

India, Japan to hold joint exercise in Nov

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With the objective to further strengthen strategic and bilateral Defence ties, Indian and Japanese Armies will hold the first-ever joint exercise in India for a fortnight in November. The exercise named 'Dharma Guardian-2018', focusing on honing anti-terrorism fighting skills, will take place at Counter Insurgency Warfare School, Vairengte in Mizoram from November 1.

The Indian contingent will be represented by 6/1 Gorkha Rifles while the Japan Ground Self Defence Force will be represented by 32 Infantry Regiment, Army officials said, adding the drill will contribute immensely in developing mutual understanding and respect for each other's militaries and also facilitate tracking the world-wide phenomenon of terrorism.

During the fortnight long exercise, due emphasis will be laid on increasing interoperability between forces from both countries. Both sides will jointly train, plan and execute a

series of well developed tactical drills for neutralisation of likely threats that may be encountered in urban warfare scenario. Experts from both sides will also hold detailed discussions to share their expertise on varied operational aspects, they said.

Indian and Japanese navies besides Coast Guard regularly hold regular exercises in high seas but this is the first time ever that the armies of two nations will hold a joint exercise. It signifies deepening strategic and Defence relations through exercises and likely exchange visits of officers from two armies to each other's institutions in the coming years, sources said.

The decision to hold the first army exercise was taken during the annual Defence dialogue here in August between Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and her Japanese counterpart Itsunori Onodera. The two sides also decided to raise the level of maritime exercises particularly in the sphere of anti-submarine warfare and mine detection measures. The IAF chief is also likely to visit Japan in December.