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Thu, 28 Sept, 2017

(Online)

Advanced artillery gun passes user trials in deserts: DRDO

Pune: The country's first fully integrated Advanced Towed Artillery Gun System (ATAGS), being developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), has successfully completed user assisted technical trials for desert terrain at the Pokhran firing range in Rajasthan.

P K Mehta, DRDO's director general for armament and combat engineering system, told TOI on Wednesday, "We have achieved the desired results in the user assisted trials and the gun is now poised for further trials (for other terrains) in the coming months."

The trials in the deserts were carried out by DRDO scientists and the Indian Army's director general for artillery from August 24 to September 7. A large number of extended range full bore artillery ammunitions were successfully fired from the gun during the trials.

Project director S V Gade of the Armament Research and Development Establishment (ARDE) in Pune, who anchored the trials, said, "The users (Indian Army) fired all type of ammunitions and achieved the desired range and consistency for the live ammunition. In fact, the gun successfully hit a target at 48km distance. No other contemporary artillery guns are able to achieve a range of more than 40km so far." The ATAGS is capable of firing a Bi-Modular Charge System (BMCS) Zone 7 propellant, which no other country is able to fire as on date, he added.

Gade said, "We have also validated firing table in a limited way of the gun, which was very crucial task for us."

The ATAGS has an all-electric drive which gives advantage over traditional hydraulic drives which exists in other towed guns. The electric drives of the ATAGS gives controls in handling ammunition, opening and closing the breech mech. and ramming the round into firing chamber, Gade added.

"The gun will undergo refinements and will be ready for high altitude trials which are likely to be conducted at Sikkim in December, depending on a confirmation from the army authorities," Gade said. The gun is expected to be inducted in the Indian Army by 2020, sources in DRDO said.



Thu, 28 Sept, 2017

(Online)

Indian Navy Destroyers, Frigates to Get Locally-made Anti-Submarine SONARs

India's Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) has approved an INR200 crore (US\$33 M) procurement of upgraded SONARs for its Navy destroyers and frigates. ; These SONARs are designed and developed by the Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) and the Naval Physical and Oceanographic Laboratory, Kochi and will boost the Navy's anti submarine warfare capabilities.

The DAC additionally cleared procurement of missiles for replenishing the naval inventory.

This is the first DAC meeting being chaired by Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman after taking over the reins of the MoD. The DAC is the supreme body within India's MoD for overseeing procurement matters.

The minister has ordered that the DAC meetings be once in a fortnight to enable speeding up the process of capability development of the armed forces, an official release said.



Thu, 28 Sept, 2017

(Online)

'Universities should research on defence technology'

DRDO director says at 38th Foundation Day of Mluru varsity

Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) Solid State Physics Laboratory (SSPL) director Dr Rajesh K Sharma called upon universities to contribute to the defence sector by carrying out research works in the field.

He was delivering the 38th Foundation Day lecture at Mangala Auditorium in Mangalagangothri on Wednesday.

Dr Sharma felt that the universities should reach the technology readiness levels and also venture into more strategic areas. Universities like Mangalore University should interact with national laboratories and focus on the researches pertaining to the sophisticated materials for defence applications.

He pointed out that not many universities have been utilising the DRDO funds meant for the same.

Claiming that the SSPL will be the first-of-its-kind laboratory in the world, Dr Sharma said that national laboratories like SSPL have been concerned with academia and industries. "Connections are being established with them so as to take the defence technology to a new level. DRDO is also active in the research towards Biological warfare protection. Terahertz technology, Quantum computing and Qubit area would be the future preferences of DRDO," he said.

"India contributes a significant percentage of GDP to defence research. However, it is less compared to countries like South Korea and USA," he added.

Presiding over the programme, Mangalore University vice chancellor Prof K Byrappa said that the youth should not waste their time but instead utilise it towards gaining knowledge. This is the age of learning, he said and added that the current aim of Mangalore University is to touch the H-index of 70, which is 59 at present. Achievers honoured

Music composer Gurukiran, writer Na Da Shetty, film actor Vinaya Prakash, film director Ramachandra P N, international-level athlete Rohith Kumar Kateel, artist Vilas Nayak and Rio Olympian Ayya Dharun were felicitated on the occasion. Non-teaching staff of the university performed a Yakshagana episode 'Sri Rama Darshana' in the afternoon.

Sitharaman can strengthen India's military muscle

By Anil Bhat

The panel was appointed to recommend measures to enhance combat capability of the armed forces.

In her first message after assuming charge as defence minister on September 7, 2017, Nirmala Sitharaman said, "My priority will definitely be the armed forces preparedness. It is important that the Indian armed forces receive the attention in terms of giving them every endowment and equipment necessary for them to perform their duty with the best of equipment available," and added that she will also be pursuing alongside, "Make in India" and welfare of soldiers and their families.

Taking charge of the defence ministry from finance minister Arun Jaitley, who was holding additional charge of it since March 2017, she became the first full-time woman defence minister of the country. Her gender predecessor in the distant past was Indira Gandhi, who, as the Prime Minister held additional charge of the defence ministry.

Ms Sitharaman has taken charge shortly after Mr Jaitley's announcement in August 2017 that the government has decided to implement 65 of the 99 recommendations of the Shekatkar Committee pertaining to the Army. The panel was appointed to recommend measures to enhance combat capability of the armed forces.

"I shall attend to all the long pending issues and in consultation and the Prime Minister and the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) ensure that those pending issues are resolved," Ms Sitharaman stated. On India's defence capabilities, she laid emphasis on having a major role for "Make in India" in defence production and said, "We shall ensure that the important characters of what makes 'Make in India' an important flagship programme of the Prime Minister is given full play for defence production because India, as you know, is a very big defence equipment procurer."

On her other priority of armed forces families and their welfare, Ms Sitharaman said, "Let us not for a moment forget that it is in their welfare, in their families' welfare that we can ensure that the soldiers at the very toughest borders, challenging zones in which they are protecting this country, remain absolutely assured that their interests are being taken care of." Pledging to do her best to ensure that "defence and defence priorities are well attended to", she added, "I shall be available round-the-clock."

The general opinion of services officers during the tenure of Ms Sitharaman's recent predecessor Manohar Parrikar was that he was quite accessible, unlike some of his predecessors. And while he being a technocrat was quite an asset as defence minister, a limitation in the aspect of his accessibility was his preoccupation with Goa, which eventually resulted in his tenure being truncated.

Born on August 18, 1959, in Madurai, Tamil Nadu, Ms Sitharaman graduated in Economics from Seethalakshmi Ramaswamy College in Tiruchirappalli and did her masters in Economics from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Thereafter, in London, she did a stint with the Agricultural Engineers Association, worked as senior manager (research and analysis) with PricewaterhouseCoopers and did a short stint with BBC.

With that creditable record, back in India, she became a member of the National Council for Women from 2003 to 2005, BJP's national executive from 2006, being elected as party's spokesperson in 2010. Known to be a prolific reader and writer, whose columns are incisive and impactful, as a spokesperson she has been articulate and assertive in panel discussions, which often become fish markets. She reportedly penned press releases herself and meticulously edited any conversation of the party that went to the media. About the contentious Article 370, she said that back in 1964 the Prime Minister had himself said that there are ways to slowly do away with the provision and it was not an unheard of topic being put up for discussion.

On May 26, 2014, she was appointed as the minister of state (independent charge) for ministry of commerce and industry and minister of state for finance and corporate affairs.

Shortly after taking over as defence minister Ms Sitharaman visited headquarters of Western Command at Chandimandir Military Station, where she was briefed on operational preparedness, administrative issues and ex-servicemen affairs by General Officer Commanding-in-Chief Western Command Lt. Gen. Surinder Singh. Appreciating the efforts of the Indian Army and Western Command, she expressed her confidence in its operational might and lauded its contribution in all spheres, including assistance to civilian administration, specially during the recent past. Paying homage to the brave martyrs at Veer Smriti, she laid a wreath, planted a sapling and spent some time interacting with junior commissioned officers (JCOs) and other ranks (ORs) of units billeted at Chandigarh.

As new defence minister Ms Sitharaman has a huge chunk of tasks. Modernisation of the three services, follow-up of many projects related to defence production and agreements on acquisitions already underway, will require relentless pursuit and prodding of the defence ministry's bureaucratic machinery. Her reported intent of daily interactions with the three Services Chiefs may not be possible literally every day, owing to MS Sitharaman and the three of them touring frequently, but even if implemented a couple of times a week/as often as possible, is a step in the right direction.

All three services have urgent requirements of weapons and critical equipment, defence strategic infrastructure development as well as matters related to administration, personnel and their welfare, which in the long run are related to morale of all ranks.

Former Controller General of Defence Accounts and then financial adviser, defence services (retired in May 2016) Sudhansu Mohanty in his exhaustive and incisive comment in the media recently titled "What Nirmala Sitharaman can do to revamp the opaque defence ministry" states: "Incurring expenditure on capital items through revenue procedure (CBRP), which has been going on for about a decade, is a very questionable — even reprehensible — practice and must be stopped. The Comptroller and Auditor General has already flagged this issue. To me, the ideal thing is to merge the Defence Procurement Manual (DPM) and the Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP) into one procedure, the DPP, and with the need for trial for established capital/revenue procurement items eliminated. It will put in place the same rigour for revenue items as for capital acquisition — something completely missing on CBRP items". Among other issues elaborated upon by Mr Mohanty are leakage of government revenue and defence public sector units, ordnance factories and Defence Research and Development Organisation.

With all that Ms Sitharaman has expressed since taking over as the defence minister and with all that needs to be done, given her past record, there seems no doubt that with her sincerity, determination and her fresh approach, much will be achieved to strengthen India's military muscle.

The writer, a retired Army officer, is a defence and security analyst based in New Delhi



Fri, 29 Sept, 2017

Defence Minister to Interact with Troops on Siachen Glacier Today

Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will interact with troops on Siachen glacier, the world's highest battlefield, on Friday. It will be her first visit there and to Kashmir where the operational commanders will brief her about the situation on the Line of Control (LoC) with Pakistan and Line of Actual Control (LAC) facing China in Ladakh region.

Army chief General Bipin Rawat will also be present during the Minister's visit to Kashmir, officials said here adding Sitharaman will also meet Jammu & Kashmir Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti during the two-day tour.

The Defence Minister, who took charge on September 3, is also expected to visit some forward locations in Kashmir and Ladkha, they said adding the present security situation in the State as regards terrorism will also figure in presentations to her. Commanders will also apprise the Minister about the Army's preparedness on the LOC as Pakistan Army continues to violate ceasefire in an effort to push in terrorists from across the LOC into Kashmir valley.

THE ASIAN AGE

Fri, 29 Sept, 2017

IAF's trainer aircraft crashes, no casualties

The pilot of the aircraft is safe, Rachakonda police commissioner Mahesh M. Bhagwat told agencies.

New Delhi: A Kiran MK-II trainer aircraft of the Indian Air Force (IAF) crashed at Keesara near Hyderabad on Thursday, the police said. The accident occurred around 11:45 am in Ankireddypalli village, about 30 km from the Telangana capital, but the pilot ejected safely before the crash.

The pilot of the aircraft is safe, Rachakonda police commissioner Mahesh M. Bhagwat told agencies. A Court of Inquiry (CoI) will ascertain the cause of the crash, an Air Force official in New Delhi said.

"Around 11.45 am today, a Kiran aircraft, which got airborne from Air Force Station Hakimpet in Hyderabad for a routine training mission with a trainee Flight Cadet, crashed. The pilot is safe," the IAF official said.

Built by the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited, the Kiran MK-II is a twin-seater aircraft but at the time of the incident just one pilot was in the aircraft, sources said. Mr Bhagwat said IAF officials took the pilot away and added that the aircraft caught fire after it crashed.

"We called up fire tenders and the fire was extinguished," he said, and added that the accident site was an "isolated place". On March 3, 2010, two pilots had been killed after a Kiran MK-II plane, which was part of the "Sagar Pawan" aerobatic team participating at the India Aviation show, had crashed into a building here.



Fri, 29 Sept, 2017

IAF corporal dies on way to Trishul Peak in Garhwal

Dehradun: An Indian Air Force (IFA) corporal, who was part of a 20-member mountaineering expedition team, was killed while attempting to scale the 22,000 ft Trishul Peak in the western Kumaon Himalayan range, officials said on Thursday.

Two other members of the team were rescued and flown down to Joshimath in an air force helicopter, officials added.

IAF corporal Shantanu Sarkar was part of the expedition team from the IAF's 52nd squadron based in Delhi. He was a resident of North 24-Parganas in West Bengal.

Chamoli district police said Sarkar was critically ill but the real cause of death will be known only after the post-mortem. "The deceased IAF personnel died of illness on way to the peak. Two other expedition

members, Amit Kumar and Rakesh Kale, were brought to Joshimath air force station for medical aid,” said officer Sanjay Kumar.



Fri, 29 Sept, 2017

Army Livestreamed Surgical Strike from Pok to Delhi: Op Head

The Indian Army commandos participating in last year's surgical strike on terrorists' launchpads in Pakistan-controlled Kashmir livestreamed the entire operation back to Army headquarters in Udhampur and Delhi, the officer-in-charge of the operation has revealed.

“Yes, we were getting the images live. I was sitting in the operations room in our command headquarter in Udhampur. I saw the entire operation live how our teams attacked the targets, and the entire live feed was being sent to Delhi Army Headquarters,” former General Officer Commanding-in-Chief of Indian Army's Northern Command (retired) Lieutenant General DS Hooda said in an interview with India TV.

Asked who all in Delhi were watching the live feed, Hooda said: “I don't know who were watching in Delhi. In Udhampur, we were watching and the feed was going to Delhi too.”

However, he refused to disclose as to whether the live streaming was done through satellite or some other technology.

“I can't disclose what technology we used, but the Indian Army has the capability where you can see livestreaming of operation that was going on. We have the capability,” Hooda said.

Giving details of the strike, Hooda said the last team of special forces returned at around 6.30 am.

“Some teams arrived earlier. They had left earlier and had struck at targets soon after midnight, while some other teams went in later and returned late.”

“There was panic in the ranks of Pakistani forces. In some places, they were firing randomly. We had also planned a backup. If any team failed to return, we had teams ready to go in, retrieve and rescue and bring them back,” Hooda, who had planned the strikes, revealed.

The former Lieutenant General also revealed that the government had made up its mind to make an announcement soon after the surgical strike was over.



Fri, 29 Sept, 2017

Long Overdue Operation

Naga insurgents have long crippled development of North-East and needed to be dealt with firmly

The Naga crisis has troubled independent India from day one, seeing ups, downs, violence, splits and compromises. The recent burst of hostilities, this time engineered by the NSCN(K) group, which operates from Myanmar, has its origins in March 2015, when it violated a 14-year-ceasefire, which was part of an agreement with the Indian Government to strike an Army post. As many as 18 soldiers were slaughtered in this strike by the NSCN(K) guerrillas. The Army retaliated in June 2015 with a surgical strike on terror camps operating

within Myanmar territory back then. But this time round, it has restricted its operation along the Indo-Myanmar border area and has inflicted heavy casualties on the guerrilla outfit. Such firm steps to quell secessionist activities hitting national interest were long overdue and, thus, welcome. After Prime Minister Narendra Modi brokered a “historical” pact with the NSCN(IM) for cessation of hostilities and dropping of the demand for a separate nation, and in place, peacefully work for greater autonomy under the Indian Constitution, it should have been in the interest of the Naga people and their dithering leader Khaplang to work peacefully for the region’s development. However, once they chose to strike, a befitting reply by the Indian Army was only correct. In national interest, any kind of secessionist demands anywhere within the nation need to be strictly dealt with, especially in the context of Naxalites who have long been a drain on the Indian economy, peace and manpower. About time, such anti-national outfits scattered in so many States, are brought to book and if that needs an Army intervention in what is considered a crisis to be handled by the civil police, so be it.

The 4.35 am operation comes virtually on the anniversary of the surgical strike against Pakistan which was a success story needing no introduction. That the operation unfolded on the Indo-Myanmar border at a time when the neighbouring country has become the focal point of talks around the Rohingya Muslim crisis being exported to other sub-continental nations is significant. Though India has been quick to clarify that the operation against the Khaplang group insurgents was no statement on its relationship with Myanmar, calling it “a friendly neighbour,” it also signals that the Government will do everything to uphold the nation’s integrity. The Khaplang group, known for its flip-flops vis-a-vis breaking accords with the Government, is the most violent and unscrupulous insurgent outfit working out of terror camps in Myanmar. Even after the death of its leader Khaplang this year, it has continued to pose an enemy problem for the Indian security forces which needed to act against them sooner or later. As a people, the Nagas are scattered all over the North-East — from Manipur, Assam and Meghalaya to Arunachal. They are an integral part of the Indian Union and should behave as such. The border strike may have tanked the sensex but it will be a buoyant step for the Indian troops who have been suffering casualties over the years due to the hit-and-run-to-Myanmar insurgents. In the interest of stability, peace and progress of the entire north-eastern region, it is imperative that insurgency is axed at the earliest and the funds and focus of the Government turn to development.

THE ASIAN AGE

Fri, 29 Sept, 2017

China inducts new stealth fighters

Beijing: In a bid to give its air force an edge in the region, China on Thursday announced commissioning the radar-evading J-20 stealth fighter jets into military service. The flight tests of J-20 jets are being conducted as scheduled, spokesperson for the Ministry

of National Defence Col Wu Qian told a media briefing. The J-20 is China’s fourth-generation medium and long-range fighter jet. It made its maiden flight in 2011 and was first shown to the public at the 11th Airshow China in Zhuhai,

Guangdong Province, in November last year. Its introduction could add a new dimension in the India- China air force balance. Pakistan has already expressed its interest in acquiring it. — *PTI*

Putin heads to Turkey for arms deal

RAZIYE AKKOC and
STUART WILLIAMS
ANKARA, SEPT. 28

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday will meet his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan over talks on Syria and a key weapons deal, hoping to strengthen an increasingly active relationship that has troubled the West.

Despite a regional rivalry that goes back to the Ottoman Empire and the Romanov dynasty, Russia and Turkey have been working closely since a 2016 reconciliation ended a crisis caused by the shooting down of a Russian war plane over Syria.

"Russia and Turkey are cooperating tightly," Putin's spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said ahead of the



Vladimir Putin (left) and
Recep Tayyip Erdogan

one-day working visit by Putin to Ankara.

The two leaders will hold a working dinner before a one-on-one meeting and a press conference at 9:30 pm (1830 GMT) at Erdogan's palace, the Turkish presidency said on its website.

Turkey and Russia have been on opposing sides during the more than six years of war in Syria, with Russia the key backer of President Bashar al-Assad and Turkey supporting rebels

seeking his ouster.

But while Turkey's policy is officially unchanged, Ankara has notably cooled its attacks on the Damascus regime since its cooperation with Russia began to heat up. Both Moscow and Ankara are pushing for the creation of four "de-escalation zones" in Syria, in line with peace talks in Astana, to end the civil war that has raged since 2011. With Moscow's ally Assad now having the upper hand in the conflict, Russia will be hoping Turkey will bring the rebels it has supported into the political process.

Turkey, a NATO member, has signed a deal reportedly worth \$2 billion (1.7 billion euros) to buy S-400 air defence systems from Russia, a move that has shocked its allies

in the alliance.

Economic cooperation is also beginning to flourish, with Russian tourists returning to Turkey and the two countries working on a Black Sea gas pipeline.

Yet analysts say that while both countries share an interest in seeking to discomfort the West by showing off close cooperation, their relationship falls well short of a sincere strategic alliance.

"Ties between Turkey and Russia may appear to be friendly, but they are loaded with contradictions," Pavel Baev and Kemal Kirisci of the Brookings Institution wrote this month. Both Moscow and Ankara are, for now, happy to send a message to the West they are serious about defence cooperation. — AFP

THE HINDU

Fourth gravitational wave detected, with European help

Gravitational waves were predicted by Albert Einstein a century ago as part of his theory of general relativity, but the first hard evidence of their existence came only in 2015, when two U.S. detectors found the first such signal.

A fourth gravitational wave has been detected — this time with help from Italy-based equipment — after two black holes collided, sending ripples through the fabric of space and time, researchers said Wednesday.

Gravitational waves were predicted by Albert Einstein a century ago as part of his theory of general relativity, but the first hard evidence of their existence came only in 2015, when two U.S. detectors found the first such signal.

The latest space-time ripples were detected on August 14, 2017 at 10.30 a.m. GMT (4 p.m. IST) when two giant black holes with masses about 31 and 25 times the mass of the Sun merged about 1.8 billion light-years away.

"The newly produced spinning black hole has about 53 times the mass of our Sun," said a statement from the international scientists at Virgo detector, located at the European Gravitational Observatory (EGO) in

Cascina, near Pisa, Italy. “While this new event is of astrophysical relevance, its detection comes with an additional asset: this is the first significant gravitational wave signal recorded by the Virgo detector.”

The Virgo detector — an underground L-shaped instrument that tracks gravitational waves using the physics of laser light and space — recently underwent an upgrade, and while still less sensitive than its U.S. counterparts, it was able to confirm the same signal.

Known as interferometers, these high-tech underground stations do not rely on light in the sky like a telescope does, but instead sense vibrations in space and can pick up the “chirp” created by a gravitational wave.

“It is wonderful to see a first gravitational-wave signal in our brand new Advanced Virgo detector only two weeks after it officially started taking data,” said Virgo spokesman Jo van den Brand of Nikhef and Vrije Universiteit (VU) University Amsterdam. The space-time ripple was picked up by all three detectors at nearly the same time.

Previously, gravitational waves have been found using two U.S.-based detectors, which are the most sophisticated in the world — known as the Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory (LIGO) detectors in Livingston, Louisiana, and Hanford, Washington.

The first was found in September 2015 and announced to the public in early 2016, a historic achievement that culminated from decades of scientific research. LIGO is funded by the National Science Foundation and operated by the California Institute of Technology (Caltech) and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

The Virgo collaboration includes more than 280 physicists and engineers belonging to 20 different European research groups. “This is just the beginning of observations with the network enabled by Virgo and LIGO working together,” said David Shoemaker, MIT’s spokesman for the LIGO Scientific Collaboration. “With the next observing run planned for Fall 2018 we can expect such detections weekly or even more often.”

Details about the latest discovery will be published in the journal *Physical Review Letters*.