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Thu, 22 Feb, 2018

Night trial of Prithvi-II missile successful

India on Wednesday successfully conducted a night trial of its indigenously developed nuclear capable Prithvi-II missile with a strike range of 350 km, from a test range in Odisha.

The surface-to-surface missile was test-fired from a mobile launcher from launch complex-3 of the Integrated Test Range at Chandipur near here around 8.30 pm, as part of a user trial by the Army, defence sources said.

The perfect test launch came after successful trial of the Agni-5 missile on January 18, Agni-1 on February 6 and Agni II on Tuesday from the Abdul Kalam Island off the Odisha coast.

Prithvi II missile was also successfully test-fired earlier on February 7 from the ITR at Chandipur. The state-of-the-art Prithvi-II missile is capable of carrying 500 to 1,000 kg of warheads and is thrust by liquid propulsion twin engines.

The sophisticated missile, which has a strike range of 350 km, uses advanced inertial guidance system with manoeuvring trajectory to hit its target, they said.

The missile was randomly chosen from the production stock and the entire launch activities were carried out by the specially formed Strategic Force Command (SFC) of the Army, and monitored by the scientists of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) as part of training exercise, the sources said.

"The missile trajectory was tracked by radars, electro-optical tracking systems and telemetry stations by the DRDO along the coast of Odisha," they said.

Thu, 22 Feb, 2018

Avani becomes first woman pilot to fly solo a fighter jet

Flying Officer Avani Chaturvedi on Wednesday became the first Indian woman pilot to fly solo a fighter jet. She flew a Mig-21 for 30 minutes at the Suratgarh airbase in Rajasthan.

Along with two other woman pilots of IAF namely Flying Officer Bhavana Kanth and Flying Officer Mohana Singh, Chaturvedi was selected for combat flying two years back thereby becoming the first women pilots to join the fighter stream.

Bhavana and Mohana are also likely to undertake first ever solo flights on MIG-21 in the coming days at Ambala and Kalaikund airbases respectively in similar type of aircraft. Till now, all the three pilots had flown solo in aircraft like Pilatus trainer aircraft and Hawk Advanced Jet Trainers(AJT). However, flying a supersonic jet like MIG-21 is a different ball game and officials said it is significant achievement for Chaturvedi.

After successfully flying some more sorties alone, the three pilots will then get trained in tricky combat manoeuvres. This phase will be followed by flying at night and during moonless nights so as to gain experience in overall combat scenario besides fighting in all kinds of weather. This critical phase will take about a year before the first three women pilots are declared fit for combat flying, officials said.

IAF is the first service to induct women in combat role while the Army and Navy are yet to follow suit. The decision to induct women in fighter jet flying was taken three years back and the three pilots were shortlisted after rigorous screening.

As of now, women fly transport planes and helicopters in the IAF, Army and Navy. Army is yet to induct women into fighting arms like infantry, artillery and armoured corps due to social perception and issues of safety during a combat. However, women officers are serving in non-fighting arms like Engineers, Army Service Corps(ASC), Ordnance, Judge and Advocate General(JAG) branch and Military Intelligence.

Similarly, women officers are yet to be deployed on warships and submarines in the Navy due to inherent issues like lack of separate accommodation facilities during long sailing tours.



Thu, 22 Feb, 2018

Narendra Modi announces ₹20,000 crore defence corridor for Bundelkhand

Prime Minister Narendra Modi today announced a defence industrial corridor in Bundelkhand to bring about development in one of the most backward regions of Uttar Pradesh.

"I want to make an important announcement that one of the two defence industrial corridors mentioned in Union budget will be at Bundelkhand region of UP and will bring an investment of Rs 20,000 crore and generate employment for 2.5 lakh people," the Prime Minister said while inaugurating 'UP Investor's Summit 2018' in Lucknow on Wednesday.

Stressing that the UP government has vast potential, Modi said, "When there is positive change it's visible and the convergence of so many captains of industry is an achievement in itself. "The path of development agenda requires policy, planning, performance to bring progress and both Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and the people of the state are ready to give their 'super hit' performance."

Terming holding of Investor's Summit and congregation of industrialists as a sign of a big change, Modi said that the Yogi government has overcome previous negativity and shown a ray of hope to people.

"Uttar Pradesh has values and virtues, but it also needs value addition," the PM said lauding the new policy 'One district, one product' of Yogi government and said that it could prove to be the game changer for the state.

The Prime Minister also said that international airports will come up in Jewar and Kushinagar.

He said that the governments at the Centre and the state focusses not only on job-centric growth but also people-centric growth. "We will try building such infrastructure in the 21st century that will take the state to new heights.

We are giving importance to ease of living as well as ease of business. For the development of new India and new UP, we not only require new hope but also new investments," he added.

On the occasion, the PM did not forget to mention the coming Kumbh Mela at Allahabad in January next year.

"Tourism has become a huge industry in itself. The Kumbh Mela in Prayag will be the largest congregation of its kind and we need to ensure that people from across the globe participate in it. We should ensure that every country has its representatives at Kumbh," he said.

Modi, who recently participated in a similar investors summit in Mumbai, said, "Maharashtra has set a target of trillion dollar economy. I set this challenge before UP to compete with Maharashtra and let us see who achieves the target first. If the competition grows fierce, it will not only attract more investments and create more job opportunities but also strengthen cooperative federalism."

While appreciating the Yogi government for its initiative of formulating new policies for different sectors, the PM said that the Chief Minister himself will monitor the execution of the MoUs signed.

"Earlier there was an atmosphere of negativity and people lived in fear and insecurity. Development could never take place in such an environment. I appreciate Yogi Adityanath for making positive change in the state which will lead to the dawn of a new era in UP," said Modi.

"Investors will see red carpet and not red tape now. Yogi Adityanath is making policies keeping this in mind. The government is making policies for the welfare of farmers, women and youth. Our government will ensure that benefits of the ongoing structural and policy changes reach those at the lowest rung of the society," the PM said.

"The Prime Minister Kisan Property Scheme has been introduced by the Union government to reduce crop-grain-fruits and waste of vegetables. The supply chain and infrastructure were being modernized under this scheme which will help in doubling farmer's income by 2022," he asserted.

The PM said UP has tremendous potential in tourism sector.

"I am sure the new tourism policy announced by the state government would facilitate investments in this sector. Kumbh Mela can add to this growth. Tourism is a multiplier for growth. UP needs to strengthen its eco-tourism," the PM said.

In his one-hour speech, the PM said that UP ranked number one in the country in production of food grains, wheat, sugarcane, milk, potato production and it was number two in vegetable production and third in fruit production. "So no one can stop it state from achieving its target of growth," he said.

Welcoming guests at the 'UP Investors Summit', the Prime Minister said, "We have former Mauritius President / PM Sir Aniroodh Jugnauth and investors from across the globe at the Summit. The fact that this summit could happen at such a large-scale is a big achievement for the state. I would like to congratulate the leadership and the people of the state for achieving this."

Earlier, as a foreign delegate senior Mauritian politician Sir Aniroodh Jugnauth said that Mauritius was willing to become a partner in UP in promotion of religious tourism and strengthening agriculture, manufacturing and infrastructure sectors.

"We have blood relationship with India and now during the Modi regime, the tie between both countries have strengthened further," he said.

The Mauritius leader, who is heading a high-level delegation of his country, also thanked the PM for giving land for the construction UP- Mauritius Pravasi Bharat building in Varanasi. The country is among the seven countries, who are partners of 'UP Investors Summit'.

More than 200 industrialists and businessmen including Mukesh Ambani, Gautam Adani, Subhash Chandra, Kumar Mangalam Birla and M Chandrashekhara are participating in the Summit.

Pak aiding, China backing influx in N-E: Army chief

Rahul Singh

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NEW DELHI: Army chief Bipin Rawat said on Wednesday that Pakistan, with support from China, is pushing illegal migrants from Bangladesh into India's northeastern states, where the "population dynamics can no longer be changed".

Rawat did not elaborate on what he meant by population dynamics but referred to the party All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF), which is accused by its political opponents of pandering to illegal immigrants.

"They (Pakistan) will always try and ensure that this area is taken over... playing the proxy dimension of warfare where they do not have to confront a stronger nation through conventional operations," he said, adding: "This proxy game is being well played by our western neighbour and supported also by the northern neighbour."

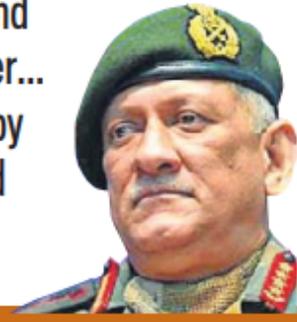
General Rawat did not name Pakistan or China, instead using "western neighbour" and "northern neighbour" to refer to them.

He was speaking at a conference on the Northeast in the Capital.

He said India needed to identify problems in the northeast

They (Pakistan) will always try and ensure that this area is taken over... This proxy game is being well played by our western neighbour and supported also by the northern neighbour.

BIPIN RAWAT, Army chief



and address them holistically, with a focus on development and on ways to integrate the region with the rest of the country.

"I think the government is looking at the Northeast with correct perspective... With development will come control of the people residing in this area. I don't think now you can change the population dynamics of this region... there is a party called AIUDF. It has grown at a faster rate than the BJP has over the years... AIUDF is moving at a faster pace in the state of Assam."

His concerns on population come at a time when attempts are being made to publish the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam that would identify illegal migrants.

The Supreme Court on Tuesday rejected petitions seeking extension of the deadline for its publication from May 31 to July 31.

In November 2016, junior home minister Kiren Rijiju told Parliament that government estimates put the number of illegal Bangladeshi migrants staying in India at "around 20 million".

He did not specify the states in which they may be in.

"We have to keep our eyes and ears open and keep a watch on this area called the north-east," army chief Rawat said. He said the government's Act East policy would help address the issues in the region.

Taking to reporters, Rawat said the situation is Doklam was "absolutely fine" and there was no reason to worry. India and China were locked in the 73-day Doklam standoff near the Sikkim border last year.

Thu, 22 Feb, 2018

SARAS completes second test flight successfully

India's indigenous light transport aircraft Saras was today successfully test flown for a second time here, Union Science and Technology minister Harsh Vardhan said.

The production model design is expected to be ready by June-July this year, he said.

The test flight, commanded by Wing Commander U P Singh, Group Captain R V Panicker and Group Captain K P Bhat of the Indian Air Force (Aircraft and System Testing Establishment), lasted 25 minutes, Vardhan said.

The flight took off from the HAL's airport here.

"This was the second of the 20 test flights planned for Saras PT1N, before freezing the production version...," he told reporters here.

The first successful test was carried out on January 24 this year.

The design and development of the aircraft is being done by the CSIR-National Aerospace Laboratories, he said.

The Indian Air Force has committed to induct 15 such aircraft initially, Vardhan said.

CSIR-NAL proposes to get the SARAS-Mk 2 version certified initially for military and subsequently for civil version, he said.

Saras will be 20 to 25 per cent cheaper than any imported aircraft in the same category and it will be a 19-seater aircraft instead of 14-seater, Vardhan said.

"The unit cost of the aircraft, with more than 70 per cent indigenous content, will be around Rs 40 to Rs 45 crore as against Rs 60 to Rs 70 crore for imported ones and has far more benefits than what the imported aircraft offers," he said.

The HAL has been identified as the production agency for the military version of Saras, while production of the civil version will be given to identify private industries.

"We are in talks with the Tatas, Mahindra and Reliance companies. We have not yet finalised any of the private companies. Soon we will do it," he said.

India needs 120 to 160 civil and military versions of the aircraft in this genre in the next 10 years, Vardhan said.

SARAS Mk 2 will be ideal for commuter connectivity under the Centre's UDAAN Scheme for variety of applications like air taxi, aerial search and survey, executive transport, disaster management, border patrol, coast guard, ambulance and other community services, Vardhan said.

"Its successful development will be one of the game changers in the history of civil aviation in India," he said.

The project was dumped by the previous government, after an accident during the test flight in 2009, Vardhan said.

"Though the Directorate General of Civil Aviation had exonerated the aircraft from any design flaw or poor-quality production, no effort was made to revive the project," he added.

The credit for reviving the indigenous project goes to the present government, headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who had given a thrust to the 'Make in India' mission and the team of scientists and engineers under the leadership of J Jadhav, the minister said.

"It is the culmination of joint team efforts of ASTE, DGAQA, CEMILAC and HAL," he added.

After the project was revived by the present government, NAL has incorporated design modifications and improvements on the Saras PT 1 model, like 2x1200 shp engines, among other things, Vardhan said.

CSIR Director General Girish Saini said the cost of development and certification of Saras Mk2 will be around Rs 600 crore with a time period of about 2 to 3 years.

Air Vice Marshal Sandeep Singh said the IAF was committed to testing and thereafter inducting the first indigenously designed and manufactured Light Transport Aircraft.

"IAF is fully supporting this programme and the design and configuration of the new version of SARAS would be frozen soon," he added.



Thu, 22 Feb, 2018

Pak Army choppers violate LoC flying norms in Poonch

Violating the international norms, Pakistan Army helicopters on Wednesday were seen flying just across the Line of Control (LoC) in the Poonch sector of Jammu division. A senior Army officer confirmed that Pakistan army helicopters were seen flying very close to the LoC in Poonch sector. However, they did not indulge in violation of airspace.

According to established norms, rotary wing aircraft should not come within 1 km of the LoC and the fixed wing aircraft not within 10 kms of the LoC. However, these helicopters flew within 300 meters of the LoC. He said that the helicopters visited their posts within their airspace and did not cross the LoC. The Pakistan Army helicopters remained about 300 meters inside the Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (POK) territory and returned from there. No firing or hostile action was reported by any side.

Reports said that the helicopters were detected flying near the Khari and Karmara areas of Poonch where the Pakistani troops have been targeting the civilian areas in a bid to enable the trained terrorists infiltrate into India under the cover of shelling. The helicopter in the area has raised doubts about the intentions of the Pakistani Army that has established training camps for terrorists in the area and also their launching pads.



Thu, 22 Feb, 2018

NASA to develop spacesuit with built-in toilet

NASA scientists are developing a new spacesuit that includes a waste-disposal system, which will allow astronauts to remain in their spacesuits for up to six days in case of emergencies. The new suits, called the Orion Crew Survival Systems Suits (OCSSS), will be worn by astronauts on NASA's Orion spacecraft, which will carry humans beyond low Earth orbit.

While the Orion will be equipped with a toilet, NASA is making contingency plans in case of emergencies, including the possibility that the Orion capsule depressurises and the astronauts have to remain in their suits to survive.

New laser system can remotely charge smartphone

Washington: Scientists, including those of Indian origin, have developed a laser emitter that can safely charge a smartphone across a room as quickly as a standard USB cable. Researchers mounted a thin power cell to the back of a smartphone, which charges the smartphone using power from the laser.

They custom designed safety features — including a metal, flat- plate heat sink on the smartphone to dissipate excess heat from the laser, as well as a reflector- based mechanism to shut off the laser if a person tries to move in the charging beam's path.

“We have designed, constructed and tested this laser- based charging system with a rapid- response safety mechanism, which ensures that the laser emitter will terminate the charging beam before a person comes into the path of the laser,” said Shyam Gollakota, associate professor at the University of Washington in the US. “In addition to the safety mechanism that quickly terminates the charging beam, our platform includes a heatsink to dissipate excess heat generated by the charging beam,” said Arka Majumdar, from University of Washington.

“These features give our wireless charging system the robust safety standards needed to apply it to a variety of commercial and home settings,” he said. The researchers designed the laser emitter to terminate the charging beam when any object — such as part of a person's body — comes into contact with one of the guard beams. The blocking of the guard beams can be sensed quickly enough to detect the fastest motions of the human body. The next generation of nano- scale optical devices are expected to operate with Gigahertz frequency, which could reduce the shutter's response time to nanoseconds, said Majumdar.