

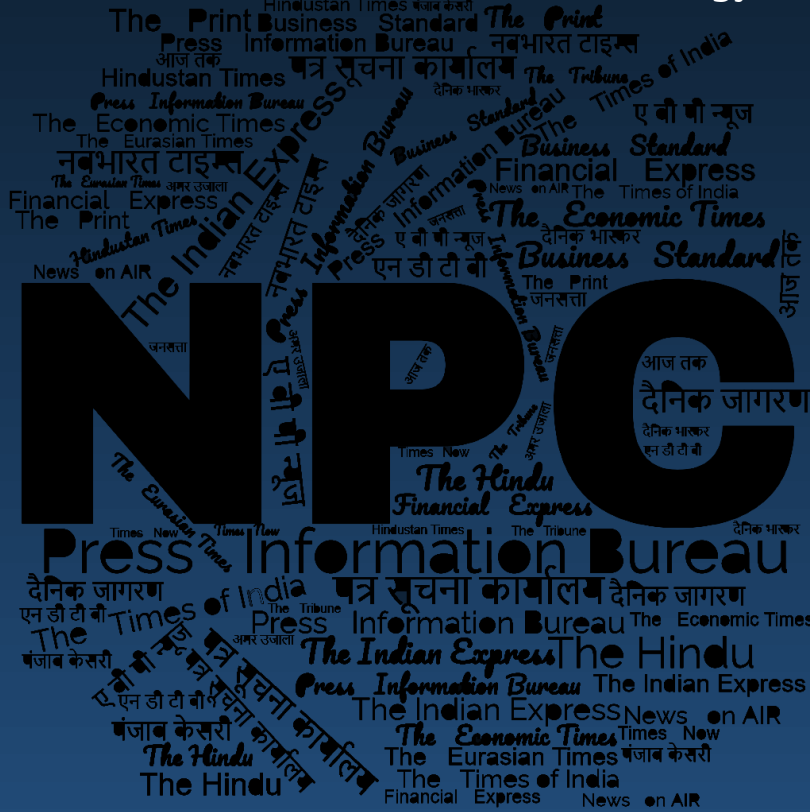
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समाचार पत्रों से चयित अंश Newspapers Clippings

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Press Information Bureau
Government of India

Ministry of Defence

Fri, 26 Apr 2024

Indian Air Force Ushers in Digital Transformation with DigiLocker Integration

Indian Air Force (IAF) embarked on a transformative digital journey by integrating with the DigiLocker platform, a flagship initiative under the Digital India programme, here on April 26, 2024. In a ceremonial event held at Air Headquarters, Vayu Bhawan, the IAF and Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) signed the momentous Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to leverage DigiLocker's secure and accessible document repository services.

This pioneering integration will revolutionize the way critical service documents of IAF personnel, both serving and retired, are issued, accessed, and verified digitally. By harnessing the power of cutting-edge technology, the IAF reaffirms its commitment to data security, operational efficiency, and seamless access to information.

Key Highlights:

Authorized IAF departments and divisions will now be able to seamlessly upload digital records, certificates, and vital documents to the national DigiLocker repository, ensuring secure storage and easy accessibility. IAF officers will have direct access to their crucial documents, such as the Certificate of Service (COS) and Service Book Officers (SBO), through their personal DigiLocker wallets, enabling convenient retrieval and verification.

The integration with DigiLocker will streamline various processes within the IAF, including the Agniveer Vayu recruitment, where candidate's academic document verification will be conducted digitally, enhancing transparency and credibility.

The MoU was signed between Air vice Marshal Philip Thomas, ACAS (PO), Indian Air Force, and Shri Akash Tripathi, President & CEO, NeGD, MeitY, marking a collaborative effort towards digital empowerment.

Speaking on the occasion, Shri S Krishnan, Secretary, Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology, lauded this initiative as "a watershed moment in India's digital transformation journey, catalyzing governance through technological empowerment of citizens and the armed forces alike".

With over 269 million registered users and a staggering 6.73 billion issued documents, DigiLocker is rapidly emerging as a national standard for digital document exchange platform.

The IAF's integration with DigiLocker signifies a significant stride towards comprehensive digital transformation, aligning with the nation's technological prowess and the armed forces' modernization efforts.

<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2018959>



Press Information Bureau
Government of India

Ministry of Defence

Fri, 26 Apr 2024

SCO Defence Ministers' Meeting in Kazakhstan Endorses 'One Earth, One Family, One Future'

**Defence Secretary reiterates India's steadfast commitment towards maintaining peace,
stability & security in SCO region**

Calls for adopting zero-tolerance approach towards terrorism

Defence Secretary Shri Giridhar Aramane participated in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Defence Ministers' meeting in Astana, Kazakhstan on April 26, 2024. During the meeting, a protocol was signed by the Defence Ministers of all SCO Member States. A Joint Communiqué was issued after the meeting, in which the SCO Defence Ministers agreed, amongst other initiatives, to developing the idea of 'One Earth, One Family, One Future', which is rooted in the ancient Indian philosophy of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam'.

At the meeting, the Defence Secretary reiterated India's steadfast commitment towards maintaining peace, stability and security in the SCO region. He emphasised the need to adopt a zero-tolerance approach towards terrorism in all its forms for prosperity and development of the SCO Member States. Shri Giridhar Aramane mentioned about India's long-standing proposal of Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism at the United Nations. He also highlighted the concept of 'Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR)', proposed by India for the Indo-Pacific.

<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2018926>



Press Information Bureau
Government of India

Ministry of Defence

Sun, 28 Apr 2024

Chief of Defence Staff Gen Anil Chauhan Concludes his Official Visit to France

CDS Visit reaffirms long-standing strategic partnership between India & France

Chief of Defence Staff, General Anil Chauhan concluded a comprehensive visit to France, which has reaffirmed the continued long-standing strategic partnership between India and France, and further reinforcing the bilateral Defence Cooperation between the two nations. The interactions of

CDS with Mr Patrick Pailloux, Director of Civil & Military Cabinet of the Minister of the French Armed Forces, and Lt Gen Vincent Giraud, Chief of Military Cabinet of the Minister of the Armed Forces at the apex level and also with his counterpart, General Thierry Burkhard (CEMA) have enabled exchange of views on areas of common interests and mutual security concerns.

Deliberations at France's Directorate General of Armament for enhancing the exchange of high-end dual-use technologies followed by interactions with the top leadership of the French Defence industry, including Dassault, Safran and Naval Groups, and Thales Alenia Space, towards futuristic capacity building of the Indian Armed Forces, would provide an impetus to indigenisation.

The exchanges at the French Land Forces Command (CFT), the French Space Command (CDE), and the School of Military Studies (Ecole Militaire), while providing India's point of view on security challenges, have also provided opportunities for enhancing defence collaboration in space, modernisation initiatives and also augmenting bilateral training between both nations.

The CDS also paid tributes at the War Memorials of Neuve-Chapelle and Villers-Guislain, to the extraordinary bravery of soldiers of the Indian Expeditionary Force who fought on the Western Front during the First World War, towards enhancing peace and tranquility in the region. These memorials stand testimony to the long-standing Indo-French relationship.

The India-France Strategic Partnership has gathered significant momentum over time and has now evolved into an even closer and multifaceted relationship that spans diverse areas of cooperation.

<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2019044>

The Tribune

Mon, 29 Apr 2024

CDS Eyes High-tech Arms, Systems from France to Boost Military Power

Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) Gen Anil Chauhan during his recent visit to France sought enhanced exchange of high-end dual-use — military and civilian — technologies.

This came up during the deliberations at France's Directorate General of Armament, the Ministry of Defence said today, adding that the visit of the CDS has culminated.

The CDS also had interactions with the top leadership of the French defence industry, including Dassault, Safran and Naval Groups and Thales Alenia Space, towards futuristic capacity building of the Indian armed forces.

Meets top executives of defence majors

With a view to building futuristic capabilities of the Indian armed forces, CDS Gen Anil Chauhan interacted with top executives of several French defence majors, including Dassault Aviation, Safran and Naval Group, during his recent visit to France

Gen Chauhan also held wide-ranging talks with senior civil and military leadership of France on ways to bolster the military cooperation between the armed forces of the two countries

Dassault is the maker of Rafale fighter jets, Safran is already making helicopter engines in collaboration with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited and Naval Group is making the Scorpene class of submarines in collaboration with Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited at Mumbai. The MoD said the interaction between the CDS and the French military leadership has enabled exchange of

views on areas of common interests and mutual security concerns. The CDS met Director of Civil and Military Cabinet of the Minister of the French Armed Forces Patrick Pailloux; Chief of Military Cabinet of the Minister of the Armed Forces Lt Gen Vincent Giraud and his French counterpart General Thierry Burkhard.

General Chauhan also met the French Land Forces Command, the French Space Command, and the School of Military Studies (Ecole Militaire). These interactions provided opportunities for enhancing defence collaboration in space, modernisation initiatives and also augmenting bilateral training between both nations. The CDS also paid tributes at the War Memorials of Neuve-Chapelle and Villers-Guislain, to the bravery of soldiers of the British Indian Army that fought on the Western Front during the First World War (1914-18).

<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/india/cds-eyes-high-tech-arms-systems-from-france-to-boost-military-power-615727>

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Mon, 29 Apr 2024

Army, IAF Conduct Successful Airdrop of Mechanised Platform

A joint operation of Army and Indian Air Force (IAF) conducted successful airdrop of a mechanised platform from a C-17 aircraft at Mahajan field firing range in Bikaner on Saturday.

The exercise involved deployment of an indigenously developed 32-feet type V platform, specially designed to facilitate airdrop of heavy mechanised equipment such as mechanised platforms at the firing range. A defence official said, "In a joint demonstration of seamless operational collaboration, a C-17 aircraft of IAF, in conjunction with the Army and ADRDE, flawlessly airdropped an Army mechanised platform rigged over an indigenised platform of ADRDE at a drop zone in the western sector. This remarkable feat demonstrated the operational prowess of IAF's air mobility fleet and proved the capability & reliability of domestically developed platforms."

According to sources, it was a challenge before the army to provide heavy military equipment to the soldiers at the hills and deserts during the war. In such situation, with the help of IAF planes, heavy equipment is airdropped. When they are dropped there was a danger of equipment getting damaged or the enemies taking it away as it never used to fall at the accurate target. In such situation, this air drop technique is used. A heavy platform was first connected with the parachute and then dropped, which fell safely at the accurate place.

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/jaipur/army-iaf-conduct-successful-airdrop-of-mechanised-platform/articleshow/109674282.cms>

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Sun, 28 Apr 2024

Rampage Missiles Inducted by Indian Air Force, Navy; Boost to Long-range Precision Strikes

The Indian Air Force (IAF) has significantly bolstered its air combat capabilities with the induction of the Rampage long-range supersonic air-to-ground missiles. These missiles, capable of striking

targets at approximately 250 kilometers, have been integrated into the IAF's fleet of Russian-origin aircraft, including the Su-30 MKI and MiG-29 fighters, as well as the Jaguar fighter jets.

Boost to Indian Navy's Firepower

Not limited to the IAF, the Indian Navy has also welcomed the Rampage missiles into its arsenal, particularly for the MiG-29K naval fighter jets. This addition enhances the navy's capability to engage and neutralize high-value targets such as communication centers and radar stations.

Procurement Under Emergency Powers

The procurement of the Rampage missiles was part of the emergency powers granted by the Defence Ministry to the armed forces, enabling them to equip themselves with critical weapons and equipment following the 2020 standoff with China. These missiles offer a longer range than the Spice-2000s, which were used in the Balakot air strikes in 2019.

Integration with Su-30 MKI and Future Prospects

The successful integration of the Rampage missiles with the Su-30 MKI has significantly enhanced the Russian aircraft fleet's firepower. This integration allows for the firing of multiple long-range air-to-ground missiles, including the BrahMos supersonic missiles with a strike range of over 400 kilometers. Furthermore, the IAF is considering the possibility of producing the Rampage missiles under the Make in India program, potentially leading to their large-scale induction.

Other Recent Developments

In addition to the Rampage missiles, the IAF recently tested the ROCKS (Crystal Maze-2) missile in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands territory. This air-launched ballistic missile successfully hit its target in trials conducted approximately a fortnight ago, showcasing the IAF's commitment to enhancing its capabilities through the acquisition of cutting-edge weaponry.

About the Rampage Missile

The Rampage missile is a long-range, supersonic, air-to-ground, seekerless, precision strike missile developed by Israel Aerospace Industries and Israeli Military Industries Systems. It is designed for missions aimed at destroying high-quality, well-protected targets such as communication and command centers, air force bases, maintenance centers, and infrastructure.

Key Features of the Rampage Missile:

Length: 4.7 meters (15.4 feet)

Weight: 570 kilograms

Speed: Supersonic, making it difficult to intercept

Range: Over 190 miles

Payload: 150 kilograms of explosives

Warhead: Blast fragmentation or general-purpose

Guidance: GPS/INS navigation with anti-jamming capabilities

Weather Capability: Operates in any weather conditions, day or night

The induction of the Rampage missiles into the IAF and Indian Navy marks a significant advancement in India's defense capabilities, further strengthening its ability to protect its sovereignty and national interests.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/indian-air-force-navy-fighter-aircraft-fleets-get-rampage-missile-boost/articleshow/109649040.cms>

AI-enabled Drones to Inspect IAF Jet Engines

The Indian Air Force (IAF) is developing an artificial intelligence-based drone system to carry out inspection of aircraft engines that would replace the conventional manual methods of carrying out such checks.

The system would consist of high-resolution cameras mounted on a mini- or micro-drone, imaging software and machine learning algorithms to detect, identify and classify defects like cracks, corrosion, dents, distortion and damage on external and, to some extent, internal components.

According to IAF officers, the present procedures of aero-engine inspection is labour intensive, time consuming and prone to error.

The new system, being developed under the aegis of the Maintenance Command, seeks to overcome the drawbacks of the existing methods. The drone will be used for fixed-wing aircraft as well as helicopters. Air intake ducts, exhaust nozzles, engine hubs, turbine blades, propellers and rotors are among components that can be inspected by the drone.

Inspection of aero engines is a critical aspect of flight safety and reliability of an aircraft. Besides engines being routinely checked both before and after a flight, the IAF has a structured programme for carrying out inspection and overhaul depending upon the periodicity, flight hours or complaints of malfunction.

Making use of tech

Apart from combat, surveillance and intelligence gathering, the IAF is introducing various types of drones for automating other routine tasks

<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/india/ai-enabled-drones-to-inspect-iaf-jet-engines-615750>



Indian Navy Comes to Tanker's Aid after Houthi Missile Attack

The Indian Navy has guided a Panama-flagged crude oil tanker with 30 crew members including 22 Indians out of troubled waters after the vessel came under missile attack from Houthi militants.

Indian Navy destroyer INS Kochi responded after the attack on MV Andromeda Star, on April 26, officials said, adding all crew members are safe.

The US Central Command said Iranian-backed Houthi militants launched three anti-ship ballistic missiles from Yemen into the Red Sea in the vicinity of merchant vessel Maisha and MV Andromeda Star.

MV Andromeda Star is a Panaman-flagged and Seychelles-operated vessel.

The vessel reported minor damage, the US Central Command said.

“A mission deployed Indian Naval destroyer INS Kochi responded to a maritime security incident involving the attack on Panama-flagged crude oil tanker MV Andromeda Star on April 26,” the Indian Navy said.

The vessel was intercepted by the Indian Navy ship and an aerial recce involving a helicopter was undertaken to assess the situation, it said.

An Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) team of the Navy was also deployed to carry out "residual risk assessment", the Navy said in a statement.

"A total of 30 crew including 22 Indian nationals are reported to be safe and the vessel is continuing its scheduled transit to the next port," it said.

The swift action of the Indian Navy ship reiterates the commitment and resolve of the Indian Navy to safeguarding seafarers passing through the region," it added.

The fresh incident comes amid growing global concerns over attacks on various commercial vessels in the Red Sea by Houthi militants.

In the last few weeks, the Indian Navy has extended assistance to a number of merchant vessels in the Western Indian Ocean following attacks on them.

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/indian-navy-comes-to-tankers-aid-after-houthi-missile-attack/article68118224.ece>



Sat, 27 Apr 2024

Germany Lifts Curbs on Sale of Small Arms to India as ‘Exception’

Germany has recently lifted restrictions on the sale of small arms to India as an exception to the country reflecting the growing strategic and military ties between the two countries, sources privy to the development said Friday.

Germany had earlier put restrictions over the sale of small arms to non-NATO countries. However, the latest move to provide an exemption to India will pave the way for the sale of small arms from Germany to the Indian military and state police forces.

As per diplomatic sources, Germany has permitted the National Security Guard (NSG) to buy spare parts and accessories for MP5 submachine guns in its inventory earlier this month.

It is Heckler & Koch, the German firm, that makes the MP5 submachine guns that are currently in use by the NSG and Indian Navy’s marine commandos (MARCOS).

As per sources, Germany has also significantly eased its export licensing rules thus sanctioning several Indian requests over the last month. Earlier, too, 95 per cent of Indian requests — except for small arms — were cleared, but the process was time consuming, prompting Germany to ease the process.

Talking about growing ties between India and Germany as strategic and like-minded partners, the sources spoke about the focus on the freedom of navigation in international waters, the right of passage and other maritime rights and obligations in accordance with the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and other principles of international law and commonality in foreign policy objectives.

One diplomatic source also spoke about the increased engagement between the Indian and the German military, citing examples of the scheduled multinational air exercise Tarang Shakti in August this year wherein the German Air Force, for the first time, will be participating in large numbers with several fighter jets and will also display the A-400M transport aircraft made by aircraft manufacturer Airbus.

The Indian Air Force is looking for Medium Transport Aircraft (MTA) with a carrying capacity of 18 to 30 tonnes as a replacement for its AN-32s, eliciting interest from several global manufacturers. Additionally, in October end, two ships from Germany—likely a frigate and a tanker—will visit India as part of a larger deployment and will participate in some sea manoeuvres with the Indian Navy.

Germany is also in talks with India over providing engines for India's future light tanks programme. This is, however, at an initial stage and is under consideration.

On the sale of six advanced conventional submarines to India for the Navy's P-75I procurement programme for submarines, sources said a proposal for a government-to-government agreement between India and Germany is being examined. Earlier this month, an Indian Navy team visited Germany to inspect the Air Independent Propulsion System (AIP), offered by Germany. The team will inspect the AIP system of Spanish Navantia, which is also another contender for the submarine programme.

<https://indianexpress.com/article/india/germany-lifts-curbs-on-sale-of-small-arms-to-india-as-exception-9293052/>

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Mon, 29 Apr 2024

China Continues LAC Infrastructure Build-up 4 Years into Face-off, Shows Latest Sat Imagery

Four years into the face-to-face military confrontation in eastern Ladakh, which also triggered tensions all along the Line of Actual Control, there has been no let-up in the way China continues to build border infrastructure and dual-use 'Xiaokang' villages, strengthen military positions and deploy additional aircraft at its air-bases facing India.

Latest satellite imagery, intelligence reports and other inputs show this ongoing Chinese activity in all the three sectors of the 3,488-km LAC, stretching from Ladakh to Arunachal Pradesh, defence and security establishment sources told TOI.

"People's Liberation Army (PLA) is relentlessly consolidating its military positions and support infrastructure in various depth and staging areas along the LAC, including near the buffer zones created after troop disengagements in eastern Ladakh," a source said.

China, for instance, recently completed construction of a road from the north of Samzungling to the Galwan Valley, providing the PLA with a 15-km shorter alternate axis to rapidly build-up troops in the area.

A no-patrol buffer zone was created around Patrolling Point-14 in Galwan Valley three weeks after the violent clash in which 20 Indian soldiers and an unspecified number of Chinese troops were killed there on June 15, 2020. Similarly, sources said, PLA has been progressively strengthening military and transport infrastructure to the rear of the other buffer zones on both banks of Pangong

Tso, including the Kailash range, and Gogra-Hot Springs, all of which have largely come up in areas that India considers its own territory.

PLA has also been focussing on last-mile connectivity through roads, bridges, tunnels and helipads to its forward positions, while also constructing new bunkers, camps, underground shelters, artillery positions, radar sites and ammunition dumps in other stretches of the LAC. “This increased PLA activity is especially being seen in the eastern sector, across Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh and Naku La in north Sikkim,” another source said.

India, of course, continues to match the PLA with “mirror military deployments”, while it has also majorly cranked up infrastructure and capability development along the frontier, as earlier reported by TOI.

China has also offset some of its air combat disadvantage due to high-altitude terrain constraints by deploying additional fighters, bombers, reconnaissance aircraft and drones after upgrading its airfields like Hotan, Kashgar, Gargunsa, Shigatse, Bangda, Nyingchi and Hoping, among others, with new and extended runways, hardened shelters, fuel and ammunition storage facilities.

Latest inputs, for instance, show two new JH-7A fighter-bombers and three Y-20 heavy-lift aircraft, among others, deployed at Hotan in Xinjiang to add to the almost 50 J-11 and J-7 fighters, five Y-8 and Y-7 transport aircraft and KJ-500 AEW&C (airborne early-warning and control) aircraft already present there.

Sources say new Chinese dual-use ‘Xiaokang’ border villages are also regularly being built and older ones being “populated” along the disputed stretches of the LAC, especially in the eastern sector, to reinforce PLA positions as well as lay claim to territory.

China has been building as many as 628 such border defence villages to fortify the borders of the Tibetan Autonomous Region with India and Bhutan over the last few years, as earlier reported by TOI.

“All this clearly indicates PLA will continue to permanently station troops in forward locations along the LAC, even if eventually there is some sort of disengagement at the two major persisting face-off sites at Depsang and Demchok in eastern Ladakh,” a source said.

It was on May 5-6 in 2020 that dozens of Indian and Chinese soldiers were injured in the first major clash that erupted on the north bank of Pangong Tso after the PLA’s well-planned multiple incursions into eastern Ladakh caught India off-guard initially.

Four years later, there are currently 50,000 to 60,000 PLA troops with heavy weaponry forward deployed in the western (Ladakh) and central sectors (Uttarakhand, Himachal) as well as 90,000 soldiers in the eastern one (Sikkim, Arunachal).

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/china-continues-lac-infra-build-up-4-years-into-face-off-shows-latest-sat-imagery/articleshow/109671610.cms>

United News of India
India's Multi Lingual News Agency

Sat, 27 Apr 2024

India, Iran Discuss Plans for Closer Defence Cooperation

Senior officials of India and Iran discussed plans for closer defence cooperation between the two nations, in view of the delicate situation in West Asia and the Indian subcontinent.

This was discussed by Iranian Defence Minister Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Ashtiani during a meeting with Indian Defence Secretary Giridhar Aramane in Kazakhstan, a news report said.

Iran and India, located in strategic regions, have great capacities to establish peace and security in West Asia and the Indian subcontinent, the Iranian Defence Minister said during the meeting, held on the sidelines of a conference of defence ministers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) member states in Kazakhstan.

The Iranian defence minister also called for close cooperation between Tehran and New Delhi in the fight against the Daesh (ISIS) terrorist group and in preventing it from regaining power in the region.

General Ashtiani highlighted the impact that military and defence cooperation between Iran and India will have on the establishment of regional stability and security, and voiced Tehran's readiness to promote defence cooperation with New Delhi.

On his part, the Indian defence secretary "expressed sympathy with Iran over the martyrdom of Iranian military advisers in an Israeli airstrike in Syria, stressing the need to ensure regional security and calm", Tasnim news agency reported.

He also emphasized the necessity for stronger military cooperation with Iran in the naval sector by attending joint naval war games, conducting defence and educational research, and exchanging military students.

In February, the Iranian Navy deployed its Dena destroyer to India for a large-scale multilateral exercise.

The Indian Navy's largest-ever multilateral naval exercise, Milan 2024, was held in the eastern port city of Visakhapatnam in the Bay of Bengal.

Warships from the navies of 50 countries participated in the harbor phase of the drill.

<http://www.uniindia.com/news/world/defence-india-iran/3188244.html>

The Tribune

Sat, 27 Apr 2024

Develop Border Villages to Counter Chinese Designs

By Lt Gen Pradeep Bali (Retd)

China has a penchant for reinventing history and tweaking geographic realities as this suits its hegemonic interests and designs. This takes the shape of manufacturing 'facts on the ground'. While the Chinese have often staked their claims to vast swathes of Indian territory, they have been on a spree of renaming habitations and terrain features in Arunachal Pradesh in recent years. The Chinese Civil Affairs Ministry released the first list of such newly invented names in 2017, mentioning six places. The second list, renaming 15 locations, was brought out in 2021, followed by 11 new names in 2023. The fourth and the latest list under this geographical name game, covering 30 places in Arunachal, which the Chinese refer to as Zangnan, came out on April 1, 2024. As expected, India has strongly objected to and rejected this gimmickry.

Parallel to this exercise, in the garb of developing border areas north of the Line of Actual Control (LAC), China has been establishing settlements called Xiaokang or 'prosperous villages'. While

over 600 of these border habitations have come up in recent years, 175 more such villages are planned for development. This entire process is ostensibly being carried out to bolster its territorial claims and serve the purpose of creating infrastructure for dual use by its People's Liberation Army (PLA). Here, the Chinese stratagem of legal warfare is in play as settled populations are not to be disturbed as and when the LAC is finally demarcated, as per the 2005 Border Defence Cooperation Agreement with India.

Similar shades of this Chinese strategy can be seen in its disputes with other nations. The Senkaku islands, administered by Japan, are claimed by Beijing with a Chinese name — Diaoyu. It is also well known that China's nine-dash line to buttress its territorial claims over the entire South China Sea (SCS) is against international laws, particularly the United Nations Convention of the Laws of the Sea. This claim line overlaps the Exclusive Economic Zones of Brunei, Indonesia, Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam. China has been pouring concrete into the seas, converting shoals and rocky outcrops into 'islands'. The objective behind this manufactured geography is securing military advantage and presenting its neighbours with a *fait accompli*.

This proclivity of taking geographical and historical liberties was in ample display in western Bhutan in 2017, when the PLA tried to occupy the Doklam plateau right up to the Jhampheri ridge. This riled India as it would have impinged upon its security concerns, and had to be physically stopped by the Army.

An interesting case of geographical emasculation is that of the Tibet region, occupied by China in 1951 and taken under complete control in 1959. Chinese rulers created the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), which roughly corresponds to what may be called 'Political Tibet' and is much smaller in size than the actual Tibet. Historically, 'Ethnic Tibet' consisted of three major areas — U-Tsang, Kham and Amdo. Amdo was amalgamated into the Qinghai province in 1955 and the Kham area into the Ganze Autonomous Prefecture in 1957. Similarly, other areas with Tibetan ethnicity were merged with Gansu and Yunnan. The TAR consists only of U-Tsang out of the original Tibetan homeland. Between 1911 and 1951, Tibet was free of the paramountcy of the Republic of China. The 14th Dalai Lama was born in Amdo and his bodyguards are from the Kham area, renowned for the warrior traits of its ethnic Tibetans.

China has also engineered an internal migration from the overcrowded Han homeland in the east to various parts of Tibet, and most of the border villages coming up across the LAC have ethnic Hans living in them. These Chinese migrants are incentivised with major economic benefits — a key element in the Sinicisation of Tibet.

India's response to China's Machiavellian strategies has varied from indifference to jingoism. The latest renaming game has elicited a very measured response from Defence Minister Rajnath Singh. Addressing a public gathering in eastern Arunachal on April 9, he said: "I want to tell our neighbours that changing names will not achieve anything. Tomorrow, if we change the names of places or states in China, will it make them ours?"

Our border issue with China has largely remained a bilateral concern. However, the US, of late, has been throwing its weight behind India. The recent statement by its Ambassador in India Eric Garcetti, that "China has no business renaming places that are part of India's territory," was a welcome step. Further east, the Chinese perfidy in the SCS has invoked strong international reactions. The Quad alignment, which includes India, Australia, the US and Japan, the AUKUS grouping (Australia, UK and US) — which Japan is likely to join soon — and the trilateral alignment among the US, Japan and the Philippines are all focused on a rules-based world order in the SCS to counter Chinese hegemonistic designs.

India needs to emphatically and repeatedly call out any changes, historical or geographical, which China tries to engineer. We need to strongly raise these issues and place our objections on record to counter manufactured claims, lest they should become accepted facts.

We suffer from a terrain disadvantage across the borders, for the area on our side is geographically hostile with steep mountainous terrain and thick forests in most parts, right up to the LAC. Our own area and infrastructure development has to stay the course, whatever the cost, and the Border Roads Organisation has been trying to meet this challenge. The recently inaugurated Sela tunnel in Arunachal is aimed at bolstering India's operational preparedness along the LAC. However, the enormity of the task requires capability enhancement for operating in high altitudes.

We need to encourage settlement in border villages in order to check migration. Economic opportunities and faster communication are stepping stones in this regard. While the Army can lend a helping hand, the policy formulation to facilitate all this is the domain of the political leadership. Furthermore, the sensitivities of the Indian citizens who populate these border areas need to be always kept in mind.

<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/comment/develop-border-villages-to-counter-chinese-designs-615001>

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Sat, 27 Apr 2024

Discussed China's "Dangerous Actions" in South China Sea: Antony Blinken

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has said that he discussed China's "dangerous actions" in the South China Sea, including against routine Philippine maintenance operations, and maritime operations near the Second Thomas Shoal, adding that US defence commitments to the Philippines remain "ironclad."

Speaking to reporters in Beijing, he said, "In today's meetings, I discussed the PRC's dangerous actions in the South China Sea, including against routine Philippine maintenance operations, maritime operations near the Second Thomas Shoal."

"Freedom of navigation and commerce in these waterways is not only critical to the Philippines, but to the US and to every other nation in the Indo-Pacific and indeed around the world. That is why so many nations have expressed concern about the PRC maritime maneuvers. I made clear that while the US will continue to work to de-escalate tensions, our defence commitments to the Philippines remain ironclad," he added.

During his meeting with Chinese leaders, Blinken raised concerns about the cases of American citizens, who are wrongfully detained and those who are subject to exit bans. He raised concerns about erosions of Hong Kong's autonomy, democratic institutions and transnational repression, ongoing human rights abuses in Xinjiang and Tibet and individual human rights cases.

Antony Blinken said, "I raised the cases of American citizens who are wrongfully detained and those who are subject to exit bans. President Biden and I will not rest until they are back with their families, where they belong. I also raised concerns about erosions of Hong Kong's autonomy, and democratic institutions as well as transnational repression, ongoing human rights abuses in Xinjiang and Tibet, and a number of individual human rights cases. We spoke about press freedom and access."

"I appreciate that the PRC granted short-term visas to a number of the foreign journalists who are here so that they could cover this visit. In my meetings, I encourage my PRC counterparts to fulfill the commitment that they made in 2021 to provide equal access to our two countries' media organisations. The United States will continue to insist on reciprocity on this issue just as we do for our businesses, cross-cultural exchanges, and many other areas," he added.

He stated, "We also discussed a range of regional and global crises where China can play a constructive role. I encouraged China to use its influence to discourage Iran and its proxies from expanding the conflict in the Middle East and to press Pyongyang to end his dangerous behaviour and engage in dialogue."

Blinken reiterated serious concerns of the US about China providing components that are powering Russia's war against Ukraine. He noted that China is the top supplier of machine tools, micro-electronics, and nitrocellulose which is critical to making ammunitions and rocket propellants that Moscow is using to ramp up its defence industrial base.

Blinken said, "Even as we seek to deepen cooperation where our interests align, the United States is very clear-eyed about the challenges posed by the PRC and about our competing visions for the future. America will always defend our core interests and values. In my discussions today, I reiterated our serious concern about the PRC providing components that are powering Russia's brutal war of aggression against Ukraine."

"China is the top supplier of machine tools, microelectronics, nitrocellulose - which is critical to making munitions and rocket propellants, and other dual-use items that Moscow is using to ramp up its defence industrial base, a defence industrial base that is churning out rockets, drones, tanks, and other weapons that President Putin is using to invade a sovereign country, to demolish its power grid and other civilian infrastructure, to kill innocent children, women, and men. Russia would struggle to sustain its assault on Ukraine without China's support," he added.

Blinken noted that fuelling Russia's defence industrial base threatens Ukrainian as well as European security.

He stated, "In my meetings with NATO Allies earlier this month and with our G7 partners just last week, I heard that same message: fueling Russia's defence industrial base not only threatens Develop border villages to counter Chinese designs Ukrainian security; it threatens European security."

"Beijing cannot achieve better relations with Europe while supporting the greatest threat to European security since the end of the Cold War. As we've told China for some time, ensuring transatlantic security is a core U.S. interest. In our discussions today, I made clear that if China does not address this problem, we will," he added.

Earlier in the day, Blinken held a meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping. The meeting followed Blinken's over-five-hour-long meeting with China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Beijing.

The top US diplomat also met with China's Minister of Security Wang Xiaohong, who serves as the country's police chief. During the meeting, Blinken and Wang Xiaohong reviewed the implementation of commitments made by the two leaders at the Woodside Summit in November 2023, including progress on bilateral cooperation to combat global illicit drug manufacturing and trafficking.

Blinken stressed the need for continued, sustained, and increased progress on counternarcotics cooperation. He also raised concerns regarding China's human rights abuses both within and beyond the borders.

In a statement, US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said, "Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken met today with PRC State Councilor and Minister of Public Security Wang Xiaohong.

They reviewed implementation of commitments made by the two leaders at the Woodside Summit in November 2023, including progress on bilateral cooperation to combat global illicit drug manufacturing and trafficking."

"The Secretary stressed the need for continued, sustained, and increased progress on counternarcotics cooperation. The Secretary raised a range of concerns regarding PRC human rights issues, both within and beyond the PRC's borders. The two sides reaffirmed the importance of maintaining open channels of communication to responsibly manage competition and to discuss key issues in the relationship," he added.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/discussed-chinas-dangerous-actions-in-south-china-sea-antony-blinken/articleshow/109631920.cms>

THE HINDU **BusinessLine**

Sat, 27 Apr 2024

China Launches First of the Eight Hangor-class Submarines Built for Pakistan

China has launched the first of the eight Hangor-class submarines to be built for its all-weather ally Pakistan to provide it with state-of-the-art warships, adding a new dimension to their growing bilateral military cooperation.

The launch ceremony, held at Wuchang Shipbuilding Industry Group's (WSIG) Shuangliu Base on Friday, was attended by Pakistan Navy Chief Admiral Naveed Ashraf, Geo News reported.

The development comes as part of the agreement between Islamabad and Beijing under which the latter had agreed to provide the former with eight state-of-the-art advanced submarines.

Out of the total eight vessels, four are to be built by WSIG, while the remaining four are being built at KS&EW (Karachi Shipyard & Engineering Works) under the Transfer of Technology (ToT) agreement.

The submarines, having advanced stealth features, are to be fitted with state-of-the-art weapons and sensors to operate under a multi-threat environment and can engage targets at stand-off ranges.

Speaking at the occasion, Admiral Ashraf emphasised the importance of maritime security under the prevailing geo-strategic environment and the Navy's resolve to ensure regional peace and stability. The Navy Chief also underscored that the Hangor-class S/M Project will "add a new dimension to the all-weather Pak-China friendship and shows strong military cooperation between the two countries".

Friday's launch ceremony comes after Pakistan commenced the manufacturing of the sixth Hangor-class submarine by KS&EW in February earlier this year. Pakistan enjoys close military ties with China with their bilateral relations provisioning various arms imports by Islamabad from Beijing.

Last year, the Pakistan Navy inducted two newly built Chinese Type 054 A/P frigates.

Both countries had inked the contract for four multi-role frigates back in 2018. The first and second ships PNS TUGHRIL and PNS TAIMUR joined the PN fleet in 2022.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/world/china-launches-first-of-the-eight-hangor-class-submarines-built-for-pakistan/article68113569.ece>

China's Military Supplies under US Lens even as Ties on the Mend

US and China's recent diplomatic moves notwithstanding, Chinese companies have been sanctioned by the US for supplies to Pakistan while Beijing is seen as one of countries patronising private military and security companies (PMSC), used as private armies, and even supplying weapons to non-state actors.

On April 19, the US sanctioned three Chinese firms for giving missile technologies to Pakistan. The three Chinese companies — Xi'an Longde Technology Development Company Limited, Tianjin Creative International Trade Co Ltd, and Granpect Company Limited — have been supplying critical elements to Pakistan to develop weapons of mass destruction.

A China-Pakistan nexus was uncovered by India in January when a ship bound for Karachi from China was intercepted at Mumbai's Nhava Sheva port. A Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) probe revealed it included a computer numerical control (CNC) machine, produced by an Italian company. The DRDO established its potential use in Pakistan's nuclear programme.

North Korea is using the same machines, and are supplied by China. India is also noting Chinese help to Pakistan in gaining access to restricted items from the US and Europe.

In October, the US issued new regulations that denied Chinese firms access to the most advanced semiconductors. The US has made it clear that it is not in the business of providing or selling things that could be turned against it to undermine security.

Yesterday, when US Secretary of State Antony Blinken addressed the media in Beijing, he said, "When it comes to sensitive technology, we're going to be very, very sure that the most sensitive technology does not wind up where it could turn around and hurt us."

"We have taken action against more than a hundred Chinese entities with sanctions, applying export controls," he said. Blinken mentioned China's military supplies to Russia and termed it as "the biggest threat to Europe's security since the end of the Cold War (1991). Now, we've already taken steps ourselves. We're prepared to do more if China is not prepared to act to curb this activity".

An Indian assessment is that China is increasingly active in the volatile states of Africa. Transferring weapons and other sophisticated technologies can lead to many issues, including interstate wars. Other than that, it can also go into the hands of non-state actors, such as terrorists. A report — 'Annual Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community' — shared with the US Senate last month said, "PMSCs have become an essential component of modern military operations and the demand for their services is likely to grow." It listed China, Russia and Turkiye, among others, who see these firms as a valuable tool in their arsenal for either advancing or protecting their interests abroad.

These firms threaten global security in many countries and regions through their ability to potentially foment violence and escalate instability in already fragile regions.

China launches sub built for Pak

Islamabad/Beijing: China has launched the first of the eight Hangor-class submarines to be built for its all-weather ally Pakistan to provide it with state-of-the-art warships, adding a new dimension to their growing bilateral military cooperation. The launch ceremony, held at Wuchang Shipbuilding Industry Group's Shuangliu Base, on Friday, was attended by Pakistan Navy chief Admiral Naveed Ashraf, a TV channel reported.

<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/india/chinas-military-supplies-under-us-lens-even-as-ties-on-the-mend-615443>

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Sat, 27 Apr 2024

Chinese Marine Research Ship Back in Maldives Waters

A 4,500-tonne high-tech Chinese research ship is back in the Maldivian waters, two months after it spent a week docked at different ports in this archipelago nation. Xiang Yang Hong 03 was docked at the Thilafushi industrial island's harbour on Thursday morning, news portal Adhadhu.com reported on Friday.

However, "the government has not disclosed the reason for its return. But the government previously confirmed permission for the ship to dock before its first visit," it said, days after President Mohamed Muizzu, a pro-China leader-led People's National Congress won the general election, securing 66 out of the 93-member People's Majlis.

Muizzu rode to power last year on an 'India Out' promise and with a super majority win in parliamentary polls on April 21, he has further consolidated his position.

"The ship has now come back after skirting the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Therefore, Xiang Yang Hong 03 has been active inside or near Maldives territory since January," it said.

The ship had earlier docked on February 23 at the same Thilafushi port, about 7.5 km to the west of Male. The hi-tech ship reached Maldivian waters on February 22 after spending about a month near the boundary of the Maldives' EEZ. About six days later, the ship went back to the EEZ boundary.

In February, the Maldivian Foreign Ministry had said the Xiang Yang Hong 3 was here to "make a port call, for the rotation of its personnel and replenishment" after a diplomatic request was made by the government of China to the government of Maldives.

"The vessel would not be conducting any research while in the Maldivian waters," the Foreign Ministry said on January 23.

The Maldives' proximity to India, barely 70 nautical miles from the island of Minicoy in Lakshadweep and 300 nautical miles from the mainland's western coast, and its location at the hub of commercial sea lanes running through the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) gives it significant strategic importance.

Meanwhile, local media reports in February provided details about the type of vessel Xiang Yang Hong 03: The 100-metre-long vessel was added to the fleet of China's State Oceanic Administration (SOA) in 2016. This is the only 4,500-tonne vessel currently in China. Since 2019, China has also been using the vessel to conduct 'distant water' and 'deep sea' surveys at China's Pilot Ocean Laboratory.

The vessel can also be used for studies on salinity, microbial genetic studies, underwater mineral exploration, and underwater life and environmental studies, it said. It has data buoys that can

measure ocean currents, waves, and important environmental information. These buoys will provide real-time satellite information to the Chinese government, the report then said.

On Friday, Adhadhu.com quoted China's State Oceanic Administration (SOA), which manages the Xiang Yang Hong 03, stating that the ship is the most modern vessel manufactured in the country for marine research. China says it is a comprehensive research vessel, meaning it is equipped for more than one task.

According to China, the boat's endurance is 15,000 nautical miles, which means it could travel 15,000 nautical miles nonstop for its work without assistance.

Incidentally, the same Chinese vessel was present near the India-Maldives-Sri Lanka trilateral Dosti-16 exercise that took place in the ocean near Male between February 22 and 25.

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/china/chinese-marine-research-ship-back-in-maldives-waters/articleshow/109641667.cms>

Science & Technology News



Sun, 28 Apr 2024

ISRO Chief Says Private Players will Make Space more Accessible

Private players in space technology will certainly help speed up the research in the field, Indian Space Research Organisation chairman S Somanath has said while interacting with space enthusiasts, through the official Instagram page of ISRO.

Replying to an observation that SpaceX, a private entity, has contributed more to space technology than most countries, Somanath on Saturday said America's tradition of encouraging private companies to involve themselves in building rocket engines and, in the case of SpaceX, to explore human flight vehicles can be replicated by India.

He said these companies are playing a crucial role in advancing technology, reducing costs and making space more accessible.

It is possible for even private companies in India to develop these kinds of capabilities, he added.

However, he said this is only possible if the government supports the private entity, "For instance, some of the technology that is owned by NASA is transferred to Space X so that they could develop faster. This is why SpaceX has made such strides, it had nearly 45 launches this year," said Somanath.

He said already there are two companies working in India – Skyroot Aerospace and Agnikul Cosmos. "We are all excited to see India going this way. These companies have already tested launch vehicles. It is an interesting development," said the ISRO chairman.

Answering a question on Chandrayaan-4, Somanath also shared an update on India's next moon mission.

According to him, Chandrayaan-4 mission is being developed as a continuation of the Chandrayaan series.

“Prime Minister Modi has announced that India intends to land on the moon in 2040. To achieve this goal, continuous moon exploration is necessary. Chandrayaan-4 will be the first step towards this objective. The mission aims to send a craft to the moon, collect samples, and bring them back to Earth. Eventually, when India is ready for human spaceflight, Indian astronauts will be sent on a Chandrayaan craft to the moon to conduct experiments and return safely,” he added.

The interaction lasted for an hour and Somanath signed off with a promise that he would be meeting again in May. The first #asksomnathisro was held on March 2. The event is an attempt to connect with the younger generation.

<https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/isro-chief-says-private-players-will-make-space-more-accessible-5544018>

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