

Scramble for 40 Chinese jets inflates Pak defence budget

Omer Farooq Khan | TNN

Islamabad: China's fifth-generation stealth fighter J-35A, touted as a rival to the American F-35, is at the heart of Pakistan's military ambitions as it doubles down on defence spending amid telling blows to its economy.

Finance minister Muhammad Aurangzeb's announcement of a 20% hike in the defence budget — the outlay stands at 2.55 trillion rupees (\$9 billion) — coincides with reports of advanced arms deals with China. Pakistan is said to be negotiating with China for 40 stealth fighters, with deliveries likely starting this Aug.

The J-35A, a twin-engine, multi-role fighter equipped with PL-17 missiles and advanced AESA radar, promises to enhance Pakistan's strike capabilities. Pakistan Air Force has approved the purchase, and various agencies have reported pilots are already training in China. Beijing's rumoured offer of a 50% discount and lenient payment terms is in line with deepening ties, with nearly 80% of Pakistan's arse-



File photo of a J-35A stealth aircraft

nal now sourced from there.

The acquisition of J-35A stealth fighter jets threatens to escalate tensions with India even as Pakistani diplomats criss-cross foreign shores, preaching restraint and dialogue.

Shehbaz Sharif govt's decision to prioritise defence over development has also drawn muted criticism within Pakistan's tightly controlled political space. The budget slashed overall federal expenditure by 7% to 17.57 trillion rupees (\$62 billion). Pakistan was mainly dependent on Chinese-supplied weapons, including J-10C fighters and HQ-9 air defence systems, during last month's military conflict with India.

Pakistan's economic woes make this military outlay particularly contentious. It owes \$15 billion to China alone, its largest bilateral creditor, and is negotiating a \$6.8 billion IMF bailout to avert a total economic collapse. Servicing its \$269 billion debt consumes over 1.9% of GDP, leaving little room for social welfare or infrastructure. With national security becoming the rationale to override financial prudence, the budget faced little scrutiny in parliament, reflecting the military's outsized influence on how the country is run.

On the diplomatic front, Pakistan is working overtime to counter India's "terrorism narrative". Foreign minister Ishaq Dar has engaged Gulf states, EU and the UN to portray Pakistan as a stabilising force and India as the aggressor. These efforts include back-channel talks and leveraging the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor to secure economic lifelines from Beijing. Dar recently thanked Beijing for its support during the recent conflict, highlighting it as an "iron-clad" relationship.

Air Marshal Ashutosh Dixit cites expansion in China's military space programme

NEW DELHI, June 11 (PTI)

CHIEF of Integrated Defence Staff Air Marshal Ashutosh Dixit said on Wednesday that as India contemplates its own surveillance capabilities, the rapidly evolving threat landscape, particularly the remarkable advances made by "our neighbours to the north", must be understood.

In his address at a seminar here, Air Marshal Dixit also cited expansion in China's military space programme and said its satellites have recently demonstrated "sophisticated 'dog-fighting' manouvres" in low earth orbits.

He was speaking on 'Surveillance and Electro-optics' at the event hosted by think-tank CAPS (Centre for Air Power Studies) and Indian Military Reviews (IMR) at Subroto Park.

China's military space pro-



AIR Marshal Ashutosh Dixit

gramme has expanded from "operating just 36 satellites in 2010 to over a thousand by 2024, with more than 360 dedicated to ISR missions".

ISR refers to intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance.

"As we contemplate our own surveillance capabilities, we must understand the rapidly evolving threat landscape, particularly the remarkable advances made by our neighbour to the north," Air Marshal Dixit said.

Sri Lanka raises power tariff by 15% ahead of IMF official's visit

COLOMBO, June 11 (PTI)

SRI Lankan authorities on Wednesday approved a 15 per cent increase in electricity tariffs, effective from Thursday, aiming to address the financial challenges faced by the state-run Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB).

The move came ahead of the upcoming visit of IMF's First

Deputy Managing Director Gita Gopinath, scheduled for next week, to Sri Lanka. The 15 per cent tariff hike approved by the Public Utilities Commission (PUCSL) is still short of the 18 per cent increase called for by the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

"We think it's a fair increase. We had a public consultation, and got everyone's views," sen-

ior PUCSL official K P L Chandralal told reporters here.

He said the revised tariffs remain below the rates set in 2024. The tariff adjustment comes in response to concerns raised by the IMF over the CEB's reported losses of LKR 18 billion in the first quarter of 2025, attributed to a tariff reduction implemented in January.

Indian Navy, UK's Royal Navy participate in Passage Exercise

NEW DELHI, June 11 (PTI)

SOME OF the Indian Navy's key assets and the Carrier Strike Group of the UK's Royal Navy took part in a Passage Exercise (PASSEX) in the North Arabian Sea, showcasing a shared commitment to maritime security and robust bilateral ties, an official spokesperson said on Wednesday.

The exercise was conducted on June 9 and 10, the Indian Navy spokesperson said.

The Indian Navy's stealth frigate INS Tabar, submarine and P8I aircraft participated in the exercise, he said.

"The exercise was conducted with the UK Carrier Strike Group, comprising HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Richmond," he added.

The multi-faceted naval exercise included unified control of integral helicopters, tactical manoeuvres, coordinated anti-submarine operations and professional exchange of officers.

In kharif season, water levels at 2 Pak key dams near 'dead levels'

With India Decreasing Indus System Flow & Monsoon A Month Away, Pak Facing Grim Situation

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New Delhi: Constant decrease in the flow volume of western rivers — Indus, Jhelum and Chenab — from India has left Pakistan discharging more water than what it's receiving to sustain its drinking water and irrigation needs. While this appears normal during the pre-monsoon season, the situation may turn grim in the coming weeks as regular desilting and flushing of dams by India in Jammu & Kashmir to increase its own storage capacity will further lessen the water flow to the other side.

The daily water situation report, released by Pakistan's Indus River System Authority (IRSA), shows that the country on Wednesday had to discharge 11,180 cusecs more water than the inflow.

Its collective outflow, measured at different monitoring stations (Tarbela on Indus, Mangla on Jhelum, Marala on Chenab and Nowshera on Kabul river), stood at 2,52,791 cusecs compared to the inflow of 2,41,611 cusecs. More outflow than inflow will eventually lead to a further drop in water availability in two key provinces — Punjab and Sindh — which depend on waters from the western



Pakistan's IRSA advisory panel apprehended the crisis last month when it declared an overall shortage of 21% for the early kharif season (May 1-June 10) and an expected shortage of 7% in the late kharif season (June 11-Sept 30)

rivers of the Indus system.

On Wednesday, Pakistan's Punjab province, where kharif farming has begun, received 1,14,600 cusecs of water compared to 1,43,600

cusecs on the same day last year — a decline of 20%.

Pakistan is still nearly a month away from getting monsoon rains, but water storage in its two key dams —

Mangla on river Jhelum and Tarbela on Indus — has already reached close to their respective 'dead levels' (there are no outlets to drain water from the reservoirs by gravity below the level).

"This means further decrease in water flow from the Indian side may leave Pakistan with few options to facilitate farming operations before the arrival of the monsoon," said an official.

Pakistan's IRSA advisory committee, at its meeting last month, apprehended the crisis when it declared an overall shortage of 21% for the early kharif season (May 1-June 10), noting "sudden de-

crease" in Chenab's inflows at Marala "due to short supply by India". It expected shortages of 7% in the late kharif season (June 11-Sept 30).

Though the situation will start improving from early next month when monsoon hits Pakistan, the authorities would find regulation of water for regular discharge difficult in the absence of water flow data from India following the suspension of Indus Water Treaty.

India, which has kept the 1960 treaty in abeyance over the Pahalgam terror attack in April, is not under any obligation to share the data with Pakistan in the present situation.

Pak phenomenal counter-terror ally: Sr US Gen

But Acknowledges Its National Plotted Attacks In America

Washington: Despite acknowledging that a Pakistani national plotted terror attacks in America last year, a top US General has described Pakistan as a 'phenomenal partner' in counter-terrorism, ostensibly because the country's military rulers hand over such terrorists to Washington on demand, **reports Chidanand Rajghatta.** In testimony before a congressional panel Tuesday, Gen Michael Kurilla, who heads US Central Command that has operational oversight over Pakistan, lauded Gen Asim Munir for handing over terrorists who attacked the US, despite Islamabad's refusal to do the same with terrorists who have attacked India.

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India's aim to boost ties with US: EAM

Amid apparent differences with Trump administration over Pakistan's terror issue, EAM S Jaishankar said India's aim is to advance relationship with US as it serves India's interests. On his Europe visit, he warned Europeans terror will come back to haunt them if they ignore it. **P 15**

Pak grapples with water shortage

Constant decrease in flow volume of rivers — Indus, Jhelum & Chenab — from India has left Pakistan discharging more water than what it's receiving. Pakistan's IRSA panel recently declared shortage of 21% for early Kharif season (May 1-June 10). It expects shortages of 7% in late Kharif season (June 11-Sept 30). **P 14**