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Press Information Bureau
Government of India

Ministry of Defence

Tue, 02 Apr 2024

Raksha Mantri Addresses the Senior Leadership of Indian Army During Army Commanders' Conference

The Army Commanders' Conference, an apex level biannual event, is being held in New Delhi and was conducted in virtual mode on 28th March and thereafter in physical mode on 01st and 02nd April 2024. During the event, Indian Army's apex leadership comprehensively deliberated upon all aspects of existing security scenarios, situation along the borders, in the hinterland and challenges for the present security apparatus. In addition, the conference also focused on issues pertaining to organisational restructuring, logistics, administration, human resource management, modernisation through indigenisation, induction of Niche technologies and assessment of impact of the various existing global situations. The main highlight of the third day of the conference was the address by the Raksha Mantri, Shri Rajnath Singh, to the senior leadership of the Indian Army, which was preceded by address by CDS, COAS, CNS and CAS as also a brief on the "Technological Infusion and Absorption Roadmap for Indian Army" plans.

The Raksha Mantri reaffirmed the faith of the billion-plus citizens in the Indian Army as one of the most trusted and inspiring organisations in the country. He highlighted the stellar role played by the Army in guarding our borders and fighting terrorism apart from providing assistance to the civil administration in every need of hour. The Raksha Mantri also remarked "The Army is present in every domain from Security, HADR, Medical Assistance to maintaining the stable internal situation in the country. The role of Indian Army is very important in Nation building as also in the overall national development". He reiterated his happiness to be present in the Army Commander's conference and complimented the Army leadership for successfully taking ahead the 'Defence and Security' vision of the Nation to new heights. He also complimented the Indian Army's approach on the infusion and absorption of cutting edge technology.

The Hon'ble Raksha Mantri stressed upon the present complex world situation which effects everyone globally. He stated that "Unconventional and asymmetric warfare, including hybrid war will be part of the future conventional wars. Cyber, information, communication, trade and finance have all become an inseparable part of future conflicts. This necessitates that Armed Forces will have to keep all these facets in consideration while planning and formulating strategies".

On the current situation along the Northern borders, the Hon'ble Raksha Mantri expressed full confidence that while troops are standing firm, the ongoing talks for peaceful resolution will continue and disengagement and de-escalation, is the way forward. The Raksha Mantri

complimented the efforts of BRO, which has led to the quantum improvement of road communication in the borders both Western and Northern, while working under difficult conditions.

Referring to the situation along the Western borders, he complimented the Indian Army's response to cross border terrorism, however the proxy war by the adversary continues. The Hon'ble Raksha Mantri said "I compliment the excellent synergy between the CAPF/ Police forces and the Army in tackling the menace of terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir. The synergised operations in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir are contributing to increased stability in the region and the same should continue".

The Raksha Mantri complimented the forces for the high standard of operational preparedness and capabilities which he has always been experiencing first hand during his visits to forward areas. He also paid tributes to all the brave hearts for making the ultimate sacrifice in the defence of the motherland. He complimented the significant contributions made by the Army in military diplomacy to further our national security interests by creating sustainable cooperative relationships with foreign Armies.

The Hon'ble Raksha Mantri stressed upon the technological advancement taking place in every sphere of our life and applauded the Armed Forces for aptly incorporating them. He appreciated the Army's efforts to develop niche technologies in collaboration with civil industries, including premier educational institutions and thereby progressing towards the aim of ' Modernisation through Indigenisation' or 'Atamnirbharta'. He emphasised that a regular interface of Armed Forces with the emerging technologies is a must. He also remarked that the government is committed in every manner towards the welfare of the Veterans and the Next of Kin of all categories of Battle Casualties and the nation remains indebted to the sacrifices made by vallant soldiers and their family.

He concluded by saying that issues related to "Defence diplomacy, indigenisation, information warfare, defence infrastructure and force modernisation should always be deliberated upon in such a forum. Doctrinal changes whenever required should be made to make the Armed Forces future ready. The recommendation and suggestions made by the senior leadership in such like forum as Commanders Conference should be deliberated upon and be taken to a logical conclusion with midcourse review and modification if required. The Nation is proud of its Army and the Government is committed to facilitate the Army in their forward movement, on the road to reforms and capability modernisation".

<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2016913>

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Tue, 02 Apr 2024

Disengagement, De-escalation Way Forward: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Eastern Ladakh

With the India-China military face-off continuing in eastern Ladakh, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday said the Indian troops are standing "firm" and the ongoing talks between the two sides for a peaceful resolution of the matter will continue as disengagement and de-escalation is the way forward. In an address to the top commanders of the Army, Singh reaffirmed the faith of the billion-plus citizens in the force as one of the "most-trusted and inspiring" organisations in the country.

The Army commanders deliberated extensively on national security challenges along the borders with China and Pakistan and ways to boost the force's overall combat capability.

The defence minister, complimenting the Army leadership for successfully taking ahead the country's "defence and security" vision to new heights, said the role of the force is very important in nation building.

In his remarks, Singh also lauded the Border Roads Organisation (BRO), saying its efforts have led to the "quantum improvement" in road communication along the western and northern frontiers.

On the current situation along the northern borders, Singh expressed full confidence that while the troops are standing firm, the ongoing talks for peaceful resolution will continue and disengagement and de-escalation is the way forward, the defence ministry said in a statement.

The Indian and Chinese troops are locked in a standoff in certain friction points in eastern Ladakh for nearly four years even as the two sides have completed disengagement from several areas following extensive diplomatic and military talks.

Referring to the situation along the borders with Pakistan, Singh complimented the Army's response to cross-border terrorism, adding that the proxy war by the "adversary" continues.

The defence minister complimented the "excellent synergy" between the Central Armed Police Forces, local police and Army in tackling the menace of terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir.

"The synergised operations in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir are contributing to increased stability in the region and the same should continue," he said.

Singh lauded the forces for the high standard of operational preparedness and capabilities, which he said he has always experienced first hand during his visits to forward areas.

Delving into the complex world situation, Singh said it affects everyone globally.

"Unconventional and asymmetric warfare, including hybrid war, will be part of the future conventional wars. Cyber, information, communication, trade and finance have all become an inseparable part of future conflicts," he added.

"This necessitates that the armed forces will have to keep all these facets in consideration while planning and formulating strategies," the defence minister said.

He highlighted the stellar role played by the Army in guarding the country's borders and fighting terrorism, apart from providing assistance to the civil administration in every need of the hour.

"The Army is present in every domain, from security, HADR (humanitarian assistance and disaster relief), medical assistance to maintaining the stable internal situation in the country," he said.

"The role of the Indian Army is very important in nation building as also in the overall national development," he noted. The defence minister complimented the leadership of the Army for successfully taking ahead the country's "defence and security" vision to new heights.

He also hailed the Army's approach on the infusion and absorption of cutting-edge technology.

Singh paid tributes to all the bravehearts for making the ultimate sacrifice in the defence of the motherland.

The Army Commanders' Conference is an apex-level biannual event that is held in April and October every year. The conference is an institutional platform for conceptual-level deliberations, culminating in making important policy decisions for the Army.

The commanders comprehensively deliberated upon all aspects of the existing security scenarios, the situation along the borders and the hinterland and the challenges for the present security apparatus. In addition, the conference also focused on issues pertaining to organisational

restructuring, logistics, administration, human resource management, modernisation through indigenisation, induction of niche technologies and the assessment of the impact of various existing global situations.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/disengagement-de-escalation-way-forward-defence-minister-rajnath-singh-on-eastern-ladakh/articleshow/108975475.cms>



Wed, 03 Apr 2024

Air Force Aircraft to Carry out Landings on Multiple Highways across India

The Indian Air Force (IAF) aircraft will conduct landing and take-off operations at various sites, including highways in Uttar Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir as part of its exercise Gaganshakti, defence officials said on Tuesday.

The aircraft operations will showcase the growing infrastructure prowess of the country, they said, adding that highway stretches are being planned to stretch from where emergency operations can be carried out.

Notably, the three defence services have been developing their capabilities to use dual-use infrastructure in partnership with the Road Transport Ministry.

Earlier, similar missions were conducted in Rajasthan's Barmer, where the transport and fighter assets of the IAF landed on a stretch of highway.

These road stretches can be very useful in case there is a disaster in a nearby area and the IAF transport planes and helicopters can reach the closest affected areas and provide support to the local population. According to defence officials, the Indian Air Force has taken multiple steps towards nation-building, like opening up the civil terminal on the Prayagraj Air Force airfield and allowing the dual use of military infrastructure.

<https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/indian-air-force-fighters-to-carry-out-landings-on-multiple-highways-in-uttar-pradesh-jammu-and-kashmir-2522500-2024-04-03>

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Tue, 02 Apr 2024

IIT Kanpur's C3iHub Launches Cybersecurity Startups to Bolster India's Digital Defence

C3iHub, a National Technology Innovation Hub (TIH) for Advanced Cybersecurity at the Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur (IITK), launched startup cohorts III, IV, and V at Hyatt Regency, New Delhi today. Funded by the Department of Science and Technology (DST) under the NM-ICPS Mission, C3iHub presented 19 startups in the Startup Incubation Program, specializing in specific cybersecurity areas including Application Security, Integrated SOC Solution, Cyber Forensics, Blockchain Technology, UAV Security, IoT Security, and Cyber Insurance.

Under the flagship program of the Startup Incubation Program, C3iHub has provided support to fifty startups across five cohorts that are actively engaged in critical cybersecurity domains such as cyber forensics, application security, blockchain technology, deception technology, threat intelligence, and cyber insurance. Many of these startups have successfully launched and commercialized products, while several others are currently in the process of scaling up their operations.

C3iHub provides a seed grant of Rs 10 lakhs to incubated startups and offers a monthly salary of Rs 50,000 for one founder over two years, resulting in an initial investment of Rs 22 lakhs. The organization aims for at least a 20% success rate among startups after the two-year incubation period. As these startups mature, C3iHub facilitates connections with investors and corporations to aid them in raising capital, fostering the development of a resilient digital infrastructure for India.

Prof. Manindra Agrawal, Project Director C3iHub, said, “Today marks a significant milestone for C3iHub. With the launch of these startups, we have crossed fifty startups in cybersecurity incubated at C3iHub. It signifies the vibrant potential of our ecosystem to innovate and lead in the face of global cybersecurity.”

Abhay Karandikar, Secretary, DST said, “Among the 25 TIH’s in the country, I am delighted that the C3iHub has done exceptionally well. The hub, apart from developing an ecosystem for deep tech, is also working to build capacity in technically skilled manpower to meet not just present but also future needs in the area of cybersecurity. Going further, I urge C3iHub to take core tech further, bring together quantum tech and cybersecurity to prepare for the emergence of technologies such as AI. DST will also be happy to support IIT Kanpur in creating a Tech Park which will bring together start-ups in cybersecurity and sector champions to create a synergy between developers and end-users, and take it to a global scale.”

Lt. General M U Nair, National Cyber Security Coordinator shared his thoughts on the event, “Cyber space is the most exploited and we must ensure that our national security is protected from any possible attack. There is a need for a vibrant cybersecurity ecosystem that will prepare us to face not just present cybersecurity challenges but also future tech advancements. It is here that the cybersecurity startups promise to be the harbingers of change. My congratulations to the entire team of C3iHub in helping these startups with the support of its immense knowledge and experience.”

The TIH is deeply engaged in all facets of cybersecurity, from identifying vulnerabilities in critical cyberphysical systems to creating tools for mitigation. This involves supporting startups and collaborating with industries to commercialize these tools, alongside training the next wave of cybersecurity experts. C3iHub, meanwhile, concentrates on addressing cybersecurity challenges within cyber-physical systems such as critical infrastructures, automotive, and drones.

Its scope encompasses various cybersecurity domains like network security, cryptography, intrusion detection, and deception technology. Startups under its umbrella focus on UAV security, blockchain, intrusion detection, and cyber-physical systems. C3iHub aims to develop security solutions for critical infrastructures while nurturing the growth of cybersecurity entrepreneurs.

In addition to hosting the Launch event, C3iHub presented an exhibition wherein several C3iHub developers as well as C3iHub top-performing startups displayed their technologies like Authentication, Deception Technology, Anti-Drone Technology, Cloud Security, Hardware Security, Blockchain Technology.

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/education/news/iit-kanpurs-c3ihub-launches-cybersecurity-startups-to-bolster-indias-digital-defence/articleshow/108964235.cms>

India's Atmanirbhar Defence Sector

By Sujan Chinoy

India's defence ecosystem has undergone transformations in several key areas in recent years. Key institutional and policy changes have spurred defence indigenisation, domestic capital procurement and defence exports.

In an era of uncertainty, the goals of Atmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India) and Make In India would mitigate risks on account of disruption or manipulation of critical supply chains — the kind of challenges that have constrained Ukraine in its conflict with Russia.

The Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2020 prescribed 50 per cent indigenous content (IC) in procurement contracts. To encourage foreign original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) to set up maintenance and manufacturing facilities in India, a new procurement category — Buy (Global-Manufacture in India) — has been introduced. This will enable ab initio indigenisation of spare parts. The Union Ministry of Defence (MoD) has released several “Positive Indigenisation Lists” that mention items that must be procured only from domestic sources. Nearly 5,000 items currently imported by the Defence Public Sector Units (DPSUs) and the three Services figure in this list.

The Srijan Indigenisation Portal was launched in August 2020. Over 34,000 items currently being imported have been uploaded on the portal — nearly a third of them are already in the process of being indigenised.

Two defence industrial corridors have been established in Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh. These have attracted investments worth Rs 7,000 crore. MoUs for a cumulative potential investments worth over Rs 20,000 crore have also been concluded. In November 2023, the Swedish arms major SAAB announced the first 100 per cent FDI project to manufacture the Carl Gustav M4 rocket system.

There has been laudable progress in building naval platforms. The INS Vikrant aircraft carrier, dedicated to the nation by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in September 2022, is the largest warship built in India's maritime history. It is spawning new technological capabilities across the Indian industry, including SMEs and MSMEs.

The Indian Navy's Warship Design Bureau has launched Project 17A frigates. The INS Vindhyagiri, launched in August 2023, is the latest example of this. There is equal focus on missiles, long-range artillery guns, multi-barrel rocket launchers and tanks, besides advanced radars, sensors and electronic capabilities.

The government recently constituted a committee to undertake a holistic review of the functioning of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO). Building “fit to purpose” domestic capabilities in defence R&D and innovation, commensurate with the challenges of the 21st century, remains the agency's guiding principle.

The Centre has stipulated that a significant portion of the defence capital procurement budget should be diverted to the domestic defence industry. Since 2020-21, the capital acquisition budget for domestic procurement has risen from around 40 per cent of the total capital procurement budget (Rs 52,000 crore) to 75 per cent (Rs 99,223 crore) in 2023-24. Moreover, since 2022-23, 25 per cent of this domestic capital procurement budget has been earmarked for purchases from the private sector.

As a result of these initiatives, the value of India's defence production crossed the Rs 1,00,000 crore mark for the first time in financial year 2022-23 to touch Rs 1,08,684 crore. Defence Public Sector Undertakings accounted for nearly 75 per cent of this.

Significantly, private sector companies accounted for Rs 21,083 crore, about 20 per cent of the total with joint ventures accounting for the rest. The defence production target for 2023-24 is Rs 1,35,000 crore and India expects the value of its defence production to reach Rs 1,75,000 crore by 2025.

The Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX) initiative, launched in 2018, aims to involve industry, including MSMEs, start-ups, individual innovators, R&D institutes and academia.

The iDEX Prime framework under iDEX was launched in 2022 to support start-ups with grants-in-aid up to Rs 10 crore to enable the development of high-end solutions. Funding under the Technology Development Fund (TDF) scheme has been enhanced from Rs 10 crore to Rs 50 crore per project. The DRDO has launched the Dare to Dream Innovation contest to support start-ups and innovation. A quarter of the defence R&D budget in 2023-24 has also been earmarked for academia and private industry.

In 2019, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) placed India among the top 25 arms exporters (at 23rd position) for the first time. India has set a defence exports target of Rs 35,000 crore by 2025.

Equally path-breaking is PM Modi's consistent effort to craft policies that provide equal career opportunities to women in the armed forces. This will help the forces in tapping a large pool of latent talent.

The government's Nari Shakti initiative has played a major role in the transformation of the nation, especially the armed forces. Sainik Schools, which have long served as grassroots institutions for recruitment in the armed forces, are no longer a male bastion. The doors of the National Defence Academy have also been thrown open to women. The number of women officers has risen sharply in recent years.

The goal of a Viksit Bharat (developed India) by 2047 requires the defence sector to be more resilient and self-reliant. The transformation underway in the defence industrial complex has set the stage for multiple stakeholders to rally and promote domestic technological innovation while cementing strategic partnerships around the world. The day is not far when India will become an integral part of the global defence value chains.

<https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/atmanirbhar-bharat-indias-defence-sector-defence-transformation-defence-ecosystem-9247668/>

Business Standard

Wed, 03 Apr 2024

NATO Proposes \$100 Billion Package over Five Years to Aid Ukraine

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg is proposing to establish a fund of allied contributions worth \$100 billion over five years for Ukraine as part of a package for alliance leaders to sign off when they gather in Washington in July.

Allies are still discussing Stoltenberg's proposal and any mechanics of the accounting, including whether to factor in bilateral aid to Ukraine into the overall sum, according to people familiar with the discussions.

The proposal, which needs approval from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's 32 members, is likely to change before leaders agree, said the people, who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

NATO didn't immediately respond to a request for comment. Spokespeople for the White House National Security Council didn't immediately comment.

As part of the package, NATO could also take over the operational duties of the US-led Ukraine Contact Defense Group, which coordinates weapons deliveries by about 50 countries to Ukraine, said the people. With NATO's supreme allied commander, General Chris Cavoli, in charge, such a step could protect the structure from any political change that may result after the November elections.

The prospect of Donald Trump's return has triggered increased talk among allies about what Europe should do to ensure the US is invested in transatlantic security. It's also raised concerns among European officials that Trump could withdraw US aid to Ukraine in light of comments that he'd seek to end the war in a day.

If allies back Stoltenberg's proposal, a move by NATO to take a more active role in aid for Ukraine would mark a paradigm shift for the military alliance, which has previously distanced itself from those efforts to avoid being potentially drawn into a wider war with Russia.

Yet, institutionalizing NATO's support could signal their commitment to Ukraine for the long term, at a time when Russian President Vladimir Putin is betting he can outlast the Kyiv's allies — especially as members are unlikely to extend a formal invitation to Ukraine to join the alliance when leaders gather in early July in Washington.

While having NATO lead discussions about aid to Ukraine might insulate it from US politics, it could subject the discussions to infighting between the alliance's 32 members, including with Turkey and Hungary taking more nuanced stances in support for Ukraine.

The discussions come as NATO foreign ministers meet in Brussels on Wednesday and Thursday to celebrate the alliance's 75th anniversary on April 4th. In addition to support for Ukraine, ministers are also likely to discuss who will succeed Stoltenberg when his term ends in October.

The US and other allies had hoped to wrap up the discussions in time for the ministers' meeting and confirm Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte for the role. But Romania recently surprised allies by putting forward its own candidate, President Klaus Iohannis, meaning the decision is likely to be delayed, even as Rutte has won the backing of a large majority of the alliance.

Some eastern European countries had raised concerns about geographical representation within the alliance, with recent NATO chiefs hailing from either Nordic nations or the Netherlands. But even Baltic leaders are now throwing their weight behind Rutte.

Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas on Tuesday said in a post on social media platform X that she backs Rutte for NATO's secretary general. Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda said at a press conference in Vilnius that he too had endorsed the Dutch leader.

https://www.business-standard.com/external-affairs-defence-security/news/nato-proposes-100-billion-package-over-five-years-to-aid-ukraine-124040201391_1.html

Business Standard

Tue, 02 Apr 2024

Taiwan Detects 30 Chinese Military Aircraft, 9 Navy Vessels around Nation

Taiwan Defence Ministry detected 30 Chinese military aircraft and nine navy vessels operating around its nation between Tuesday 6 am and Wednesday 6 am, Taiwan Ministry of National Defence said.

It added that 20 Chinese aircraft entered its northern middle line and Taiwan's southwest air defence identification zone (ADIZ).

"30 PLA aircraft and 9 PLAN vessels operating around Taiwan were detected up until 6 a.m. (UTC+8) today. 20 of the aircraft entered Taiwan's northern, middle line, and SW ADIZ. #ROCArmedForces have monitored the situation and employed appropriate force to respond," Taiwan Ministry of National Defence posted on X.

Taiwan tracked seven Chinese naval vessels and six military aircraft around the nation amid escalating cross-strait tensions on Tuesday, Taiwan News reported.

In an official post on 'X,' Taiwan's Ministry of National Defence (MND) said, "6 PLA aircraft and 7 PLAN vessels around Taiwan were detected by 6 am (UTC+8) today. 2 of the aircraft crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait. #ROCArmedForces have monitored the situation and employed appropriate forces to respond."

Notably, in March, Taiwan tracked 359 Chinese military aircraft and 204 naval vessels, according to Taiwan News.

Since September 2020, China has increased its use of gray zone tactics by incrementally increasing the number of military aircraft and naval ships operating around Taiwan.

Gray zone tactics are defined as "an effort or series of efforts beyond steady-state deterrence and assurance that attempts to achieve one's security objectives without resorting to direct and sizable use of force."

Meanwhile, the Taiwanese military condemned the filming by drones by Chinese netizens on the outlying island of Erdan near Kinmen on March 31, Taiwan News reported.

Some reports circulated online suggesting that unmanned aerial vehicles had captured footage of military movements on the Taiwanese-held island, within view of the Chinese city of Xiamen.

The Kinmen Defence Command said local officers could take appropriate measures based on the threat level the drones posed.

The military blamed some Chinese netizens for the provocative behaviour, which could easily escalate into a serious incident.

https://www.business-standard.com/world-news/taiwan-detects-30-chinese-military-aircraft-9-navy-vessels-around-nation-124040300174_1.html



Press Information Bureau
Government of India

Ministry of Science & Technology

Tue, 02 Apr 2024

Indian National Science Academy (INSA) and National Centre for Good Governance (NCGG) Jointly Organises the 2nd Leadership Development in Science & Technology (LEADS) Programme-2024 from 1-7 April 2024

The programme seeks to create robust science ecosystem to nurture and empower future leaders in the field of Science and Technology

The Indian National Science Academy (INSA) and the National Centre for Good Governance (NCGG) are jointly organizing the 2nd INSA-NCGG Leadership Development Program in Science and Technology (LEADS) at New Delhi from 1-7, April 2024. This pioneering programme seeks to nurture and empower future leaders in the field of science and technology, fostering visionary leadership and advancing scientific excellence in India. The participants include professors/scientists selected from various institutions, laboratories/ Universities, of DST, DBT, CSIR, ICMR, DAE, ICAR, NITs, IITs, IISERs, MoES, ISRO etc. The National Centre for Good Governance (NCGG) is an apex institution for governance-related training, research, and consultancy. It aims to enhance the capabilities of individuals and organizations involved in governance and public administration in India. The Indian National Science Academy (INSA) is a premier scientific organization that promotes and recognizes excellence in scientific research and fosters scientific cooperation within India and globally.

LEADS brings together the expertise and resources of INSA and NCGG, institutions dedicated to quality scientific pursuit and good governance, respectively. The programme will impart required leadership skills to the participants for the pursuit of excellence in leadership, administration, team building, infrastructure development, institution building, financial planning, innovation, incubation, HR management, addressing gender-related/diversity issues, understanding governance structure, international relationships, handling interpersonal relationships, etc.

The inaugural session of LEADS- April, 2024 was held on 1 April 2024 in the presence of Sh. V Srinivas, Secretary, Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances and Department of Pensions and Pensioners Welfare and Director General of NCGG. Prof. Ashutosh Sharma, President INSA and Prof. Indranil Manna, Vice-President, INSA along with distinguished experts, and scientists from various academic disciplines. Prof. Ashutosh Sharma, during the program shed light on various components, intricacies, and objectives of the LEADS program, illuminating its potential benefits for the participants' future endeavours. He inspired the participants, instilling in them a heightened sense of anticipation and enthusiasm for the opportunities that lie ahead. Speaking at the event, Shri V Srinivas, highlighted the significance of cultivating effective leadership in science and technology, emphasizing the critical role it plays in driving societal

progress and innovation. The participants expressed their enthusiasm and gratitude for the opportunity to engage with esteemed speakers and experts, as well as network with like-minded peers from various institution across the country. LEADS is a testament to the commitment of INSA and NCGG towards building a robust ecosystem for scientific leadership and governance excellence. The programme will conclude on 7th April which will encompass a series of sessions, workshops, and mentoring opportunities, equipping participants with the skills, knowledge, and networks necessary to address complex challenges and drive transformative change in the realm of science and technology.

<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2016995>



Press Information Bureau Government of India

Ministry of Science & Technology

Tue, 02 Apr 2024

Kodaikanal Solar Observatory Celebrates 125 Years of Studying the Sun

The 125th anniversary of the iconic Kodaikanal Solar Observatory (KSO) was celebrated on 1 April 2024 by Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA), an autonomous institute of the Department of Science and Technology (DST), to remember the history of KSO, felicitate its scientists, and honour its legacy was a milestone for astronomy in India. The KSO houses a digital repository of 1.2 lakh digitised solar images and thousands of other images of the Sun recorded every day since the start of the 20th century.

A.S. Kiran Kumar, former Chairman of ISRO and Chairperson of the Governing Council of IIA then unveiled the KSO 125 logo for the anniversary celebrations along with a booklet detailing the history and the research highlights of the Observatory.

Established on 1 April 1899 by the British, the Observatory has one of the longest continuous daily records of the Sun in the world, and this unique database has been digitised and is publicly available for astronomers from across the globe.

Starting with these celebrations, IIA has planned a number of events over the coming months to highlight the Observatory's rich history, its diverse achievements, and its ongoing research. which in turn, arose from the Madras Observatory established in 1792. Currently, KSO is operational as a field station under the Indian Institute of Astrophysics, which is an autonomous institution under the Department of Science and Technology.

The Director of IIA, Prof. Annapurni Subramaniam, highlighted the legacy of the observatory and how more than a century of pursuit of knowledge required continuous innovation through multiple generations of technology while transferring skills through the generations of scientists as well. Prof. Siraj Hasan, former Director of IIA and a solar physicist talked about the discovery of the Evershed Effect, an effect observed in sunspots due to radial flow of gas, in 1909 at the observatory. S. Seetha, former Director of Space Science Program Office of ISRO underlined that school and college textbooks need to talk about the KSO to increase awareness among students about its uniqueness.

1st April is also celebrated by Indian Institute of Astrophysics as its Foundation Day, commemorating when it was constituted as an institution under the Department of Science & Technology in 1971. The Foundation Day Lecture for 2024 was delivered by Shri A.S. Kiran Kumar from Kodaikanal on the "Indian Space Program", where he sketched its history starting with the initial vision of Sarabhai and others of using space technology for socio-economic development of the country, including the unique programs for remote education, providing information to farmers and fishing community, and for disaster warning. He also spoke about the progress made in various fields of remote sensing, mapping, and communications highlighting the technological challenges that were overcome for the successful Chandrayaan 3 mission, and the future with Gaganyaan as well.

The event brought into focus how the Kodaikanal Solar Observatory bears testament to more than a century and half of scientists deciphering the Sun from Indian soil, starting with chasing eclipses, discovering Helium in 1868, to understanding the plasma process in the Sun and the production of prominences and flares. The Visible Emission Line Coronagraph onboard the recently launched Aditya-L1 that was assembled at CREST, IIA and the proposed National Large Solar Telescope in Ladakh led by IIA, continue to build on this rich legacy.

<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2016952>



Tue, 02 Apr 2024

"Pioneering Gaganyatri": ISRO Chief Applauds India's only Astronaut

Bharat is still "saare jahan se accha (best in the world)", said the country's very first cosmonaut Rakesh Sharma, who is celebrating the 40th anniversary of that historic flight. Closely connected to the country's fresh effort to put four cosmonauts in space, Mr Sharma, who is now 75 years old, said he would love to take another flight, but only as a "tourist".

"There was too much work. I just want to put my nose on the window (this time) and enjoy the sights of Mother Earth from space," he told NDTV's Science Editor Pallava Bagla in an exclusive interview.

Today, as India is preparing for its maiden human space flight as part of Mission Gaganyaan, the Indian Space Research Organisation or ISRO is also looking at that golden moment 40 years ago.

"Squadron Leader Rakesh Sharma's journey to space not only inspired Bharat but also symbolized the boundless potential of human endeavour," said S Somanath, the chairman of the space research organisation, who was 21 years old at the time.

"On this 40th anniversary of historic space flight, let us take a moment to honour his remarkable achievement and the indelible mark he left on Indian space exploration," he added.

History was made on April 3, 1984, when Squadron Leader Rakesh Sharma lifted off on a Soviet rocket and became India's first "Gaganyatri" -- a term the country has made official. He stayed on the Soviet space station for 7 days and 21 hours.

His conversation with then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi --beamed into every house by Doordarshan -- had thrilled the nation. To her question "Upar se Bharat kaisa lag raha hai (How does India look from up there)" he had responded with the famous line penned by Alama Iqbal,

"Saare jahan se accha". Mr Sharma told NDTV today that the line was not rehearsed at all. He used to sing the legendary song in school so it came naturally.

ISRO is now hoping to send one of four astronaut designates into space from Sriharikota as part of its Mission Gaganyaan. The rocket would be Indian and as Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "This time, the countdown will be ours too".

Group Captain Ravish Malhotra, who trained alongside Mr Sharma and was a standby cosmonaut, never flew into space. Now 81 years old, he went on to help create one of India's most vibrant aerospace companies -- the Dynamatic Technologies in Bengaluru.

Speaking of him, Mr Sharma said, "I had the good fortune of being selected to go up in space. I wish to emphasize that it was sheer good fortune because between my colleague Ravish Sir and myself, I can lay claim to no special quality that was present only in me and not him".

Mr Sharma now helps ISRO train the four astronaut designates for the Gaganyaan Mission.

Mr Sharma had trained in yoga before his flight and performed it while in the near zero gravity condition. The practice had earned him the moniker "World's first Antriksh Yogi".

"Purists will find the yoga I performed as naive. But doing it in weightless condition is not easy and a quality harness is required to hold the Yogi in space," he said.

Sources in ISRO said yoga is now part of the routine of the "Fabulous four" as the Gaganyatri designates are often called.

Mr Somanath said Mr Sharma has been the "supporter, promoter and advisor for development of Gaganyaan".

"He continues to support ISRO in many ways to develop the human space flight capability. He remains a pioneering Gaganyatri for India, as the four candidates follow in his footsteps as part of Mission Gaganyaan," he added

Mr Sharma said he eagerly awaits the day when he will get the company of an Indian in that elite club of "Universe Gazers".

<https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/pioneering-gaganyatri-isro-chief-applauds-indias-only-astronaut-5360851>

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