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Defence can start up Make in India

By S.K. Chatterji

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call for Start-Up India was the loudest bang on the weekend. A few days ago, the wider contours of the new Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP) were unveiled by defence minister Manohar Parrikar. It unequivocally gave a message to the armed forces that their modernisation plan has to be to "Make in India". Mr Parrikar is carrying a purse with an upwards of \$2 billion modernisation budget to be spent on the armed forces in the next decade or so. If there is one sector that can give both "Start-Up India" and "Make in India" meaning, it's the defence sector. Though there are apprehensions as the ministry of defence has opted for domestic private firms for strategic partnership. The micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in the defence sector are a worried lot as they think that only big firms will benefit from this. Will the nominated strategic partners grab most of the budget without the MSMEs and new entrepreneurs getting an opportunity to grow simultaneously? A task force under former DRDO chief V.K. Aatre has made recommendations to the government on strategic partners. The concept of strategic partners in defence production is not novel. Globally, the trend has been that of large conglomerates gradually evolving in major areas of defence production and governments supporting them in their research and development of new generations of military hardware and software. It would be prudent to look at the models used in a few countries with sophisticated defence industry. The British defence industry has in its logistics chain over 9,000 small and medium enterprises (SME). The UK also has a Manufacturing Advisory Board Service. Its nine centres provide support to SMEs in areas of technology, consulting, networking and training. Large manufacturers complement the government programme by mentorship initiatives for Tier-1 manufacturers (Tier-1 companies are direct suppliers to original equipment manufacturer, or OEM). In the US, major manufacturers spend up to 60 per cent of the product cost on purchased inputs, thus spreading out the profits to a large family of SMEs and entrepreneurs. The Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership of the US department of commerce has 60 centres and 1,200 manufacturing experts to provide technical expertise to small manufacturers. Canadians run the Industrial Research Assistance Programme that provides assistance through industrial technology advisers. They connect SMEs with universities and laboratories for sharing technology. The programme also provides funds for research and development directly to SMEs and entrepreneurs for research. The common factor that emerges from the methodologies adopted by leading industrial nations is that the interests of the SMEs and entrepreneurs are part of the government and major industrial establishments' focus. Institutions exist to help them progress both technologically and in quality manufacturing. New entrants to our defence sector are reluctant because defence products have a limited market and long gestation period. The procurement cycle is tedious and protracted. Existing MSMEs are squeezed between rising costs of raw material and labour and remaining competitive in an environment of cut-throat competition. They have idle capacities and are financially stretched. With the decision to nominate strategic partners, there is apprehension of a further squeeze with big players calling the shots without much concern for the lesser ones. There is also the threat of the entire "Start-Up India" and "Make in India" pitches going the big business way in the defence sector. The generation of employment - an area where the MSMEs have greater contribution - will also not see the boost that the "Make in India" or "Start Up India" missions would want to address. The defence sector needs to be viewed differently. It is a strategically important sector where self-reliance is required not just to stem the \$1.5 billion we are going to spend but also the

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Defence can start up Make in India

vulnerability of the nation, should defence production not be adequately indigenised. Simultaneously, it has to be perceived that we do not have the technologies in all the areas and the indigenisation march will need to be gradual. Foreign OEMs have a role to play and will retain a part of that role even in future. Certain issues that New Delhi now needs to address include earmarking a percentage of the acquisition outlay for execution by new entrants and MSMEs. Clear guidelines are required regarding percentage of proposed cost of project that will be outsourced to entrepreneurs and MSMEs by defence PSUs, Ordnance Factory Board and potential strategic partners. Strategic partners will need to involve entrepreneurs and MSMEs at project planning and technology development stages. Some MSMEs and aspiring entrepreneurs with novel ideas, capable of technological innovation can be directly funded by DRDO for design and development. The new DPP and the "Start-Up India" initiative have provisions for government funding of R&D. Diffusion of technology from nominated strategic partners and original equipment manufacturers to the MSMEs and entrepreneurs in their supply chain will also need to be ensured. These big players need to promote innovation by MSMEs and taking entrepreneurs on board by assuring returns on new technologies and upgrades they can produce. MSMEs and entrepreneurs should also be guided into availing offsets benefits, even though the new DPP has raised the bar for offset obligation to above ₹2,000 crore projects only. Focused emerging forces like the recently launched Defence Innovators and Industry Association should pursue the interests of both entrepreneurs and MSMEs vigorously. Finally, financial issues must be revisited. Over and above government support, ensuring availability of credit facilities from bankers on priority and soft terms is necessary. It is time to nurture trust between the government, financial institutions, big corporates, MSMEs and entrepreneurs with accountability for non-performance built into the system. "Start-Up India" and "Make in India" offer wide avenues of growth for every segment desirous of participating in the military modernisation thrust.

Mr Modi's Pakistan plan

By Ajai Shukla

India should adopt a pro-active strategy on Pakistan - catalysing, facilitating and making room for a change in its anti-India posture. Is Pakistan actually cracking down on the perpetrators of the January 2 attack on the Indian Air Force base in Pathankot? We can only guess what that country's policymakers really intend, but here is what is known: Islamabad has constituted a multi-agency "joint investigation team" to probe the attack, including military intelligence and ISI officers. It has rounded up some mid-ranking members of the Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), the radical Islamist group that New Delhi believes is behind the attack. A central minister in Islamabad has said JeM chief, Masood Azhar, is in "protective custody" since he cannot be arrested without hard evidence of wrongdoing. Meanwhile, other branches of the Pakistan government have denied that Mr Azhar is in custody. Almost everyone in India who can spell P-a-k-i-s-t-a-n has already pointed out that previous "crackdowns" on India-focused jihadis were mere theatre. It is also well known that this subterfuge comes easily to both Pakistan's policymaking elements - the elected government in Islamabad; and the all-powerful army headquarters in Rawalpindi. But it is still worth carefully considering the question, is anything different this time? The Indian government apparently thinks so, going by the substance and tone of recent statements from New Delhi's foreign policy and security establishment. The woeful history of Indo-Pakistan engagement is replete with instances where talks have been cancelled or postponed. But never has a scheduled meeting been postponed with such cordiality, especially on the heels of a terror attack. In a phone call the day before they were to meet, both foreign secretaries amicably agreed on a token postponement. Talks will resume in what India's foreign ministry spokesman termed "the very near future". Underlining the bonhomie in thick pencil, the spokesperson declared that the postponement was arranged in "a mutually acceptable manner". This foreign ministry cordiality was in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's approach, who blamed the Pathankot attack on "enemies of humanity who can't see India progress". His counterpart, Nawaz Sharif, responded in kind, with his foreign ministry offering to join hands with India "to completely eradicate the menace of terrorism afflicting our region." Given these atmospherics, it is worth wondering whether some rarified layer of the Indian government has an assurance from Pakistan's top power brokers that action will be taken against the JeM, but gradually and without fanfare? We simply do not know, and will not know until later. Even so, with the government continuing the dialogue with only a token display of pique at the Pathankot attack, it seems as if Messrs Modi and Doval know something that we do not. On the other hand, Mr Modi may have no explicit assurances from Islamabad and Rawalpindi about restraining India-directed jihad, but believes something is fundamentally changing in Pakistan; and that a tipping point has been reached. Given Pakistan's long record of duplicity, India's government is vulnerable to charges of naivety and gullibility. But here is the catch: when (and if) Pakistan starts putting the squeeze on such groups, this cannot be accompanied by a public promise to New Delhi. Whatever Islamabad says would be in private. Indian public anger restrains New Delhi from talking peace with Islamabad after a terrorist attack, unless Pakistan appears to be acting against those responsible. At the same time, Pakistani self-esteem prevents its government from acting against extremists under Indian pressure, even if there were consensus in that country that this was essential. For that reason, were Mr Modi to believe that Islamabad and Rawalpindi are willing to defang groups like the JeM now, and perhaps later the Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT), he would have to give Pakistan time and space to shield it from allegations of acting under Indian pressure.

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Mr Modi's Pakistan plan

Expecting the Pakistani security megacorp to backtrack from 68 years of sub-conventional military options against India is, admittedly, a long shot. Even so, our strategy should not assume an unchanging world. Like many others, Pakistan is concerned over the changing face of political Islam, with Frankenstein's monsters like the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and the Islamic State challenging the Pakistan Army. Numerous Indian experts on Pakistan (and every Indian believes she is one) had confidently predicted that Rawalpindi would never crack down on the TTP, or launch a military offensive in North Waziristan. But the ideological swings and shifting allegiances of international jihad, forced Pakistan to confront one set of its own monsters. True, Pakistan has so far cracked down only on the bad terrorists, the rebellious TTP. For now, the good terrorists - including the JeM and LeT - remain loyal to Rawalpindi and offer no provocation that justifies winding them up. But this is not a constant. In 2003 the JeM - a perfect Pakistan Army poodle for years - turned on its master, staging at least three assassination bids on General Pervez Musharraf. Rawalpindi knows well how growing ideological and operational linkages between the good and the bad terrorists have the potential to subvert the army's control over the former. It is bad strategy for India to assume an unchanging world, even if the prospects of change are tenuous. Instead of waiting for change to happen within Pakistan, New Delhi should adopt a pro-active strategy - catalysing, facilitating and making room for that change. This does not imply looking at Pakistan through rose-tinted glasses, or condoning terrorist strikes by so-called "non-state actors" in the hope that Islamabad will take them down. What this strategy does involve is strengthening our intelligence and security networks so that terrorists are denied operational success of the kind they obtained in Pathankot; developing retaliatory capability for pin-point strikes on jihadi targets inside Pakistan; diplomatically managing the potential for escalation; and, meanwhile, keeping a tight lid on political rhetoric and name-calling, so that Rawalpindi and Islamabad can crack down on jihadi groups without appearing to be acting at India's behest. For this, Mr Modi must be convinced that Pakistan is moving, even if cautiously, towards restraining and eventually shutting down the factories of jihad. It may well turn out that Pakistan's internal incoherence and weakness prevents it from doing what it badly needs to in its own interest. Yet, in deliberately creating the space for such a turnaround in Pakistan, New Delhi would actually have a plan instead of what has passed for strategy over the last one-and-a-half decades - shrill name-calling, public demands for action that will always remain unmet; and repeated cancellations of talks before starting the sorry circle yet again. A former Congress minister has publicly advocated dealing with Pakistan by "building a high wall all along the border." There is an Indian security plan to cover gaps in the border fence with "laser walls." The fact, as our planners probably know, is that physical barriers cannot keep India and Pakistan apart. The two countries will have to accommodate each other, discovering common interest to bridge the chasms that divide them.

Seema Darshan to give kids time with troops

In an ambitious move to inspire youth to join the armed forces, the Ministry of Human Resource development (HRD) has initiated a pilot project to send some Class 11 boys and girls to the border and Line of Control (LoC) to spend time with the soldiers. The programme, to be launched on January 20, entails a group of 30 boys and girls from Kendriya Vidyalaya and Navodaya Vidyalaya schools to travel to Wagah Attari border and J&K LoC and spend a week with the security forces. "They will live with the army and the Border Security Force (BSF), see their lives, see the environment they operate in and under stand the prevailing security situation," Santosh Kumar Mall, Commissioner Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan told Mail today. This is union HRD minister Smriti Irani's brain child and the HRD ministry is working on the pilot project 'Seema Darshan' along with the ministries of Defence and Home Affairs. "The aim is to encourage future leaders of the country to be more aware of the environment. In case this pilot project is successful, then in future students will be taken to the Siachen Glacier, North Kashmir, eastern borders in Arunachal Pradesh and also on ships and the sea coast," sources said. "Such an exposure will enable the students to get a feel of the conditions under which security personnel operate. This will also be a career guidance course for students," he added. 16 Kendriya Vidyalaya students (eight boys and eight girls) and 14 Navodaya Vidyalaya students (seven boys and seven girls) from places like Manipur, Meghalaya, Maharashtra, Tripura, Andhra Pradesh and Nagaland will be taken to the Wagah Attari and Akhnoor and Jammu border. These 30 students on their return from this assignment will file an audio visual project report for their schoolmates. "If this project is successful as anticipated, some physically fit and mentally robust students will also have an opportunity to visit the high altitude line of control in Kashmir and Nathu La in Sikkim," army sources said. "The aim is to encourage the youth to see how our armed forces defend our diverse borders. Based on the feedback we will increase the number of students and the borders they shall visit. This is an awareness project and an added advantage could be their interest to join the forces. It also help strengthen the spirit of service above self which we want our young to imbibe after their interaction with the forces," said HRD Minister Smriti Irani.

The Times of India

19 January 2016

To fight China A&N forays, India deploys sub hunters

By Rajat Pandit

But Andaman & Nicobar Command Still Suffers From Neglect With Chinese nuclear and conventional submarines regularly popping up in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), India has now begun to deploy its latest long-range maritime patrol aircraft as well as spy drones at its forward military base in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Defence ministry sources on Monday said two of the country's most potent submarine hunterskillers, the naval Poseidon-8I aircraft, are just about to complete their first-ever two-week deployment to the strategically-located A&N archipelago. "Navy and IAF are also deploying their (Israeli) Searcher-II unmanned aerial vehicles to the islands on a temporary basis," said a source. India has inducted eight P-8I aircraft, acquired under a \$2.1 billion deal inked in January 2009 with US aviation major Boeing, at its INS Rajali naval air station in Arakkonam (Tamil Nadu). With an operating range of over 1,200 nautical miles and a maximum speed of 907 kmph, the radarpacked P-8Is are especially geared to gather intelligence and detect threats in the IOR as "intelligent hawk-eyes". Armed as they are with deadly Harpoon Block-II missiles, MK-54 lightweight torpedoes, rockets and depth charges, the P-8Is can neutralise enemy submarines and warships if required. "Acquisition of another four P-8Is is in the final stages. P-8Is can operate from Port Blair (naval air station INS Utkrosh) to keep tabs on the entire region," said the source. But while this is a muchneeded operational requirement, India's first and only theatre command in the shape of Andaman & Nicobar Command (ANC) continues to suffer from relative neglect despite the Modi government making it a top priority. Much more needs to be done at a faster pace to ensure ANC, with requisite military force-levels and infrastructure, can effectively act as a pivot to counter China's strategic moves in IOR as well as ensure security of sea lanes converging towards the Malacca Strait. Sources said "not much progress" has been made in the overall plan to have enough infrastructure and maintenance support with more airstrips and jetties in the 572-island cluster, extending over 720-km, to eventually deploy a division-level force (around 15,000 troops), a fighter squadron and some major warships there. As of now amid turf wars among Army Navy and IAF as well as fund crunches and environmental concerns, ANC has just over an infantry brigade (3,000 soldiers), 20 small warships and patrol vessels, and a few Mi-8 helicopters and Dornier-228 patrol aircraft.

Atithi Devo Bhava: French Team to March First on R-Day

NEW DELHI/ RANCHI: As a mark of respect to visiting French President Francois Hollande, who will be the Guest of Honour at the Republic Day parade next week, a 136-member contingent of the French military will be given pride of place as the first marching contingent of the parade on Rajpath. It will be the first time that a foreign military contingent will be participating in the R-Day parade. On Monday, the French contingent carried out a rehearsal at Rajpath. They will march in two groups, including a French Air Force Military Band, according to a defence ministry official. "In all, 80 personnel from the French Army and 56 personnel of the band will be part of the 136-member French contingent. Their contingent has been put ahead of any Indian armed forces contingent," an official added. At the rehearsal, the soldiers of the French army were seen marching to drum beats at Rajpath in perfect synchrony. Though this is the first time the French first contingent is participating in the January 26 parade in India, soldiers of the Maratha light infantry regiment of the Indian army had marched shoulder to shoulder with the French army back in 2009 at Champs Elysees. This time, the length of the parade has been cut short by nearly 20 minutes compared to last year. No decorated camel contingent from the Border Security Force will be participating. However, a contingent of sniffer dogs of the Indian army will be part of the R-Day parade for the first time in 26 years.

Largest Tricolour in Ranchi - Ahead of Republic Day, India will get its largest tricolour, 66 ft in height and 99 ft in width, to be hoisted on a 293 ft tall pole in Ranchi. To be hoisted by Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar on January 23, the flag will be taller than the Qutub Minar. The Minister is scheduled to hoist the flag in the presence of Jharkhand Chief Minister Raghubar Das and other state officials. The event will coincide with the birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose.



French soldiers march during rehearsals for the upcoming Republic Day parade in New Delhi on Monday. A 136-member contingent of the French military will march at Rajpath on Republic Day

Tata Motors Likely to Bag Another Army Trucks Order

By Manu Pubby

Tata Motors is set to bag an additional order for high mobility military trucks, taking its total order book for the advanced vehicles to ₹1,300 crore, the single largest contract to be awarded to an Indian manufacturer by the Army. The high mobility vehicles needed for a variety of roles from transporting men and material to being the platform for multi barrel rocket launchers and surface to air missile systems are in high demand by the Army that has struggled to procure trucks after the Tata scandal hit headlines in 2012. Authoritative sources have told ET that the Army has formally moved a follow on order to a contract it signed with Tata Motors in March last year. The follow on order is to procure 619 new 6X6 High Mobility vehicles that will cost the Army just over ₹350 crore. This would add to the earlier order for 1,239 vehicles that was valued at ₹940 crore. Tata Motors had won the order earlier in a competition that included the Tata-BEML combine. "We are confident that the vehicles have more than met the requirements of the Indian Army. We are also in the process of increasing the indigenous content on the trucks, including the loading crane that will soon be made fully in India," Vernon Noronha, Vice President, Defence and Government Business, Tata Motors told ET. Designed for extreme missions including carrying heavy loads of road, the Tata 6x6 has been extensively tested at the VRDE (Vehicle Research & Development Establishment) 'torture track' designed to test military vehicles and will be operated in all terrain from the deserts of Rajasthan to extreme heights and cold in Ladakh and along the Chinese border. Noronha says that the truck has already been exported by Tata to several countries including Israel and France that are developing missile systems for the Indian Army. The truck is expected to be the platform for future Multi Barrel Rocket Launchers, Short Range Surface to Air Missiles, Quick Reaction Surface to Air Missiles and Low Level Quick Reaction Missiles.

DESIDOC

Mortar Radars to Counter Shelling Now

BY Aman Sharma

A team of technical experts had already finalised the required radar specifications. India has decided to buy modern counter mortar radars to repel heavy shelling on the International Border by Pakistan as happened with increased frequency last year. These radars can track in coming mortar fire, alert the Border Security Force precious seconds in advance and enable precise counter fire to engage the enemy. A committee of technical experts on January 13 completed the task of drawing up specifications required of such equipment, after the home ministry commissioned the exercise in August last year. This came after the Pakistan Army and Rangers resorted to heavy mortar shelling on the International Border in Jammu on various occasions in 2014 and 2015, causing civilian and BSF casualties. Subsequently, in September last year Pakistan Rangers DG came to India to meet the BSF chief and both sides agreed not to resort to mortar shelling. In 2014, the US had supplied such radars to the Ukrainian armed forces. As per the specifications drawn up by the committee, the radar should be able to detect and track incoming mortar shells, rocket-propelled grenades (RPG) and rockets from any direction from a distance of up to 10 km. The radar is also desired to track at least five targets simultaneously fired at any angle and should have accuracy of point of origin and point of impact accuracy up to 5 metres. An estimate of the place from where the fire is coming will enable BSF to accurately launch return fire. The radar should be capable of being remotely operated to protect operators from any targeted attack on the radar. The government wants the system to be lightweight and portable. A government official said such equipment will help in two ways.. First, it will alert the BSF so the force can take evasive measures. Second, the firing position can be accurately known based on the trajectory and the counter-engagement be launched immediately to minimise casualty of the enemy fire, especially if the impact zone in India is a civilian area. The US calls this an effective counter-measure to "asymmetrical fire" by the enemy. The radar uses GIS maps and algorithms to calculate the origin point of the fire and is able to work effectively even if wind speed is up to 40 miles per hour.



List of Demands

Counter Mortar Radars that India wants...

CAPABLE OF DETECTING AND tracking incoming mortar shells, RPG, UBGL fire and rockets from any direction and angle from up to 10 kms



ACCURACY OF POINT of origin and point of impact up to 5 meters

WORK EFFECTIVELY AND accurately even in wind speed up to 40 miles/hr

WILL HELP ALERT BSF posts that may be target, also enable it to launch counter-fire precisely to engage source of enemy fire

Coming soon: 'Make in India' special clothing for soldiers at the world's highest battlefield

By Sushant Singh

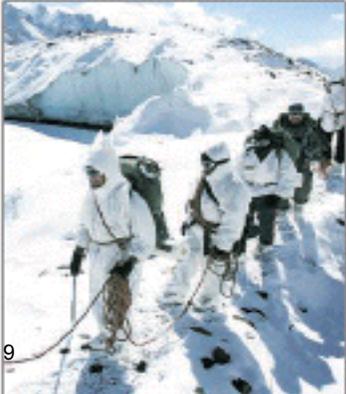
Indian suppliers have now, for the first time, given their samples to the army for trials in five items of Siachen and Super High Altitude clothing. Army soldiers serving in the inhospitable, icy climates of Siachen glacier - the most dangerous battlefield in the world - could soon be using special jackets, trousers, boots, sleeping bags and other specialised extreme winter clothing items that are made in India. These clothes are designed to allow soldiers to operate in temperatures which go up to minus 55 degree Celsius. Since 1984, when India captured the Siachen glacier, the army has lost 869 soldiers in Siachen due to extreme climatic conditions and environmental factors. Indian suppliers have now, for the first time, given their samples to the army for trials in five items of Siachen and Super High Altitude clothing. Soldiers deployed beyond an altitude of 14,000 feet - in Siachen, Kargil, Drass, Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim - are issued Siachen and Super High Altitude clothing which consists of 55 items. Out of 55, 22 are one-time issue items, such as a down jacket or a sleeping bag, issued to an individual soldier and not recycled thereafter: nine of them are imported. The balance 33 items are unit issue items, such as special tents and ice axes: 11 of them are imported. These imported items are mostly made in China, although they are supplied by around a dozen foreign firms from Switzerland, Italy, Australia, Canada, Singapore, Norway and UK. The annual requirement of Siachen clothing for the army is around 27,000 sets. The army maintains a reserve for another year's requirement. The average shortfall of items in Siachen clothing is between 5-10 per cent every year which is replenished from the reserves. Besides ensuring that there is no depletion in reserve stock, once these items are produced under 'Make in India', the defence ministry is also concerned about other problems related to the import of Siachen clothing. The import process has a long gestation period and fluctuating foreign exchange rates further complicate it. "The biggest issue for us is the China factor. Most of these items use bird feathers as a filling. Even though the items are certified for avian flu, we can never be sure about the Chinese products. Despite the quality check, we feel that we are still taking a chance of bringing infection to India," a defence ministry official said. As per defence ministry sources, the impetus to promote 'Make in India' in Siachen clothing came from a meeting last February with the Indian Technical textile Association (ITTA), the apex body representing technical textile manufacturers in the country. Army had displayed all the items of Siachen clothing at an exhibition-cum-seminar in Delhi and asked Indian manufacturers to bid for supplying the imported items. "This first of its kind event was supported by the Ministry of Textiles and attended by Defence Forces, DRDO, DGQA and the domestic Industry. That interaction has now started showing results and the army is moving towards both product improvement and cutting down its import bill for textiles by working with Indian companies," Sundaraman KS, vice-chairman of ITTA and executive director of Shiva Texyarn Ltd told The Indian Express. Besides Shiva Texyarn, National Textile Corporation, Sara Sae, Key Tent and Sabre Safety Ltd are the other Indian companies who have deposited the samples of their items with the army. After the tenders are opened, these items will undergo 90 days of trials at Siachen in peak winters. The trial report shall be available to the defence ministry by April and based on technical evaluation and lab testing by DGQA, the suppliers will be finalised. "Unlike earlier, we are not going for generic specifications, but going by user approved samples. For example, in the sleeping bag, we used to say 90 per cent down feather filling. Now we have changed it to 'or any other suitable material'. At the end of this process, we will be able to fix new technical specifications for each item which will help Indian vendors indigenise these products," an army official involved with the tender process explained.

INDIAN SUPPLIERS GIVE SAMPLES TO THE ARMY FOR TRIALS OF SIACHEN AND SUPER HIGH ALTITUDE CLOTHING

ARMY'S ANNUAL REQUIREMENT:
27,000 sets + one year's reserves

CURRENT ANNUAL SHORTFALL:
Between 5-10% (replenished from reserves)

55 number of items per set required	22 One-time individual issue items: 22 (9 of them imported)
5 Samples submitted for trials	33 Unit issue items (11 imported)



Bullet-Proof Vests for Jawans Soon

By Deepshika Hooda

New jackets have cleared tech trials: Army chief In the field trials stage, the Army usually checks the user comfort, weight, etc. The Army chief has assured bulletproof jackets for soldiers would be procured speedily. The process to procure 1.86 lakh jackets, with new qualitative requirements, has passed technical trials and were undergoing field trials as part of the second stage of the process, he said. "The Army is moving to provide the jackets at the earliest," said Gen Suhag said at his annual press conference last week. Sources in the Ministry of Defence told ET that this is the first time that the process of acquisition has cleared the technical stage, since the procurement process began in 2009. The purchase of 1.86 lakh bulletproof jackets saw several hitches since 2009, until the government in 2012 issued a fresh proposal after changing the qualitative requirements. There were several delays due to technical problems even then. As ET reported, the ammunition created by Ordnance Factory Board failed to meet the right velocity requirements used for the trial of these jackets. Sources have indicated that with the technical trials cleared, very little remains to hamper the procurement process. "In the field trials stage we just check the user comfort, weight etc and no real technical issues. In case of bulletproof jackets, this stage is unlikely to create any bottleneck," a senior Army official told ET. To meet the immediate requirement of soldiers, 50,000 bulletproof jackets are being procured as per the old qualitative requirements. According to a statement by the defence minister last year, the urgent and essential requirement of the jackets was being met through the revenue procurement route. "These are at the cost negotiation stage and should be available in a few months," said the army chief.



ON FAST TRACK



For immediate needs, 50,000 bulletproof jackets are being procured as per old specifications



CHANGED FUNDING



The urgent requirement of jackets is being met through revenue procurement route

US vows it 'won't rest' until Iran frees American

Washington, AFP: While five American citizens were freed from detention in Iran this weekend, the US government vowed on Sunday to work tirelessly for the release of another missing for nine years. Ex-FBI agent Robert Levinson disappeared in mysterious circumstances in March 2007 during a visit to the Iranian island of Kish. He was reportedly investigating cigarette counterfeiting in the region. Levinson, 67, is considered to be the longest-held hostage in US history, if still alive. "Even as we rejoice in the safe return of others, we will never forget about Bob," President Barack Obama said. "Each and every day, but especially today, our hearts are with the Levinson family, and we will not rest until their family is whole again." Of the US citizens who have been freed by Iran, four were part of a prisoner swap with America, while a fifth was released in a separate process. The Federal Bureau of Investigation has announced a \$5 million reward for information leading to his return. Iranian officials have denied all knowledge regarding his disappearance.

The Hindu

19 January 2016

A new beginning with Iran

It was a remarkable moment in international diplomacy. Until last year, it was unimaginable that there would be a peaceful solution to the Iranian nuclear crisis. Even when a deal was reached in July, critics continued to attack the efforts, questioning the operating challenges of the accord and Iran's dubious nuclear record. But proving its critics wrong again, Iran quickly acted to rein in its nuclear programme. It decommissioned its enrichment centrifuges, removed the core of its heavy-water reactor and shipped out most of its low-enriched uranium stockpile - all in months. On Saturday, the International Atomic Energy Agency confirmed Iran had complied with its commitments. Within hours, nuclear sanctions were removed, signalling Iran's reintegration with the global economy. The implementation of the deal demonstrates the willingness of both the U.S. and Iran to move past their history of hostilities and begin a new future of cooperation. U.S. President Barack Obama and his Iranian counterpart Hassan Rouhani deserve credit for their visionary determination. It was not easy to effect structural changes in the thinking of their respective foreign policy establishments and chart a new course of constructive engagement. Both faced criticism at home. There were regional challenges as well, such as the steadfast opposition from Israel. Still they stuck to the path of diplomacy which brought new hopes to a region that is otherwise tormented by conflicts. Over the past few months, U.S.-Iran ties have substantially improved. Though both sides maintain that cooperation is limited to the nuclear deal, in actuality it is much broader. Tehran and Washington are engaged in Syria and Iraq. They share common interests in Afghanistan. The quick release of American sailors whose patrol boats drifted into Iranian waters signalled the shift in ties. The prisoner swap deal, announced just hours before the sanctions were lifted and under which Iran released four Americans and the U.S. seven Iranians, is another indicator. But the question is whether these changes are sustainable and, if so, what effects they can have on the troubled West Asian geopolitics. In Iran there appears to be a consensus on enhanced engagement with the West. Despite the anti-American public posturing, often from the hard-line quarters of the establishment, Iran's political elite remains largely supportive of President Rouhani's moves. But it's not the case in the U.S., where the Republican front runners for the presidential election are highly critical of the deal. It is not clear what could happen to the Iran-U.S. détente if a Republican is elected to the White House. But if both nations overcome these challenges and sustain the momentum, it can transform the region for the better in the long run. India should take the cue from the deal. A peaceful, stable Iran is vital for its interests, particularly for energy security and connectivity. New Delhi should get Tehran on board, again.

Iran vows to continue developing missiles, denounces US move

Iran on Monday said new US curbs on the Islamic Republic's ballistic missile programme were illegitimate, vowing to continue developing its conventional military deterrent. The United States imposed sanctions on 11 companies and individuals on Sunday for supplying Iran's ballistic missile programme in a move delayed by over two weeks so as not to endanger this weekend's release of US prisoners. The new measures also came after the lifting of far more comprehensive nuclear sanctions. "The Islamic Republic will respond to these aggravating and propagandistic measures by pursuing its legal missile programme stronger than before and developing its defensive capabilities," a foreign ministry statement said. Iran conducted a ballistic missile test in October, which the United Nations called a breach of a resolution prohibiting the Islamic Republic from developing missiles capable of delivering nuclear warheads. Iran insists the missile was designed to carry a conventional payload. Foreign ministry spokesman Hossein Jaber Ansari said Washington's sales of weaponry to allies in the Middle East, worth tens of billions of dollars each year, was used to commit "war crimes against Palestinian, Lebanese and most recently Yemeni citizens". "The US sanctions against Iran's ballistic missile programme... have no legal or moral legitimacy," he said. Hardline newspapers Kayhan and Vatan-e-Emrooz splashed the news on their front pages, crowding out a triumphal speech by President Hassan Rouhani, who on Sunday hailed the lifting of the nuclear sanctions. "Sanctions are back!" ran the Kayhan headline. The article pointed out that Tehran's top authority, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, had said new sanctions under any pretext would constitute a breach of the nuclear deal.

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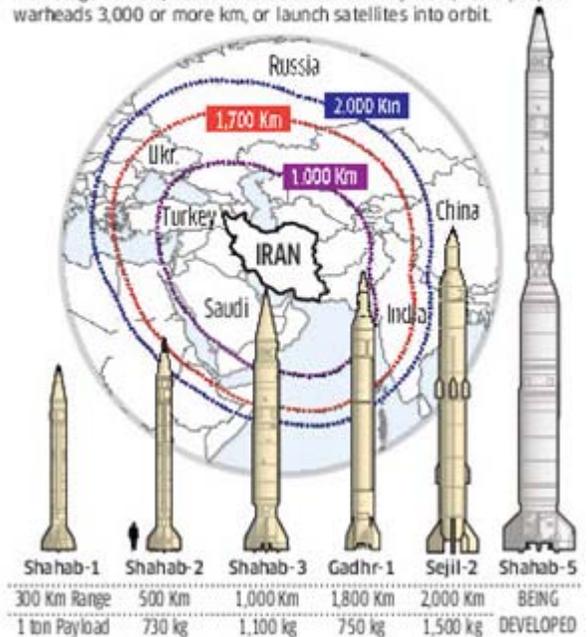
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Iran denounces new US sanctions

Left behind: US desperate to find ex-FBI agent in Iran

Tehran: Iran denounced new US sanctions on its missile programme on Monday but pushed ahead with international cooperation after its historic nuclear deal. Washington announced the new sanctions on Sunday, the day after the UN atomic watchdog confirmed that Iran had complied with the measures imposed by the deal with global powers reached in Vienna in July. World leaders hailed the implementation of the deal, and the subsequent lifting of European and US sanctions, as a milestone in international diplomacy. But in a sign that tensions persist, the US Treasury announced it was imposing sanctions on five Iranian nationals and a network of companies based in the United Arab Emirates and China in connection with Iran's ballistic missile programme. Iran's foreign ministry on Monday decried the new measures as "illegitimate," with spokesman Hossein Jaber Ansari insisting the missile programme has no links with the nuclear issue. "Iran's missile programme has never been designed to be capable of carrying nuclear weapons," Ansari said. He said Iran would respond by "accelerating its legal ballistic missile programme and boosting defence capabilities." Defence Minister Hossein Dehghan said the new sanctions would have "no effect," telling the Fars news agency: "We will prove it in practice by unveiling new missile achievements." President Hassan Rouhani, a moderate whose 2013 election victory helped launch the huge diplomatic effort toward the deal, has promised that the lifting of sanctions will give a major boost to Iran's economy. Iran will now be able to significantly increase its oil exports, long the lifeblood of its economy.

Iran's rocket programme began in the 1980s, during the Iran-Iraq war. Tehran's first missile, the Shahab-1, a copy of the Russian Scud missile that could propel one-ton warheads roughly over 300 km. The latest multistage rockets, believed to be under development, could propel warheads 3,000 or more km, or launch satellites into orbit.



World's a Safer place, thanks to Iran Deal

This is a moment many thought would never come: Iran has delivered on its commitment under a 2015 agreement with the United States and other major powers to curb or eliminate the most dangerous elements of its nuclear program. The world is now safer for this. The International Atomic Energy Agency verified on Saturday that Iran has shipped over 8.5 tons of enriched uranium to Russia so Iran can't use that in bomb-making, disabled more than 12,000 centrifuges and poured concrete into the core of a reactor at Arak designed to produce plutonium. On Sunday, President Obama hailed these steps as having "cut off every single path Iran could have used to build a bomb" and noted that engagement with Iran has created a "window to try to resolve important issues." Most important of all, he said, "We've achieved this historic progress through diplomacy, without resorting to another war in the Middle East." Still, there are daunting challenges ahead. The deal is a testament to patient diplomacy and President Obama's visionary determination to pursue a negotiated solution to the nuclear threat, despite relentless attempts by his political opponents to sabotage the initiative.

The Economic Times

19 January 2016

Pathankot Militants Consumed Psychotropic Substances

By Rahul Tripathi

All four terrorists who carried out attacks at the Pathankot air base on January 2 had consumed psychotropic substances, preliminary post-mortem reports have revealed. The four were killed after more than 15 hours gun battle with security forces. The terrorists had administered the psychotropic drugs nearly six hours before they entered the air base perimeter and remained under its influence for more than 12-15 hours, a government official requesting anonymity, said.



Countdown begins for PSLV-C31 launch

By Dennis S. Jesudasan

"The countdown started at 9.31 a.m. on Monday and the scheduled launch of the rocket is at 9.31 a.m. on Wednesday". The 48-hour countdown for the launch of PSLV-C31 rocket carrying IRNSS-1E satellite commenced at Satish Dhawan Space Centre at Sriharikota, some 100 km from here, on Monday. "The countdown started at 9.31 a.m. on Monday and the scheduled launch of the rocket is at 9.31 a.m. on Wednesday," an Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) spokesperson said. IRNSS-1E is the fifth of the seven-series Indian Regional Navigational Satellite System (IRNSS), which India is hoping to put in place by the end of this year. The regional navigation satellite system is aimed at providing accurate position information service to users in India as well as the region extending up to 1500 km from its boundary. According to ISRO, the IRNSS would provide two types of services - Standard Positioning Service (SPS) to all users and Restricted Service (RS), an encrypted service provided to authorised users.



A panoramic view of the fully integrated PSLV C-31 rocket at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre at Sriharikota. Photo: ISRO

जनसत्ता

19 January 2016

आइआरएनएसए 1-ई के प्रक्षेपण की उल्टी गिनती शुरू

भारतीय क्षेत्रीय नौवहन उपग्रह प्रणाली के पांचवें उपग्रह आइआरएनएसए 1-ई के प्रक्षेपण के लिए ध्रुवीय प्रक्षेपण यान पीएसएलएवी सी-31 की 48 घंटों की उल्टी गिनती शुरू हो गई है।

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Space tech push to Modi-fy water sector

The government will 'extensively' use space technology to look for fresh aquifers or underground water reserves in 15 lakh sq km-almost half of the country. The current deposits are spread in about 9 lakh sq km. The plan also is to add 100 flood forecasting stations to the existing 176, generate actionable data sets for 10 million hectares of flood-prone area already mapped, and look at an additional 5-10 lakh tonnes of fish production by identifying new territories. After Prime Minister Narendra Modi in September called for maximum use of the digital and mapped information- both old and real-time-accessed by satellites, the government is set to roll out projects to forecast floods and drought, and action plans to reduce their impacts. Indian states have been suffering from either too much or too little rainfall. Top officials will meet experts from the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and the National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC) for help in achieving goals broadly outlined by Modi. Union water resources secretary Shashi Shekhar said, "The meeting is likely in February's second week. That's when we draw up a timeline for the projects." Shekhar said monitoring of water levels in dams, in poor rainfall years, will help fight potential drought spells by getting farmers to switch to less water-intensive crops. "Also, monitoring of all 20 river basins and connected aquifers to know how exploited they are would aid in underground storage of water to be used in times of need," he said. At present, assessment of just two river basins (Brahmni-Baitarni and Godavari) has thrown up nearly 23 per cent additional water. There are other projects as well. One is to monitor 50 glacial lakes in the Himalayas to deal with situations like glacial lake outburst flood, feared to have taken place in Uttarakhand's Kedarnath in 2013. There are about 100 key irrigation projects currently monitored. The Centre wants to add about 50 more to the tally. Space tech will also help prepare periodic water quality maps for the Ganga's different stretches, and assess the health of river banks and floodplains. The idea also is to reduce fisherfolk casualties. An estimated 100 fishermen per one lakh population die annually in accidents. A total of 325 Indian fishermen who strayed are in Bangladesh, Iran and Pakistan jails. Clear demarcation of international water boundaries and safe fishing zones would address parts of these problems, Shekhar said. "We also want to set up a National Water Informatics Centre, linked to all central and state water-related data bases," Shekhar said. In case of a particular intensity of rainfall, officials would know in advance the levels up to which water would reach in times of floods. "We can inform cities and villages in dangers of being flooded and to timely take people to safer areas," he said. Water expert Manoj Misra, however, has a word of caution. "No matter how advanced a technology is, it remains remotely sensed (subject to vagaries of weather conditions). There would still be a need of field validation. The need to enhance man power and equipment cannot be over emphasised," he said.

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Supply of limitless clean energy may be possible

Los Angeles, PTI: A new technique to 'see' where energy is delivered in a reactor has brought researchers a step closer towards achieving controlled nuclear fusion - a process that powers the Sun and other stars, and has the potential to supply the world with limitless, clean energy. The method was developed to see where energy is delivered during a process called fast ignition, an approach to initiate nuclear fusion reactions using a high-intensity laser. "Before we developed this technique, it was as if we were looking in the dark. Now, we can better understand where energy is being deposited so we can probe new experimental designs to improve delivery of energy to the fuel," said Christopher McGuffey from the University of California. Fast ignition involves two stages to start nuclear fusion. First, hundreds of lasers compress the fusion fuel (typically a mix of deuterium and tritium contained in a spherical plastic fuel capsule) to high density. Then, a high-intensity laser delivers energy to rapidly heat (ignite) the compressed fuel. Scientists consider fast ignition a promising approach towards controlled nuclear fusion because it requires less energy than other approaches. In order for fast ignition to succeed, scientists need to overcome a big hurdle - how to direct energy from the high-intensity laser into the densest region of the fuel. To tackle this problem, researchers devised a way to see, for the first time, where energy travels when the high-intensity laser hits the fuel target. The technique relies on the use of copper tracers inside the fuel capsule. When the high-intensity laser beam is directed at the compressed fuel target, it generates high-energy electrons that hit the copper tracers and cause them to emit X-rays that scientists can image. After experimenting with different fuel target designs and laser configurations, researchers eventually achieved a record high (up to 7 per cent) efficiency of energy delivery from the high-intensity laser to the fuel.