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June
2023

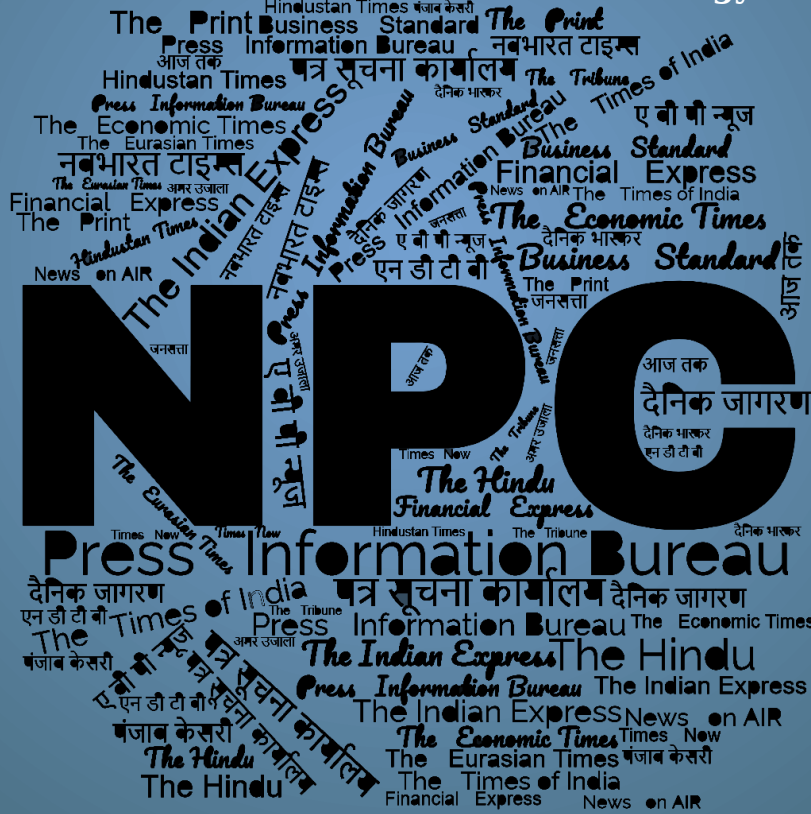
खंड/Vol. : 48 अंक/Issue : 115

20/06/2023

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Unlock the Potential of Research for Nation's Progress: Tessy Thomas

Renowned scientist and Director General of Aeronautical Systems at the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) Tessy Thomas has emphasised the potential of research and innovations in spurring the development of the country.

Inaugurating the Kerala University Researchers' Fest, Heights 2023, which got under way at the Karyavattom campus on Monday, Dr. Thomas said the development and prosperity of any nation hinged on education and the development of science and technology.

Paying rich tributes to the country's visionaries who had dreamt about nurturing different capabilities for its welfare, she reminisced about the early stages of the missile development programme at DRDO, the premier agency entrusted with the military's research and development.

Led by the former President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam when he was the Director of DRDO, the agency had successfully undertaken the Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme that had paved the way for the development of several missiles that were subsequently inducted in the Armed Forces.

"We lacked the knowledge back in the 1980s when the technology (for missile development) was non-existent. However, APJ Abdul Kalam had dreamt about having technology developed indigenously in the country. His vision led to the development of missiles like Prithvi, Agni and Akash that have all been inducted and operationalised," Dr. Thomas, an alumnus of Kerala University, said. Delivering the keynote address, former Director of the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) Bengaluru P. Balram spoke of how disciplines are being increasingly intermixed in science and social sciences.

"Every discipline of science and humanities has become one continuum in the progress of human knowledge. This is the approach one should take to research. The questions we try to answer in one discipline is sometimes related to those that are being asked in a related discipline," he said.

Citing the impact the Raman effect has had on technological advancement, he opined that esoteric and basic research could sometime lead to unanticipated technological applications.

Kerala University Vice Chancellor in-charge Mohanan Kunnummal presided over the function. Kerala University Vice Chancellor Gopinath Ravindran, festival organising committee convener S. Nazeeb, chairman Gopchandran K.G. and internal quality assurance cell (IQAC) director Gabriel Simon Thattil were among those who spoke at the inaugural ceremony.

Earlier, A.A. Rahim, MP, and Higher Education Department principal secretary Ishita Roy inaugurated the R&D exhibition and research gallery respectively.

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/unlock-the-potential-of-research-for-nations-progress-tessy-thomas/article66987022.ece>



Press Information Bureau
Government of India

Ministry of Defence

Mon, 19 Jun 2023

Govt Building a Strong & Self-Reliant India, a Flag-Bearer of Peace with the Capability to Give a Befitting Reply to its Adversaries: Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh in Dehradun

“Our aim is to build an ‘Aatmanirbhar’ defence sector that equips the military with latest weapons & technologies”

“Groundwork being laid under PM Modi’s leadership for India to become a developed nation by 2047”

India is witnessing economic, social, cultural & political empowerment under Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi’s leadership, with groundwork being laid for the country to become a developed nation by 2047. This was stated by Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh at an event, organised on the theme ‘Swarnim Bhavishya’, in Dehradun, Uttarakhand on June 19, 2023. Shri Rajnath Singh asserted that the steps taken by the Government in the last few years have ensured the holistic development of the country, social cohesion and re-connected the people with the nation’s rich cultural heritage. The Raksha Mantri touched upon some of the path-breaking decisions, including Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, Ayushman Bharat & abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu & Kashmir, besides India’s brave fight against COVID-19 pandemic and measures to get rid of the colonial mindset while instilling the feeling of pride in Indian heritage, traditions & values among the people.

Shri Rajnath Singh also shed light on the steps taken towards women empowerment, including construction of pucca houses with toilets in rural areas and ensuring that females get equal opportunities as their male counterparts in every field. On the decisions taken to increase the role of women in the Armed Forces, he stated that doors have been opened for girls for admission in Sainik Schools and female officers are being posted at the world's highest battlefield in Siachen glacier as well as on warships. He added that efforts are being made to make the country completely safe for women and provide them with abundant opportunities.

Laying out the roadmap of India’s Swarnim Bhavishya from the military & security perspective, the Raksha Mantri asserted that the Government is committed to build an India which is completely self-reliant in the defence sector and possesses state-of-the-art weapons & technologies. He highlighted the efforts being made to ensure that the country’s youth have ample opportunities if they wish to serve the motherland as defence scientists. “We have established new IITs & NITs and the number of seats have also increased. In addition, we have invited ideas in the defence sector through Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX) initiative and Technology Development Fund

(TDF) which aims to promote start-ups. Due to these steps and many other reforms, India is well on course to soon become one of the leading defence exporters from an importer. We are building a strong and self-reliant India which is the flag-bearer of regional & global peace and, at the same time, has the wherewithal to give a befitting reply to those who try to cast an evil eye,” said Shri Rajnath Singh. The Raksha Mantri lauded Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi for transforming India’s image at the global stage to an assertor from a mere observer. While India is the world’s third largest economy in terms of Purchasing Power Parity, it will, by 2027, become the third largest economy in terms of nominal GDP as well, he hoped. He voiced the Government’s vision to bring India at the forefront in terms of GDP, while connecting the people with its country’s tradition and culture.

<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1933433>



Press Information Bureau
Government of India

Ministry of Defence

Mon, 19 Jun 2023

Indian Army Contingent Participates in Multinational Joint Exercise “Ex Khaan Quest 2023” in Mongolia

Multinational Peacekeeping Joint Exercise “Ex Khaan Quest 2023” featuring participation from military contingents and observers from over 20 countries has commenced in Mongolia today. Mr Ukhnaagiin Khurelsukh, the Hon’ble President of Mongolia inaugurated the Exercise in a ceremony organised at the exercise location in Mongolia. The exercise is co-sponsored by Mongolian Armed Forces (MAF) and United States Army Pacific Command (USARPAC).

The Indian Army is represented by a contingent from the GARHWAL RIFLES. The 14-day exercise is aimed at enhancing interoperability of the participating nations, for sharing experience and to train uniformed personnel for the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKO). The exercise will prepare participants for future UN Peacekeeping missions, develop peace operations capabilities and enhance military readiness. The exercise includes Command Post Exercise (CPX), Field Training Exercises (FTX), combat discussions, lectures and demonstration.

The military exercise will enhance the level of defence co-operation between Indian Army and participating countries especially with the Mongolian Armed Forces which will enhance bilateral relations between the two countries.

<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1933424>



Tue, 20 Jun 2023

Military Theatre Commanders to Hold Four-Star Rank at par with Service Chiefs

The Defence Ministry is putting the finishing touches to a plan that will add momentum to its effort to create theatre commands or so-called jointmanship of the three services, with four-star rank theatre commanders being at the heart of this radical idea, HT learns. That would put the theatre commanders — there are expected to be three, two land theatres and one maritime one — at the

same rank as the three chiefs of services, with the Chief of Defence Staff coming on top of all six. While the government is tight-lipped about the military theatre commands, it is understood that the commands will be adversary specific with one maritime theatre command to handle the Indo-Pacific. Importantly, the government has decided to ensure that other verticals such as Cyber, Space, Intelligence, Missile, Drone, National Defence University and logistics command are created so that there is no loss of jobs at the three-star (Lt General), two star (Major General) or one star (Brigadier) level after the theatre commands are created.

After detailed deliberations led by CDS General Anil Chauhan, the three services are believed to be on board with the theatre commands plan .

And even as the General Chauhan visits commands and other formations all over the country to explain the need for theatre command to the senior officers, the military reforms are rapidly taking final shape with national security planners putting the finishing touches to the plan that will revolutionize military affairs in India. It was earlier envisaged that the military theatre commanders would be of three-star rank — that is at the level of Lt Generals, Vice Admirals and Air Marshals — the new plan is that they should be of equal rank as that of the three chiefs or else they will not be able to operationally perform in a hierarchy conscious military where seniority rules the day. “How will the army, navy and air force chiefs listen to the theatre commanders in times of war if they are of a lower rank? Since the theatre commanders are operationally responsible, they have to hold the same ranks as the tri-service chiefs,” said a senior official, one of the few familiar with the plan who asked not to be named

India’s plan for theatre commands is in line with similar hierarchies in the US or China with theatre commanders holding four-star rank. In India, the theatre commanders will report to the CDS who is also the Permanent Chairman of Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC).

The creation of the new military verticals is key to the plan as this will ensure there are no redundancies at the three star, two star or one star or even at the battalion commander level; the new verticals will be utilized for rank appointments which are rationalized during creation of theatre commands. For instance, the revival of the National Defence University is on the anvil as it will be tasked to prepare for doctrines, concepts, theories needed under the new theatre commands. The Intelligence command will ensure that real time information is available to the theatre commands on their demands as well as the service headquarters in Delhi.

HT learns that while the plan is nearing finalization, there could be more changes before the military-civilian bureaucracy and the political leadership give a final go ahead. But with officers now being posted in the army, navy, or air force as per the jointmanship plan and the creation of a single act to ensure discipline and deployment of the forces without any silos, the big structure of military theatres may start becoming visible before the end of 2023.

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/military-theatre-commanders-to-hold-four-star-rank-at-par-with-service-chiefs-101687219186413.html>

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Mon, 19 Jun 2023

With Multi-Billion Dollar Deals Lined up, Defence Cooperation to be 'Key Outcome' of PM Modi's US Visit

The ever-tightening geopolitical embrace between India and US will be on full display over the coming days when Prime Minister Narendra Modi embarks on his first official state visit to America on June 21.

Officials in India had earlier said that both sides are preparing a "robust outcome document" which will set the tone for the future relationship between the two powerful democracies.

The external affairs ministry on Monday said that a roadmap for defence industrial cooperation is expected to be one of the key outcomes of PM Modi's visit.

Addressing a press conference in the national capital, foreign secretary Vinay Mohan Kwatra said that all aspects of defence co-production and co-development will be part of the discussions between PM Modi and US President Joe Biden.

"One of the key components which will be prominently showcased will be bilateral defence cooperation," he said.

The remarks assume significance as both India and US have deepened their defence cooperation in recent years amid tensions with China.

PM Modi's much-anticipated visit to Washington is seen as an occasion when the two countries could strike some key defence deals.

What deals are expected to be announced

The defence ministry had last week approved procurement of 31 MQ-9B Predator armed drones from the US under a government-to-government framework.

The nearly \$3 billion deal is expected to be announced following talks between PM Modi and Biden in Washington later this week

The procurement of the weaponised 'hunter-killer' drones from General Atomics was cleared at a meeting of the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) chaired by defence minister Rajnath Singh, people familiar with the matter said.

The Sea Guardian Predator drones are being procured at a cost of around \$3 billion to crank up the surveillance apparatus of the armed forces, especially along the frontier with China, they said.

The approval to the long-awaited procurement following years of negotiations came around 10 days after US defence secretary Lloyd Austin held wide-ranging talks with Singh that focused on significantly expanding overall strategic and defence engagement between the two countries.

It is learnt that the Navy is likely to get 14 drones while the Indian Air Force and the Army will get eight each.

The MQ-9B has two variants — Sky Guardian and its sibling Sea Guardian.

There is also a likelihood of firming up of an agreement on manufacturing of the GE-414 fighter jet engine in India during Modi's visit.

India is looking at the project to power its indigenously developed combat aircraft, sources said.

According to the proposed deal, US-based General Electric (GE) and Indian defence PSU Hindustan Aeronautics will jointly produce GE-F414 turbofan engines in the 98 Kilonewton thrust class in India. These engines will be used in the made-in-India Tejas Mark-2 fighter jets.

Why defence ties with US matter

The defence ties between the two nations have been on an upswing over the last few years as America tries to wean India off of Russian weaponry.

Washington also views New Delhi as a strong regional counterweight to China, which has been aggressively asserting itself in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

Meanwhile, India has also increased defence cooperation with US amid recent flareups with China along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Eastern Ladakh.

The two nations, along with Australia and Japan, are part of the Quad security group, which has proactively pitched for a "free & fair Indo-Pacific region" in a veiled but strong message to China.

China has often accused US for using Quad as a platform to counter Beijing in IOR.

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/with-multi-billion-dollar-deals-lined-up-defence-cooperation-to-be-key-outcome-of-pm-modis-us-visit/articleshow/101104413.cms>

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Mon, 19 Jun 2023

Rajnath Singh Holds Talks with Vietnamese Defence Minister

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Monday held talks with his Vietnamese counterpart General Phan Van Giang, who is on a two-day visit to India. Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan and other top officials from the Ministry of Defence also attended the meeting.

The two sides have been focused on further boosting bilateral defence ties and reviewing the situation in the South China Sea, a region that has witnessed growing Chinese assertiveness.

Both sides also exchanged views on regional and global issues of mutual interest.

Relations between the two countries were elevated to the level of 'strategic partnership' during the visit of Vietnam's then Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung to India in July 2007.

In 2016, during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Vietnam, bilateral relations were further elevated to a "comprehensive strategic partnership"

With India stressing on its Act East policy, Vietnam has emerged as a key partner, and defence engagements between the two nations include wide-ranging contacts between the services, military-to-military exchanges, capacity building, and training programmes.

During Rajnath Singh's visit to Vietnam in June 2022, a joint vision statement on the India-Vietnam defence partnership and a Memorandum of Understanding on mutual logistics support were inked.

Earlier, General Giang inspected the Tri-Service Guard of Honour, and laid a wreath and paid homage to the soldiers at the National War Memorial.

General Giang is also scheduled to visit Agra in Uttar Pradesh.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/rajnath-singh-holds-talks-with-vietnamese-defence-minister/articleshow/101103468.cms>

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Mon, 19 Jun 2023

India Gifts Indigenously-Built Missile Corvette 'INS Kirpan' to Vietnam

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh announced the gifting of an indigenously-built in-service Missile Corvette INS Kirpan, which will be a milestone in enhancing the capabilities of the Vietnam People's Navy. Defence Minister Singh held talks with Vietnamese Defence Minister, General Phan Van Gang in Delhi on Monday.

During the meeting, progress on various bilateral defence cooperation initiatives was reviewed, with both sides expressing satisfaction with the ongoing engagements.

"Both Ministers identified means to enhance existing areas of collaboration, especially in the field of defence industry cooperation, maritime security and multinational cooperation," an official release by the Ministry of Defence said after the meeting.

— rajnathsingh (@rajnathsingh)

Further, as part of his engagements Vietnamese defence minister also visited DRDO headquarters and discussed ways to enhance defence industrial capabilities by cooperation in defence research and joint production.

Earlier in the day, General Phan Van Gang laid a wreath at the National War Memorial and paid homage to the fallen heroes. The visiting dignitary arrived in India on Sunday on a two-day visit.

Vietnam is an important partner in India's Act East Policy and the Indo-Pacific region.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-gifts-indigenously-built-missile-corvette-ins-kirpan-to-vietnam/articleshow/101107836.cms>

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Tue, 20 Jun 2023

It's a Drone Deal but Plenty Needs Doing before Desi UAVs take Wing

India's Buying US-Made Predators, Considered The World's Best Combat Drone. That's The Good News. The Not-So-Good News Is The Slow Progress In Making Top-Class Desi Drones

Last week, India's Defence Acquisition Council greenlit the estimated \$3.5 billion procurement of 31 high-altitude, long-endurance Predator-B drones from the US. These unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) are expected to significantly upgrade India's surveillance and strategic operations capabilities. Here's a quick guide to the Predator and India's own drone programme.

What Are Predator Drones?

They are to drones what, say, Porsches are to cars. These high-precision surveillance and combat drones were developed by San Diego-based defence contractor General Atomics. They were the first drones to carry video cameras. Their first job was only surveillance. Famously, it was a Predator drone that identified Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan in 2000. It was shortly after 9/11 that the first armed Predators with the fearsome Hellfire missiles appeared.

Fighter Planes Minus Pilots

Today's Predators are far superior to their early versions. The Predator MQ9A 'Reaper', first flown in 2001, has an endurance of over 27 hours, can operate up to 50,000 feet and has a 1,746kg payload capacity. But later variants like the MQ-9B SkyGuardian and MQ-9B SeaGuardian – the types India is interested in – are designed to fly via satellite for 30 to 40-plus hours in all kinds of weather with payloads in excess of 2,000 kg.

The SeaGuardian can even integrate an anti-submarine warfare mission kit, enhancing maritime search and patrol capabilities. This has significant implications for India in the light of the growing strategic competition with China over the sea lanes of the Indo-Pacific.

A 'Star-Studded' Ops List

What really adds to the Predator's reputation is its long list of high-profile operations. It has seen extensive deployment in Afghanistan and Iraq and was reportedly used by American forces to take out al-Qaida leader Ayman al-Zawahiri and Iranian General Qasim Soleimani. So, think Predators when considering a surgical strike. The Predator remains unmatched in its category. The closest equivalent is China's Cai Hong-4, but that drone has run into trouble in recent years with both Jordan and Iraq facing performance and maintenance issues with it. Also, the Predator is very different from the growing category of loitering munition or kamikaze drones like AeroVironment's Switchblade or Iran's Shahed-136. These drones can carry out either a swarm attack or precision hits, but with minimum resources. So they need to be relatively inexpensive, since many need to be used. In contrast, the Predator can be used for multiple high-calibre operations over longer lifespans

India's Tryst With Drones

While drones are not new to Indian security forces, they were largely seen as a complementary platform to the services. For example, IAF has long operated the Israel-made loitering munition Harpy and its upgraded version the Harop. These can loiter for up to six hours and carry a 23kg warhead. But India's own drone manufacturing capabilities are low grade, despite its domestic expertise in IT. Notwithstanding years of research, India hasn't been able to deliver a drone platform akin to Turkiye's Bayraktar TB2, which Ukrainian forces used effectively against the Russian army in the earlier part of the Ukraine war

Desi drones under development include the Tapas-BH-201, which has been integrated with the indigenous Gagan satellite navigation system but faces engine issues. The Ghatak is analogous to the Bayraktar TB2 and will be armed with missiles and precision-hit capability. The prototype is expected in 2024-25. The Netra is a lightweight (1.5 kg) drone for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance developed by DRDO and Mumbai-based IdeaForge, representing a successful public-private venture. It has already been deployed across the three services, providing a foundation for future lightweight drone development. So, while desi drones may make waves in the future, right now the acquisition of Predators will be a huge step up for India. And having those toys around should hopefully speed up DRDO's R&D as well.

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/its-a-drone-deal-but-plenty-needs-doing-before-desi-uavs-take-wing/articleshow/101116646.cms>



Mon, 19 Jun 2023

Modi's Visit to Cairo: India Expects Progress in Talks over Sale of Tejas LCAs, Missiles to Egypt

With Prime Minister Narendra Modi set to meet Egyptian President, Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, during his visit to Cairo next weekend, New Delhi is keen to advance talks on exporting the Tejas Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) manufactured by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) in India to the Arab Republic.

The two sides are also likely to discuss India's proposal for the sale of indigenously developed Akash and Akash NG air defence systems to Egypt. Modi will fly to Cairo from Washington DC after completing his state visit to the United States. He will have a meeting with Sisi, who visited New Delhi early this year when he attended the Republic Day ceremony as the chief guest on January 26.

A source in New Delhi told DH that the Modi-Sisi meeting in Cairo could see the two sides making progress in talks over the defence platforms India offered to Egypt.

Cairo conveyed to New Delhi its interest in procuring at least 20 Tejas LCAs manufactured by the HAL headquartered in Bengaluru. The Sisi Government also asked India to explore the possibility of setting up a maintenance, repair and overhaul facility for the LCAs. India also offered LCA Tejas trainers to Egypt.

India had earlier offered 70 Tejas LCAs to Egypt with a manufacturing facility in the Arab Republic.

Cairo is also weighing other options for the Egyptian Air Force, including the T-50 fighter jets of Korea. New Delhi, however, expects that the Modi-Sisi meeting might add new momentum to talks over the proposed deal.

The source said that New Delhi had also offered Egypt the Akash and Akash NG – the medium-range surface-to-air missiles indigenously developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and manufactured by the Bharat Dynamics Limited of India.

India and Egypt had last year signed a Memorandum of Understanding to step up defence cooperation. The Indian Air Force (IAF) had also sent three Su-30MKI aircraft, two C-17 aircraft and 57 personnel to participate in Tactical Leadership Programme at Egyptian Air Force (EAF) Weapon School in Cairo West Airbase last year. Earlier, the IAF and the EAF had a joint tactical air exercise in Egypt in October 2021. They also had a joint training in an airbase in Egypt last month.

When Modi and Sisi met in New Delhi on January 25, they agreed to deepen cooperation between the defence industries of the two countries and explore new initiatives to intensify military-to-military engagements. They agreed to further enhance and deepen defence cooperation in all fields, especially by exchanging technology between defence industries, widening the footprint of military exercises, and exchanging best practices.

A joint statement issued after the meeting between Modi and Sisi emphasized the need for co-production in the defence sector.

<https://www.deccanherald.com/national/modis-visit-to-cairo-india-expects-progress-in-talks-over-sale-of-tejas-lcas-missiles-to-egypt-1229015.html>

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Mon, 19 Jun 2023

Indian Naval Submarine and Pakistani Ship Visit Sri Lanka at Same Time

The Indian naval submarine 'Vagir', the latest indigenous Kalvari-class submarine of the Indian Navy, on Monday, began its four-day visit to Sri Lanka at the same time a Pakistan naval ship docked here. The Indian High Commission said its operational visit is to commemorate the ninth edition of International Day of Yoga (IDY) under the theme of "Global Ocean Ring".

The Commanding Officer of the Indian Naval submarine, Commander Divakar. S will call on Commander Western Naval Area, Rear Admiral Suresh De Silva. Further, during the submarine's visit, the vessel would be open for visitors and school children.

The High Commission of India in coordination with Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre is scheduled to organize a grand event at Colombo Port to celebrate IDY on 21 June 2023 with the

participation of senior defence hierarchy and personnel from Indian and Sri Lanka Navies, the mission said in a press release.

The Indian naval ships Delhi, Sukanya, Kiltan, and Savitri have previously visited Colombo.

Visits by Indian Navy ships and submarines in Sri Lanka aim to foster brotherhood and togetherness between the two neighbouring navies in keeping with India's vision of 'Neighbourhood First' policy and 'Security and Growth for all in the Region (SAGAR)', the release said. Meanwhile, the Sri Lankan Navy said 'Tippu Sultan', the Pakistani naval ship, also arrived at the port of Colombo on Sunday on a two-day visit.

'Tippu Sultan' is a 134.1 metre-long warship manned by a crew of 168 persons, the Navy said.

The Navy said this is the first visit to Colombo by a submarine since a Chinese submarine docked in 2014.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/indian-naval-submarine-and-pakistani-ship-visit-sri-lanka-at-same-time/articleshow/101099960.cms>



Tue, 20 Jun 2023

Did Chinese Belligerent Overreach in the Indo-Pacific Bring India, US Together?

By Shishir Gupta

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is headed for the United States with positivity overtaking the past legacy of negativity, hurdles, and restraint in bilateral ties. While PM Modi and US President Joe Biden have worked together to build a strong relationship between two natural allies, it is the wolf warrior diplomacy of the Middle Kingdom that really has acted as a super catalyst in bringing the two biggest democracies together. Although the US and China are now talking at the highest level to avoid any untoward accident, it is other conversations in Asia that may have caused concern to Chinese President Xi Jinping and his band of wolf warriors. The Vietnamese Defence Minister Gen Phan Van Giang is in New Delhi and held a meeting with Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Monday. Last week, National Security Advisors of Japan, the Philippines and the US hunkered down in Tokyo to chart out a new trilateral defence partnership including naval exercises to counter the Chinese challenge in the South China Sea.

While India and Vietnam are the two countries that have fought wars with China and have unsettled territorial disputes, Japan and the Philippines also have unresolved territorial claims with China apart from facing existential dispute over the future of Taiwan. Even though India and Vietnam have huge trade with China, the two countries are wary of the Middle Kingdom with the PLA sitting aggressively all along the Line of Actual Control with India, particularly in Western and Eastern sectors. Even today, the Indian Army and the PLA have deployed over 50,000 men on both sides of the LAC in East Ladakh as the Chinese belligerence that began in May 2020 continues.

Fact is that the Chinese aggression in East Ladakh unravelled its larger political strategy to keep India away from the US by pumping New Delhi's ego in the name of strategic autonomy and independent thinking. The Chinese supporters in India and the Leftist parties always conjured up images of USS Enterprise in Bay of Bengal in the 1971 Indo-Pak war to drive home the message that the US cannot be trusted and that India should go it alone. A flawed strategy that definitely not

helped India but worked in favour of the Communist Party of China even as Beijing expanded its area of influence in the Indo-Pacific while growing industrially at the expense of the US. After China bared its teeth in the Indo-Pacific, the era of free lunches for Chinese wolf warriors was over as the world started looking at Beijing most suspiciously.

India under PM Narendra Modi had to shed the past Indian baggage of mistrust with the US after the present Pakistan leadership made it amply evident that China, not the US, was their ultimate strategic partner. Faced with a double whammy from China and Pakistan in Jammu and Kashmir, and in Ladakh and with Beijing holding an economic guillotine over neighbours Sri Lanka and Myanmar, the Indian strategic options were very limited. The Chinese string of pearls had started to choke India in its own backyard as Beijing's push was being felt on the land and maritime frontiers.

The “no limits ally” relationship that has developed between China and Russia also skewed the Indian equation particularly after the Ukraine war as New Delhi realized that its hardware dependency on Russia may lead to grief, particularly at a time when the PLA was amassed in East Ladakh. The China-Russia joint exercises in and over the Sea of Japan on the other hand raised alarm bells in Tokyo and Seoul just as China’s security pact with Solomon Islands raised the hackles of Australia in the Far Pacific.

The revival of Quad and the growing trilateral partnerships minus China in SouthEast Asia are all indications that the wolf warriors have overplayed their hand with uncalled-for aggression. The decision has already been taken as far as New Delhi is concerned.

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/did-chinese-belligerent-overreach-in-the-indo-pacific-bring-india-us-together-101687233814769.html>

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Mon, 19 Jun 2023

Europe Defence Ministers are Holding Talks in Paris on how to Better Defend the Continent's Airspace

Defence ministers and other representatives of 20 European countries will hold a conference in Paris on Monday on how to better defend Europe's airspace, a long-divisive issue that takes on new urgency because of Russia's war in Ukraine.

The talks will include anti-drone combat and ballistic missile defense, French organizers said, noting that Moscow's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has shown the importance and effectiveness of such equipment. Nuclear weapons deterrence will also be on the agenda.

The French Defence Ministry said among the nations taking part in the meeting are Germany, the U.K. and Sweden as well as Ukraine's neighbors Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania. Representatives of NATO and the European Union were also due to attend.

With the help of Western weapons and growing experience, Ukraine's air defense systems have made great strides since the war started last year, saving infrastructure and lives and preventing Russia from achieving air superiority.

"There is therefore a need for Europeans to think collectively and strategically about the threats coming from the skies," a French official said on condition of anonymity in accordance with the government's customary practices. The one-day meeting is taking place on the sidelines of the Paris Air Show, the world's largest event focusing on aviation and space industry that is opening Monday. French President Emmanuel Macron will make the closing speech of the conference in the evening. France has been openly critical of German-led plans for improved European air

defense capabilities. The so-called European Sky Shield project, launched at the end of last year, is made up of 17 European nations including the U.K. - but not France. It's meant to be integrated within NATO air and missile defense systems.

The French government believes the project doesn't adequately preserve European sovereignty, because it's expected to be largely based on U.S. and Israeli industry.

The German-led plan "has limitations," the French official said, adding that Monday's conference would propose a "more global approach." German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius will attend the meeting. "With the European Sky Shield Initiative, we are bringing together European states to jointly increase protection against ballistic missiles, cruise missiles and drones," German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said at a news conference on Monday in Berlin with NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg.

The German-led plan is expected to feature the Israeli Arrow 3 system and build on existing U.S. Patriot missile capabilities. Scholz made no reference to Paris' objections to the initiative.

The French Mamba system is already part of NATO's integrated air and missile defense.

Defence has been a recurrent bone of contention between the two countries, with France complaining that Germany wasn't doing enough in the area for years - until the war in Ukraine led Berlin to announce a major boost to military spending.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/europe-defence-ministers-are-holding-talks-in-paris-on-how-to-better-defend-the-continent-airspace/articleshow/101110572.cms>

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Mon, 19 Jun 2023

North Korea Says Botched Satellite Launch was 'Gravest Failure'

North Korea has said its botched military satellite launch last month was the "gravest failure" at the ruling party's latest key meeting, state media KCNA reported on Monday.

The enlarged plenary meeting was held between Friday and Sunday, ordering workers and researchers to analyze the failed military satellite launch and prepare for another in the near future.

Those in charge of the satellite launch were "heavily criticized," the report said.

It marked the eight enlarged plenary meeting of the 8th Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK), the country's ruling party.

The North Korean rocket plunged into the sea "after losing thrust due to the abnormal starting of the second-stage engine," Pyongyang said after the launch failure in an unusually candid admission of a technical problem.

North Korea also vowed it will continue to develop its nuclear capability and strengthen solidarity with other countries that oppose what it called the "U.S. strategy for world supremacy."

The meeting also discussed ensuring self-sufficiency in food supply by increasing the country's agricultural output and meeting the annual grain production target.

Earlier this year, South Korea's Unification Ministry said the food situation in the North "seemed to have deteriorated".

The isolated country is under strict international sanctions over its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs and its economy has been further strained by strict self-imposed border lockdowns aimed at stopping COVID-19 outbreaks.

Separately, the KCNA report said Kim Yong Chol, who previously served as director of the United Front Department and is a close aide to leader Kim Jong Un, was named as an alternate member of the Political Bureau of the Party Central Committee.

Kim was sidelined after a summit with the U.S. in 2019 failed to reach a deal, a South Korean lawmaker said at that time. He steered negotiations for the summit working with his then-U.S. counterpart and former U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/north-korea-says-botched-satellite-launch-was-gravest-failure/articleshow/101092494.cms>



Mon, 19 Jun 2023

U.S., China Pledge to Improve Relations, Resume High-Level Talks after Blinken's Visit

The United States and China have pledged to stabilise their worn out ties during a critical visit to Beijing by U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who met on June 19 with Chinese President Xi Jinping. It remains to be seen whether the two countries can resolve their most important disagreements, many of which have international financial, security and stability implications.

Apart from a willingness to talk, there was little sign that either was prepared to bend from hardened positions on issues ranging from trade to Taiwan, to human rights conditions in China and Hong Kong, to Chinese military assertiveness in the South China Sea, to Russia's war in Ukraine.

At the meeting with Mr. Blinken, President Xi pronounced himself pleased with the outcome of Mr. Blinken's earlier meetings with two top Chinese diplomats and said the two countries had agreed to resume a program of understandings that he and President Joe Biden agreed to at a meeting in Bali last year.

"The Chinese side has made our position clear, and the two sides have agreed to follow through the common understandings President Biden and I had reached in Bali," Mr. Xi said.

That agenda had been thrown into jeopardy in recent months, notably after the U.S. shot down a Chinese surveillance balloon over its airspace in February, and amid escalated military activity in the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea. Combined with disputes over human rights, trade and opiate production, the list of problem areas is daunting.

But Mr. Xi suggested the worst could be over.

"The two sides have also made progress and reached agreement on some specific issues," he said without elaborating, according to a transcript of the remarks released by the State Department.

"I hope that through this visit, Mr. Secretary, you will make more positive contributions to stabilizing China-U.S. relations," Mr. Xi added.

In his remarks to President Xi during the 35-minute session at the Great Hall of the People, which was not announced until an hour before it started, Mr. Blinken said “The United States and China have an obligation and responsibility to manage our relationship.”

“The United States is committed to doing that,” Mr. Blinken said. “It’s in the interest of the United States, in the interests of China, and in the interest of the world.” He described his earlier discussions with senior Chinese officials as “candid and constructive.”

Despite his presence in China, Mr. Blinken and other U.S. officials had played down the prospects for any significant breakthroughs on the most vexing issues facing the planet’s two largest economies. Instead, these officials have emphasised the importance of the two countries establishing and maintaining better lines of communication.

Mr. Blinken is the highest-level U.S. official to visit China since President Joe Biden took office, and the first Secretary of State to make the trip in five years. His visit is expected to usher in a new round of visits by senior U.S. and Chinese officials, possibly including a meeting between Xi and Biden in the coming months. Mr. Blinken earlier met China’s top diplomat Wang Yi for about three hours, according to a U.S. official.

China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs wrote in a statement that Mr. Blinken's visit "coincides with a critical juncture in China-U.S. relations, and it is necessary to make a choice between dialogue or confrontation, cooperation or conflict,” and blamed the “U.S. side’s erroneous perception of China, leading to incorrect policies towards China” for the current “low point” in relations.

It said the U.S. had a responsibility to halt “the spiralling decline of China-U.S. relations to push it back to a healthy and stable track” and that Mr. Wang had “demanded that the U.S. stop hyping up the ‘China threat theory,’ lift illegal unilateral sanctions against China, abandon suppression of China’s technological development, and refrain from arbitrary interference in China’s internal affairs.”

The State Department said Mr. Blinken “underscored the importance of responsibly managing the competition between the United States and the People’s Republic of China through open channels of communication to ensure competition does not veer into conflict.”

In the first round of talks on June 18, Mr. Blinken met for nearly six hours with Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang, after which both countries said they had agreed to continue high-level discussions. However, there was no sign that any of the most fractious issues between them were closer to resolution. Both the U.S. and China said Mr. Qin had accepted an invitation from Blinken to visit Washington but Beijing made clear that “the China-U.S. relationship is at the lowest point since its establishment.” That sentiment is widely shared by U.S. officials.

Mr. Blinken's visit comes after his initial plans to travel to China were postponed in February after the shutdown of a Chinese surveillance balloon over the U.S. A snub by the Chinese leader would have been a major setback to the effort to restore and maintain communications at senior levels.

President Biden said over the weekend that he hoped to be able to meet with Mr. Xi in the coming months to take up the plethora of differences that divide them. In his meetings on June 18, Mr. Blinken also pressed the Chinese to release detained American citizens and to take steps to curb the production and export of fentanyl precursors that are fueling the opioid crisis in the United States.

Mr. Xi had offered a hint of a possible willingness to reduce tensions on June 16, saying in a meeting with Microsoft Corp. co-founder Bill Gates that the United States and China can cooperate to “benefit our two countries.”

Since the cancellation of Blinken’s trip in February, there have been some high-level engagements. CIA Chief William Burns travelled to China in May, while China’s Commerce Minister travelled to

the U.S. And Mr. Biden's National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan met with senior Chinese Foreign Policy Adviser Wang Yi in Vienna in May.

But those have been punctuated by bursts of angry rhetoric from both countries over the Taiwan Strait, their broader intentions in the Indo-Pacific, China's refusal to condemn Russia for its war against Ukraine, and U.S. allegations from Washington that Beijing is attempting to boost its worldwide surveillance capabilities, including in Cuba.

And, earlier this month, China's Defense Minister rebuffed a request from U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin for a meeting on the sidelines of a security symposium in Singapore, a sign of continuing discontent.

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/us-china-pledge-to-improve-relations-resume-high-level-talks-after-blinkens-visit/article66985828.ece>

Science & Technology News

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Mon, 19 Jun 2023

Ahead of Modi's US Visit, NASA Wants India to Join Lunar Mission

Days before PM Narendra Modi's visit to the US from June 21 to 25, Nasa officials are increasingly talking about roping in India for Nasa's Artemis Accords, which are an American-led effort to return humans to the Moon by 2025, with the ultimate goal of expanding space exploration to Mars and beyond.

A US space expert hoped that cooperation in the field of space would be one of the major areas of discussion between PM Modi and US President Joe Biden when they meet at the White House next week.

Bhavya Lal, the associate administrator for technology, policy and strategy within the office of the Nasa Administrator, recently said that as of now, there are 25 signatories to the Artemis Accords and hoped that India becomes the 26th country.

Lal, who did her schooling in Delhi before doing her bachelor's and masters in nuclear engineering from MIT, previously served as the acting chief technologist of Nasa. She said India and the US needed to do more things together in the Artemis programme.

Mike Gold, US space expert and former associate administrator for space policy and partnerships at Nasa, said the "relationship between the US and India is absolutely critical on Earth, and possibly even more so in space". He also described India as a "sleeping giant" for whom the sky is no longer the limit. Gold, who is considered an architect of the Artemis Accords, also urged India to join the US' lunar programme. He also hoped that Nasa would cooperate with Isro in its human space flight mission Gaganyaan, and that the International Space Station would become a destination for Indian astronauts.

In November 2022, the US kicked off its Artemis programme by launching the unmanned Orion spacecraft towards the Moon and bringing it safely back to Earth as a prelude to its manned lunar mission. Interestingly, India and the US earlier this year agreed to advance space collaboration in

several areas, under the 'initiative on critical and emerging technology' (ICET) umbrella, including human space exploration and commercial space partnership.

If Modi and Biden discuss India joining Nasa's Artemis programme and also cooperation in human space exploration, it will be a big boost to Isro's space exploration projects. India is also on the verge of launching its Chandrayaan-3 mission and Aditya L-1 Sun mission in a few weeks.

Isro and Nasa have till now worked together on the \$1.5 billion NISAR satellite project, the world's most expensive earth observation satellite programme, which, once launched next year, will measure the Earth's changing ecosystems, dynamic surfaces and ice sheet collapses. Nasa had also sent its payload to the Moon onboard India's Chandrayaan-1 spacecraft that for the first time found evidence of water on the Moon.

The Artemis Accords were signed on October 13, 2020 by several countries. As of June 5, 2023, 25 countries and one territory have signed the accords, including 10 in Europe, seven in Asia, three in North America, two in Oceania, two in Africa, and two in South America. The Accords remain open for signature indefinitely, as Nasa anticipates other nations will join. Additional signatories can choose to directly participate in Artemis programme activities or may agree simply to commit to the principles for responsible exploration of the Moon that are set out in the accords.

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/ahead-of-modis-us-visit-nasa-wants-india-to-join-lunar-mission/articleshow/101089951.cms>

