

title:Ultra and Mahindra partner to win major contract with the Indian Navy

Date: Published January 12, 2022

SOURCE: ULTRA PR

Ultra is pleased to announce, in partnership with Mahindra Defence Systems Limited, the award of the Integrated Anti-Submarine Warfare Defence Suite (IADS) programme for selected frontline warships of the Indian Navy. The contract is worth approximately ₹60 million to Ultra. Deliveries are due to commence in 2024 and to be completed by 2030.

IADS provides a powerful multi-sensor ASW capability using an in-line active and passive towed Low Frequency Variable Depth Sonar as well as Torpedo Defence with embedded detection, classification & localisation to defeat detected Torpedo threats.

Simon Pryce, Ultra's Chief Executive, commented:

"IADS represents a major enhancement in the Indian Navy's anti-submarine warfare capability and ability to deliver maritime mission effectiveness and protection to India's surface fleet.

This is another significant and strategic order for Ultra and our Sonar Systems business unit. We are very proud of and committed to this programme, and to our long-term partnership with Mahindra Defence to deliver outstanding solutions to the Indian Navy."

Mr SP Shukla, Chairman of Mahindra Defence and Mahindra Aerospace, stated that:

"IADS is the first major contract from the Indian Navy to an Indian private sector company for underwater detection and protection from threats.

Mahindra is looking forward to delivering IADS and further build partnerships with Ultra in other programmes.

This contract once again epitomises the success of the "Make in India" initiative of the Indian Government."

This announcement is in line with Ultra's policy to announce new orders of over 5% of Group sales.

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title:IAC-1 deserves greater attention. If only Indian defence moved away from episodic concerns

Date: Published January 12, 2022

SOURCE: THE PRINT

National aerospace and maritime security received some positive news in the past few days even as personal anxieties on a Punjab highway dominated India's talk time. Events on an overbridge on the Bhatinda-Ferozepur highway became the cynosure of national attention since 5 January when Prime Minister Narendra Modi's convoy was halted by a perceived security breach. That, unfortunately, overshadowed a significant milestone far away in the Arabian Sea when the Indigenous Aircraft Carrier "1 set sail for another complex set of sea trials. There was also some light shed on the Light Combat Aircraft Tejas, and its variants.

To be christened Vikrant upon induction, IAC-1 has now begun its third round of trials at sea. Developed by the outstanding Directorate of Naval Design, the 40,000-ton aircraft carrier is the largest ship built in India and is certain to have a significant impact on national maritime security. But for it to fulfil its fullest potential, IAC-1 will have to be, first, joined by another, larger aircraft carrier, and second, be flying indigenously developed aircraft, fixed-wing and rotary. Both conditions are not beyond the realms of reality, but require greater attention than the episodic concerns for Indian defence.

Threat of China, India's cost concernsOne of the enduring debates in the defence airwaves has been the question of the third aircraft carrier, joining INS Vikramaditya, and INS Vikrant, once it is commissioned. Even as the Navy has been asking for the third carrier, studies commissioned by specialist on the Indian Ocean region have also highlighted this shortfall. The severity of the problem is highlighted through the extraordinary progress made by Communist China's naval programme. From a coastal force not long ago, it is on the cusp of becoming a truly oceanic combatant service, now even with a base at Djibouti, on the mouth of the Arabian Sea.

The domestic argument against the third carrier is, as always, costs involved. Supposed to be a larger vessel, and with a flat deck rather than a catapult launch system for fixed-wing aircraft, it would obviously cost more than the IAC-1 under development now. And since the cost of IAC-1 is not too far above what India is spending on the refurbishment of New Delhi's Rajpath and its environs, it really begs the question "what is of greater importance to the country, beauty or security? Given the air-land military imbalance between India and Communist China, it was always assumed the answer would result in greater outlay for maritime capabilities.

There is, however, the simple logic of investing in greater indigenous research and development. Over time such investments bear greater returns as the knowledge base becomes ever larger. This is as true for low-end items as it is for the pinnacle of technologies, as in aerospace capabilities. And progress in the long-awaited Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) was recently announced by R. Madhavan, the chairman and managing director of Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL). He declared that delivery of all 10 Final Operational Clearance aircraft will be done in 2022, provided Israel supplies some key components. Supply chain problems obviously

have an adverse impact on domestic defence programmes.

Cost and time overruns in defence programmes are common worldwide, but in India's case they acquire legendary proportions, because almost all of the indigenous research and development (R&D) is under the control of enormous state institutions. And then the perennial problem of extensive supply chains made worse by the Wuhan virus, so delays are obvious. Tesla, the electric vehicle manufacturer, seemed better prepared for all of those challenges than its enormous competitors for fairly simple reasons, and some of those lessons could certainly be useful for domestic Indian defence capabilities. Tesla essentially side-stepped the computer chip shortage that struck global automobile manufacturers by its "superior command of technology and its own chain".

HAL, the aviation monopoly, has a decision-making system that doesn't allow for flexibility at such critical times. As a result, delays have become ever longer. But the technology is now within sight, and must not be let loose. Integrating all that knowledge to enhance aviation platforms is essential for the IAC-1, and its follow-up carrier if funded, to fulfil their operational capabilities. But for that to happen, greater dynamism is required in defence R&D, and decision making.

Whether it is the LCA or IAC-1, greater participation of dynamic domestic partners, with access to "superior command of technology" and their "own chain" can certainly make indigenous defence R&D more efficient, cheaper, and lead to greater speed of productivity. All of which India needs desperately for it to handle the threat posed by Communist China. HAL and the shipyards involved must be encouraged to increase Indian industry's role in enhancing design and production capabilities. Only when indigenously designed and developed aircraft fly off the decks of Indian aircraft carriers can it truly be said that a breach is unlikely in the country's security.

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title:Patchwork APT Indian hacker group targets Pakistani scientists in a new campaign

Date: Published January 12, 2022

SOURCE: Â 2-Spyware

Indian threat actors mainly targeting Pakistani government entities and individuals managed to out a new campaign that researchers have been analyzing. Threat intelligence team[1] discovered the tactics and procedures that the hacking group used in the renewed campaign which took place in November " December of 2021.[2]

The discovery is in-depth and thorough because hackers managed to infect themselves with the RAT. This attack captured keystrokes and screenshots of their computers, so the research team had a lot of material for the analysis. Patchwork APT group used malicious files to spread the version of BADNEWS/ Ragnatela remote administration trojan.[3]

The hacker group is known for spear-phishing attacks. In this recent campaign, hackers targeted various faculty members related to research focused on molecular medicine and biological science. First target like this known to the day. Mainly people from the Pakistan Ministry of Defense, national defense University of Islamabad, Faculty of Bio-Sciences at UVAS Lahore. Faculties in Salim Habib University fell victim to the threat.

Hacker group active since 2015Patchwork is the cyberespionage group that started the malicious activities back in 2015. The Iranian hackers also are known as Dropping Elephant.[4] These cybercriminals are identified as Indian or Pro-Indian entities due to the evidence that the attackers mainly target industries related to diplomatic and government agencies.

The code that this hacker group uses was mainly collected from various online forums, and this group is known for operations mainly with spear-phishing methods. These campaigns target the United States think tank groups. The more recent attacks that were widely reported took place in 2018.[5]

The main goal of the APT group is to steal valuable information like credentials or files. The group uses various tactics and tools to bypass user access controls, encrypt collected files, encode them using the AES algorithm. Hackers can execute scripts on affected drivers, download malicious payloads. Over the years, these functions evolved, and threat actors can collect and copy various files, store them on separate servers and make money or use the data for additional campaigns.

The newest version of the RAT " RagnatelaThe success of this research was determined by the fact that these attackers managed to fall into their own trap and get the remote access trojan on their devices. The analysis shows various techniques and tactics used by the attackers because keystrokes and files got captured by the trojan and later analyzed by the Malwarebytes Threat Intelligence team.

The Ragnatela RAT was recently created, and the program has various malicious features like keystroke logging, downloading additional payloads, and uploading files. The threat can also capture screenshots, execute commands using the command prompt, collect lists of all the files found on the machine, record running applications from particular time periods.

The RAT was distributed by luring victims with documents posing as emails sent from Pakistan authorities. These documents in word formats mainly contain the exploit that compromises the computer and launches the payload of RAT. Researchers managed to understand the group better and determine that patchwork is not as sophisticated as Russian or North Korean groups but can evolve and steal more advanced codes and improve

these operations.

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title:Threat at LAC remains, says Indian Army chief General MM Naravane

Date: Published January 12, 2022

SOURCE: PTI

Indian Army Chief General MM Naravane on Wednesday said that the threat levels at LAC (Line of Actual Control) "has not reduced". "Force levels are more or less the same," he said addressing a press conference ahead of the Army Day (January 15). Army Chief said: "We will continue to deal with PLA (People's Liberation Army, China) in a firm and resolute manner. Necessary safeguards are in place to deal with any contingency".

Speaking on the future along the LAC, the Army Chief mentioned three-step process that is disengagement of troops, de-escalation of tensions followed by de-induction of all troops, weapons and equipment. "Till these steps are completed, we have to remain there (the LAC), the Army Chief said.

On the northern borders, he said, the Army has highest level of operational preparedness even as a dialogue is on with China.

To a question on India's response to the stand at the LAC, he said the Army response was robust to the PLA attempt to unilaterally change the status quo at LAC.

"Our capabilities have increased manifold at the northern borders," he added. "We are in much better position than what we were an year and a half ago and are much better prepared to deal with any situation," General Naravane said

A conflict, he said, was the last resort but if it happens we will emerge victorious. The only long-term solution to resolve the border question, unless we have a settled boundary this (difference of opinion at where is the LAC) will keep happening.

"There is no question that a status quo, as it exists today, can be altered with force," he added.

The threat assessment at the northern borders has led to re-organisation and Army has re-aligned forces to ensure territorial integrity and it caters to major augmentation of PLA forces. "We have undertaken reorganisation and rebalancing of forces. Re-orientation of additional forces to the Northern Borders, has been carried out, while retaining our punitive strike capability, along the Western Front," the Chief said. The crisis at the LAC has been used an opportunity to fast-track infrastructure development, undertake doctrinal reviews and make-up operational voids, through Emergency and Fast Track Procurements, he said. The upgrade and development of infrastructure along the northern borders, is being carried out in a comprehensive manner, including roads and tunnels.

Along the Line of Control (LoC) with Pakistan, the DGMOs understanding arrived at by both sides in February last year has witnessed marked improvement. However, concentration of terrorists "some 350 to 400" in launch pads and repeated infiltration attempts.

"We, on our part, have resolved to show "Zero Tolerance" to terror," he said.

On the incident of December 4 when civilian were killed in an operation of the Indian Army in Nagaland, the General said the incident is being thoroughly investigated. "Law of the land is paramount we will uphold that," he added.

Formation of Battle Groups is progressing well, he said adding that Theatre commands are the way forward for future battles.

Siachen glacier

On Siachen glacier, he said both sides (India and Pakistan) are face to face. "We are not averse to (demilitarisation). However, the precondition is to accept the positions at the Actual Ground Position Line (AGPL) before any disengagement takes places. Pakistan does not want to accept the AGPL

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title:India must consolidate its gains in Kashmir. Jihadist groups eyeing expansion opportunity

Date: Published January 12, 2022

SOURCE: THE PRINT

Ten days before the New Year, in the darkness of the night, Imad Muzaffar Wani disappeared from his home in

Arigam, near the south Kashmir town of Pulwama, with nothing but an automatic pistol head kept hidden in his room. From there, authorities allege, he made his way to the nearby village of Bandzoo, where he shot police constable Mushtaq Ahmad Wagay, leaving him for dead. Earlier this week, after a twelve-hour exchange of fire, Wani was shot dead by police, his blood running over the snow outside Hassanpora, near Kulgam. Ever since his early teens, an intelligence dossier records, the 21-year-old had participated in Islamic protest mobs battling police on Kashmir's streets, graduating to aiding Hizbul Mujahideen terrorists on the run. That freezing night, for reasons no-one knows for sure, he decided the time had come to kill and die. After the Pulwama terrorist bombing led India and Pakistan to the edge of war in 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's decision to use force, and the internal crackdown which accompanied the revocation of Kashmir's special constitutional status, appeared to have paid off. The tempo of killings, which had risen since he took office, reversed. Moreover, there have been no significant terrorist attacks outside Kashmir. There's one cause for concern, though: In spite of these gains, the recruitment of young ethnic Kashmiris to jihadist groups has continued apace. Estimating numbers for last year isn't easy, but many experts put the count around 200, nearly the same as in 2020.

Exact numbers matter less than the message: There's a wellspring of political resentment, ideological rage and social dysfunction that terrorist recruiters are able to tap.

The Pakistan army's peace dilemma Key to relative peace seen since 2018 are restraints put on jihadist groups by Pakistan's military. The Generals know that as the Pulwama crisis showed they can draw a sharp punch or two on their adversary's nose but crisis inflicts asymmetric costs on Pakistan's fragile economy.

In 2018, it's now widely known, the Research and Analysis Wing (R&W) and the Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate began secret talks gently nudged on by the world community to prevent such crises from erupting between the two nuclear-weapons armed countries. The talks were derailed by the Pulwama crisis, but resumed and led to last year's ceasefire on the Line of Control, which significantly helps India target infiltration.

The Pakistan military's decision to restrain jihadists after 2019 was true to pattern.

Following the 2001 attack on Parliament House in New Delhi, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee threatened war, only to find himself constrained not only by the Indian Army's lumbering infrastructure but also the prospect that India might win forcing Pakistan to use its nuclear weapons.

In spite of this success, Islamabad ratcheted up terrorism against India sharply in coming years, and began secret diplomatic negotiations that almost ended with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Pakistan's military ruler General Pervez Musharraf securing a final status deal on Kashmir.

Lieutenant-General Moinuddin Haider, who served as interior minister under General Musharraf, explained to the scholar George Perkovich that he argued that the long-term costs for Pakistan continuing to back jihadists would be higher than the potential losses from taking them on. President Musharraf feared that confrontation with jihadi groups would provoke a civil war.

I was the sole voice initially, Haider said. He told Musharraf: Mr. President, your economic plan will not work, people will not invest, if you don't get rid of extremists.

General Musharraf's intelligence chief, Lieutenant-General Javed Ashraf Qazi, went further. We must not be afraid, General Qazi publicly said of admitting that the Jaish was involved in the deaths of thousands of innocent Kashmiris, bombing the Indian Parliament, [the journalist] Daniel Pearl's murder and even attempts on President Musharraf's life.

Today, though, there are signs that the Pakistan army may no longer be willing or able, in the face of a resurgent Taliban to take on its jihadist proxies. Last week, footage obtained by ThePrint established that the Jaish-e-Mohammad had held their first rallies since Pulwama, publicly announcing their role in terrorism in Kashmir.

Experience explains why Pakistan's military leadership might be loosening the jihadists' shackles. In 2007, General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani locked in growing conflict with jihadists of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, as well as groups like al-Qaeda rolled back General Musharraf's peace plan, and escalated levels of violence in Kashmir. He calculated the military needed the support of its Kashmir-centred jihadist proxies like the Jaish-e-Mohammad and Lashkar-e-Taiba, as ideological counterweights against anti-State jihadists.

General Qamar Javed Bajwa's tenure as Pakistan Army chief is scheduled to end in November. Amidst rising conflict with the Taliban, his successor could take the same call General Kayani did.

Like it or not, the time couldn't be better for jihadist groups to expand their operations in Kashmir. In some important senses, the debates within Kashmir over the restoration of its statehood or Constitution guarantees aren't about their purported subject; these are a metaphor for wider insecurities that the region's Muslims have about their future in India. As India's always-fraught communal landscape has turned ever more toxic, those insecurities have sharpened.

There isn't a single Muslim in Kapurthala, Alwar or Bharatpur, Kashmir's political patriarch, Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah, once said of the toxic legacy of Partition, noting that some of these had been Muslim-majority states. Kashmiris, he added, feared the same fate lies ahead for them, too.

In 2008, anxieties that Hindu India might be preparing to seize Kashmir's lands and eradicate its religion were stoked by Islamists to spark an uprising against the grant of land-use rights to the Shri Amarnath Shrine Board. India, Islamist political leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani had warned, was working on an agenda of changing the demography of the State.

A generation of young Kashmiris listened: in 2010, and again in 2016, mobs battled police, seeing themselves as defenders of a beleaguered people and religion.

The circumstances make it imperative for New Delhi to secure its political flanks in Kashmir, and engage a population deeply concerned about its future. The Indian armed forces are locked in confrontation with China, and the country's economy has been battered by the pandemic; a simultaneous confrontation with Pakistan would be unsustainable. The model of deterrence used in 2001 by Vajpayee, and in 2019 by Narendra Modi, is neither wise, nor currently credible.

Large numbers of options exist before New Delhi and not just predictable ones, like holding elections to

the state Assembly. The Modi government could, for example, consider lifting the Armed Forces Special Powers Act from some urban centres in the Valley where the Army does not, in any case, operate or from some of the many, relatively peaceful tehsils. It could encourage regular talks between regional political parties, and their national counterparts, on the state's constitutional future. And it could redress fears that India is aiming to transform Kashmir's demography. The time of act is now, if New Delhi isn't to risk blowing its own hard-won gains.

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title:How irregular warfare has become a new threat to India's national security

Date: Published January 12, 2022

SOURCE: FIRST POST

Irregular warfare is perhaps the newest manner by which belligerent groups are seeking to wage war with India. Although this phenomenon has manifested itself in various theatres around the world in earlier times as well, the institutionalised approach by which it is coming to the fore of late warrants careful study. Indeed, in a plethora of ways – kleinkrieg or small wars – is achieving greater significance in the conflict continuum across the globe.

To that end, whether it is the Al-Qaeda-ISIS combine that are decisively coming together in Afghanistan or the ethnic insurgencies in the North East that are beginning to exhibit non-traditional violence, novel methodologies are increasingly being espoused by such formations in order to engineer irregular manoeuvre. Therefore, even as radical Islam by way of the global Salafi movement is forcefully spreading – Op Confusion – onto a bewildered establishment, there are instances by which other forms of conflict are also adopting out-of-the-box methods to carry out subterfuge.

In the universe of Islamist terror discourse an avant-garde Operation Inherent Resolve which could have impounded all the radically deviant minds of the globe into a single area with proper surveillance instead permitted Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurashi and his group to spirit away. The total territorial ouster of ISIS from Iraq-Syria turned out to be detrimental in the long run. ISIS is no longer restrained to a region where its aggression threshold could have been appropriately controlled. After all, even radicals across the globe were undertaking the hijrah to the neo-caliphate's domain after having taken the Bay'ah or the oath of allegiance!

Indeed, ISIS could presently be anywhere in the world, cloaked in different avatars including as the salar-e-allah of the Afghanistan-based Islamic State of Khorasan Province and Waliyah-i-Hind inside India preparing for the Third Wave of Radicalisation. The fact that the Taliban notwithstanding the Doha Agreement would continue to sustain both al-Qaeda and ISIS is also no longer in doubt.

Another important aspect is the manner in which insurgent groups in India's eastern extremity are planning and executing dastardly attacks on security forces in the region. A manifestation of one such act was the 13 November, 2021, Churachandpur ambush in Manipur. While such attacks have been carried out in the past as well, indeed at times with greater ferocity as was the case when soldiers of the Indian Army's 6 Dogras were attacked in 2015, the fact of the matter is that insurgent organisations in the North East are progressively becoming bolder, almost attesting to the fact that the state may have lost the plot despite the fact that there had been considerable forward movement to bring round the wayward groups in the past.

In any event, the prognosis that accompanies the appearance of such pattern clearly attests to the fact that Myanmar post 1 February, 2021, has presented itself as a ready launching detachment for groups that have long jettisoned their founding principles and have graduated into distasteful mercenary conduct much of which is driven by narco-terrorism.

Indeed, many insurgent outfits have come into an agreement with the Tatmadaw and are believed to be aiding the Myanmar Army to quell the civil unrest that erupted after the February putsch. In fact, one of the principal introspection exercises that need to occupy Raisina Hill is the about-face that Naypyidaw engineered after the junta took over the reins of governance.

This is unfortunate as it had been quite forthcoming in ousting the insurgent groups from its soil by way of Op Sunrise-I and II. However, the most important aspect that forbiddingly lends itself to irregular warfare behaviour is the fact that China, perturbed by its inability to intimidate India by conventional methods, is utilising the insurgents to mount a proxy war against India by way of the North East. While this, too, is not new, the fact of the matter is China's import of revolution had ceased when Deng Xiaoping was in the seat of power.

The entry of the Chinese into the North East insurgency game in the aftermath of the Chinese humiliation in eastern Ladakh indicates that Beijing is resorting to irregular warfare initiative in order to, alongside its surrogate Pakistan, bleed India with a thousand cuts. Such facets that are beginning to endanger India must be carefully factored in and studied by the security managers of India.

On the other hand, the atmospherics that have come to roost in Bangladesh are fraught with a possibility that despite Sheikh Hasina's best efforts, a rise in radicalisation might be taking place. This is becoming increasingly palpable with the growing intimacy of the country's population with Pakistan in recent times. The Pakistanisation of a section of Bangladesh has become particularly pronounced after the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan with a butterfly effect being felt in the erstwhile East Pakistan.

The post-1971 generation seems to be identifying itself with not only Pakistan, but the global Salafi movement as well. This was in ample evidence when a hostage situation was engineered in Dhaka in 2016. The Islamist groups in Bangladesh like the Jama'at-ul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and the Ansarullah Bangla Team had, of course, already identified themselves with groups such as the al-Qaeda and the ISIS. The expanse is, therefore, ripe for a concerted fundamentalist resurgence.

Coupled with the aforesaid resurgence a spill over effect from Bangladesh into India is also being felt. Eastern India and Assam would be the first ports of call for the Islamists. After all, the JMB had set up shop in Assam, Bengal and Bihar in 2014. Indeed, one of the modus operandi of the radicalised elements from Bangladesh as also from South East Asia has been to utilise the demographic jungles of lower Assam and employ it as a "gateway" to the rest of India in order to perpetrate terror alongside Pakistan-based tanzeems such as Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad. An expedited radicalisation effort of the sort that is being analysed would have far-reaching implication for India.

The state must, therefore, prepare itself for the "gray zone" warfare that is going to be upon it sooner than later. The prudent course of action would be to chart and cull from non-orthodox stratagems from theatres across the world. The consecration of novel approaches for combating "irregular warfare" is an important objective. As aforesaid, this is so not only because of the unconventional behaviour in Islamist terror conduct but in the insurgencies that India is faced with in the North East.

The pincer movements from the two extremities of India that are slowly making their way to "marry-up" in the traditional perches of East and North East India must be outflanked. A correctly anvilled anti-terror doctrine which is overarching and takes into account non-foreseeable eventualities would have gone a long way in the direction of countering the new threat. It is, therefore, important to be clear-eyed and construct an integrated approach whereby deception management is comprehended and acted upon with foresight. Such an exercise would also calibrate the construction of a mainframe around the concept of irregular warfare that is all set to proliferate. Strategic acumen decrees that a course correction exercise be put in place which would counter the new threat with fortitude.

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title:Pakistan's new national security policy seeks "peace with India for the next 100 years"

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SOURCE: WION

Peace with India and its immediate neighbours is set to be the central theme of Pakistan's first-ever National Security Policy that is scheduled to be unveiled by Prime Minister Imran Khan on Friday. The 100-page policy document has also put out elaborate plans to open trade and business ties with India without final settlement of the Kashmir issue, Pakistan-based newspaper Express Tribune reported on Tuesday quoting an official.

"Only a part of the national security policy will be made public," the official clarified, saying in the rest of the world such policies often remained classified. The official stressed that normalising commercial relations is contingent upon achieving progress in talks between the two nuclear-armed neighbours.

"We are not seeking hostility with India for the next 100 years. The new policy seeks peace with immediate neighbours," the official, who is associated with the development, was quoted as saying.

"Economic security will be the central theme of the new national security policy". But geo-economics does not necessarily mean we overlook our geo-strategic and geo-political interests," the official said.

The official further said that the Kashmir issue with India has been identified as a "vital national policy" issue for Pakistan.

The official, however, clarified that there were no prospects of rapprochement with India under the current Modi-led government in New Delhi.

The country's new National Security Policy would act as an umbrella document, to be used as a guideline for Pakistan's foreign, international and defence related policies, he said.

Pakistan and India have mostly been at loggerheads with each other throughout history.

During the first term of Narendra Modi in 2014, the relations took a positive turn when he announced his intentions to have cordial relations with Pakistan.

He had also visited Islamabad in 2015 unannounced to attend a marriage ceremony in Sharif's family.

However, the relations between the two countries turned south following the horrific 2016 Uri attacks in which four terrorists launched grenade attacks on Indian Army soldiers in the Indian's Jammu and Kashmir on 18 September.

The attack killed 19 soldiers and injured 19-30 others. It was reported as "the deadliest attack on security forces in Kashmir in two decades".

Pakistan-based terrorist group Jaish-e-Mohammed was involved in the planning and execution of the attack.

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title:India prepared to deal with any military ramifications of China's new land boundary law: Army chief
MM Naravane

Date: Published January 12, 2022

SOURCE: PTI

The Indian Army will continue to deal with the Chinese PLA in a firm and resolute manner in eastern Ladakh and it has been maintaining the highest level of operational preparedness in the region, Army Chief Gen MM Naravane said on Wednesday.

At a press conference ahead of the Army Day, Gen Naravane said though there has been partial engagement in the region, the "threat by no means has reduced". "We have continued to maintain the highest levels of operational preparedness while at the same time engaging with the Chinese PLA through dialogue," Gen Naravane said.

The Chief of Army Staff also said that the Indian Army is more than adequately prepared to deal with any military ramifications of China's new land boundary law.

"We will continue to deal with the Chinese PLA in a firm and resolute manner," Gen Naravane said, adding necessary safeguards are in place to take care of any contingencies.

The Chief of Army Staff also referred to upgradation and development of infrastructure along Northern borders, saying the initiative has been undertaken in a holistic and comprehensive manner.

He also said that major efforts are undertaken to see what all dual-use infrastructure in the border areas can be made use of.

The Army chief said the response by his forces to Chinese attempts to unilaterally change the status quo was very robust.

"We are much better prepared to meet any challenge that is thrown up at us," he said.

When asked about the 14th round of military talks with China that is underway on Wednesday, he said India was hopeful of resolving issues at Patrolling Point 15 (Hot Springs).

Gen Naravane also said the Army's inquiry report into the December 4 Nagaland firing incident is expected to come out in a day or two.

He said appropriate action will be taken based on the report.

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title:China's New Construction At Bhutan Border Has Big Implications For India

Date: Published January 12, 2022

SOURCE: REUTERS

China has accelerated settlement-building along its disputed border with Bhutan, with more than 200 structures, including two-storey buildings, under construction in six locations, according to satellite image analysis conducted for Reuters.

The images and analysis supplied to Reuters by US data analytics firm HawkEye 360, which uses satellites to gather intelligence on ground-level activities, and vetted by two other experts, provide a detailed look into China's recent construction along its frontier with Bhutan.

Construction-related activity in some of the locations along Bhutan's western border has been under way since early 2020, with China initially building tracks and clearing out areas, based on material provided by satellite imagery firms Capella Space and Planet Labs, said Chris Biggers, the mission applications director at HawkEye 360.

Images show the work speeded up in 2021. Smaller structures were erected "possibly to house equipment and supplies" followed by the laying of foundations and then the construction of buildings, Biggers said.

"To me, 2021 was the period for acceleration," Biggers said.

Two other experts who studied the locations of the new construction and recent satellite images taken by Capella Space said all six settlements appear to be in territory disputed by China and Bhutan "including a contested tract of roughly 110 square kilometres" with little in the way of resources or native population.

"It is Bhutan's policy not to talk about boundary issues in the public," Bhutan's foreign ministry said in response to questions from Reuters. The ministry declined to comment further.

The construction suggests that China is bent on resolving its border claims by giving its ambitions concrete form, said the experts and one Indian defence source.

China's foreign ministry said the construction is "entirely for the improvement of the working and living conditions of the local people."

"It is within China's sovereignty to carry out normal construction activities on its own territory," the ministry said. The ministry declined to comment further.

The villages also offer Beijing some strategic value, two of the experts say. The new construction is 9 to 27km from the Doklam area at the junction of the borders of India, Bhutan and China, where Indian and Chinese troops were locked in standoff for more than two months in 2017.

The settlements would allow China to better control and monitor far-flung areas, and potentially use them to establish security-focused installations, according to one expert and the Indian defence source.

India's foreign ministry did not respond to a request for comment.

Bhutan, a country of less than 800,000 people, has been negotiating with Beijing for almost four decades to settle their 477-km border. At issue for Bhutan is not just territorial integrity, but also concerns over the potential security implications for India, which is the Himalayan kingdom's main ally and economic partner. The Bhutanese foreign ministry said Bhutan and China had agreed during the latest round of boundary negotiations in April 2021 to speed up the process of resolving their differences. It declined to discuss the details of the plan to do so.

"All issues are discussed between Bhutan and China within the framework of the Boundary Talks," the ministry said.

"China's village building across the claimed Bhutan border appears to be designed to force Bhutan to yield to Chinese demands in their border negotiations, now in their 24th round after 37 years," said Robert Barnett, a professorial research associate at SOAS University of London, who is an expert on Tibet and has studied the China-Bhutan border closely.

Border Villages

The settlements appear part of a plan Beijing made public in 2017 to build more than 600 villages in border areas in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), which lies on the Chinese side of the disputed border, said Barnett and M. Taylor Fravel, director of the Security Studies Program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Fravel said the construction indicated China likely wanted to consolidate its control and improve infrastructure in border areas.

The Chinese-controlled TAR was established in 1965, six years after the Dalai Lama fled Tibet in the wake of a failed uprising against Chinese rule.

Some of the villages near the border are built where there has been no previous construction. China's government gives residents subsidies to settle there, Barnett said.

"All the cross-border villages in the western Bhutan sector are sited in areas where no natural village would be found, since these areas are barely habitable," he said.

Chicken's Neck

Control over the remote Doklam plateau would potentially give China greater access to the adjoining "Chicken's Neck" area, a strategic strip of land that connects India to its northeastern region.

India shares an unsettled 3,500-km border with China. Troops from both countries remain deployed near each other in a separate border dispute in the Ladakh region "about 1,100km from Doklam" where they clashed in hand-to-hand combat in 2020.

India has been closely monitoring Chinese construction along its borders, the Indian defence source said, declining to be named because of the sensitivity of the matter.

The satellite imagery suggests that neither India nor Bhutan has responded on the ground to China's construction activities, Biggers said.

Nathan Ruser, a researcher at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute research organisation, added that it would be a challenge for India and Bhutan to counter the Chinese construction.

"Any action taken against these Chinese installations would necessarily put civilian populations at risk," Ruser said. "It limits the ways in which India and Bhutan are able to combat Chinese encroachment into disputed territories."

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title:Army Chief Says Increase In Concentration Of Terrorists On Western Front

Date: Published January 12, 2022

SOURCE: ANI

Indian Army chief General Manoj Mukund Naravane on Tuesday said that as far as the western front is concerned, there is an increase in the concentration of terrorists in various launch pads and there have been repeated attempts of infiltration across the Line of Control. The army chief said, "On the western front, there is an increase in the concentration of terrorists in various launch pads and there have been repeated attempts of infiltration across the LAC. This once exposes the nefarious designs of our western neighbour." Addressing the media persons on Tuesday, Gen Naravane said, "If you recall the situation as it existed last January, there have been positive developments both along our northern and western borders. On the northern

borders, we have continued to maintain the highest levels of operational preparedness while at the same time, engaging with the People's Liberation Army (PLA) through dialogue.

After persistent joint efforts, mutual disengagement has occurred at many locations of which I have been telling you from time to time. So, that definitely is a positive development that has happened over the last one year. As we speak, the 14th round of the Core Commander talks are underway and I am hopeful that you should see further development in the days ahead," he added.

While there has been a partial disengagement, the threat has by no means reduced and the host level are more or less the same. From our side, it has been enhanced. The threat assessment and internal deliberations that we have carried out from time to time have resulted in some reorganisation and realignment of the same in keeping with our army's mandate of ensuring our territorial integrity," the army chief said.

Gen Naravane said, "This also caters to the major augmentation that has taken in the PLA forces and their infrastructure. While we will continue to deal with PLA in a firm and resolute manner, necessary safeguards are in place to take care of any contingency."

The 14th round of Corps Commander-level talks between India and China are currently underway.

The 14th round of Senior Highest Military Commander Level (SHMCL) talks between India and China is taking place on January 12 at the Chushul-Moldo meeting point, on the Chinese side at 09:30 AM (IST). The Indian side is looking forward to constructive dialogue for resolving the remaining friction areas, said Indian Army officials.

New Delhi and Beijing have been engaged in holding talks on the Line of Actual Control in the Eastern Ladakh area to resolve the standoff. So far, 13 rounds of talks have been held.

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title:Indian agencies prepare for extradition hearing of fugitive arms dealer Sanjay Bhandari in UK next month

Date: Published January 12, 2022

SOURCE: ANI

With reports suggesting that fugitive arms dealer Sanjay Bhandari has sought asylum in the United Kingdom, Indian agencies in coordination with the Ministry of External Affairs are engaged in preparation for his extradition hearing scheduled next month.

A joint team of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Enforcement Directorate (ED) is engaged in preparing documents with foolproof evidence that could help both the agencies to put forth their case during Bhandari's extradition hearing pending in the UK next month, an official source told ANI requesting anonymity.

Both the agencies have engaged Joint Director level officers who in coordination with the investigating officers have expedited the process to gather documents linked to the case, said the source.

Bhandari, who is wanted in India for violating the Official Secrets Act, is currently seeking asylum in the UK.

India has moved to the UK for his extradition for money laundering and tax evasion cases against him. A hearing in the case is due in London next month. Bhandari is currently on conditional bail in the UK awaiting the outcome of his extradition case.

"Extradition of Sanjay Bhandari is necessary to investigate his links to "kickbacks" amounting to several hundreds of crores during the UPA tenure as his bank transaction details have suggested that he had received money for his involvement in multiple defence deals in 2011," another official linked to the probe told ANI.

"A watertight case is being prepared and documents regarding that are being gathered to present it before a designated court in the UK when it will be hearing Bhandari's matter linked to his extradition to India." The former defence consultant recently sued French firm Thales, contending that he is owed "commissions" worth Rs 90 crore in connection with a defence deal. Thales incidentally supplies the avionics equipment for Dassault's Rafale aircraft.

The contract under contention is a EUR2.4 billion contract signed in 2011 by the then United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government under Manmohan Singh to upgrade Indian Air Force (IAF) Mirage 2000 planes.

According to the report in the UK-based newspaper The Telegraph, the French company is "facing allegations that it used a secret and illicit system of paying middlemen to secure lucrative international contracts." The Telegraph stated that Bhandari claimed he "helped" Thales to "sell the upgrade of the Mirage jets by facilitating a meeting" with a top defence ministry official, citing court documents. He also claimed that he was entitled to a EUR20 million (167 crores) consulting fee but only received EUR9 million (75 crores). The fugitive arms lobbyist alleged that this was due to political factors in 2016 because he was close to the Congress Party.

Bhandari has described himself in the lawsuit as a "well-known commercial intermediary involved in arms and defence in India", who has "worked with major international defence companies to assist them in negotiating arms contracts with the Indian Ministry of Defence". The lawsuit is ongoing and a judgment is expected later this year.

Bhandari, considered close to Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's brother-in-law Robert Vadra, had fled India in

2016 following raids at his residence for allegedly possessing classified information on the country's defence purchases. He was later charged under the Official Secrets Act. Bhandari had purportedly received a kickback of Rs 328 crore in connection with the Pilatus Aircraft deal. He has also been linked to several other business agreements, including the ONGC deal. Between 2010 and 2012, more than Rs 3.47 crore had been transferred by Thales International, the Middle East into a bank account that is believed to belong to the fugitive defence middleman in conjunction with another defence deal relating to aviation products. The company named in the accessed documents is Offset India Solutions of which Bhandari is a director. The Enforcement Directorate had conducted raids on HL Pahwa in May 2017 which linked a land deal connection with the Gandhi family and HL Pahwa who was funded by one CC Thampi, who has close financial links to Sanjay Bhandari. From files seized by the ED during raids at HL Pahwa office the link was established and it needed further probe. In August 2020, ED had raided 14 locations related to Bhandari in connection to the Pilatus aircraft scam. Bhandari is also under the scanner of the CBI as well for allegedly purchasing Benami properties for Robert Vadra, the son-in-law of Congress president Sonia Gandhi. CBI's inquiry had found that Bhandari's company had received the kickback amount through his Singapore-based bank account in 2009. From there the money was laundered to Bhandari's company in Dubai and then, it was allegedly used to purchase properties in London. It is notable here that the ED has already stated in open court that Bhandari was acting on behalf of Robert Vadra for the purchase of properties in London.

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title:Indian Navy hands over interceptor craft to Mozambique

Date: Published January 12, 2022

SOURCE: Â defenceWeb

The Indian Navy has handed over two Solas Marine fast interceptor craft to Mozambique and provided military training during a port visit by the tank landing ship INS Kesari. Indian Naval Ship Kesari entered the Port of Maputo on 25 December under Mission Sagar, India's initiative to deliver COVID-19 related assistance to countries in the Indian Ocean region. 500 tons of food aid was shipped by INS Kesari to support the efforts of Mozambique to cope with ongoing drought and the concurrent challenges of the pandemic.

In support of capacity building of the Mozambican military, INS Kesari delivered two 16 metre fast interceptor craft (T310 and T311) and self defence equipment that was handed over to the Armed Forces of Mozambique on 27 December.

The handover ceremony was attended by the High Commissioner of India in Mozambique, Shri Ankan Banerjee, India's defence attache Captain Nitin Kapoor and the ship's commanding officer, Commander Ashish Dutta. The Indian Navy said that small arms training was conducted by INS Kesari for Mozambican military personnel and training was imparted by the Indian Navy training team to Mozambican Navy personnel on the new fast interceptors.

The fast interceptor craft were built by Solas Marine in Sri Lanka. A total of 80 craft were delivered to the Indian Navy between 2013 and 2017. The interceptors are 16 metres long with a draught of .8 metres. Water-jet propulsion gives a top speed of 45 knots and a range of 200 nautical miles at 12 knots. They can carry machineguns and feature bullet-resistant cabins.

One of the vessels (T311) delivered to Mozambique last month was several years ago used by the Indian Navy to demonstrate biodiesel fuel as part of its Green Initiatives Programme.

December's vessel donation to Mozambique was not India's first in July 2019, India handed over two Larsen & Toubro interceptors to the Mozambican Navy as part of an agreement to strengthen defence cooperation between the two countries.

The 30 metre long fast interceptors (named Namiliti and Umbeluzi), displace 90 tonnes, have a top speed of 45 knots, range of 500 nautical miles and are typically armed with machineguns. They are powered by two Caterpillar marine engines and two auxiliary generators. Waterjets are used for high speed performance. The aluminium-hulled vessels are crewed by a dozen sailors and are designed for surveillance, patrol, search and rescue, anti-poaching, counter-smuggling and other maritime security missions.

India has cultivated close ties with Mozambique and in 2011 affirmed its commitment to help Mozambique with maritime security and anti-piracy. Indian Navy warships have visited the country and helped provide humanitarian assistance after Cyclone Idai in March 2019. In November 2014 the Indian Navy vessel INS Teg took part in a goodwill visit to Mozambique after Exercise Ibsamar in South Africa, and in July 2017 India's Chief of the Naval Staff (CNS) Admiral Sunil Lanba visited Mozambique and Tanzania to consolidate bilateral defence relations.

Since May 2020, INS Kesari has undertaken other Mission Sagar visits in the region, providing humanitarian and medical assistance to the Maldives, Mauritius, Seychelles, Madagascar and Comoros, including deployment of Medical Assistance Teams of the Indian Navy in multiple locations.

Since May 2020, the Indian Navy has deployed ships to 15 friendly foreign countries under Sagar missions. These deployments spanned over 215 days at sea have delivered a cumulative assistance of more than 3 000 tons

of food aid, 900 oxygen concentrators and 20 ISO containers. Whilst undertaking these missions, Indian Naval Ships have traversed a cumulative distance of close to 40 000 nautical miles.

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title:Nagaland Civilian Killings: Army Chief Naravane Assures Appropriate Action, Calls The Incident
â€˜Unfortunateâ€™

Date: Published January 12, 2022

SOURCE: INDIA TV

Addressing an annual press conference, Army Chief General MM Naravane on Wednesday asserted that “appropriate action” will be taken against those involved in the brutal killing of 14 civilians in the Mon district of Nagaland in December last year. “Appropriate and corrective action will be taken based on the outcome of the investigation,” Naravane reportedly said, terming the incident “unfortunate”.Also Read “ Killing of Miners in Nagaland: An Accident or Conspiracy? Notably, the Army had owned responsibility for the killings of civilians in a statement on December 5, 2021. “Based on credible intelligence of likely movement of insurgents, a specific operation was planned to be conducted in the area of Tiru, Mon district, Nagaland. The incident and its aftermath are deeply regretted. The cause of the unfortunate loss of lives is being investigated at the highest level and appropriate action will be taken as per the course of law,” Nagaland’s Dimapur-based 3 Corps said in a statement. Also Read “ Longest Drone Flight Delivers Medical Supplies From Nagaland’s Mokokchung to Tuensang. Thirteen of the 14 people killed by army personnel on December 4 and 5 belonged to the Konyak tribe, one of the major tribes of Nagaland. They were killed in three consecutive episodes of firing by security forces, the first of which has been claimed to be a case of mistaken identity. Also Read “ Fresh Protests Erupt Again Over Civilian Deaths in Nagaland, Agitators Call For Non-Cooperation Union Home Minister Amit Shah had told the Lok Sabha that the army had received information on the movement of insurgents in Mon and “21 Para Commando” unit had laid an ambush. “A vehicle was signalled to stop but it tried to speed away. Suspecting the presence of insurgents in the vehicle, the security personnel opened fire, leading to the death of six of its eight occupants,” Shah said. Regretting the death of the civilians, he had said security forces fired in self-defence. Eight others, including an army man, were killed in subsequent clashes between the force and villagers. Several political parties have contested the government version that the vehicle was asked to stop.

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title:Four nabbed in Jodhpur for preparing forged documents for Pak immigrants

Date: Published January 12, 2022

SOURCE: PTI

Four persons have been arrested here for allegedly preparing forged documents for Pakistan citizens in order to get them Indian visas, police said. Two accused are relatives while two others include a student and an employee of an NGO. A case was registered on the directions of a CID inspector, who had conducted an inquiry into a complaint against them by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs last month. “In the investigation, Narendra alias Nemaram Tak, Soheli Rohani, Chiranjit alias Ashok Meghwal and Shital Bheel were found guilty of preparing forged documents. We have arrested them on Tuesday evening,” a senior police official said. Investigation revealed that the accused colluded to get the documents like sponsor certificate, identity card and residential certificate for the visas for Pakistan citizens willing to come to India, police said. For the attestation, they fabricated the signature of a teacher Gautam Puri, the police said. “During investigation, we found that Puri had no idea about this attestation in his name and he was not aware of his name being used in fabrication of documents for this purpose,” said the officer associated with the investigation adding that a third class teacher does not fall into the category of a gazetted officer, thus ineligible for such attestations. Of the four accused, Soheli and Chiranjiv worked as a typist in the High Court premises here and had charged Rs 500 for preparing forged documents for 11 Pak citizens so far, the officer said. Soheli and Chiranjiv are relatives and were working as agents to prepare Visas for willing Pakistani citizens.

As per the procedure, a Pakistan citizen has to submit his documents to the Indian High commission in Pakistan for a visa for India. For this, there is the requirement of a sponsor or guarantor from India. This sponsor certificate has to be attested by a gazetted officer. This certificate is then annexed with the visa documents to obtain a visa for India.

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title:Assam-Manipur tussle: Militants gun down man along border in volatile Cachar district

Date: Published January 12, 2022

SOURCE: TIMES NOW

Â In a major flare up of law and order situation ahead of the 2022 Assembly elections in Manipur, a man was reportedly shot dead by suspected militants in the district bordering Assam.

â€œThe incident took place under Jirighat police station limits in Cachar district. Further investigation is underway,â€ Cachar SP Ramandeep Kaur said. The latest development has come barely a month ahead of the crucial Manipur Assembly elections.

The incident comes a day after two men, including an India Reserve Battalion (IRB) personnel, were shot dead in Manipurâ€™s Imphal West, causing massive tension in the area.

Abujam John (50) and Abujam Sashikanta (34) were near their home when the accused, yet to be identified, shot them around 9 pm on Sunday in Samurou in the Wangoi police station area.

While, John died at the spot, Sashikanta, the IRB personnel, succumbed to his injuries en route to the hospital.

John was reportedly an active BJP member and worked for state agricultural minister O Lukhoi.

Meanwhile, the Gauhati High Court on Tuesday asked the Assam government to file a detailed affidavit stating the number of police encounters that have taken place ever since the Bharatiya Janata Party returned to power in May 2021.

The order was issued following a public interest litigation filed by advocate Arif Md Yeasin Jwadder, a High Court Bench. The bench hearing the matter comprises Chief Justice Sudhanshu Dhulia and Justice Soumitra Saikia asked Assam Advocate General Devajit Lon Saikia.

â€œThe Home and Political Department will prepare and file the affidavit,â€ the Advocate General told news agencyÂ PTI.

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