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Countering China in the backyard, Indian Navy silently tighten grip over Indian Ocean

By Sudhi Ranjan Sen

As countries like Bangladesh, Myanmar, Vietnam and Thailand keenly watch the outcome of the standoff at the Doklam in Bhutan between the Indian and Chinese armies; New Delhi has tasked the Indian Navy to silently spread its influence and further strengthen its grip over the Indian Ocean Region. Besides, the immediate security concern, India's stand on Doklam is also influenced by the message the outcome of stand-off will send to these neighbouring countries. For the last two and half months Indian and Chinese troops are engaged in face-off at the Doklam plateau in Bhutan. China wants to construct a road through the plateau. India objects to the road and has deployed army.

A large-multi-lateral exercise of Indian Ocean littoral countries

For the first time ever Bangladesh - which now heads the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) - with the help of India will be organising a large Naval exercise involving over a dozen countries. The IONS is an India initiative to increase maritime cooperation among navies of the littoral states of the Indian Ocean Region. The IONS was conceived by the UPA government to get "friendly" navies of the region together to counter the increased aggressiveness of China in the Indian Ocean region. The exercise - likely to see participation from over a dozen countries - is likely to be held in the Bay of Bengal. The IONS platform had become dormant in the past-few years, "we have decided to revitalize the platform," a senior Ministry of Defence official told India Today and added "a large exercise with the participation of several littoral countries sends a tacit but a clear message."

Reaching Out to the Neighbours - While China has been reaching out with big bucks, India has decided to take a more benign approach. Indian Navy is launching the Sambandh initiative - Naval officers and cadets from smaller countries that do not have big navies will now be welcome aboard INS Vikramaditya -India's aircraft carrier- Kolkata class destroyer- the state of the art stealth guided missile destroyer - INS Kalvari - Scorpene Class diesel- electric submarine etc. "Cadets and officers of smaller navies will get flavour of blue-water navy and how big navies are organised," a senior officer said. Cadets and officers from countries like Bangladesh, Kenya, Oman, Tanzania, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam etc will soon be on these platforms. South Block has already given its clearance to the initiative.

Mobile Training Team - Apart from the Sambandh initiate the Indian Navy is reaching out to the neighbourhood extending his training out-reach programme. Training teams of the Indian Navy will now be going to neighbouring countries. "Many countries aren't able to send their officers, cadets to a foreign country for training, this initiative will be plug that gap," a senior officer said. Each Mobile Training Team (MTT) will comprise 8 to 10 officers and can train more of officers at their home bases the officer added. Bangladesh has already asked India to set-up its submarine naval training school. Earlier, India had trained a group of its submarine cadets at the Visakhapatnam based INS Satavahana. The Navy has been approached by the countries Thailand, Sri Lanka, Myanmar for MTT.

More permanent deployment of Indian warships - Indian Naval warships will now be permanently deployed at the Malacca Straits -the crucial strait connecting the Indian Ocean, Pacific Ocean linking major Asian economies such as India, China, Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea- and Indian warships will be more visible at Sunda Straits - a crucial passage that connects Indian Ocean to Eastern Asia.

About 70 per cent of the global trade by value passes through the Malacca and Sunda Straits.

Indian Air Force Deploys Hercules Strategic Aircraft in Panagarh amid Border Row With China

Arjan Singh is the second base in the country to have a fat fleet of Hercules aircraft after Hindon Air Force base in Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh.

New Delhi: In the wake of Doklam stand-off with China, the Indian Air Force installed six C-130J Super Hercules strategic aircraft in its Arjan Singh base in Panagarh, West Bengal.

The base is approximately 150 km away from state capital Kolkata. Arjan Singh is the second base in the country to have a fat fleet of Hercules aircraft after Hindon Air Force base in Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh. Many engineers and technicians for the past two years have been working on making hangars (aircraft parking in a closed building) and other facilities at Panagarh, suggest reports.

A senior IAF official told TOI that a mid air refueller called Ilyushin Il-78 has also been installed at Arjan Singh base. The official who did not want to be named said the fleet of Eastern Command will make the total use of refueller including Sukhois.

The official who did not want to be named said the fleet of Eastern Command will make the total use of including Sukhois. Arjan Singh base became fully operational and as per IAF, it is part of the routine.

THE ASIAN AGE

Fri, 25 Aug, 2017

USS Pearl Harbor ship in Goa on a port visit

Panaji, Aug. 24: The amphibious dock landing ship *USS Pearl Harbor* (LSD 52) and the embarked 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) arrived in Goa on Thursday for a scheduled port visit.

The ship's Commanding Officer Theodore Essensfeld said their mission in Goa is to conduct the professional subject matter expert exchanges with the Indian Navy, Marine Commandos, and Army.

He said during their stay in Goa, they will meet their Indian Navy and Army counterparts "in a rare opportunity for joint and combined exchanges, honing our interoperability

in amphibious skills, medical care, visit, board, search and seizure procedures, and helicopter operations".

He interacted with media persons on board the ship at Vasco, 35 km away from here.

The commanding officer said the crew wanted to participate in Ganesh festival beginning on Friday.

USS Pearl Harbor is an amphibious dock landing ship, designed to support US Marine Corps operations from the sea. The ship can operate the full range of landing craft and helicopters in the US Inventory in support of combat or humanitarian missions.

"The purpose is to

enhance our interoperability and establish a stronger esprit de corps between our militaries.

Our countries have a long history of military cooperation, based on our shared ideals of democracy, international rules and norms, and our desires for peace, security and prosperity across the region," he said.

Lieutenant Colonel James Stover, Commander of Troops, leading embarked elements of the 15th MEU, said no single nation can combat regional threats alone. "We must work together to share best practices, each nation's unique experiences, and

encourage interoperability and teamwork to enhance readiness and regional stability.

"Both the US and India recognise that the Indian Ocean is vital to the security of the region and the global economy. Positive mil-to-mil relationships are based on common interests related to maritime security, counterterrorism, defence trade and security of the global commons," he said. — PTI

North Korea's trade with China hit by sanctions

China's imports from North Korea slowed in July while its exports to the sanctions-hit country dwindled after surging in recent months, according to official Chinese statistics. Overall, bilateral trade between the two countries stood at USD 456 million last month, down nearly seven per cent from June, according to General Administration of Customs figures.

The decline is partly due to a steady decline in China's imports from its neighbor, which fell to USD 156.3 million in July, down three per cent from the previous month and more than 30 per cent year on year. China, the main ally of Pyongyang and the recipient of some 90 per cent of North Korea's exports, suspended all imports of coal in February in compliance with United Nations sanctions. The aim of these restrictions is to deprive the Kim JongUn regime of crucial currency sources in order to check its controversial nuclear programme. Following a seventh round of sanctions adopted in early August by the UN Security Council, Beijing recently announced it will also suspend its purchases of North Korean iron, lead and seafood.

Chinese exports to the Stalinist regime fell to \$299.8 million in July, down more than eight per cent from June. But exports were up 55 per cent year on year. North Korea considerably increased its purchases from the Asian giant in recent months, including appliances, mechanical parts, textiles and solar panels. In Dandong, a Chinese border town, AFP found last month that vibrant trade continued despite sanctions - with many Chinese shops continuing to offer jewels made of North Korean gold and silver, which have long been banned from the other side.

US President Donald Trump has urged China to step up pressure on its turbulent neighbour.

NASA rockets to create glowing artificial clouds

A NASA rocket mission is set to form white artificial clouds that will glow in the night sky, to study disturbances in the upper atmosphere that interfere with communication and technology systems. The artificial clouds will be visible to residents of the Republic of the Marshall Islands during two rocket flights to occur between August 29 and September 9, the US space agency said.

The Waves and Instabilities from a Neutral Dynamo (WINDY) mission will study a phenomenon that occurs in the ionosphere - a layer of charged particles in the upper atmosphere. Known as equatorial spread F (ESF) these disturbances occur after sunset at latitudes near the equator in part of the ionosphere known as the F region. The disturbances interfere with radio communication, navigation and imaging systems and pose a hazard to technology and society that depends on it. The WINDY mission consists of two NASA suborbital sounding rockets that will be launched nearly simultaneously in a window between 8 and 11 pm local time from August 29 through September 9 from the island of RoiNamur.

The Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshall Islands is near the magnetic equator, where post-sunset ionosphere storms are more intense, making the site an ideal location for these studies, NASA said. One rocket will carry a substance called tri-methyl aluminium (TMA), which will form the white artificial clouds that glow in the night sky. Scientists on the ground photograph the movement of these clouds to measure the winds and energetic particles that are in motion in the upper atmosphere.

The clouds are expected to be visible for about 30 minutes. The first rocket launched, a two-stage 47-foot long Black Brant IX rocket, will carry and release both TMA and lithium. The release of the lithium vapours is not visible to the naked-eye but can be viewed with special cameras on the ground.

Both TMA and lithium, which are harmless to residents on the ground when released at these altitudes, move with the atmospheric winds and can therefore be used to determine the wind speeds and direction over the area where these ionosphere storms are occurring. TMA reacts spontaneously on contact with oxygen to produce a pale white glow visible from the ground. For the WINDY mission, sunlight reflected by the Moon, will illuminate lithium producing an emission that can be detected with cameras equipped with narrow-band filters. Using moonlight allows the launches to occur later in the evening when the critical ESF conditions occur. The second rocket, a twostage 36-foot long TerrierMalemute, will be launched five minutes after the first rocket.

It will carry instruments to measure ionosphere densities and electric and magnetic fields present in these storms. The ionosphere is defined as the layer of Earth's atmosphere that is ionised by solar and cosmic radiation. Ionisation occurs when incoming energetic radiation strips electrons from atoms and molecules, creating temporarily charged particles.