and submitted a deputation, seeking the latter's intervention to ensure law and order and peace are upheld in Chopra in North Dinajpur district which is witnessing a political power struggle.

Panchayat election in Chopra was marred by allegations of Trinamool Congress not allowing the opposition candidates to file their nomination paper.

Post the election, the region has been engulfed in a power struggle with Trinamool and opposition party activists clashing with one another. Congress has put the blame on the murder of two of its cadres - Md Samirul and Md Samiruddin - on the Trinamool.

Samirul of Chopramari was killed on May 24 and Samiruddin of Nandugaita was murdered on November 4, earlier this month. Congress has put the blame on the Trinamool for the two murders.

West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee leaders Deepa Dasmunshi and Shankar Malakar on Sunday arrived in Darjeeling accompanied by the family if the victims and met the West Bengal Governor at Raj Bhawan. After



West Bengal Pradesh Congress leaders speaking to newsmen in Darjeeling - Pranab Chhetri

meeting the Governor, Dasmunshi said: "We have already approached the court. The police initially did not record our FIR but were compelled due to public pressure. The accused though continue to roam about freely in the area. Today we met the Governor to get justice for the victims' families and seek his intervention to ensure peace and rule of the land is upheld in Chopra."

The Congress alleged Trinamool goons with tacit support

of the police were continuing to issue threat which had resulted in people fleeing their homes out of fear. "The police are working like Trinamool cadres. The Trinamool and its government are killing democracy in Chopra. Innocent people are being implicated in false cases. Most of the men-folk have been forced to flee their homes while the women too are threatened of consequences," Dasmunshi said.

Leader of the Opposition Abdul Mannan who was also

present during the day said the Trinamool with the help of the police were trying to quash people's voice of dissent fearing back-lash. "People of Chopra have come together to raise their voice against the Trinamool police atrocities. That's why Trinamool goons continue to intimidate and threaten the people," he said.

Malakar alleged chief minister Mamata Banerjee of allowing the atrocities to take place in Chopra for her political benefits. "Two of our cadres have been murdered by her party-men and 14 are injured while more than hundred people have been implicated in false cases. It seems that Didi's government's job is to end the opposition and the Congress party to ensure her autocratic rule is not affected. We have started a slogan in Chopra: 'TMC

hatao, Congress bachao (throw out the Trinamool and save the Congress)'. On Saturday, more than 15,000 people gathered for our public meeting which shows that the public is against the Trinamool," he said.

In the question of the impending panchayat election in the hills of Darjeeling and talks of an understanding with the Trinamool at national level, Malakar said: "For the tie-up with the Trinamool it is for our national leaders to decide. We will continue to work freely in the state in our own way. As for the panchayat election in the hills, is it necessary to have one in Didi's Switzerland?"

Pawan Chamling commissions 110 MW Chuzachen hydel project



Pawan Chamling inaugurating the power project - Shekhar Khawas

SUJAL PRADHAN

GANGTOK, NOV 18/-/ In a major boost to the power sector in Sikkim, Chief Minister Pawan Chamling on Sunday commissioned the 110 MW Chuzachen hydroelectric power project (HEPP) developed by Gati Infrastructures. A sum of Rs 1,200 crore has been invested in the project.

At present, Sikkim stands second in hydro electric projects in terms of numbers and total megawatts produce after Himachal Pradesh. "The Sikkim Government has

set a target of 3300 MW capacity and 3000 MW has been achieved. If Sikkim is able to achieve 3300 MW capacity then the State will be the number one in terms of hydel capacity," Chamling said after inaugurating the project.

The Chief Minister also said that Sikkim had been able to achieve the feat because of investment friendly policies which the State had opted. All the projects would be handed over to the State after 25 years after commissioning.

Pawan Chamling to inaugurate Pabyuk Monastery on Nov 27



Duchi Committee monks in a news conference - EOI Photo

SUJAL PRADHAN

GANGTOK, NOV 18/-/ The Duchi Committee of Pabyuk on Saturday organized a meeting with the people of Shyari Constituency. The meeting was mainly called to thank Chief Minister Pawan Chamling for accepting the invitation to inaugurate Pabyuk Gonpa (Monastery).

The inauguration is slated for

November 27. The Chief Minister has given his consent to attend the event as the chief guest.

During the meeting it was informed that all the functions till inauguration would be conducted by the Duchi Committee, which is a 10-member body composed of monks.

The meeting also saw the thorough discussion on how to organize the function nicely and the organizing committee sought the opinions of people of the constituency

IN BRIEF

12 killed as bus rolls down gorge

UTTARAKASHI: At least 12 people were killed and 13 injured when the bus in which they were travelling fell into 130-metre-deep gorge in Uttarakashi district on Sunday, an official said. The private-run bus was on its way to Vikas Nagar from Janikichatti in the district when it fell into the gorgenear Damta. District Magistrate Ashish Chauhan said,

It's now or never for us in Madhya Pradesh: Scindia

SHIVPURI: As his party makes an all-out effort to wrest control of Madhya Pradesh from the BJP, senior Congress leader Jyotiraditya Scindia feels it is "now or never" for the grand-old party that has remained out of power in the state for 15 straight years. PTI

Harka Bahadur Chhetri raises Gorkhaland demand in Delhi

NEW DELHI, NOV 18/-/ Creation of small states is the only way to solve political, social and economic disparities, a body of organizations spearheading separate state movements has claimed. The National Federation of New States (NFNS), a conglomerate eight separate state movement bodies, has been demanding regions of Vidarbha in Maharashtra, Bodoland and Karbi in Assam, Gorkhaland in West Bengal, Kukiland in Manipur, Tripaland in Tripura, Poorvanchal in Uttar Pradesh and Bundelkhand in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh be given statehood.

Political regimes have been neglecting demands for creation of separate states and only before an election, political parties try to pacify people demanding separate statehood with assurances to fulfil their demand, NFNS general secretary Munish Tamang alleged.

To put more pressure on the Centre to create states on the basis of language, ethnicity and economy, the organization in a meeting on Wednesday in Delhi has also decided to launch an movement.

"The fulfilment of the longstanding demand of creation of small states is the only way to ameliorate the prevalent political, social and economic disparity of regions demanding separate statehood," Tamang said.

During the meeting leaders of separate state movements, also chalked out new strategies to intensify the agitation for creation of new states.

The NFNS called upon all regional and national political parties to engage with the idea of creation of new states in the country keeping in mind the Constitution of India.

Harka Bahadur Chhetri, one of the pioneers of the Gorkhaland movement, strongly opposed the manner in which the political dispensation both in New Delhi and West Bengal has ignored the demands of a separate state of Gorkhaland. He asked the Gorkha people to come together and fight for their demands. "Self-representational aspirations being the foundation and corner stone of democracy and as a true democratic country, the government must find ways to accommodate the aspirations of the people to represent themselves administratively, socially and politically," Chhetri said.

SKM smells plot against opposition supporters

SUJAL PRADHAN

GANGTOK, NOV 18/-/ Opposition Sikkim Krantikari Morcha party has strongly condemned the act of slapping an extortion case on a member of the party and called it a scripted move of the Sikkim Democratic Front before the 2019 poll.

SKM spokesperson Jacob Khaling said on Saturday: "As a way whole story unfolds, first they arrested our youth then smartly shared in their party's Facebook pages that they have done so and so and disseminated



SKM leaders in a news conference - Shekhar Khawas

that to every platform in the social media. This entire incident clearly suggests that that the SDF is afraid of SKM party and SKM is rising day by day," added Khaling. "Since SDF has failed to buy our honest supporter they knitted a conspiracy to trap our youth by calling him to their place and make a fake case," Khaling said.

UN committee condemns rights violations against Rohingya

UNITED NATIONS, NOV 18/-/ A key UN committee overwhelmingly approved a resolution on Friday strongly condemning the continuing "gross human rights violations and abuses" against Rohingya Muslims who are treated as outsiders in Myanmar and were victims of a brutal campaign by the country's military. The General Assembly's human rights committee approved the resolution by a vote of 142-10, with 26 abstentions. It is virtually certain to be formally adopted by the 193-member world body in December.

Among those voting against the resolution were Myanmar neighbours China, Cambodia and Laos along with Russia, Bangladesh, which hosts 1.1

million Rohingya refugees, voted in favour. The resolution expresses deep concern that violence by Myanmar's military against the Rohingya has forced over 725,000 people to flee to Bangladesh since August 2017. It urgently calls on Myanmar's government to end discrimination and provide a path to citizenship for the embattled minority.

Buddhist-majority Myanmar has long considered the Rohingya to be 'Bengalis' from Bangladesh even though their families have lived in the country for generations. Nearly all have been denied citizenship since 1982, effectively rendering them stateless, and they are also denied freedom of movement and other basic

rights. The latest crisis began with attacks by an underground Rohingya insurgent group on Myanmar security personnel in August 2017 in northern Rakhine State. Myanmar's military responded with a brutal campaign and is accused of mass rape, killings and the burning of thousands of homes.

The resolution, sponsored by the 57-nation Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, the European Union and Canada, reiterates "deep distress" at reports that unarmed Rohingya are still being subjected to excessive use of force and rights violations by Myanmar's military and security forces, including killings and rapes. The resolution expresses "grave concern" at the findings



of the UN fact-finding mission on Myanmar, which concluded that some top Myanmar military leaders should be prosecuted for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide against the Rohingyas. It strongly condemns all rights abuses set out in the commission's report and calls for "a full and independent investigation" of human rights abuses against the Rohingya and other minorities. Turkish Ambassador Feridun Siniroglu, speaking

on behalf of the OIC, called the commission's findings "deplorable." He said: "People have been trapped in a vicious cycle of violence and forced displacement" for years in Myanmar and the events of August 2017 against the Rohingyas are "only the latest episode of this cycle."

"Without a comprehensive strategy, reaching an enduring solution to this crisis is impossible," Siniroglu said. He said the OIC believes the only solution is the voluntary return of the Rohingyas to their homes with their basic rights "guaranteed" but he said this will not be possible "without holding the perpetrators responsible for their crimes."

Myanmar's UN ambassador, Hui Do Suan, called the

resolution "politically motivated and one-sided and discriminatory."

He accused the global media and human rights champions of concentrating on Myanmar and Rakhine state where the remaining Rohingyas live when money could be better spent helping starving people in Yemen and elsewhere.

"Adoption of this and other ill-intentioned, selective and politically motivated resolutions will not help at all our efforts to solving the issue of Rakhine state, but would rather lead to further polarization and escalation of tensions among different religious communities in the country," Hui said. "It will only aggravate distrust between the people of Myanmar and the international community," AP