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1. Indian Navy Chief R Hari Kumar participates in the 25th ISS in the US (Sept. 26, 2023)

Admiral R Hari Kumar, Chief of Naval Staff (CNS) of the Indian Navy participated in the 25th International Sea Power Symposium (ISS) in the United States of America.

An Overview of the News

- The event was organized by the US Navy and was held at the US Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island from September 19 to 22, 2023.
- CNS R Hari Kumar participated in bilateral talks with naval counterparts from several countries including the United States, Australia, Egypt, Fiji, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Peru, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, and the UK.

Operating Partnerships and Exercises

- It emphasized the Indian Navy's commitment to enhance operational partnership with the United States Navy in various exercises including MALABAR, RIMPAC, Sea Dragon and Tiger Triumph.
- Detailed discussions took place regarding human resource management in the context of ISS, with a focus on recruitment, retention and gender equality within the Indian Navy.

Strengthening Defense Relations

- The visit of CNS Admiral R Hari Kumar further strengthened defense ties between India and the United States.
- The visit provided valuable opportunities for high-level naval engagement with diverse partners in the Indo-Pacific region.

Military Exercises

Army Exercises:

- Yudh Abhyas: Held at both brigade and battalion levels, around 250 soldiers from each army participate.
- Vajra Prahar (Army Special Forces): A special forces exercise between American and Indian squads.

Air Force Exercise:

- Cope India: Aerial exercise conducted at various Indian Air Force stations.

Tri-Service Exercises:

- Tiger Triumph (TRIUMPH): A tri-service amphibious exercise involving the Indian Army, Navy, and Air Force as well as the US Navy and Marine Corps.

Multilateral Exercises:

- Malabar Naval Exercise: It involves India, the US, Australia, and Japan. Australia and Japan joined in recent years, with the latest edition being held in Australia in August 2023.
- RIMPAC Naval Exercise: The world's largest naval exercise conducted by the US Navy, with India's participation in the 22nd edition in 2022.

Special Exercises between India and America:

- Exercise Sangam: A joint Naval Special Forces exercise involving India's MARCOS and US Navy SEALs.
- Exercise Tarkash: A joint exercise between elite counter-terrorism forces of the two countries, including India's National Security Guard and US special forces.

2. INS Nireekshak conducts diver training exercise in Trincomalee (Sept. 24, 2023)

Indian Navy's Diver Assistance and Submarine Rescue Ship, 'INS Nireekshak' participated in the 'Diver Training Exercise' conducted from 15 to 21 September 2023 conducted at Trincomalee, Sri Lanka.

An Overview of the News

- Diving teams from both the Indian Navy and Sri Lanka Navy conducted extensive dives in the port and sea.
- Additionally, various interactions and training sessions were conducted between the crew of INS Nireekshak and Sri Lanka Navy personnel on topics of mutual interest.
- Officials from the Junior Command and Staff College, Trincomalee visited INS Nireekshak and learned about its advanced diving capabilities.
- Commander Eastern Naval Area, Rear Admiral PS de Silva visited the ship and appreciated the support of the Indian Navy in training the divers of the Sri Lanka Navy.

Other activities during the Journey:

- In addition to the training activities, a social outreach program was conducted at a school for underprivileged children in Trincomalee.
- On the occasion of International Coastal Cleanup Day on September 16, 2023, a joint beach cleanup campaign was conducted at Dutch Beach.
- A joint yoga session and a friendly basketball match with Sri Lankan Navy personnel were also organized to promote unity and well-being.
- INS Inspector was open to visitors and more than 1,500 people visited the ship during its voyage.

- The visit of the INS Nireekshak to Sri Lanka served to strengthen relations between the
- Indian and Sri Lankan Navies.

INS Nireekshak:

- INS Nireekshak is a dive assistance and submarine rescue ship belonging to the Indian Navy.
- It was built in 1985 by Mazagon Shipbuilders.
- This ship was inducted into the Indian Navy in 1995.
- It is equipped with two deep submergence rescue vehicles (DSRVs), capable of carrying 12 people simultaneously to a depth of 300 meters.
- The primary objective of INS Nireekshak is to facilitate the rescue of distressed submarines and the training of divers.
- It holds the national record for the deepest dive, reaching a depth of 257 meters.
- In February 2023, INS Nireekshak received the Chief of Naval Staff 'On-the-Spot Unit' Commendation for deep sea diving and rescue operations in extremely challenging conditions.

3. Indian Navy and IISc Bangalore sign MoU (Sept. 24, 2023)

The Indian Navy and the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in New Delhi.

An Overview of the News

- The MoU was signed by Rear Admiral K Srinivas representing the Navy Captain Sridhar Warriar (Retd) and Professor B Gurumurthy representing IISc.
- The primary objective of this MoU is to promote technical cooperation and collaborative research and development between the Indian Navy and IISc, especially in the field of engineering related to defense technologies.

Benefits of MOU:

- Academic Collaboration: It will promote academic collaboration in various engineering disciplines.
- Enhanced technological understanding: The agreement aims to enhance scientific understanding of defense-related technologies and promote the development of new technologies.
- Capacity Building: Both sides will engage in effective training, capacity building, and resolving on-field issues.
- Equipment vendor base: The agreement aims to expand the vendor base for equipment used in defense.

- Knowledge Exchange: Faculty and guest lectures will be exchanged to facilitate knowledge sharing.

Innovative Technology:

- Indian Navy in collaboration with IISc has successfully developed an advanced transcritical carbon dioxide (CO₂) based air conditioning (AC) system which works on natural refrigerant.
- This technology is a significant advancement as it eliminates the need for Halon synthetic refrigerants, and has been developed domestically.

Future Technological Development:

- The MoU serves as a formal basis for ongoing cooperation in the development and advancement of technologies such as CO₂-based AC systems for the defense sector.

About the Indian Institute of Science (IISc):

- IISc, located in Bengaluru, was founded in 1909 by Jamsetji Tata and Maharaja Krishnaraja Wadiyar IV.
- It is a premier public institution renowned for its contributions to science and technology since its inception.

4. DAC gave its approval to the indigenous missile Dhruvastra (Sept. 23, 2023)

The Indian Defense Acquisition Council (DAC) gave its approval to the indigenous short-range air-to-surface missile Dhruvastra.

An Overview of the News

- The Dhruvastra missile is designed **to enhance India's combat capabilities against enemy tanks and armored vehicles and will be deployed on DHRUV MK-IV helicopters.**
- DAC's approval of the Dhruvastra missile represents a significant enhancement to India's military capabilities.
- Developed by the Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO) as part of the Integrated Guided Missile Development Program (IGMDP), it is a valuable addition to India's military assets.

Dhruvastra Missile:-

- It is a third-generation, fire-and-forget anti-tank guided missile (ATGM) system known for its versatility and advanced features.
- **Dual Engagement Mode:** Dhruvastra can operate in direct hit and top attack modes, increasing its adaptability to various combat scenarios.

- **Effective Range:** Its range ranges from 500 meters to an impressive 7 kilometers, allowing it to engage targets across a wide spectrum.
- **High altitude launch:** Dhruvastra can be launched from altitudes up to 4 kilometers, providing a strategic advantage in mountainous terrain.
- **Effective Target Tracking:** Equipped with an Imaging Infrared-Seeker (IIS), it can track and guide the missile to its target based on the heat signature of the target, ensuring accuracy even in challenging conditions.
- **Penetrating Warhead:** The Dhruvastra's specialized warhead is designed to penetrate various types of armor, including reactive armor found on modern tanks.

5. Indian Coast Guard conducts coastal security drill 'Operation Sajag' (Sept. 20, 2023)

Coastal security drill 'Operation Sajag' was conducted by the Indian Coast Guard off the west coast.

An Overview of the News

- Operation Sajag aims **to re-validate the coastal security mechanism and raise awareness among fishermen living at sea.**
- During the drill, comprehensive checking and verification of documents and crew passes of all **fishing boats, barges, and crafts** at sea was carried out.
- A total of **118 ships took part in the drill.** These included **customs, maritime police, ports, and Indian Navy ships.**
- As part of security measures, biometric card readers have been provided to security agencies.
- Various measures have been implemented to strengthen coastal security.

These measures include:

- Issuance of biometric cards for fishermen
- Color coding of fishing boats based on each state
- Provision of fish landing centers and access control at entry/exit points.
- Coastal Mapping
- Designating specific sea band frequencies for security agencies
- Training of Marine Police Personnel by Indian Coast Guard

6. Defense Minister Rajnath Singh approved 23 new Sainik Schools in partnership mode (Sept. 16, 2023)

Defense Minister Rajnath Singh approved the creation of an additional 23 new Sainik Schools under this partnership mode.

An Overview of the News

- The Government of India approved the establishment of **100 new Sainik Schools starting from Class 6 in partnership with NGOs, private schools, and state governments.**
- Sainik School Society signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOA) with 19 new proposed Sainik Schools located across the country.
- Further evaluation of the applications has led to the approval of 23 additional new Sainik Schools under the partnership mode, taking the total number of such schools to 42, in addition to the existing 33 Sainik Schools operating under the previous model.

Objective and operational details

- The objectives of this initiative envisioned by Prime Minister Narendra Modi include **providing quality education in line with the National Education Policy and enhancing career opportunities for students, including the option to join the armed forces.**
- It also promotes collaboration between the private sector and the government for nation-building and the development of responsible citizens.
- These new Sainik Schools, with affiliation to the respective education boards, will operate under the guidance of the Sainik School Society and will follow the rules and regulations prescribed for new Sainik Schools operating in partnership mode.
- Apart from the regular curriculum affiliated with the education boards, these schools will offer **an academic plus curriculum following the Sainik School pattern.**

7. Indian government approves defense acquisitions worth Rs 45,000 crore from domestic vendors (Sept. 16, 2023)

The Government of India gave a significant boost to the "Atmanirbhar Bharat" initiative by approving defense acquisitions worth Rs 45 thousand crore from domestic vendors.

An Overview of the News

- The Defense Acquisition Council (DAC), chaired by Defense Minister Rajnath Singh, has granted Approval of Requirement (AoN) for nine capital acquisition proposals.
- These acquisitions will exclusively involve Indian vendors, which will significantly contribute to the growth of the Indian defense industry and align with the objective of achieving self-reliance in defense manufacturing.

Approved acquisitions:

DAC grants AoN for the following purchases:

- Lightly armored multi-role vehicle and integrated surveillance and targeting system.

- High Mobility Vehicle Gun Towing Vehicle for rapid mobilization of artillery guns and radar.
- Next-generation survey ship to enhance hydrographic capabilities of the Indian Navy.
- Dhruvastra short-range air-to-surface missiles for indigenous ALH Mk-IV helicopters.
- 12 Su-30 MKI aircraft with associated equipment from Hindustan Aeronautics Limited.

8. India begins construction of world's highest combat airfield at Nyoma in Ladakh (Sept. 11, 2023)

The Border Roads Organization (BRO) is building the world's highest combat airfield at Nyoma in Ladakh.

An Overview of the News

- Defense Minister Rajnath Singh will lay the foundation stone of this project at Devak Bridge in Jammu on September 12, 2023.
- Nyoma, a major village in southern Ladakh, already hosts an Indian Air Force base and an Advanced Landing Ground (ALG), established in 1962.
- The altitude of Nyoma reaches an impressive 4,180 meters (13,710 ft) above sea level, making it one of the highest altitudes in the region.

Budget Allocation:

- The Central Government has consistently increased its budget allocation for the development of border infrastructure.
- Last year, around ₹12,340 crore was allocated, underscoring the government's commitment to strengthening India's border infrastructure.

Goals of India's infrastructure development:

- Lieutenant General Rajiv Chaudhary, who heads the BRO, is optimistic about India's rapid progress in developing border infrastructure.
- India aims to surpass China in this regard on the 3,488 km long Line of Actual Control (LAC) within the next two to three years.

About Ladakh

- Union Territory - **31 October 2019**
- Capitals - **Leh, Kargil**
- Lieutenant Governor - **B. D. Mishra**
- Member of Parliament - **Jamyang Tsering Namgyal**

9. India Drone Shakti 2023 (Sept. 10, 2023)

The Indian Air Force (IAF) is co-hosting 'Bharat Drone Shakti 2023' with the Drone Federation of India at IAF's Hindon Airbase in Ghaziabad on September 25 and 26, 2023.

An Overview of the News

- The event serves as a platform to showcase the significant **impact of drone technology in both civil and defense applications, revolutionizing efficiency, reducing risks, and enhancing capabilities.**
- India is experiencing a rise in the adoption of drones across various sectors, including military and civilian applications, highlighting the country's growing interest in unmanned aerial platforms.

About Bharat Drone Shakti 2023:

- The event will include live aerial demonstrations organized by the Indian drone industry.
- These aerial demonstrations will showcase a diverse range of drone applications, including survey drones, agricultural drones, firefighting drones, tactical surveillance drones, heavy-duty logistics drones, rotating munition systems, drone swarms, and anti-drone solutions.
- More than 75 drone startups and corporate entities participated in the event.
- The primary goal of the event is **to highlight and showcase the capabilities of Indian-made drones.**
- Additionally, the event serves as a platform for **networking, knowledge exchange, and collaboration among industry leaders, innovators, and drone enthusiasts.**

10. Indian and French navies conclude Phase II of Varuna-23 (Sept. 9, 2023)

The second phase of the 21st edition of the India-France bilateral naval exercise 'Varuna' concluded successfully in the Arabian Sea.

An Overview of the News

- Exercise 'Varuna' involved the participation of guided missile frigates, tankers, maritime patrol aircraft, and integral helicopters from both the Indian and French navies.
- This phase of the exercise lasted for three days and included joint operations, underway replenishment, and various tactical maneuvers.
- The primary objectives were **to enhance and refine war-fighting skills, improve interoperability, and demonstrate the ability to promote peace, security, and stability in the region.**

Previous Phase:

- The **first phase of 'Varuna-2023'** took place off the western coast of India from **January 16 to January 20, 2023.**

Initiation of Varuna Exercise:

- Bilateral naval exercises between **India and France began in 1993.**
- It was officially named '**Varuna**' in **2001.**

Purpose of Varuna Exercise:

- The exercise serves as a symbol of the strong strategic ties between India and France.
- It provides an opportunity for both the **navies to learn and adopt each other's best practices and procedures.**