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1. Rajnath Singh launches 'Soul of Steel' Alpine Challenge (Jan. 16, 2023)

Soul of Steel

To promote tourism in border areas, the defence minister **Rajnath Singh** launched the "**Soul of Steel**" **Alpine Challenge** on 14 January.

An overview of the news

- Rajnath Singh also flagged off the 460 km long car rally '**Road to the End**', a joint operation by the Indian Army and CLAW.
- The rally will reach its destination in the Garhwal Himalayas near **Niti village in Chamoli district** in the next three days.
- A team of Indian Special Forces veterans with multiple expertise in CLAW, mountaineering, skydiving, SCUBA diving, unarmed combat, multi-terrain survival techniques and emergency medical response will lead the challenge.

About 'Soul of Steel' challenge

- It will test the **high altitude endurance** of an individual and will initially feature **12 Indian participants** and six international teams between the ages of 18 and 30.
- This challenge will run for **three months**.
- It is being organised by **CLAW Global**, a conglomerate of giants.
- The Indian Army is supporting the adventure challenge.
- It is modelled on the lines of the '**Ironman Triathlon**', a long distance triathlon held in **Europe** that tests a person's physical abilities.
- The initiative aims to enable life skills training and youth development.
- This is also expected to give a boost to the global promotion of adventure tourism in Uttarakhand.

2. ICG ship 'Kamla Devi', last vessel of FPV series, commissioned (Jan. 13, 2023)

Fast Patrol Vessel (FPV) ICG ship '**Kamala Devi**' was commissioned on 12 January in **Kolkata**, the capital of West Bengal.

An overview of the news

- This **Fast Patrol Vessel (FPV)** designed, built and delivered by **Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE) Ltd** to the Indian Coast Guard.
- A passenger-cum-cargo ocean going ferry '**MV Ma Lisha**' built by the shipyard for the **Republic of Guyana** was also flagged off.

- This is the first such ship built by a Defense Public Sector Shipyard for export to a Latin American country.

About ICG Kamla Devi

- ICG Kamla Devi is **48.9 meters long and 7.5 meters wide** with a **displacement of 308 tonnes**.
- It is capable of a top speed of **34 knots** and an endurance of over **1,500 nautical miles**, with three engines and water jets.
- She also has an integrated bridge system and is fitted with a **40/60 gun** as the main armament.
- The ship has advanced livable facilities with fully air-conditioned accommodation for 35 personnel.
- ICGS Kamla Devi will patrol the seas and undertake **anti-smuggling, anti-poaching and search and rescue operations** when required.

About MV Ma Lisha

- It has been designed and built by **GRSE** and will be housed at **Chennai**, a semi-submersible vessel **MV Sun Rise** for the long voyage to **Guyana**.
- The ship was launched on **June 15, 2022** and within six months, GRSE secured the 'technical acceptance' of the ship on December 16.
- The **70 metre long** vessel with a displacement of **1,700 tonnes** is propelled by two diesel engines and can attain a maximum speed of **15 knots**.
- The ship can accommodate **294 passengers** including **14 crew members** along with **14 cars**, two trucks and 14 containers and cargo.

3. Successful training launch of Prithvi-2 at Chandipur, Odisha (Jan. 11, 2023)

Prithvi-2 was successfully trained on 10 January 2023 from the **Integrated Test Range at Chandipur off the Odisha coast**.

An overview of the news

- Prithvi-II is an indigenously developed surface-to-surface **short-range ballistic missile (SRBM)** with a range of approximately 250-350 km. and it can carry one ton payload.
- The **Prithvi-II class** is a single-stage liquid-fueled missile with a payload of 500-1000 kg. has warhead mounting capability.
- The missile system is capable of **hitting targets** with a very high degree of accuracy.

- The state-of-the-art missile uses an **advanced inertial guidance system** with an efficient trajectory to hit its target.
- It was initially developed for the Indian Air Force as the primary user and was later inducted into the Indian Army as well.
- While the missile was first inducted into India's Strategic Forces Command in 2003, it was the first missile developed under the IGMDP.

Five missiles developed under IGMDP

- The **5 missiles (P-A-T-N-A)** developed under this program are:
- **Prithvi**: Short-range surface-to-surface ballistic missile.
- **Agni**: Surface-to-surface medium-range ballistic missile i.e. Agni (1,2,3,4,5).
- **Trishul**: Short-range surface-to-air missile.
- **Nag**: Third generation anti-tank missile.
- **Akash**: Medium-range surface-to-air missile.

4. India, Japan to hold 1st bilateral air exercise 'Veer Guardian-2023' from next week (Jan. 10, 2023)

'Veer Guardian-2023' from next week

Exercise '**Veer Guardian 2023**' between the **Indian Air Force and the Japanese Air Self-Defense Force (JASDF)** will be conducted from January 12 to 26 at **Hyakuri air base and Iruma air base in Japan.**

An overview of the news

- The aim of the exercise is to strengthen mutual understanding and **defence ties between the two air forces.**
- The Indian contingent will be represented by a contingent of around **150 personnel.** India's **1 IL-78 mid-air refuelling and 4 Su-30MKI fighter aircraft** will participate in it.
- **4 F-15s and 4 F-2 fighter jets** will be involved in this bilateral exercise from the Japanese side.

Other defence exercises involving India and Japan

- **Dharma Guardian** - Held from 27 February to 10 March 2022 at **Lagavi (Belgaum, Karnataka).**
- The 6th edition of **JIMEX-2022** was organised in the **Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal.**

- **Malabar naval exercise** - India and Japan, along with the United States and Australia, participate in a naval exercise called Malabar. Its 26th edition was organised in Japan in November 2022.

5. Military Tattoo & Tribal Dance Festival to be held in New Delhi on 23rd & 24th January (Jan. 7, 2023)

As part of the Republic Day celebrations 2023 and to mark the **126th birth anniversary (Parakram Diwas)** of **Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose**, a **military tattoo and tribal dance festival 'Adi Shaurya - Parv Parakram Ka'** will organise at the **Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium** in New Delhi.

An overview of the news

- The two-day festival will showcase the might of the **Armed Forces and the ethnic beauty of India's tribal culture.**
- The program included a **military tattoo** (paramotor gliding, hot air balloon, horse show, motorcycle display, air warrior drill, navy band) and an hour long **traditional dance performance** (khukri dance, gatka, mallakhamb, kalaripayattu, thangata) by tribal artistes.
- The grand finale includes a performance by renowned singer **Kailash Kher.**
- The festival aims to remember the sacrifices of the country's bravehearts and celebrate the rich cultural heritage that makes India unique and diverse.
- It aims to celebrate the bravery of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, embrace the true spirit of India and renew the commitment to build a strong and prosperous '**New India**'.
- The Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Tribal Affairs are jointly organising the event, with the Indian Coast Guard as the coordinating agency.

6. Captain Shiva Chauhan becomes the first women officer to be operationally deployed in Siachen (Jan. 3, 2023)

Captain Shiva Chauhan becomes the first women officer to be operationally deployed in Siachen

Fire and Fury Corps officer **Captain Shiva Chauhan** became the first woman officer to be operationally deployed at the highest battleground in Kumar Post on the Siachen glacier.

This information was tweeted by the official account of the Fire and Fury Corps of the Indian Army.

Ms Shiva had to undergo arduous training before her posting in Kumar Post.

Siachen Glacier

The Siachen glacier lies in the Karakoram Range .It is 75 km (47 miles) long, which makes it the second longest nonpolar glacier in the world, after Fedchenko Glacier in Tajikistan.

Strategic Significance of Siachen Glacier

The Siachen Glacier is the highest battleground on earth, where India and Pakistan have fought intermittently since 1984. The Glacier is of strategic significance for India namely;

- The Glacier guards the routes which lead to Leh, the capital of Ladakh.
- Secondly the Salto Ridge overlooks the area of Gilgit-Baltistan of Pakistan Occupied Kashmir.
- Thirdly, it overlooks and dominates the Shaksgam Valley, which was illegally ceded to China by Pakistan.
- Fourthly, it is close to the Karakoram Pass through which the Karakoram Highway passes connecting Gilgit-Baltistan to Xinjiang Province of China.

Due to its strategic significance both countries maintain a permanent military presence in the region at a height of over 6,000 metres (20,000 feet).

More than 2,000 soldiers have died in this inhospitable terrain, mostly due to weather extremes and the natural hazards of mountain warfare.

Operation Meghdoot

Operation Meghdoot was launched by the Indian Armed Forces to take control of Siachen Glacier on the morning of April 13, 1984 before the Pakistani army did so.

At that time Siachen Glacier was in the State of Jammu and Kashmir but presently it is in the **Union Territory of Ladakh**.

7. Government starts process to buy 100 more K9-Vajras (Jan. 2, 2023)

The Defense Ministry has initiated the process to procure **100 more K-9 Vajra self-propelled howitzers**, which are made in India by **Larsen & Toubro (L&T)** using technology transferred from South Korean defence major **Hanwha Defence**.

Important facts

- The 100th cannon was handed over to the army in **2021**.
- In the 2020 standoff in eastern Ladakh, the Army deployed a regiment of these howitzers to augment its long-range firepower in a massive move by **China across the Line of Actual Control**.
- Encouraged by its improved performance, the Army is looking to eventually buy an additional 100 guns.
- The induction of **Dhanush, K9-Vajra and M777 Ultra Light Howitzers** has increased the artillery firepower on the northern frontiers.

About K9-Vajra

- The K-9 Vajra is a **155 mm, 52-calibre tracked self-propelled howitzer** manufactured by L&T.
- It is based on the K-9 Thunder with technology transferred from South Korean defence major **Hanwha Defence**.
- The K-9 Vajra was primarily procured for use in the desert, but the standoff with China has prompted them to be deployed in the mountains as well.

8. Air Marshal Pankaj Mohan Sinha assumes command of the IAF Western Command (Jan. 1, 2023)

Air Marshal Pankaj Mohan Sinha assumes command of the IAF Western Command

Air Marshal **Pankaj Mohan Sinha** assumed command of the Indian Air Force's Western Air Command on 01 January 2023.

The Air Marshal is a graduate of National Defence Academy, Pune and was commissioned into the IAF as a fighter pilot in June 1985. He is an alumnus of the prestigious Defence Services Staff College, Wellington.

Air Marshal Pankaj Mohan Sinha succeeds Air Marshal S Prabhakaran who superannuated on 31 December 2022 after putting in more than 39 years of distinguished service in the IAF.

Indian Air force and its command structure

It was set up on 8 October 1932. It comes under the Union Defence Ministry.

President of India is the Supreme Commander of the Air Force.

Every year October 8 is observed as Air Force Day.

Chief of Air Staff: Air Chief Marshal **Vivek Ram Chaudhari**

Command structure of the Indian Air Force

Serial No	Command	Headquarters
1	Western Air Command	Delhi
2	South-Western Air Command	Gandhinagar
3	Central Air Command	Prayagraj
4	Eastern Air Command	Shillong
5	Southern Air Command	Thiruvananthapuram
6	Training Command	Bengaluru
7	Maintenance Command	Nagpur

9. Air version of BrahMos Missile with 400 km Range test fired form IAF Sukhoi plane (Dec. 29, 2022)

Air version of BrahMos Missile with 400 km Range test fired form IAF Sukhoi plane

The Indian Air Force successfully tested the extended range version of the **Brahmos** Air Launched missile against a ship target in Bay of Bengal from **Su-30 MKI fighter jet** on 29 December 2022.

According to the media report the extended range of the Brahmos missile is believed to have the ability to take out targets in sea 400 km away.

According to the Defence ministry the supersonic cruise missile successfully achieved all its mission objectives.

The successful test firing was a joint effort by the Indian Air Force, Indian Navy, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), and the BrahMos Aerospace (BAPL).

In May this year, the extended-range version of the supersonic missile was successfully tested from the Sukhoi fighter. The extended range was reported to have increased to 350 km from 290 km.

Brahmos missile

Brahmos supersonic missile has been developed by the **Brahmos Aerospace Ltd.** The company is a joint venture of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) of India and Russia's NPOM.

The missile takes its name from the river **Brahmaputra** and **Moskva** Rivers. Russian capital Moscow is situated along the Moskva River.

The missile can be launched from submarines, ships, aircraft, or land platforms.

The BrahMos supersonic cruise missile has a **two-stage** propellant booster engine. The first stage is a **solid booster engine** and the second stage is the **liquid ramjet engine**. The missile has a low radar signature.

The missile has a speed of 2.8 Mach or 2.8 times the speed of the sound.

The missile has a range of 290-400 km.

The **Philippines** is the first country in the world to buy the Brahmos missile from India.

Managing Director and CEO of Brahmos Aerospace: **Atul Dinkar Rane**

10. Union Home Minister Amit Shah launches the "Prahari app" of the Border Security Force (Dec. 29, 2022)

Union Home Minister Amit Shah launches the "Prahari app" of the Border Security Force

The Union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah launched the Mobile App '**Prahari**' of the [Border Security Force \(BSF\)](#) in New Delhi on 29 December 2022. Union Minister of State for Home Affairs **Nityanand Rai**, Director General of BSF **Pankaj Kumar Singh** were amongst those dignitaries present on the occasion.

Usefulness of the Prahari' app

Amit Shah said that the BSF 'Prahari' app is a great example of Proactive Governance. "Now jawans can get personal information and information related to accommodation, Ayushman-CAPF and leaves on their mobiles. Be it GPF, Bio Data or grievance redressal on "Centralized Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System" (CP-GRAMS) or information on various welfare schemes, now Jawans can get all this information through the app and this app will also connect them with the portal of the Ministry of Home Affairs."

The Union Home Minister also said that a "**BSF Drone/UAV and Cyber Forensic Lab**" has been set up in Noida, Uttar Pradesh through which captured drones of Pakistan have been thoroughly mapped for their linkages and locations across the border. These drones are used to bring narcotics and arms and ammunition to spread terrorism in India.

The **Border Security Force** was raised on 1 December 1965 after the India-Pakistan war of 1965. It is a border force which is deployed along the International border with **Bangladesh** and **Pakistan**.

BSF is also known as the nation's 'first **line of defence**'. It comes under the Union Ministry of Home Affairs.