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SPG troops get highest allowance to look smart

The Special Protection Group is an elite force which guards only a few individuals, including the serving and ex- prime ministers of India. Even before the Prime Minister disembarks his plane in a foreign country, it is the men from this elite force who get down to provide him the security cover and have to look good in their uniform everywhere they go with the dignitaries.

“For looking good in their uniform, the government has decided to grant the highest dress allowance of `27,800 to operational personnel of the SPG,” a government official said here. The non-operational personnel of the small elite force have been granted `21,225 for maintaining their dress. Otherwise also, the SPG is the favourite force of the government in terms of facilities and perks. The personnel wear different uniforms in winters and summers. While in summers, they wear safari suits, in winters, they are dressed in suits with ties but their weapons are usually not visible in these dresses. The SPG personnel also put on combat uniforms where they carry their assault rifles and other weapons openly.

The allowances would be paid to the personnel annually and not monthly, and it would be credited directly to their accounts once a year in July. As per the recommendations of the Seventh Pay Commission, the government has merged all the clothing and other uniform related allowances in armed forces into one calling it the dress allowance. Earlier, the troops of different services were given separate allowances such as kit maintenance, shoe, robe, robe maintenance and washing.

“Now, all the allowances have been merged to simplify the accounts for which the money was being paid,” the official said. Surprisingly, the nurses working in the central government hospitals would be paid a higher dress allowance than the officers of the defence forces such as army, coast guard, navy and air force and the other paramilitary forces. “As per the government order, the nurses of central government hospitals would be given a monthly allowance of `1,800 per month (`21,600 annually) to maintain their white uniform while the armed forces officers would be getting only `20,000 for the purpose,” the officials said.

This higher dress allowance for the nurses than defence officers is causing heartburn among the services officers as there is a feeling of being downgraded by the government in some of them, a defence officer said. The nurses of the armed forces from the Military Nursing Service would also be getting a lower allowance than their civilian counterparts as they would be getting only `15,000 for maintaining their dress. Officers of Delhi and Union Territory police services would also be given the same amount. “As per the government order, the Indian Foreign Services officers will continue to get their outfit allowance and it has been increased by 50 per cent in this pay commission,” an official said.

Army of robots to fight terror in Kashmir

New Delhi: Indigenously built robots, capable of delivering ammunition at intended locations, will soon be used by the Army in its fight against terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir.

An army proposal, projecting a requirement of 544 robots, has been approved by the defence ministry, paving the way for the indigenous development of such machines, army officials said.

The proposal for adopting robotic security and surveillance stresses that the footprint of terror has expanded from jungle and rural areas to urban sectors, necessitating the induction of the systems in the force. “The way the situation is evolving, it may just be a matter of time when security forces as a whole, and Rashtriya Rifles

(RR) in particular, will face the threat in built-up and super built-up areas,” it said, making a strong case for robotic platforms.

The RR is an elite counter-terrorism force raised in the nineties. “These robotic surveillance platforms can be extensively used by the RR...for gathering real-time input prior to manual insertion,” says an army note.

The “lightweight and rugged” robots will consist of several subsystems such as surveillance cameras and transmission systems with a range of 200 metres. The army’s requirements state that the robots should be able to “deliver suitable ammunition...e.g. stun grenade.”

The approval for the surveillance platform has been granted under the ‘Make’ category of acquisition in the Defence Procurement Procedure 2016 that lays down that only Indian vendors are eligible for the projects.

The army has also factored in the possibility of two or more teams operating jointly in a target area. “A second unit which can be operated alongside the first unit by a single operator with the same remote (having at least dual display screen) should also form part of the system.”

The force has been using a locally-produced remotely operated vehicle, Daksh, for handling IEDs. Developed by the DRDO, Daksh can climb stairs, lasts three hours on battery, can be operated with remote within 500 metres and lift up to 20kg loads.



Sat, 12 Aug, 2017

CBI tells Parl Panel it wants to take Bofors Case to its 'Logical Conclusion'

By Raghav Ohri

6-Member Panel Sought Cbi View On Reopening Of Case: Top officials of Central Bureau of Investigation conveyed its position to a sub-committee on defence attached to Public Accounts Committee

Officials said agency was denied permission by then Cong-led govt to appeal against HC order

The Central Bureau of Investigation, which is likely to support a petition in the Supreme Court for reopening the Bofors payoff case, has told a parliamentary panel that it wants to take the matter to its “final and logical conclusion”.

Top officials at the probe agency conveyed this position earlier this week to a sub-committee on defence attached to the Public Accounts Committee (PAC). The six-member panel had last month sought CBI's stance on reopening of the case. It is looking into what is seen as non-compliance of certain aspects of a 1986 Comptroller and Auditor General report on India's howitzer deal with Bofors. The CBI brass had in January this year decided to support the petition by BJP member and advocate Ajay Aggarwal to reopen the case, ET reported on Friday. Top government sources told ET that the agency told the parliamentary panel that it was more than willing to reopen the case. The CBI also claimed that it had properly investigated the case, which had resulted in the framing of charges against the accused.

The accused were discharged by the Delhi high court in May 2005. CBI officials told the panel that the agency was denied permission by the then Congress-led government to appeal against the high court order. They said the agency will support the SLP seeking the reopening of the case when it comes up for hearing. The Government of India is a necessary respondent in the petition and it has to convey its stand on the case in the Supreme Court. Government sources ET spoke to said it will support the demand to reopen the case.

Bofors hit national headlines in 1987. Accusations of bribes being paid for buying the Swedish artillery gun embroiled the then prime minister, late Rajiv Gandhi, and late Italian businessman Ottavio Quattrocchi. ET has seen CBI's files and notings since 2005 on the issue, which show that in 2006, the then director of

prosecution (DoP), the law official responsible for supervising and conducting the agency's cases, had argued against filing an appeal against the high court order.

This changed in January this year, when the DoP agreed with the agency's top officers.

THE BOFORS SAGA

Mar 1986: India signs an agreement with Swedish firm Bofors for a \$1.5 billion supply order for 155 mm howitzers

Apr 1987: Reports claim kickbacks paid to Indian officials and politicians to bag the deal as part of a larger investigation into Bofors operations worldwide. Within days, PM Rajiv Gandhi says no kickbacks paid, takes stand that deal is clean

Nov 1989: The Gandhi led Cong govt loses the Lok Sabha polls

Jan 1990: Formal case registered into the Bofors scandal by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). Swiss accounts of accused frozen

Jul 1993: Italian businessman, Ottavio Quattrocchi, accused in the case, leaves India

Oct 1999: CBI files first chargesheet, naming Rajiv Gandhi as one of the accused. Bofors allowed to bid for Indian contracts again

Jul 2013: Quattrocchi dies in Milan. Most accused in the case now dead as the case drags on in the Supreme Court

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THE TIMES OF INDIA

Sat, 12 Aug, 2017

Jaitley: Forces have enough ammo to face any situation

Amid the border stand-off with China, defence minister Arun Jaitely on Friday rejected reports about shortage of ammunition and asserted that the armed forces have enough quantity to face any eventuality .

He assured this in Lok Sabha after a member raised questions about the preparedness of the armed forces while contending, that there are “disturbing reports from our border areas“, a reference to the Doklam stand-off.

A question was also asked in reference to a CAG report which had stated that the defence forces have ammunition that can last for 20 days in an event of a war, instead of the minimum requirement of 40 days. “This question has been asked earlier also and I will only reiterate what I had said. Our defence forces have adequate equipment to face any eventuality,“ Jaitley said, without mentioning the Doklam standoff which has been going on for nearly two months.

The defence minister said the findings of the CAG report, which had talked about the shortage of ammunition, related to a particular point of time. “Thereafter significant process has been made. It is a continuous process. Therefore, nobody should have any doubt about the availability of equipment or the preparedness of our forces,“ he asserted.

Jaitley also sought to allay fears of closure of ordnance defence factories, saying all these factories and defence PSUs are going to continue and no employee will be retrenched.

“The core expertise of these ODFs (ordnance factories) is (manufacturing) ammunition and they will continue to do that,“ he added.

In response to another question on the government's target to achieve indigenisation by 2022, minister of state for defence Subhash Bhamre said taking into consideration the next 15 years, the forces have a long-term integrated (LTI) perspective on this.



Sat, 12 Aug, 2017

IAF airbases in NE on high alert

Flag Meet Fails To Resolve Doklam Row

India continues to pump in additional troops and weapon systems on the entire eastern front in the face of continuing belligerence from China on Doklam, even as diplomatic and military channels are being utilised in a bid to defuse the almost twomonth-old crisis.

Sources said a top-level flag meeting between major general rank officers from India and China was held at the Nathu La border personnel meeting point in Sikkim for the first time on Friday, following the failure of a similar huddle between brigade commanders on August 8 to break the deadlock.

But the latest meeting also proved “inconclusive“ with China remaining adamant that India immediately withdraw troops from the Bhutanese territory of Doklam near the Sikkim-Bhutan-Tibet trijunction. “The Indian side held China should first remove its road construction equipment from the site. Both sides will now report back to their headquarters,” said a source.

The meeting indicates a line of communication at the ground level and efforts to exchange perceptions and possibly explore means to contain the confrontation.

The Indian Army has steadily but quietly moved troops dily but quietly moved troops to their “operational alert areas“ on the borders with China in Sikkim and Arunachal, while maintaining high operational readiness of its other formations and units along the 4,057-km long LAC stretching from Ladakh to Arunachal, as reported by TOI earlier. In the eastern theatre, this primarily includes the 33 Corps headquartered in Sukna, with the 17 (Gangtok), 27 (Kalimpong) and 20 (Binnaguri) Mountain Divisions under its control. Each division has 10,000 15,000 soldiers who have undergone acclimatisa tion for the high-altitude for ward areas.

The 3 Corps (Dimapur) and 4 Corps (Tezpur), with similar infantry and moun tain divisions under them have also been activated as a precautionary move. IAF air bases in the northeast are al so maintaining a high oper ational alert, with “combat air patrols“ on a regular ba sis, said sources.

India's troop mobilisa tion comes in response to muscle-flexing by China which has amassed troops tanks and artillery in the Ti bet Military District. “While the People's Liberation Army is showing its teeth in a bid to make us cower down we have cranked up our cau tion levels,” said a source.

But at the actual faceoff site located at an altitude of over 1,000-feet in Doklam, which China is keen to grab from Bhutan to add strategic depth to its narrow Chumbi Valley , there are still only 300-350 soldiers ranged against each other. The PLA has deployed another 1,500 soldiers just beyond the standoff site as part of its aggressive posture.

Defence minister Arun Jaitley, incidentally , assured Lok Sabha on Friday that the Indian armed forces are geared for all contingencies, while responding to questions on Chinese troop movements in Tibet and the Army vicechief 's statement that Pakistan's indigenous defence production industry was better than India's. “Our defence forces are ready to take on any eventuality ,“ he said, without making any specific reference to to Doklam.

In sharp contrast to China's belligerence and threats of military reprisals, through both its officials and state-controlled media, India has chosen to remain largely tight-lipped about the entire faceoff from the beginning. External affairs minister Sushma Swaraj, in fact, had recently stressed the need for both sides to mutually withdraw their troops from Doklam simultaneously .

At least two flag meetings were also held earlier between the local commanders after Indian troops had proactively blocked the attempt by the PLA to construct a motorable road in Doklamon June 18, but they had proved futile with both the armies refusing to budge from their positions.

Uncertainty also hangs over the traditional annual invitation to the PLA at the five BPM points on the LAC - Daulat Beg Oldi and Chushul in Ladakh, Bum La and Kibithu in Arunachal, and Nathu La in Sikkim -to celebrate India's Independence Day on August 15. Indian troops, however, had not crossed over to the Chinese side to mark the 90th anniversary of the PLA on August 1 due to the ongoing tensions.

Chinese navy eyes Indian Ocean as part of PLA's plan to extend its reach

China's navy wants to join hands with India to maintain security of the Indian Ocean, amid growing concerns in New Delhi over the increasing presence of the PLA fleet in India's backyard. Throwing open its strategic South Sea Fleet (SSF) base in the coastal city of Zhanjiang to a group of Indian journalists for the first time, People's Liberation Army Navy officials say the , Indian Ocean is a common place for the international community.

“It is my opinion China and India can make joint contributions to the safety and security of the Indian Ocean,” Capt Liang Tianjun, deputy chief of general office of China's SSF said. His remarks came as China's Navy embarked on a massive expansion to extend its global reach. PTI

THE ASIAN AGE

Sat, 12 Aug, 2017

Indian Army, PLA meet at Nathu La

SANJIB KR BARUAH
NEW DELHI, AUG. 11

In a strong effort to defuse the escalating tension between India and China amid troop mobilisations along the border stretch from Sikkim to Arunachal Pradesh by India amid belligerent statements emanating from the Chinese state-run media, an Indian Army delegation led by a major general rank officer met a team of Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) team on Friday under the Border Personnel Meetings (BPM) framework near the 14,100 feet Nathu-La pass in Sikkim.

Though the defence ministry and the Indian Army refused to comment on the latest development, sources confirming the meeting have told this newspaper that the step is being undertaken to ease the defuse the potentially

India deploys more troops on border

New Delhi, Aug. 11: In a strategically key move, India has poured in more troops along the entire stretch of its border with China in Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh in the face of heightened rhetoric by Beijing over the Doklam standoff, senior government officials said on Friday. The “caution level” among the troops has also been raised, the officials said. — PTI

explosive situation with the aim to ease out before India's Independence Day celebrations on Tuesday. “But at the same time, mobilisation of men and material on both sides is on and no quarter is being yielded,” the sources said.

The latest meeting follows a meeting between

the two forces about three days back. While a brigadier-level officer led the Indian Army team, a senior colonel ranked PLA officer — the Chinese equivalent of an Indian Army brigadier — represented the Chinese Army.

About 350 Indian Army soldiers are engaged in a more than seven-and-a-half-week-long eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation with an equal number of PLA troops over the Doklam plateau, a swath of rugged terrain at about 10,500 feet near the intersection separating Dokala in India's Sikkim, China and Bhutan.

With only about 100 metres separating them from the Chinese forces, batches of Indian soldiers in groups of 10 or 12 have been maintaining a 24-hour vigil by taking turns throughout the day and night.

Doklam standoff: India increases troops along border, caution level raised

The officials declined to give any figure or percentage of increased deployment

In a strategically key move, India has poured in more troops along the entire stretch of its border with China in Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh in the face of heightened rhetoric by Beijing over the Doklam standoff, senior government officials said on Friday.

The "caution level" among the troops has also been raised, the officials told PTI.

The decision to increase the deployment along the nearly 1,400-km Sino-India border from Sikkim to Arunachal Pradesh was taken after carrying out a detailed analysis of the situation and considering China's aggressive posturing against India on Doklam, the officials said.

"The troop level along the border with China in the Sikkim and Arunachal sectors has been increased," said the officials on condition of anonymity because of the sensitive nature of the information.

The Army's Sukna-based 33 Corps as well as 3 and 4 corps based in Arunachal and Assam are tasked to protect the sensitive Sino-India border in the eastern theatre.

The officials declined to give any figure or percentage of increased deployment, saying they cannot disclose "operational details."

According to defence experts, roughly 45,000 troops including personnel having completed the weather acclimatisation process are normally kept ready along the border at any given time, but not all are necessarily deployed. The soldiers, deployed over 9,000 feet, have to go through a 14-day-long acclimatisation process.

The officials, however, said there is no enhancement of troops at the India-China-Bhutan tri-junction in Doklam where around 350 army personnel are holding on to their position for nearly eight weeks after stopping Chinese troops from constructing a road on June 16.

Bhutan and China have competing claims over Doklam, and are negotiating a resolution.

China has been ramping up rhetoric against India over the last few weeks, demanding immediate withdrawal of Indian troops from Doklam. The Chinese state media, particularly, has carried a barrage of critical articles on the Doklam stand-off slamming India.

External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj recently said both sides should first pull back their troops for any talks to take place, and favoured a peaceful resolution of the border standoff.

India also conveyed to the Chinese government that the road construction would represent a significant change of status quo with serious security implications for it.

MAIL TODAY

Nepal wants peaceful solution for Doklam

When Mail Today posed the same question to the Nepalese deputy PM, he rejected the idea of another standoff at the Indian border which does not bode well for any of the countries in the region, choosing the diplomatic route and fobbing any Chinese overtures. He said, "We are discussing this in a diplomatic way with India and with China. That is the only way forward." Nepal as one of the Himalayan nations is feeling the

heat of what is happening in Doklam. The administration is monitoring the developments at the tri-junction. Mahara said, “We have mentioned not to go in the way of war, solve it peacefully, diplomatically.

This is our stand and our request.” This is the first time that Nepal has come out and urged all the three nations to resolve the stand-off peacefully. Earlier, they had kept away from commenting over the crisis.

This is a sign of how any kind of escalation is what Nepal and Bhutan want to avoid. Even after the bilateral meeting between India and Bhutan on Friday afternoon, Bhutanese Foreign Minister Damcho Dorji said, “We hope the situation in Doklam will be resolved peacefully and amicably.” Meanwhile, defence minister Arun Jaitely Friday rejected reports about shortage of ammunition and asserted that the armed forces have enough quantity to face any eventuality.

He said this in the Lok Sabha after a member raised questions about the preparedness of the armed forces while contending that there are disturbing reports from our border areas, a reference to the Doklam stand-off. A question was also asked in reference to a CAG report which had stated that the defence forces have ammunition that can last for 20 days in an event of a war instead of the minimum requirement of 40 days. “This question has been asked earlier also and I will only reiterate what I had said. Our defence forces have adequate equipment to face any eventuality,” Jaitely said, without any mention of the Doklam stand-off which has been going on for nearly two months. The defence minister said the findings of the CAG report, which had talked about the shortage of ammunition, related to a particular point of time.

Thereafter significant process has been made. “It is a continuous process. Therefore, nobody should have any doubt about the availability of equipment or the preparedness of our forces,” he asserted. Jaitely also sought to allay fears of closure of ordnance defence factories, saying all these factories and defence PSUs are going to continue and no employee will be retrenched. The core expertise of these ordnance factories is manufacturing ammo and they will continue to do that, he added.



Sat, 12 Aug, 2017

No axe to grind with India: Chinese navy

By Sandeep Dikshit

‘Indian Ocean vast region, we anticipate more cooperation with Indian Navy’

While the confrontation with the Chinese army has entered into the second month, leading to hot words in Beijing, its navy says it has no axe to grind with India because the Indian Ocean is a “vast region”.

At the sprawling base of the South China Sea Fleet in this hot and humid south China port city, its officers said they anticipated more cooperation with the Indian Navy in cleansing the oceans of drug running, piracy and arms trafficking.

Addressing a concern in India over China rapidly inducting aircraft carriers in its armada, Chinese naval officers sought to be conciliatory. “The number of aircraft carriers is not critical. Our role in China’s National Defence Policy is defensive. We will never intrude into other countries, nor will we endure obstruction by other countries,” said Capt He Luyang.

“All our major weapon systems are not toys,” interjected his colleague. This is the first time Indian journalists were given monitored access to the sword arm of the Chinese navy.

It is South China Fleet’s ships and submarines that cause consternation in India when they make restocking pauses at Colombo and Karachi on way to anti-piracy duties in the Gulf of Aden and off the coast of Somalia.

But Capt Hu feels the Indian media overreacts to the docking of Chinese submarines in nearby countries. Their movement does not compare to manoeuvres of the US navy destroyers near the tightly contested islands of South China Sea.

Capt Hu drew attention to a vital difference. Chinese ships transit through international navigation areas, not in the waters of “your country”. But US battleships come inside the 12 nautical mile (nm) boundary of islands claimed by China.

“It will be different if our ships do that. It is all right for the US navy to go through SCS but we won’t tolerate their crossing of the red line of 12 nm,” he emphasised.

Equipped with bombers, submarines — both nuclear and conventional — besides UAVs, destroyers and reconnaissance planes, the Indian Navy is keenly tracking this fleet’s expanding footprint in the Indian Ocean.



Sat, 12 Aug, 2017

China protests after US warship sails near island

Beijing voiced displeasure today after a US warship sailed near an artificial island in the disputed South China Sea, an operation that prompted the Chinese navy to warn off the American destroyer. Foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said the actions of the USS John S McCain had violated Chinese and international law, “seriously” impairing the country's sovereignty and security. “China is strongly dissatisfied with this,” Geng said in a statement, adding that Beijing would lodge an official protest with Washington. The USS John S McCain destroyer sailed within six nautical miles of Mischief Reef -- an artificial island built by China -- yesterday as part of a “freedom of navigation” operation, a US official said.

The reef is part of the disputed Spratly Islands in the South China Sea, which is the scene of rival claims between China and neighbouring countries. Speaking on condition of anonymity, the US official told AFP a Chinese frigate sent radio warnings at least 10 times to the USS McCain. “They called and said 'please turn around, you are in our waters,'” the official said. “We told them we are a US (ship) conducting routine operations in international waters.” The official said the interactions were all “safe and professional,” with the operation lasting about six hours from start to finish, but Geng said such operations “seriously endanger lives”.

The freedom of navigation operation was the third of its kind carried out by the United States since President Donald Trump took office in January. The US move came four days after the United States, Australia and Japan denounced Beijing's island building and militarisation of the South China Sea on the sidelines of a security forum of the 10-nation Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Manila. China claims nearly all of the sea, through which \$5 trillion in annual shipping trade passes and which is believed to sit atop vast oil and gas deposits. Its sweeping claims overlap with Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei -- all ASEAN members -- as well as Taiwan. But in recent years Beijing has managed to weaken regional resistance by courting some ASEAN members. On Sunday China scored a coup when ASEAN ministers issued a diluted statement on the dispute and agreed to its terms on talks at the Manila meeting.

China insists that a much-delayed code of conduct between it and ASEAN members over the disputed sea must not be legally binding, a demand to which Southeast Asian countries have so far acquiesced.



Sat, 12 Aug, 2017

U.S. military is ‘locked and loaded’ on North Korea

Trump says military solutions are now fully in place; Pyongyang accuses the U.S. President of driving the Peninsula to the brink of a nuclear war

President Donald Trump issued a new threat to North Korea on Friday, saying the U.S. military was “locked and loaded” as Pyongyang accused him of driving the Korean Peninsula to the brink of nuclear war.

Mr. Trump kept up the war of words on Twitter shortly after the North Korean state news agency, KCNA, put out a statement blaming him for the escalated tensions.

“Trump is driving the situation on the Korean Peninsula to the brink of a nuclear war, making such outcries as ‘the U.S. will not rule out a war against the DPRK,’” KCNA said.

President Trump, who is vacationing at his Bedminster, New Jersey, golf resort, described American military readiness in stark terms. “Military solutions are now fully in place, locked and loaded, should North Korea act unwisely,” he wrote on Twitter. “Hopefully Kim Jong-un will find another path!”

Mr. Trump maintained pressure on the North after a week of incendiary rhetoric, including his warning on Tuesday that the U.S. would unleash “fire and fury” on Pyongyang if it continued to issue threats.

Unusual response

U.S. allies in the region reacted with alarm to the unusual response from Washington and senior U.S. officials scrambled to play down his comments.

Still, Mr. Trump amplified the warning on Thursday, saying maybe his “fire and fury” threat “wasn’t tough enough”. U.S. Defense Secretary James Mattis later tempered Mr. Trump's harsh words, saying the U.S. still preferred a diplomatic approach to the North Korean threat. A war would be “catastrophic,” he said.

Asked if the U.S. was prepared to handle a hostile act by North Korea, Mr. Mattis said: “We are ready.”

As of late Thursday, two U.S. officials said the threat with regards to North Korea had not changed, additional assets were not being moved into the region and intelligence did not show indications of North Korea preparing a missile launch.

Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff Joseph Dunford left Washington on Thursday to visit Japan, China and South Korea. While the trip has been long planned, the issue of North Korea is likely to be a priority, officials said.

Military drill

Meanwhile, U.S. officials said Friday they plan to move ahead with large-scale U.S.-South Korea exercises later this month that North Korea, now finalizing plans to launch a salvo of missiles toward Guam, claims are a rehearsal for war.

The exercises are an annual event, but come as Pyongyang says it is readying a plan to fire off four Hwasong-12 missiles toward Guam, a tiny island which is U.S. territory and major military hub. Called Ulchi—Freedom Guardian, the exercises are expected to run from Aug. 21—31 and involve tens of thousands of American and South Korean troops on the ground and in the sea and air.

Mr. Trump said Kim was not going to get away with his “horrific” comments and disrespecting America.

“Let's see what he does with Guam. He does something in Guam, it will be an event the likes of which nobody's seen before, what will happen in North Korea,” Mr. Trump told reporters on Thursday in New Jersey, without offering specifics.



Sat, 12 Aug, 2017

China should be 'neutral' if N Korea strikes US: Report

A Chinese state-run newspaper called on Beijing today to “stay neutral” if North Korea strikes first in a conflict with the United States, despite a mutual defence pact between the Asian allies. The nationalistic Global Times tabloid said in an editorial that Washington and Pyongyang were playing a “reckless game” that could lead to “miscalculations and a strategic ‘war’”. “Beijing is not able to persuade Washington or Pyongyang to back down at this time,” the Global Times said.

“It needs to make clear its stance to all sides and make them understand that when their actions jeopardize China's interests, China will respond with a firm hand.” The commentary came after Washington warned North Korea this week it faced “fire and fury like the world has never seen” if it continued to threaten the US with its missile and nuclear programmes. That prompted a defiant Pyongyang to threaten a missile attack on Guam, a tiny US territory in the Pacific that is home to major US air and naval facilities. China -- which has been accused by the US of not doing enough to rein in its longtime ally -- has maintained that political dialogue is the only solution. China fought alongside the North in the 1950-53 Korean War and the two nations signed a mutual defence pact in 1961, but the Global Times suggested Beijing should remain on the sidelines if Pyongyang launches the first salvo in a new conflict with the United States.

“China should also make clear that if North Korea launches missiles that threaten US soil first and the US retaliates, China will stay neutral,” the editorial said. “If the US and South Korea carry out strikes and try to overthrow the North Korean regime and change the political pattern of the Korean Peninsula, China will prevent them from doing so.”



Sat, 12 Aug, 2017

NASA to study Earth's ionosphere during total solar eclipse

NASA is set to study the Earth's ionosphere during the upcoming total solar eclipse in the US, to better understand the Sun's relationship to the region of the atmosphere where satellites orbit and radio signals are reflected towards our planet. On August 21, the Moon will slide in front of the Sun and for a brief moment, day will melt into a dusky night in the US.

The Moon's shadow will block the Sun's light, and weather permitting, those within the path of totality will be treated to a view of the Sun's outer atmosphere, called the corona. However, the total solar eclipse will also have imperceptible effects, such as the sudden loss of extreme ultraviolet radiation from the Sun, which generates the ionised layer of Earth's atmosphere, called the ionosphere.

This ever-changing region grows and shrinks based on solar conditions, and researchers will use the eclipse as a ready-made experiment. “The eclipse turns off the ionosphere's source of highenergy radiation,” said Bob Marshall, a space scientist at University of Colorado Boulder in the US. “Without ionizing radiation, the ionosphere will relax, going from daytime conditions to nighttime conditions and then back again after the eclipse,” said Marshall. Stretching from roughly 50 to 400 miles above Earth's surface, the tenuous ionosphere is an electrified layer of the atmosphere that reacts to changes from both Earth below and space above. Such changes in the lower atmosphere or space weather can manifest as disruptions in the ionosphere that can interfere with communication and navigation signals.

“In our lifetime, this is the best eclipse to see,” said Greg Earle, engineer at Virginia Tech in the US. “But we've also got a denser network of satellites, GPS and radio traffic than ever before. It's the first time we'll have such a wealth of information to study the effects of this eclipse; we'll be drowning in data,” Earle said. During the eclipse, scientists will know exactly how much solar radiation is blocked, the area of land it is blocked over and for how long.