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True blue: The sea power punch

By Ajay Banerjee

Indian Navy is on its biggest peacetime deployment around the globe (see map), eager to display its 'blue-water' capability. This stretching also means protecting trade and dominating India's vast sea boundary

IN April 1989, the Time magazine cover-paged a picture of Indian Naval warship INS Godavari with a heading 'Super India: the next military power.' The magazine had unusually predicted the rise of India — a well-known friend of the then Soviet Union. Six months before the 'Time' article, the world had taken note as to how India used INS Godavari, the country's first indigenously designed-and-built frigate, to prevent a coup in the Maldives, an Indian Ocean island country, 700 km south-west of Kerala.

Around three decades later, the Indian Navy is deemed to have 'blue water' capability — the ability to deploy and sustain operations over 370km from shore. The Navy is currently on its biggest peacetime deployment ever. Since January 2015 Indian Naval warships have visited 47 countries for exercises or port visits. These locations are as separated as far-eastern Russia and Norway in Europe and West Africa and Australia. Military observers in Moscow, Washington, Tokyo, Paris and Beijing keep a watch on India's sea activities.

"It's a realization of an ambitious plan our predecessors had for a blue-water Navy. And they thought of this when we were perceived as a poor nation," says Vice Admiral Satish Soni (retd), who headed the Navy's Eastern Command.

The deployment

As of June 1, the INS Tarkash is in Lagos (Nigeria) on the west coast of Africa. It will return via Cape Horn. The Tarkash, Mumbai, Trishul and Aditya, a fleet tanker carrying supplies, have been sailing since early April. The flotilla carried out anti-piracy operations and participated in exercises in Europe. The Tarkash docked at London's Canary Wharf where it was received by Sachin Tendulkar.

Another flotilla of four ships in the East is exercising with Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea. Three of these warships are slated to reach Australia in mid-June for another round of exercises.

Since 2008, one warship is rotated on anti-piracy duties in the Gulf of Aden. Hydrographic vessels — mapping the seabed spend 6-8 months annually in East-African countries and in the Indian Ocean. A regular deployment is maintained to patrol the coast of Maldives and Seychelles besides all along the Sea Lines of Communication (SLOC) carrying cargo-laden ships. In the past one week three warships each have been rushed to Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, carrying relief material in the wake of cyclones.

The urgency

Naval deployments convey multiple messaging: Power projection; assurance to smaller countries; a showcase of abilities to established maritime powers and finally show the intent to dominate the SLOC through which most of Indian trade is carried out. "Some 40% of the nation's GDP comes from incoming and outgoing trade and a blue-water Navy helps register India as a maritime power," says Vice Admiral Pradeep Chauhan (retd), a former Commandant of the Indian Naval Academy.

Harsh V Pant in his book 'The Rise of the Indian Navy: Internal Vulnerabilities, External Challenges' narrates the change: "The relevance of Indian Navy in the foreign policy calculus underwent a gradual trans-mutation from the mid-1980s."

In April 2004, the Navy released its first Maritime Doctrine. But the real primer was on December 2, 2005. "India aspires to a certain position in the world and so we must have a navy commensurate to our needs," said Admiral Arun Prakash, the Navy Chief. "A blue-water navy needs strong integral capacity, logistics,

surveillance, networked operations. The governments have realized this and provided money,” says Vice Admiral Sekhar Sinha (ret), a former Commander of the Navy’s Mumbai-based Western Command. “The time has come to bridge the gaps — we need more submarines and new helicopters,” he says.

Age of technology

In the mid-2000, India broke free from the Soviet ship-making industry and produced its own ship-grade steel. New gas turbine engines now mean smoother operations and fewer breakdowns. “Technology, driven by a desire to protect interests at sea coupled with fiscal backing, has played a vital,” says Vice Admiral Chauhan.

Since 2013 a dedicated naval satellite Rukmini keeps all ships linked with the base. Modern surveillance planes such as Boeing P-8I, nuclear submarine INS Chakra, an Aircraft carrier, new stealth frigates fitted with the BrahMos add to the confidence of the seagoing fleet.



Sun, 04 June, 2017

CBI busts transfer racket at Army HQ

The CBI today said it has exposed a major racket at Army headquarters with the arrest of a Lt Colonel and a middleman who were said to be using their contacts in the force to manipulate posting of officers for bribes. Lt-Col Ranganathan Suvramani Moni in the personnel division of the Army and middleman Gaurav Kohli were arrested while an alleged bribe of Rs 2 lakh was changing hands for the transfer of a Bengaluru-based officer, the CBI said.

“Searches were conducted at the premises, including the residence of arrested accused and others in New Delhi, Hyderabad, Bengaluru and Thiruvananthapuram which led to recovery of cash over 10 lakh (approximately) and incriminating documents and other articles,” CBI spokesperson R K Gaur said. Raids were also conducted on the premises of a Brigadier in the personnel wing at the headquarters. The agency has registered the case against Moni, Hyderabad-based army officer Purshottam, Bengaluru-based barracks and stores officer (BSO) S Subhas and alleged middleman Gaurav Kohli.

The name of Brigadier S K Grover, DDG Personnel, has been mentioned in the FIR but does not figure in the list of accused. The agency seized phones and laptop of Grover during the searches, CBI sources said. Moni, Kohli and some other officers were allegedly involved in a transfer-posting racket in which choice postings were ensured in return for “huge illegal gratification” which ran into lakhs of rupees for a single case, sources said. Moni conspired with Kohli and Purshottam, an officer posted in the engineer stores department in Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh, for influencing the transfer of various officers.

Purshottam allegedly contacted army officers who were either posted in field formations or faced imminent transfer, and wanted postings at preferred locations. Kohli, who was close to senior officers in the personnel division at the army HQ used these contacts to pursue transfer of the officers, the FIR said.



Sun, 04 June, 2017

ISRO to launch GSLV MARK-III tomorrow

Monday is going to be crucial for the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) as they are going to launch its heaviest rocket GSLV Mark —III on Monday from space port Sriharikota in Andhra Pradesh. The mission launch success will put the ISRO into the elite space club of very few countries which have the capacity of putting four tonne satellites into orbit. At present U.S., Russia, Europe, China and Japan dominate this space.

The all-new 640-ton Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle — Mark III (GSLV Mk- III) has the capability to put our own astronauts into space.

According to ISRO, the launch will take place at Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota at 5.28 p.m. This heavy rocket can put Indian communication satellites into orbit from India saving lot on exchequer.

MK-II can eject heavier satellite into higher geostationary transfer orbit of 36,000 km and to low-Earth orbit of up to 800 km.

According to ISRO officials, the prime objective of

the GSLV MK-III was to launch communication satellites totally in India without depending on others .

The GSLV Mark -III will launch 3,136 kilogram GSAT-19, an experimental communications satellite. “We are confident that this fully self-reliant Indian rocket will succeed in its mission,” said AS Kiran Kumar, chairman ISRO.

According to space scientists, 43-metres long GSLV MK-III could become India’s launch vehicle for astronauts. GSLV Mark -III has the indigenously designed cryogenic engine with an estimated cost of Rs 300 crore.