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Military ties, tech on top of PM's Israel list

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will embark on a two-day maiden visit to Israel on July 5, the first by an Indian PM, and mark 25 years of diplomatic ties between the two countries, officials said on Wednesday.

Modi will be in Israel on July 5 and 6 en route to the July 7-8 G-20 Summit at Hamburg, Germany.

Preparatory work for the historic first has already begun, with defence secretary G Mohan Kumar bound for Tel Aviv on April 24-26 for a high-power joint working group meeting on military cooperation.

India is keen to jointly develop an armed drone with long endurance and high survivability in the war theatre, officials said.

Foreign secretary S Jaishankar will also visit Israel early next month, even as India plays host to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.

Though Israel is among the top four military hardware suppliers to India, with more than \$1 billion in annual sales to New Delhi, the Modi government is keen to ensure that this visit is not focused on defence ties alone, but encompasses long-term economic and technological cooperation, resulting in a free-trade agreement.

Modi's visit will be an open acknowledgement of India's close ties with Israel, and also pave the way for transfer of high-end agricultural technologies that will benefit Indian farmers.

In the context of West Asia and the Af-Pak region, terrorism will top the agenda, and Israel is expected to brief the Indian prime minister of the role of Iran's support to Shia extremist groups in destabilising Iraq and Syria. Tel Aviv will also share its assessment on the spread of the so-called Islamic State (IS).

Modi's itinerary in Israel is still to be worked out, but the larger part of the two-day programme will be aimed at people-to-people interaction, and the charting out of an agenda for future exchanges, the officials said.



India, U.K. discuss framework for technology transfers

By Dinakar Peri

Developing of products and selling them to third countries

To expand the cooperation between India and the U.K. on sharing of advanced technology, the two countries are discussing ways to devise a government-to-government framework to facilitate transfer of such technology, said visiting U.K. Secretary of State for Defence Sir Michael Fallon on Wednesday.

“We have our exports controls, licensing system and I know that 99% of the license applications are granted. We are looking to further facilitate the transfer through a government-to-government framework”, he said speaking at the India-UK strategic dialogue organised by the Observer Research Foundation and U.K. High Commission.

This is in line with the understanding reached between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his British counterpart Theresa May during her visit to India in November last year. This will be one of the specific areas of discussion under the Defence and International Security Partnership (DISP) agreed between the two countries in 2015 and will be taken up by the Defence Consultative Group (DCG).

Mr. Fallon said that U.K. sees India as a launch pad for British companies where they can develop high-tech capabilities and sell them to third countries.

Transfer of technology

“We are dead-serious on transfer of technology,” Mr. Fallon stressed. He also said that the U.K. can share valuable lessons with India in its attempts at defence reforms. He listed the appointment of the Chief of Defence Staff and the setting up of a new procurement agency as some of the areas. India can learn from our mistakes during such reforms, he added.



Thu, 13 Apr, 2017

Army Urges SC to Recall Minimum Force Rule in Dealing with Militants

By Samanwaya Rautray

Kill or be killed: "When militants fire, forces have to attack, they cannot be expected to only act in self-defence," attorney general Mukul Rohatgi

An SC bench had earlier ruled out immunity if excessive force is used even if AFSPA was in force

The Army urged the Supreme Court to withdraw a ruling that restricted the use of force while dealing with militants to the minimum that is required for self-defence, saying that it could constraint antiterror operations and compromise the security of the country .

“When militants fire, armed forces have to attack, they cannot be expected to only act in self-defence,” attorney general Mukul Rohatgi told a bench presided over by CJI JS Khehar.

The right to self-defence is only a peacetime rule for civilians and cannot be applied in actual military situations, the government's topmost law officer told the court on Wednesday . The bench said it cannot examine the merits of the case as a review petition in the matter has already been dismissed. “Security of the country is not a ground for a curative,” the CJI observed in his preliminary remarks, even as he assured the AG to examine the matter carefully .

A bench, comprising Justices Madan B Lokur and UU Lalit, on a batch of petitions alleging extrajudicial killings by the army and Assam Rifles soldiers in Manipur, had ruled that personnel using excessive force would not be immune to prosecution even if the Armed Forces Special Powers Act was in force. A review petition against this order was dismissed by the same bench on October 6, 2016.

“The immediate effect of the judgement is that it has hampered the Army's ability to respond to insurgent and terrorist situations attributable to the actors within the boundaries of the country ,” said the Army's curative petition, which allows the petitioner a final chance to seek relief from the SC against its order.

The ruling, mandating armed forces personnel to exercise minimum force in combat situations while dealing with militants whether in Kashmir or the Northeast, would compromise the security of the country , the AG said. “If the position maintained by the order continues, it may , one day , be wellnigh impossible to maintain peace and security . The Army has to, in given circumstances, take quick decisions which cannot be dissected later on like an appeal against the ordinary murder appeal,” Rohatgi added.

In his argument, Rohatgi said the scope of judicial review against active military operations cannot be on the same parameters as in other situations.

“Therefore, action taken by the Army during operations cannot be put to judicial scrutiny ,” he argued. “...to apply ... judicial review over action which has taken place in the last two or three decades is detrimental to the morale of forces and, in fact, if it carries on to its end may result in adverse consequences to serving and retired army officers who have spent a lifetime risking their all to secure the sovereignty and integrity of the nation.”

Thu, 13 Apr, 2017

Gaps in fragile border security need to be plugged: Committee

India's border security is 'very fragile' and there are 'several gaps' which need to be plugged, the Parliamentary standing committee on home affairs has, in a report, informed the Parliament. The committee, headed by former home minister P Chidambaram studied the issue of capacity building for border security and found that some institutions were created for the purpose, but the government had maintained an 'ambiguous approach' in strengthening them. Commenting on infiltration and cross-border terrorism, the committee said more than a year has passed since the Pathankot attack, but its investigation by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) was not complete yet.

No analysis seems to have been done into 'the failure of the intelligence agencies to provide credible and actionable inputs regarding the attacks at Pathankot, Uri, Pampore, Baramulla and Nagrota,' the committee said. These attacks exposed the deficiencies in the Indian intelligence agencies and the Home Ministry should instruct the NIA to complete the investigations so as to 'identify the loopholes in the intelligence set-up in the border areas,' the committee said. The committee has concluded that the huge rise in the number of infiltrations could be due to failures of the Indian Army and the BSF to foil some of them.

The government must probe the vulnerabilities along the Line of Control that are being exploited by the infiltrators, it said, adding that the government can take help from countries which have developed tunnel detection systems, as tunnels were increasingly used for infiltration.



Thu, 13 Apr, 2017

Flashpoint Korea

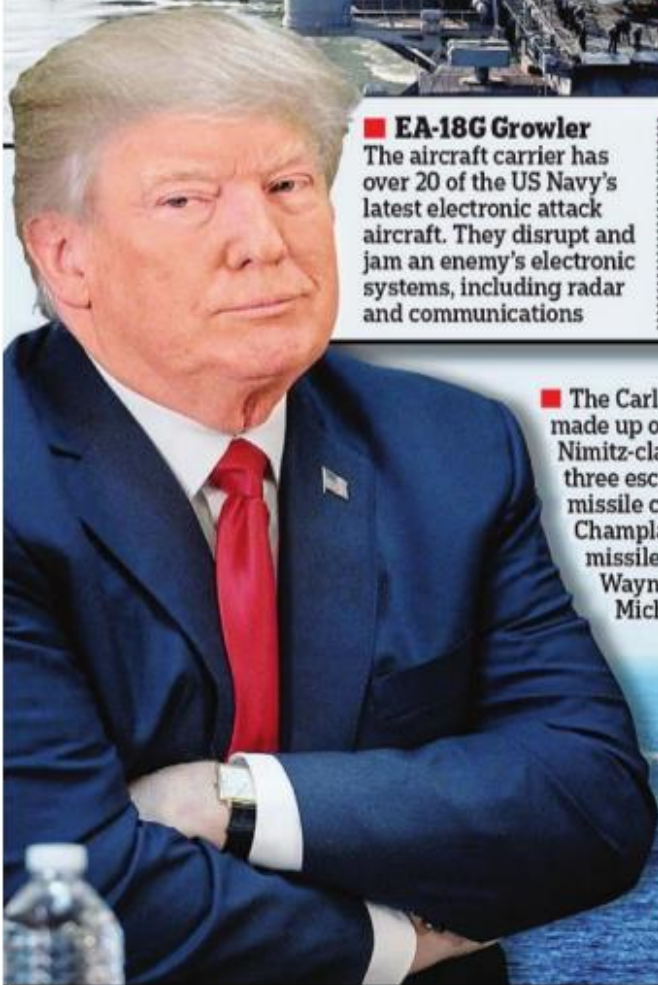
US muscle flexing won't get Pyongyang to abandon its nuclear programme

Amid escalating tensions on the Korean peninsula, North Korea has warned of a nuclear attack on the US at any sign of American aggression. This comes on the heels of Washington's recent decision to send a naval carrier strike group to the region and US strikes against a Syrian airbase for purported use of chemical weapons. It appears that Washington wants to keep all its options open to get Pyongyang to abandon its nuclear programme. That the US has already begun deploying the THAAD anti-missile defence system in South Korea shows that Washington is preparing for all possible contingencies.

That said, such American show of force is unlikely to move Pyongyang. On the contrary, it is likely to harden Pyongyang's resolve to pursue its nuclear programme. Over the decades, North Korea's ruling Kim family has itself used the threat of force against South Korea and Japan as an effective bargaining chip. It has conducted five nuclear tests so far, and could conduct a sixth in the face of recent US military moves.

Add to this the fact that China is North Korea's closest ally. President Donald Trump urged Chinese President Xi Jinping to do more to rein in North Korea during their recent meet. This is a vain hope, as China sees the US as a strategic rival and is not keen to oblige. Beijing does not want to deal with a likely flood of refugees should the North Korean regime collapse, nor will it allow US and South Korean forces to advance to its doorstep. Given these realities, it's unclear what US military muscle flexing will achieve. It won't get North Korea to denuclearise but will raise tensions in east Asia - another example of incoherent foreign policy emanating from Washington.

North Korea nuclear threat



■ EA-18G Growler

The aircraft carrier has over 20 of the US Navy's latest electronic attack aircraft. They disrupt and jam an enemy's electronic systems, including radar and communications

■ F/A-18 Super Hornet

Faster than the speed of sound, the 40-plus Super Hornets on board can carry laser-guided bombs for surface targets and heat-seeking Sidewinder missiles capable of destroying other fighter aircraft

■ E-2C Hawkeye

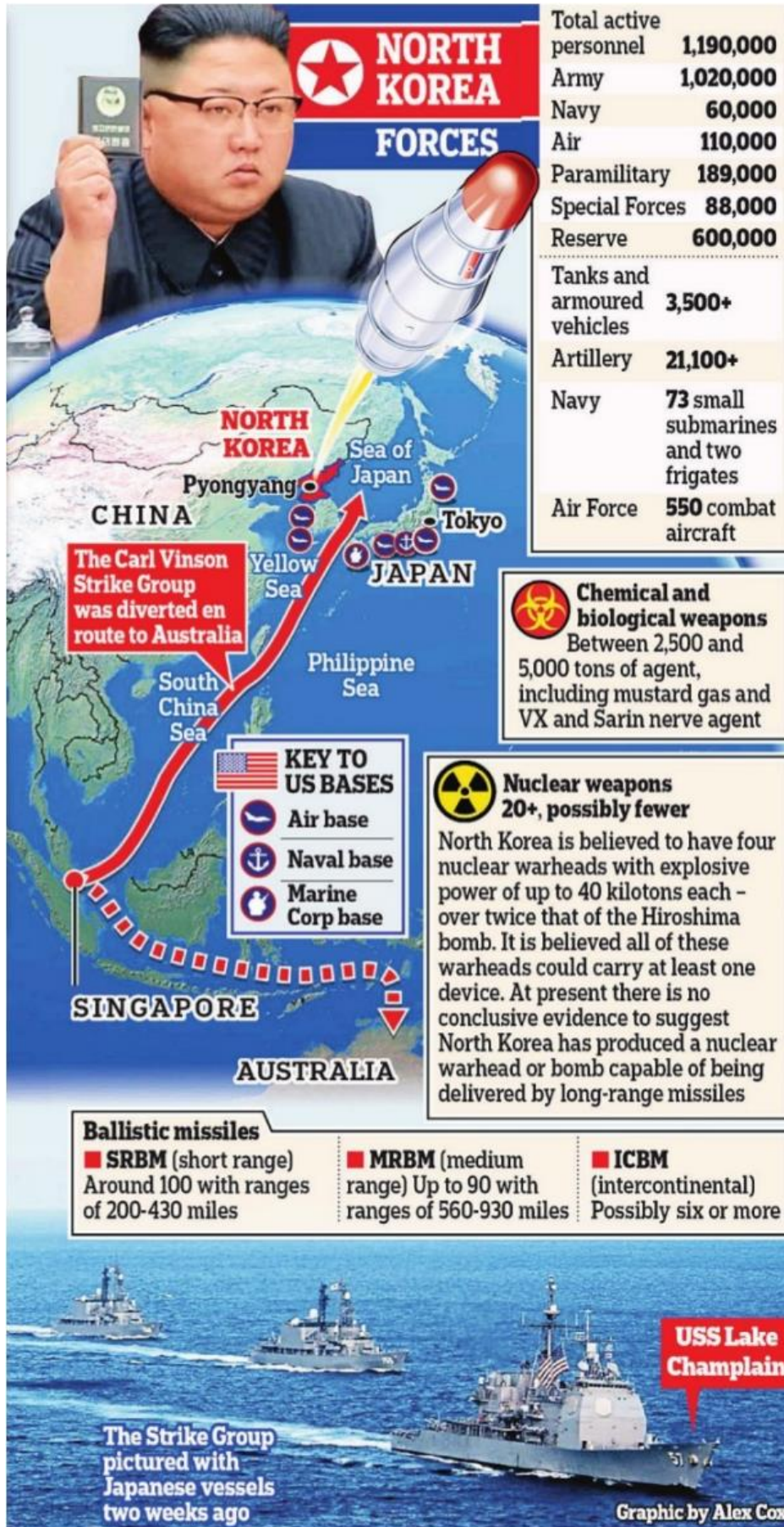
Known as the 'eyes of the fleet', the four Hawkeyes operate as an airborne early warning system. Their distinctive 24ft-wide radar rotodomes contain surveillance sensors to provide high-tech threat analysis against hostile targets

■ The Carl Vinson Strike Group is made up of the USS Carl Vinson, a Nimitz-class aircraft carrier, and three escort ships – the guided missile cruiser USS Lake Champlain and two guided missile destroyers, the USS Wayne E Meyer and the USS Michael Murphy (not pictured)

■ The three escort ships have a combined 300 missile tubes and are fitted with the Aegis anti-missile system. This could allow them to shoot down North Korean ballistic missiles just after launch or in mid-flight



Contd....



Global interest in PSLV soars

Next flight to carry 30 smallsats

The Indian PSLV (Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle) space vehicle has received more than double its normal share of inquiries from prospective customers ever since it launched a record 104 satellites in a single flight in February.

A world best, 101 small foreign commercial spacecraft were taken up at once in that feat, catapulting the PSLV's overall commercial tally to 180.

“There has been a spurt in inquiries, almost double what we were getting. Globally, 500 satellites are expected to come up for launch every year from 2018 onwards. We are seeing how we can equip ourselves towards meeting this big opportunity,” said Rakesh Sashibhushan, chairman and managing director of Antrix Corporation, ISRO's (Indian Space Research Organisation) business arm that markets its rocket and satellite services.

“ISRO is also ramping up availability of the PSLVs. Antrix has asked for two dedicated PSLVs a year for doing fully commercial launches. They can mostly cater to the 5 kg to 100 kg small satellites,” he told *The Hindu*.

The PSLV, with a near impeccable 37 successes in 39 flights, he said, is a clear leader in the category of rockets that lift small satellites to low Earth orbits or LEOs. These satellites weigh up to 500 kg and must be placed in polar orbits 500 km from Earth.

“Antrix has launch orders worth around 600 crore,” Mr. Sasibhushan said. Roughly 15% of its nearly 2,000-crore turnover comes from PSLV launch orders of foreign satellite operators.

Similar 100-plus satellite contracts in a single flight would be uncommon; Mr. Sasibhushan said the next PSLV, C-38, due in May, would have 30 smallsats riding piggyback with the primary Cartosat-2 series satellite. But they are not a result of the February launch, he clarified.

Carolyn Belle, Senior Analyst at Northern Sky Research, a space industry consultancy based in Massachusetts, said in a response, “The PSLV is in an interesting position in the market. It has a strong technical track record and is an attractive vehicle for smallsat operators - especially if the launch [frequency] increases.”

However, a limiting factor, in her view, is the waiver process that is needed to launch a US satellite, the US being the largest market.