

Monthly Defence Current Affairs

March 2024

DRDO Successfully Flight Tests VSHORADS

- DRDO conducted two successful flight tests of Very Short-Range Air Defence System (VSHORADS) missile on 28th & 29th Feb 2024 from a ground based portable launcher off the coast of Odisha from Integrated Test Range, Chandipur.
- These tests were carried out against high speed unmanned aerial targets under different interception scenarios. During all the test flights, the targets were intercepted and destroyed by the missiles, meeting the mission objectives.
- VSHORADS is a Man Portable Air Defence System designed and developed indigenously by Research Centre Imarat in collaboration with other DRDO laboratories and Indian Industry Partners. VSHORADAS missile incorporates many novel technologies including miniaturized Reaction Control System and integrated avionics which have been successfully proven during the tests.



Launch Of Ammunition Cum Torpedo Cum Missile Barge

- The launch of 'Ammunition Cum Torpedo Cum Missile Barge, LSAM 18', 4th Barge of 11 x ACTCM Barge Project, built by MSME Shipyard, **M/s Suryadipta Projects Pvt Ltd**, Thane for Indian Navy, was undertaken on 28 Feb 24.
- The contract for building 11 X ACTCM Barge was signed between MoD and M/s Suryadipta Projects Pvt Ltd, Thane on 05 Mar 21. The availability of these Barges

would provide impetus to operational commitments of IN by facilitating Transportation, Embarkation and Disembarkation of articles/ ammunition to IN Ships both alongside jetties and at outer harbours.



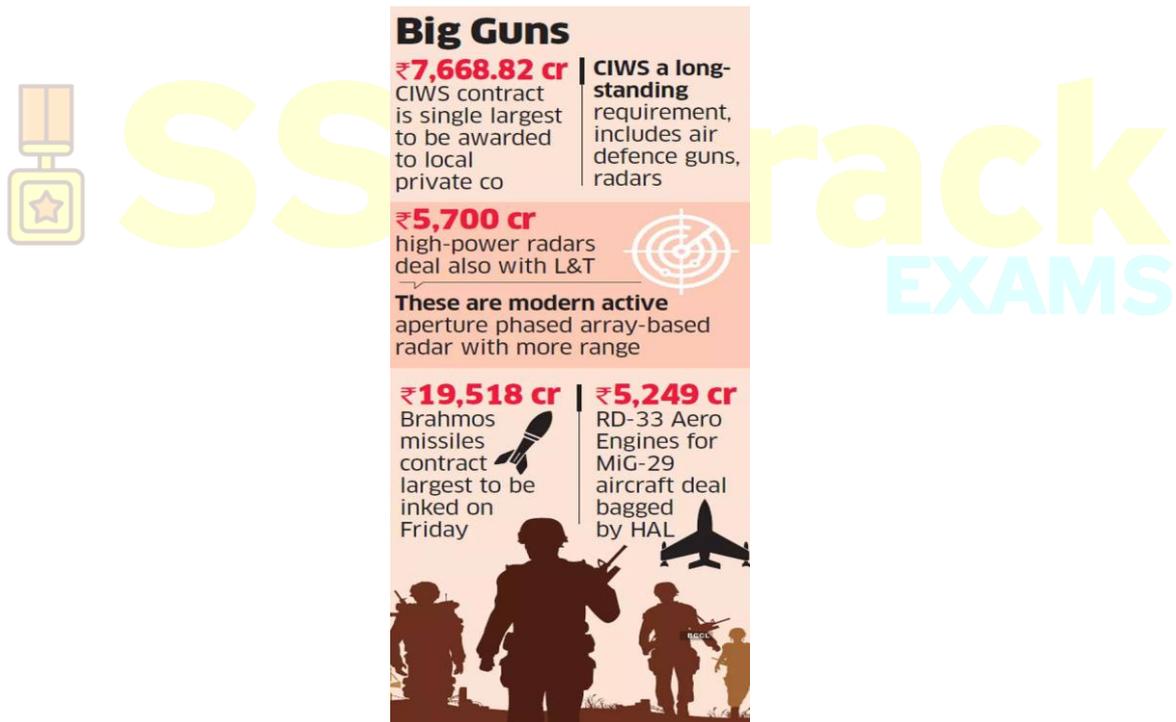
Indian Army Conducts Anti Tank Guided Missile Field Firing Test

- The annual Eastern Command Anti Tank Guided Missile (ATGM) field firing was conducted at Teesta Field Firing Range in West Bengal from February 20 to February 28, a defence official said.
- According to the defence release, more than 1500 personnel from various units of the Infantry and Mechanised Infantry Battalion participated in the command-level training exercise.
- The firing was conducted under the aegis of the **Trishakti Corps** and more than 260 missiles were fired to achieve the target of One Missile and Tank.



Defence Ministry inks Rs 39,000 crore Deals

- The defence ministry signed acquisition contracts worth Rs 39,125 crore on Friday, including the largest military deal for an Indian private sector company, that went to engineering major Larsen and Toubro (L&T).
- The contracts included acquisition of upgraded fighter jet engines, supersonic cruise missiles, close-in weapon systems and high-power radars.
- Cleared by the Cabinet committee on security (CCS) last week, five contracts were inked, with deliveries to start in the next two to three years.
- The announced procurement of close-in weapon systems (CIWS) for the air force is the single largest procurement contract awarded to an Indian private sector entity (L&T) till date, at Rs 7,668.82 crore. The diversified conglomerate is also in contention to supply similar systems to the army.



India-Malaysia Bilateral Naval Exercise

- A joint naval exercise between the navies of India and Malaysia is currently underway off Visakhapatnam, aiming to strengthen bonds and enhance interoperability between the two forces. **Exercise 'Samudra Laksamana'** between the Indian Navy and Royal Malaysian Navy began on February 28 and will go on till March 2.

- Indian Naval Ship Kiltan and Royal Malaysian Naval Ship KD Lekir are participating in the third edition of this exercise which has harbour professional interactions followed by the operational phase at sea.
- The harbour phase involves professional interactions, subject matter expert exchange on topics of mutual interest, sports fixtures, and other interactions.



Defence Ministry Signs Deal With Indian Firm To Upgrade Su-30

- The Ministry of Defence has signed a contract with an Indian firm to upgrade the simulators of the Su-30 MKI fighter aircraft of the Indian Air Force.
- The Su-30 MKI fighter jets are the backbone of the Indian Air Force's fighter fleet and over 270 of them have been inducted into the force. The simulators will help in further improving the training of pilots.
- Earlier, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) signed five major capital acquisition contracts worth Rs 39,125.39 crore on Friday in Delhi.
- The contracts were exchanged in the presence of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Defence Secretary Giridhar Aramane.
- The contract for **RD-33 Aero Engines for MiG-29 aircraft** has been signed with HAL at a cost of **Rs 5,249.72 crore**. These aeroengines will be produced by the Koraput Division of HAL.

- The contract for procurement of CIWS has been signed with Larsen and Toubro Limited at a cost of **Rs 7,668.82 crore**.



Indianising the Navy: Kurta- Pyjama Debuts At Naval Officers' Mess

- The Indian Navy has now introduced the kurta- pyjama attire into the naval messes. The recently permitted naval ethnic attire made its debut at a Naval Officers' Mess in New Delhi.
- The Navy chief highlighted Indian Navy's achievements - narcotics interception North Arabian Sea, MILAN in the East, Maritime Security Ops in the West and infrastructure development in the South, the statement added.



Meet Suman Kumari, BSF's 'First Woman Sniper'

- A **sub-inspector named Suman Kumari** has become the first woman sniper of the Border Security Force. She recently completed eight-week sniper course at **Central School of Weapons and Tactics(CSWT)** in Indore and achieved '**instructor grade**'.

- Suman volunteered for the sniper course after witnessing the threat of sniper attacks from across the border while commanding a platoon in Punjab. Her superiors approved Suman's participation in the course after seeing her determination.

MoD Inks MoU With BEML Limited, BEL & MIDHANI

- Ministry of Defence has signed a tripartite MoU with BEML Limited, Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) and Mishra Dhatu Nigam Limited (MIDHANI) for indigenous development of Advanced Fuelling and Control System for Engines for heavy duty applications.
- The MoU was inked with Chairman & Managing Director, BEML Limited Shri Shantanu Roy; CMD, MIDHANI Dr SK Jha; and CMD, BEL Shri Bhanu Prakash Srivastava, in the presence of Defence Secretary Shri Giridhar Aramane in New Delhi on March 04, 2024.
- This collaborative initiative will focus on leveraging indigenous capabilities to design, test, and manufacture an Advanced Fuelling and Control System that offers enhanced efficiency, performance, and reliability.



Curtain Raiser Naval Commanders' Conference 24/1

- The first edition of the Naval Commanders' Conference of 2024 is scheduled to commence from 05 Mar 24. The Conference, this time around, will be held in a Hybrid format where in the first phase will be held at sea.
- The inaugural session of the Conference will have Raksha Mantri embarking at sea to witness both aircraft carriers demonstrating Indian Navy's ability to conduct 'twin carrier operations'.

- During the three-day event, the Raksha Mantri, Shri Rajnath Singh, will address the Naval Commanders. The CDS, along with the Chiefs of the Indian Army and Indian Air Force, will also engage with the Naval Commanders during the conference to discuss the convergence of the three Services in light of the common national security environment.



Delivery Of Ammunition Cum Torpedo Cum Missile Barge

- The delivery of 'Ammunition Cum Torpedo Cum Missile Barge, LSAM 19', 5th Barge of 11 x ACTCM Barge Project, built by MSME Shipyard, **M/s Suryadipta Projects Pvt Ltd**, Thane for Indian Navy, was undertaken on 04 Mar 24 at Naval Dockyard, Mumbai for NAD(Karanja).
- The contract for building 11 X ACTCM Barge was signed between MoD and M/s Suryadipta Projects Pvt Ltd, Thane on 05 Mar 21. Induction of these Barges would provide impetus to operational commitments of IN by facilitating Transportation, Embarkation and Disembarkation of articles/ ammunition to IN Ships both alongside jetties and at outer harbours.



Saab to establish Carl-Gustaf Weapon System plant at Reliance MET city

- A milestone was achieved by MET City, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Reliance Industries Limited, as it becomes home to Saab's first manufacturing facility of the famous Carl-Gustaf Weapon System in India.
- Saab is a Swedish defence major and has a wide array of defence products and their relationship with India is not new.
- As per a release, it is a significant development for India to become Aatmanirbhar in defence manufacturing as this will be India's first 100 percent FDI in defence.
- MET City (METL) is a 100 per cent subsidiary of Reliance Industries Limited, which is developing a world-class Greenfield Smart city on over 8,000 acres land in the district of Jhajjar near Gurugram in the state of Haryana. More than 480 companies including some of the best national and international corporates have set up their bases in MET City.



Hungary President Signs Sweden's NATO Membership Ratification

- Hungary's President Tamas Sulyok has signed the bill that approved Sweden's accession to the NATO military alliance, the president's office said on Tuesday, clearing the way for Sweden to become the 32nd member of the alliance in the coming days.

- Stockholm abandoned its non-alignment policy for greater safety within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022.
- The remaining formalities, such as depositing accession documentation in Washington, are likely to be concluded swiftly.
- The North Atlantic Treaty Organization, also called the North Atlantic Alliance, is an intergovernmental military alliance of 31 member states – 29 European and two North American.



China, Maldives Sign New Defence Agreements

- China Monday signed an agreement to provide free military assistance with Maldives. This agreement comes a week after an Indian civilian team arrived in the country to replace military personnel manning one of the three aviation platforms gifted by New Delhi to Malé.
- The specific manner of military assistance agreed to by both China and Maldives remains unclear, however this is a further sign of the pivot from India by the pro-China Maldivian president Mohamed Muizzu.



Indian Army's New HR Policy Promoting Specialisation

- With a focus on specialisation, the Indian Army implemented a new Human Resource (HR) policy on 1 January 2024 that allows ranks higher than Lieutenant Colonels to continue working in the field.
- Earlier, only about 30 to 40 per cent of Lt Colonels would become Colonels as the requirement for them was to assume command positions by leaving their specialisation domains.
- However, now the Indian Army wants to retain specialist officers in fields like Artificial Intelligence (AI), space, Information Technology (IT), nanotechnology, robotics and weapons design, etc.
- Lt Colonel Prasad Bansod has become the first beneficiary of this new HR policy and has now been promoted to the rank of Colonel while being on deputation with the DRDO's small arms laboratory.



Indian Navy Commissions Newly-inducted MH 60R

- The Indian Navy on Wednesday commissioned the first squadron of its newly-inducted MH 60R Seahawk multi-role choppers that is expected to significantly bolster the force's surveillance and combat capabilities in the strategic waters.
- The INAS 334 'Seahawks' naval air squadron was commissioned at a ceremony at INS Garuda in Kochi in the presence of Navy Chief Admiral R Hari Kumar.
- MH-60R helicopter, produced by US defence giant Lockheed Martin Corporation, is an all-weather helicopter designed to support multiple missions with state-of-the-art avionics and sensors. The chopper is a maritime variant of the **Blackhawk helicopter**.



India, Japan Hold Joint Military Exercise

- A joint military exercise between India and Japan was completed on Friday at the Mahajan Field Firing Range in Rajasthan, a defence spokesperson said. The fifth joint military exercise named 'Dharma Guardian' between the Indian Army and Japan Ground Self Defense Force was successfully conducted at Mahajan Field Firing Range on Friday.
- India's Rajputana Rifles battalion and a group of 40 soldiers from Japan participated in the exercise, defence spokesperson Colonel Amitabh Sharma said in a statement.

- The primary objective of the exercise was to promote military cooperation and enhance capabilities to carry out joint operations in semi-urban environments under the mandate of the United Nations.



ANC Carries Out Maiden All-women Maritime Surveillance Mission

- A maiden all-women maritime surveillance mission was undertaken by the Andaman & Nicobar Command on the 40th anniversary of INAS 318 and **International Women's Day on March 08, 2024.**
- The crew based at INS Utkrosh comprised Lt Cdr Shubhangi Swaroop, Lt Cdr Divya Sharma and Lt Vaishali Mishra. The occasion highlighted the crucial role played by women combatants in all the walks of the Naval Air Arm, which included pre-flight briefing, meteorological briefing, medical check-up and Air Traffic Control briefing, all of which were conducted by women officers.
- **INAS 318** is the elite **Naval Air squadron** in the Andaman & Nicobar Command, continuously engaged in surveillance role since its commissioning on March 08, 1984. The squadron commenced its journey with the induction of Islander aircraft which were replaced by Dornier aircraft in 1999.



Joint Exercise “Sea Defenders-2024

- Marking a significant step in bolstering bilateral cooperation b/w the ICG and the United States Coast Guard, the USCG Ship Bertholf reached Port Blair on 07 Mar 2024, for joint exercise with ICG. Codenamed “Sea Defenders-2024”, the joint exercise was held on 09-10 Mar 2024 off the coast of Port Blair.
- The exercise simulated scenarios relevant to maritime piracy and asymmetric threats, including simulated drone attacks on commercial merchant traffic, joint maritime search and rescue operations, major firefighting, marine pollution response, and counter-drug interdiction exercises.



Cutlass Express 24

- INS Tir, the lead ship of First Training Squadron (1TS) participated in Exercise Cutlass Express - 24 (CE – 24) held at Port Victoria, Seychelles from 26 Feb – 08 Mar 24. The exercise was inaugurated by the President of Seychelles in attendance of dignitaries from India, USA and African countries.
- As part of Cutlass Express, the Indian Navy actively engaged with participants from 16 friendly foreign countries. Training was conducted on theoretical and practical aspects of Maritime Interdiction Operations, Visit Board Search and Seizure procedures and Diving operations.
- The exercise culminated at a closing ceremony held at Seychelles Defence Academy, Ile Perseverance on 08 Mar 24. The Indian Navy has been participating in the exercise since 2019.



Prime Minister Virtually Dedicates To The Nation Sela Tunnel

- Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi virtually dedicated to the nation the Sela Tunnel project during the Viksit Bharat Viksit Northeast programme in Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh on March 09, 2024.
- The tunnel has been constructed by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) at an altitude of 13,000 feet on the road connecting Tezpur, Assam to Tawang in the West Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh.
- Built at a total cost of Rs 825 crore, the tunnel will provide all-weather connectivity to Tawang across Sela Pass on the Balipara - Chariduar - Tawang

Road, boosting the preparedness of the Armed Forces and augmenting the socio-economic development of the border region.

- The Sela Tunnel has been constructed using the new Austrian Tunnelling Method and incorporates safety features of the highest standards. The project will not only provide a faster and more efficient transport route in the region but is of strategic importance to the country.



Fifth Generation Fighter Jet To Take To Skies By 2028

- India's most advanced and lethal aircraft that is taking shape in Bengaluru got a big boost earlier this week after the Cabinet Committee on Security headed by PM Narendra Modi, approved a ₹15,000-crore fifth-generation **Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft** project. If everything works out as planned, the first aircraft will take to the skies by the end of 2028.
- The Bangalore-based Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) has completed the design phase of AMCA and is ready to get into the development phase. AMCA is considered to be the next mega aircraft project after Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) TEJAS, which is a four/four-plus generation aircraft.
- All five prototypes that will be built by ADA will undergo flight testing and they will be ready for commencement of production by the end of 10 years, he said. They expect some orders by then and start production and inducting the aircraft. Currently, the aircraft development will go with the GE 414 engines.



DRDO Successfully Conducts Mission Divyastra

- DRDO conducted first successful flight test of indigenously developed Agni-5 missile with **Multiple Independently Targetable Re-Entry Vehicle (MIRV)** technology. The flight test **named Mission Divyastra** was carried out from **Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Island** in Odisha.
- Various Telemetry and radar stations tracked and monitored multiple re-entry vehicles. The Mission accomplished the designed parameters.
- India's nuclear doctrine, promulgated in 2003, commits to a "no first use" posture, with weapons to be used only in retaliation against a nuclear attack on Indian territory or Indian forces. In a stand that reflects the capabilities India has built over the years, the doctrine states nuclear retaliation to a first strike will be massive and designed to inflict unacceptable damage.
- There was no official word on how many warheads the MIRV version of Agni-5 can carry, though military scientists tracking the project pegged the number at four to five. People familiar with the matter said the warheads can be propelled independently with their targets 200-500 km apart.



Launch Of 25t Bollard Pull Tug, Baljeet

- 25T Bollard Pull (BP) Tug, **Baljeet** was launched by Cmde Rajat Nagar, WPS (Mbi) on 10 Mar 24 at **M/s Shoft Shipyard Pvt Ltd**, Bharuch, Gujarat. This Tug is a proud flag bearer of “Make in India” initiative of Govt of India.
- The availability of Tugs will provide impetus to Operational commitments of IN by facilitating assistance to Naval ships and submarines during berthing and unberthing, turning and manoeuvring in confined waters.



India Remains World’s Largest Arms Importer: SIPRI

- India remains the world's top arms importer and its imports increased by 4.7 per cent between 2014-2018 and 2019-2023, Swedish think tank SIPRI said in a new

report on Monday. Russia continued as India's main arms supplier, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) said.

- Adding around 55 percent of arms imports by European states in 2019-23 were supplied by the US, up from 35 percent in 2014-18.
- "India was the world's top arms importer. Its arms imports increased by 4.7 per cent between 2014-18 and 2019-23," the think-tank said in a statement.
- "Although Russia remained India's main arms supplier (accounting for 36 per cent of its arms imports), this was the first five-year period since 1960-64 when deliveries from Russia (or the Soviet Union before 1991) made up less than half of India's arms imports," it said.
- According to the report, Pakistan significantly increased its arms imports (43 percent). Pakistan was the fifth largest arms importer in 2019-23 and China became even more dominant as its main supplier, providing 82 per cent of its arms imports, it said.
- Arms imports by two of China's East Asian neighbours increased, Japan's by 155 per cent and South Korea's by 6.5 percent, it said.
- China's own arms imports shrank by 44 percent, mainly as a result of substituting imported arms -- most of which came from Russia, with locally produced systems.

The logo for SIPRI (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) features the word "sipri" in a white, lowercase, serif font, centered on a solid red rectangular background. A thin white horizontal line is positioned below the letters.

Exercise 'Bharat Shakti'

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi witnessed 'Bharat Shakti', a synergised demonstration of indigenous defence capabilities in the form of a tri-services live fire and manoeuvre exercise, in Rajasthan's Pokhran on March 12. Modi also visited Gujarat on Tuesday to launch multiple development projects.

- He also flagged off 10 new Vande Bharat trains between Ahmedabad-Mumbai Central, Secunderabad-Visakhapatnam, Mysuru-Dr MGR Central (Chennai), Patna- Lucknow, New Jalpaiguri-Patna, Puri-Visakhapatnam, Lucknow-Dehradun, Kalaburagi- Sir M Visvesvaraya Terminal Bengaluru, Ranchi-Varanasi, and Khajuraho-Delhi (Nizamuddin).
- The 'Bharat Shakti' had on display an array of indigenous weapon systems and platforms as a demonstration of the prowess of the country, premised on the nation's self-reliance initiative, the statement said.



IAF's Tejas Crashes Near Jaisalmer

- A light combat aircraft Tejas crashed near Jaisalmer in Rajasthan on Tuesday during an operational training sortie, the first such incident involving the indigenously-built jet. However, the pilot was ejected safely and no casualties were reported.
- The LCA Tejas was part of the **18th Squadron** of the Indian Air Force and participated in the tri-services **exercise Bharat Shakti** in Pokharan before crashing in Jaisalmer city.
- Prima Facie, it is emerging that the **engine failure** caused the crash but more details would be known only after the detailed inquiry is completed, defence officials told ANI.
- The HAL Tejas is an Indian single engine, delta wing, light multirole fighter designed by the Aeronautical Development Agency in collaboration with Aircraft

Research and Design Centre of Hindustan Aeronautics Limited for the Indian Air Force and Indian Navy.



Iran, Russia And China Show Off Their Ships In A Joint Naval Drill

- United Arab Emirates - China, Iran and Russia have begun a joint naval drill in the Gulf of Oman, a crucial waterway near the mouth of the Persian Gulf, officials said.
- Footage aired by Chinese state television and a video released by the Russian navy showed the ongoing drill, known as "Marine Security Belt 2024."
- China sent the guided-missile destroyer Urumqi and the guided-missile frigate Linyi to the exercise. Russia's forces are being led by the Varyag, a Slava-class cruiser.
- More than 20 ships, support vessels and combat boats from the three countries, as well as naval helicopters, are involved in the exercise.
- A report by Iranian state television quoted the drill's spokesperson, Adm. Mostafa Tajaddini, as saying the drill will take place in 17,000 square kilometers (6,600 square miles) of water.



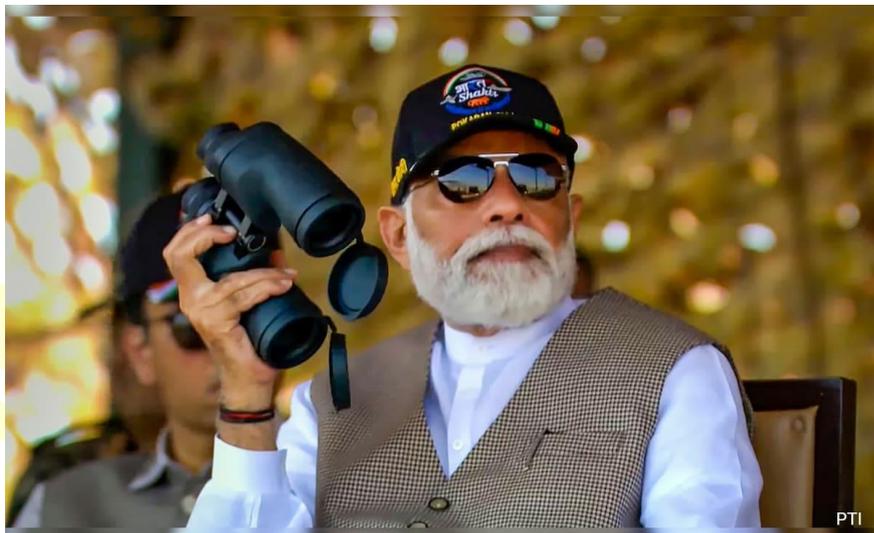
Launch And Keel Laying Of 25t Bollard Pull Tug Bahubali And Yuvan At

- Second 25T Bollard Pull Tug, Bahubali was launched and Keel for the 4th 25T BP Tug, Yuvan was laid by Cmde Atul Maini, President SSB (Kolkata) on 12 Mar 24 at M/s Titagarh Rail Systems Limited, Kolkata. This Tug is a proud flag bearer of “Make in India” initiative of Govt of India.
- Contract for construction and delivery of six 25T BP Tugs was concluded with M/s **Titagarh Rail Systems Limited** (M/s TRSL), in consonance with “Aatmanirbhar Bharat” initiative of the Government of India.



'Atmanirbhar' India in defence sector is guarantee of 'Atmavishwas' : PM Modi

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi who witnessed the tri-service exercise 'Bharat Shakti' in Rajasthan's Pokhran on Tuesday said that self-reliant India in defence sector is guarantee of 'atmavishwas' (self-confidence) in the forces.
- The Prime Minister, while speaking at the Exercise Bharat Shakti in Pokhran, said that the first successful flight test of an indigenously developed Agni-5 missile with MIRV technology, which took place on Monday, is a huge step towards Aatmanirbhar Bharat in the defence sector.
- As per the government, the exercise 'Bharat Shakti' displays an array of indigenous weapon systems and platforms as a demonstration of the prowess of the country, premised on the nation's Aatmanirbharata initiative.



Launch of Agray And Akshay

- 'Agray' and 'Akshay', the 5th and 6th ships of 08 x ASW Shallow Water Craft (SWC) Project being built by M/S GRSE for Indian Navy, were launched on 13 Mar 24 at M/S GRSE, Kolkata.
- The ships have been rechristened as Agray and Akshay, named after erstwhile Abhay Class Corvettes Agray and Akshay of Indian Navy.
- The contract for building eight ASW SWC ships was signed between MOD and Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata on 29 Apr 19. Arnala class of ships will replace the in-service Abhay class ASW Corvettes of Indian Navy and are designed to undertake anti-submarine operations in coastal waters, Low Intensity Maritime Operations (LIMO) and Mine Laying Operations.



MoD inks contract with AVNL for 693 Armament Upgrades

- The Ministry of Defence, on March 13, 2024, signed a contract with Armoured Vehicles Nigam Limited (AVNL) for the procurement of 693 Armament Upgrades of Infantry Combat Vehicle BMP2 to BMP2M.
- This upgrade includes Night Enablement, Gunner Main Sight, Commander Panoramic Sight and Fire Control System with Automatic Target Tracker under Buy {Indian-Indigenously Designed Developed and Manufactured} Category.
- The AVNL has developed an indigenised solution for providing existing BMP 2/2K with Night Fighting Capabilities and FCS based on the integration of DRDO and Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL), Chennai-developed sight and FCS.



MoD Signs Contracts Worth Rs 8073 Cr with HAL

- Consequent upon approval of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS), the Ministry of Defence signed two contracts for a combined value of Rs 8073.17

crore with HAL, Bengaluru on 13 March 2024 for acquisition of 34 Advanced Light Helicopters (ALH) Dhruv Mk III along with Operational Role Equipment for Indian Army (25 ALHs) and ICG (09 ALHs) under Buy (Indian-IDDMM - Indigenously Designed, Developed & Manufactured).

- The ALH Dhruv Mk III UT (Utility), the Indian Army version, is designed for Search & Rescue, Troop Transportation, Internal Cargo, Recce/ Casualty Evacuation etc. It has proved its performance in high altitude regions like Siachen Glacier and Ladakh.
- The ALH Mk III MR (Maritime Role), the ICG version, is designed for Maritime Surveillance and Interdiction, Search and Rescue, Rappelling Operations and also for Cargo & Personnel Transportation, Pollution Response using external cargo carrying capability and Medical Casualty Evacuation. It has proved its mettle even in adverse atmospheric conditions over sea and land.



Rajnath Singh Clears Proposal To Expand NCC

- Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh has approved a proposal for expansion of the National Cadet Corps (NCC) with the addition of three lakh cadet vacancies. This expansion is expected to cater to the increasing demand for the NCC from educational institutions throughout the country.
- From just 20,000 cadets in 1948, the NCC will now have a sanctioned strength of 20 lakh cadets on its rolls making it the largest uniformed youth organisation of the world. With NCC being offered as an elective subject as per the NEP 2020, the expansion will be a step towards meeting the aspirations of the youth towards playing a pivotal role as future leaders of the nation.
- The NCC aims to make a transformative impact, fostering an environment where youth meaningfully contribute towards nation building. The initiative will

expand the base of motivated, disciplined and patriotic youth of the 'Amrit Peedhi' who will contribute towards achieving the goal of 'Viksit Bharat'.



Indian Army Raises Apache Squadron At Jodhpur

- In preparation for the delivery of six Apache attack helicopters from the US starting in May, the Indian Army has established a squadron for these heavy-duty choppers at Jodhpur along the western front with Pakistan.
- The squadron was raised in the presence of Army Aviation's director general Lt-General Ajay Suri and other officials. According to an officer, the delivery, initially scheduled to begin in February, has been slightly delayed, with the first three Apaches now expected in May.
- The Indian Air Force (IAF) has already inducted **22 Boeing-manufactured Apache helicopters** under a **Rs 13,952 crore** deal signed with the US in September 2015. The Army, under a separate **Rs 5,691 crore** deal inked in February 2020, will receive six choppers.



Rajnath Singh Inaugurates the ‘Nausena Bhawan’

- Nausena Bhawan, the newly-constructed Headquarters of the Indian Navy, located at Delhi Cantt. was officially inaugurated by Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh on March 15, 2024. The inauguration marks a significant milestone for the Indian Navy as it establishes its first independent headquarters in Delhi.
- Previously, the Navy operated from 13 different locations, necessitating a consolidated and purpose-built facility such as Nausena Bhawan. The architectural design of Nausena Bhawan was selected through a rigorous all-India Competition process, ensuring the building's functionality and aesthetic appeal.
- Nausena Bhawan is equipped with extensive IT infrastructure supported by UPS systems, promoting a paperless work environment and meeting the stringent network requirements of the Navy.



MoD Signs Contract Worth Over Rs. 2,890 Cr With HAL

- The Ministry of Defence signed a contract with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) on March 15, 2024, for Mid Life Upgrade (MLU) of 25 Dornier Aircraft along with associated equipment for the Indian Navy at a cost of Rs.2,890 cr.
- The MLU for Dornier Aircraft includes an upgrade to incorporate state-of-the art Avionics Systems and Primary Role sensors. The upgrade would significantly enhance the operational capability of the Dornier aircraft of the Indian Navy to perform Primary Roles of Maritime Surveillance, Coastal Surveillance, Electronic Intelligence and development of Maritime Domain Awareness.

- MLU of 25 Dornier Aircraft is likely to generate an employment of 1.8 Lakh Man-days during its execution span of 6.5 years. The indigenous upgrade entails supply of major systems and equipments from indigenous sources thus significantly contributing towards "Atmanirbharta" in Defence.



Exercise Gaganshakti 2024

- A comprehensive operational discussion was conducted as a run-up to 'Exercise Gaganshakti 2024', featuring deliberations on all domain warfare, including Cyber, Space, Cognitive, and Information Warfare, the Indian Air Force (IAF) informed through a statement on Friday.
- During the discussion, the focus was on joint operations and synchronisation of efforts for swift and optimised application of war-fighting assets, the statement added.
- The exercise provided IAF with an excellent opportunity to practice its wartime drills and undertake operations in realistic scenarios, the release stated, adding that activities were undertaken cohesively to achieve the stated objectives of the Indian Air Force, in the event of any contingency.



Guyana Signs LoC With India To Purchase Aircraft

- The Indian defence industry is making forays in the Caribbean with the Guyana Defence Force (GDF) planning to soon acquire two new aircraft from New Delhi with a \$23.27 million loan from Export-Import Bank of India.
- An agreement in this regard was signed last Friday between Guyanese Finance Minister and Deputy GM of EXIM Bank. Guyana, which has a substantial Indian diaspora, plans to purchase two HAL (Dornier) 228 planes from Hindustan Aeronautics Limited.
- This agreement represents the latest instalment of the Government's ongoing effort to ramp up the capabilities of the GDF, and has its genesis in President Ali's visit to India's state-owned aerospace and defence company – Hindustan Aeronautics Limited, in January 2023.
- Dr Singh, while delivering remarks, placed on record the government's strong appreciation of India's unwavering support to Guyana, and alluded to the two countries' long-standing relationship grounded in history, people, and culture, and in more recent times, economic and commercial cooperation. In welcoming Lamba to Guyana, Dr Singh also recognised the EXIM Bank's instrumental role in facilitating the presence of Indian companies in Guyana, thereby allowing for the expansion of productive capacity in various sectors of the country.



IAF's 'Bambi Bucket Operation' Douse Forest Fires in Nilgiris

- The Indian Air Force (IAF) deployed an AF Mi-17 V5 helicopter on Sunday to undertake multiple Bambi Bucket operations to douse forest fires in the Nilgiris.
- Collaborating with the forest department and state administration, the IAF helicopter discharged over 16,000 litres of water to control the spread of the fire.
- Air Force station Sulur, located near Coimbatore, was assigned the task, after which the Mi-17 V5 helicopter equipped with a Bambi Bucket was dispatched from there.
- The Bambi Bucket, a specialised apparatus utilised by the Mi-17 V5 helicopter, facilitates the transport of a large volume of water underneath the aircraft, enabling effective dispersal over the affected areas.



Exercise Lamitiye – 2024

- Indian Army contingent departed for Seychelles to participate in the Tenth edition of Joint Military Exercise “LAMITIYE-2024” between the Indian Army and Seychelles Defence Forces (SDF).
- The Joint Exercise conducted at Seychelles from 18-27 March 2024. ‘LAMITIYE’ meaning ‘Friendship’ in the Creole language is a biennial training event and has been conducted in Seychelles since 2001. 45 personnel each from the GORKHA RIFLES of the Indian Army and Seychelles Defence Forces (SDF) will participate in the exercise.
- The aim of the Exercise is to enhance interoperability in Sub-conventional Operations in Semi-Urban environment under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter on Peace Keeping Operations. The Exercise will enhance cooperation and interoperability between both the sides during Peace Keeping Operations.



Ex Tiger Triumph – 24

- In consonance with the established partnership between India and the US, a bilateral tri-Service Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) Exercise between both countries, Tiger Triumph – 24, is scheduled on the Eastern Seaboard from 18 to 31 Mar 24.
- Indian Navy Ships with integral helicopters and landing crafts embarked, Indian Navy aircraft, Indian Army personnel and vehicles and Indian Air Force aircraft and helicopters along with the Rapid Action Medical Team (RAMT) would be participating in the exercise.
- The Harbour Phase is scheduled from 18 to 25 Mar 24. Personnel from both navies would participate in Training Visits, Subject Matter Expert Exchanges, Sports Events and Social interactions.



Activation of Emergency Landing Facility On NH 16

- On 18 March 2024, IAF fighter and transport aircraft carried out operations on an Emergency Landing Facility airstrip on National Highway 16 near Addanki in Bapatla district. Su-30 and Hawk fighters successfully carried out overshoots during the activation, while An-32 and Dornier transport aircraft landed and subsequently took off from the strip.
- The activation showcased the high level of synergy and liaison between civil agencies such as National Highways Authority of India (NHAI), district administration, state police and the IAF towards conduct of complex multifaceted activities.

- Previously, such an activation was conducted on 29 December 2022. The 4.1 km long and 33 m wide concrete airstrip has been constructed by the NHA as per specifications provided by the IAF. While other airstrips are already operational in various parts of the country, this ELF in Andhra Pradesh has been recently operationalised in peninsular India.
- ELF highway airstrips enhance flexibility of air operations during contingencies and are invaluable assets during Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief operations in far flung areas. IAF, with Ministry of Road Transport and Highways are working jointly for creation of ELFs at suitable locations.



Raksha Mantri Trophy for Armed Forces Medical Services

- Raksha Mantri Trophy for the Best and 2nd Best Command Hospitals of the Armed Forces Medical Services (AFMS) for the year 2022 was presented by Director General Armed Forces Medical Services and Senior Colonel Comdt, Army Medical Corps Lt Gen Daljit Singh on 19 Mar 2024 in New Delhi.
- The Command Hospital (Southern Command), Pune and the Command Hospital (Central Command), Lucknow were judged as the Best and Second Best Command Hospital for the year 2022 respectively.
- The DGAFMS, while complimenting the two hospitals on their outstanding performance, acknowledged the commendable services being rendered by the AFMS, ranging from combat medical support to troops deployed in operational roles to state-of-the-art healthcare services at mid-zonal, zonal and tertiary care hospitals of the AFMS.

- The Raksha Mantri Trophy was instituted in 1989 to recognize excellence in healthcare services provided by Armed Forces Hospitals of the AFMS and to foster a spirit of healthy competition among them.



Indian Army's Elite Tech Unit Headed By Colonel-rank Officer

- Signals Technology Evaluation and Adaptation Group (STEAG), an elite unit of the Indian Army recently raised in Delhi, is headed by a Colonel-rank officer from the Corps of Signals, with a primary aim to enhance the communication infrastructure of the force, officials on Tuesday said.
- This unit, with a strength of nearly 280 personnel, will undertake research and evaluation of futuristic communication technologies like 6G, artificial intelligence, machine learning and quantum computing for defence applications in view of the changing nature of the field.
- "The primary aim is to enhance the communication infrastructure of the Indian Army," a senior official said.
- This group will be operational under the Signals Directorate and is based in Delhi. It is headed by a Colonel rank officer of the Army from the Corps of Signals, he said.



Maiden Test-firing Of India's First Indigenously-Made 1500 HP Engine

- Defence Secretary Shri Giridhar Aramane presided over the maiden test-firing of India's first indigenously-made 1500 Horsepower (HP) engine for Main Battle Tanks at BEML's Engine division in Mysuru complex on March 20, 2024.
- The achievement heralds a new era in the country's defence capabilities, showcasing the technological prowess and commitment to self-reliance in defence technologies.
- The 1500 HP engine represents a paradigm shift in military propulsion systems, possessing cutting-edge features such as high power-to-weight ratio, operability in extreme conditions including high altitudes, sub-zero temperatures, and desert environments. Equipped with advanced technologies, the engine stands on par with the most advanced engines globally.
- The Defence Secretary also inaugurated the '**Wall of Fame**' to recognise the extraordinary efforts of the BEML team. It symbolises their contribution towards advancing the defence capabilities of the country and achieving milestones in indigenous technological innovation.



Exercise IMT TRILAT- 2024

- INS Tir and INS Sujata will participate in the forthcoming **second edition** of India **Mozambique Tanzania (IMT) Tri Lateral (TRILAT) Exercise**, a joint maritime exercise scheduled from 21-29 Mar 24.
- The first edition of IMT TRILAT exercise conducted in Oct 22, saw participation of INS Tarkash with the Tanzanian and Mozambique Navies.
- The current edition of the exercise is planned in two phases. As part of the harbour phase scheduled from 21-24 Mar 24, Naval ships Tir and Sujata will engage with the respective Navies at the ports of Zanzibar (Tanzania) and Maputo (Mozambique).



NCC & NPCIL ink MoU To Raise Awareness On Peaceful Use Of Nuclear Power

- NCC and Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL) signed a MoU in New Delhi on March 21, 2024, to conduct various awareness programmes throughout the country to enhance public perceptions on peaceful use of nuclear power and disseminate scientific & authentic information.
- The MoU was signed between DG NCC Lt Gen Gurbirpal Singh and Executive Director (Corporate Communication & Corporate Planning), NPCIL Shri BVS Shekhar.
- The NPCIL will be providing resource persons in this initiative for field engagements with the NCC during the camps and various activities by educating the cadets. The MoU also facilitates a unique opportunity to the cadets to visit various facilities of NPCIL across the country, thereby giving a first-hand experience on peaceful use of nuclear energy, its technical and technological aspects.



Army Major Gets Patent For Multi Target Detonation Device, Inducted In Indian Army

- The Indian Army achieved yet another milestone with a patent granted for the innovation of a Portable **Multi Target Detonation Device** (WEDC). It was developed by Major Rajprasad RS of the Corps of Engineers.
- The innovation, which would enable troops to undertake demolition at long range with increased safety and several advanced features, has been inducted in the Indian Army.

- The device developed by Major Rajprasad is aimed at enhancing the safety and reliability of the detonation of multiple targets and overcoming the limitations of the previously used Exploder Dynamo Capacitor.
- The previously utilised system is a mechanically operated wired system with limited range of 400 metres. The requirement of the Indian Army was to increase the safety range and carry reserve demolition of multiple targets wirelessly from longer ranges.
- This device is a microprocessor based electronic system that offers a long range of 2.5 km with both wired and wireless mode of firing.



IAF Chopper Drops ISRO's 'Pushpak'

- In a significant mission, the Indian Air Force (IAF) collaborated with the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) in the Pushpak Reusable Landing Vehicle (RLV) LEX 02 landing experiment and dropped the 'Pushpak' from an altitude of 4.5 km.
- The shuttle was dropped from 4.5 km above the earth to a runway in Karnataka's Chitradurga by IAF's Chinook helicopter, where the landing experiment was conducted earlier in the day. The IAF shared a video from the inside of the chopper showing the shuttle being dropped towards the ground.

- ISRO said that after the RLV-LEX-01 mission, which was accomplished last year, the RLV-LEX-02 demonstrated the autonomous landing capability of RLV off-nominal initial conditions at the release from a Chinook helicopter.



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BRO Connects Strategic Nimmu- Padam- Darcha Road In Ladakh

- BRO connected the strategic Nimmu-Padam-Darcha road in Ladakh on March 25, 2024. This 298-km road will connect Manali to Leh through Darcha and Nimmu on Kargil – Leh Highway. The road is now the third axis apart from Manali-Leh and Srinagar-Leh which connects Ladakh to the hinterland.
- The Nimmu-Padam-Darcha road derives its strategic importance from the fact that it is not only shorter vis-a-vis the other two axes, but crosses only one pass; Shinkun La (16,558 feet) on which tunnel work is about to commence by the BRO.

- This will result in the road having all weather connectivity to the Ladakh region. The connectivity will strengthen the defence preparedness and provide a boost to the economic development in the Zaskar valley.
- DG Border Roads Lt Gen Raghu Srinivasan said that in January, when the River Zansakar was frozen, the equipment and personnel were mobilised and the work of establishing the connectivity was completed.



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REVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1. What was the purpose of the two successful flight tests conducted by DRDO on 28th & 29th Feb 2024?**
 - A. Testing a new submarine-launched missile system
 - B. Testing a new Very Short-Range Air Defence System (VSHORADS) missile
 - C. Testing a long-range surface-to-air missile system
 - D. Testing a new anti-tank guided missile
- 2. Where is the Indian Navy going to commission a new base, INS Jatayu?**
 - A. Andaman Islands
 - B. Nicobar Islands
 - C. Lakshadweep Islands
 - D. Maldives Islands

ANSWER: C

3. The annual Eastern Command Anti Tank Guided Missile (ATGM) field firing was conducted at

- A. Teesta Field Firing Range
- B. Pokhran Field Firing Range
- C. Devlali
- D. None

ANSWER: A

4. Exercise 'Samudra Laksamana conducted b/w India &

- A. Qatar
- B. Oman
- C. Malaysia
- D. Maldives

ANSWER: C

5. Defence Ministry inks Rs 39,000 crore deals With

- A. HAL
- B. DRDO
- C. L&T
- D. HSL

ANSWER: C

6. Who has recently become the first woman sniper of the Border Security Force?

- A. Suman Kumari
- B. Anjali Sharma
- C. Priya Patel
- D. Neha Gupta

ANSWER: A

7. What recent change has the Indian Navy introduced into its naval messes?

- A. Introduction of a new naval uniform
- B. Inauguration of a new naval base
- C. Introduction of ethnic attire, kurta-pyjama
- D. Commissioning of new aircraft carriers

ANSWER: C

8. Which company's subsidiary achieved a milestone by becoming home to Saab's first manufacturing facility?

- A. Tata Group

- B. Mahindra & Mahindra
- C. Reliance Industries Limited
- D. Larsen & Toubro

ANSWER: C

9. What is the focus of the tripartite MoU signed by the MoD with BEML Limited, BEL & MIDHANI?

- A. Development of advanced missile systems
- B. Indigenous development of Advanced Fuelling and Control System for Engines
- C. Procurement of foreign weaponry
- D. Maintenance of naval vessels

ANSWER: B

10. AESA Stands For

- A. Activated Electronically Scanned Array
- B. Active Electronically Scanned Array
- C. Active Electronics Scanned Array
- D. None

ANSWER: B

11. Joint Exercise "Sea Defenders-2024" Conducted B/w

- A. ICG & USCG
- B. NSG & USCG
- C. IAF & USCG
- D. None

ANSWER: A

12. INS Utkrosh Is In

- A. ANC
- B. Goa
- C. Chennai
- D. Pune

ANSWER: A

13. In which location was Exercise Cutlass Express - 24 (CE – 24) held?

- A. Port Victoria, Seychelles
- B. Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh
- C. Tezpur, Assam

D. Bengaluru, Karnataka

ANSWER: A

14. Which organization constructed the Sela Tunnel project?

- A. Indian Navy
- B. Border Roads Organisation (BRO)
- C. Indian Air Force
- D. Indian Army

ANSWER: B

15. What is the estimated cost of the fifth generation AMCA project approved by the CCS?

- A. ₹825 crore
- B. ₹13,000 crore
- C. ₹15,000 crore
- D. ₹20,000 crore

ANSWER: C

16. What was the objective of the DRDO's Mission Divyastra?

- A. To test the Agni-5 missile's accuracy
- B. To demonstrate the Multiple Independently Targetable Re-Entry Vehicle (MIRV) technology
- C. To launch a new tugboat in Bharuch, Gujarat
- D. To conduct a live fire exercise in Pokhran, Rajasthan

ANSWER: B

17. Where was the 25T Bollard Pull (BP) Tug, Baljeet, launched?

- A. Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Island, Odisha
- B. Pokhran, Rajasthan
- C. Bharuch, Gujarat
- D. New Delhi

ANSWER: C

18. Where was the Second 25T Bollard Pull Tug, Bahubali, launched?

- A. Bharuch, Gujarat
- B. Pokhran, Rajasthan
- C. Kolkata, West Bengal
- D. Odisha

ANSWER: C

19. Manufacturer of LCA Tejas Is

- A. Boeing
- B. HAL
- C. Lockheed Martin
- D. None

ANSWER: B

20. India Had Signed A __ Deal With Russia To Buy Five Units Of The S-400 Air Defence Missile Systems.

- A. USD 5 billion
- B. USD 6 billion
- C. USD 7 billion
- D. USD 8 billion

ANSWER: A

21. INS Baratang Is A

- A. Destroyer
- B. OPV
- C. Submarine
- D. Tank

ANSWER: B

22. Which organization signed contracts worth Rs 8073.17 crore for the acquisition of ALH Dhruv Mk III?

- A. Indian Army
- B. Indian Coast Guard
- C. Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL)
- D. Armoured Vehicles Nigam Limited (AVNL)

ANSWER: C

23. What was the focus of the discussions in the 12th edition of India-Italy (MCG) Meeting?

- A. Procurement of armoured vehicles
- B. Enhancing educational cooperation
- C. Increasing the strength of the National Cadet Corps (NCC)
- D. Enhancing defence cooperation and military to military level exchange

ANSWER: D

24. What is the proposed addition of cadet vacancies approved by Raksha Mantri for the expansion of the NCC?

- A. 20,000 cadets
- E. 2,000,000 cadets
- F. 300,000 cadets
- G. 200,000 cadets

ANSWER: C

25. Where is the location newly-established squadron for Apache attack helicopters by the Indian Army?

- A. Delhi Cantt.
- B. Jodhpur
- C. Mumbai
- D. Chennai

ANSWER: B

26. Nausena Bhawan Is In

- A. Delhi Cantt.
- B. Jodhpur
- C. Mumbai
- D. New Delhi

ANSWER: D

27. Which company signed a contract with the MoD for the Mid Life Upgrade of 25 Dornier Aircraft?

- A. Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL)
- B. Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL)
- C. Tata Advanced Systems Limited (TASL)
- D. Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)

ANSWER: A

28. What is the venue of the third edition of the Station Commanders' Workshop of the Indian Navy?

- A. INS Hamla at Mumbai
- B. INS Circars
- C. New Delhi
- D. Seychelles

ANSWER: C

29. Ex 'LAMITIYE' conducted b/w India &

- A. Qatar
- B. Oman
- C. UAE
- D. Seychelles

ANSWER: D

30. What operation did the IAF deploy an AF Mi-17 V5 helicopter for?

- A. Counter-terrorism operation
- B. Relief operations in flood-affected areas
- C. Bambi Bucket operations to douse forest fires
- D. Airlift of medical supplies

ANSWER: C

