

# ISRO'S NEW YEAR AIM

## Black Holes, cosmic events

SRIHARIKOTA (AP), Dec 31 (PTI)

ISRO is set to welcome the New Year with the launch of its first X-Ray Polarimeter Satellite that would offer insights into celestial objects like black holes, onboard a Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle rocket on Monday.

The launch comes after the success of its Gaganyaan Test Vehicle D1 mission in October. The PSLV-C58 rocket, in its 60th mission, would carry primary payload XPoSat and 10 other satellites to be deployed in low earth orbits. The 25-hour countdown commenced on Sunday for the lift-off scheduled at 9.10 am from the first launch pad at this spaceport, located about 135 kms east of Chennai, on January 1. "The countdown commenced for PSLV-C58 at 8.10 am today," ISRO sources said.

The X-ray Polarimeter Satellite (XPoSat) is aimed to investigate the polarisation of intense X-ray sources in space. According to ISRO, it is the first dedicated scientific satellite from ISRO to carry out research in space-based polarisation measurements of X-ray emission from celestial sources.

Besides ISRO, the US-based National Aeronautics Space Agency (NASA) conducted a similar study -- the Imaging X-Ray Polarimetry Explorer mission in December 2021 on the remnants of supernova explosions, the particle streams emitted by black holes and other cosmic events. While space-based X-ray astronomy has been established in India focusing on imaging, and time

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(Top) Preparations underway for the launch of ISRO's PSLV-C58 carrying X-ray Polarimeter Satellite (XPoSat) at the Satish Dhawan Space Station in Sriharikota.

(Bottom) The primary payload 'POLIX'. (PTI)

# Over 3,000 CAPF troops for C'garh



■ **By Neelabh Srivastava**  
NEW DELHI, Dec 31 (PTI)

**THREE** battalions of the BSF comprising more than 3,000 personnel will move across the border from Odisha to Chhattisgarh and an equal number of ITBP units will further move into the Naxal stronghold of Abujhmad as part of a strategy to intensify anti-Maoist operations in their last bastions, official sources said.

The new operational blueprint is part of a plan under which Union Home Minister Amit Shah recently made a declaration that India was "on the verge of" eliminating Left Wing Extremism (LWE).

"The last strike against LWE by forces such as the BSF, the CRPF and the ITBP is in the process. We are determined to end Naxalism in the country," Shah said on December 1 in Hazaribag, Jharkhand while addressing BSF troops on their 59th raising day.

These forces are called as Central Armed Police Force (CAPFs).

Sources in the security establishment told PTI that the Border Security Force (BSF) has been directed to create six new COBs or company operating bases in Chhattisgarh's Narayanpur district by initially moving one of its battalion based in Odisha's Malkangiri, just across the inter-state border.

A BSF battalion has a strength of over 1,000 personnel. The Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), which currently has about eight  
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# IAF to extend life of Su-30MKI fighter jet fleet by more than 20 years

■ By Ajit Dubey

NEW DELHI, Dec 31 (ANI)

HAVING started the induction of Sukhoi-30 MKI fighter jets about two decades ago, the Indian Air Force is now planning to extend the service life of its Russian-origin combat aircraft by more than 20 years.

The Indian Air Force has inducted 272 of the Su-30 MKI fighter aircraft operating in its fleet and the twin-engine planes are going to be the mainstay of the force for at least the next 15-20 years.

"Indian Air Force is looking to extend the service life of the



fighter jets by another 20 years or more. Indian Air Force carries out extensive tests on the airframe and other parts of the aircraft to extend their service life and has had earlier expe-

rience in doing so," defence officials told ANI.

"Service life extension would help the Indian Air Force to maintain the fleet of its mighty Su-30s around 2045-2050," they

said. Indian Air Force is also working on boosting the capabilities of the aircraft by equipping it with major upgrades in terms of indigenous advanced radars, avionics and weapon systems. It is working to upgrade its fleet of Sukhoi-30 MKI fighters with indigenous weapon systems and radar named Virupaaksha.

"Virupaaksha radar is being developed indigenously, keeping in view the requirements of IAF in different sectors and would be the most advanced one among all the Sukhoi-30 variants being flown around the globe," the Government sources said.

# Russia launches drone strikes on Ukraine, hits back for Kyiv's counteroffensive

KYIV, Dec 31 (AP)

RUSSIA launched a fresh drone assault on Ukraine on Saturday night, after promising that strikes on the Russian border city of Belgorod earlier in the day "would not go unpunished."

The Ukrainian Air Force said on Sunday that it had shot down 21 of 49 drones launched by Russian forces overnight.

Twenty-eight people were wounded in an attack on the eastern city of Kharkiv, regional Gov Oleh Syniehubov said on Sunday. A central hotel, apartment buildings, kindergarten, shops and administra-

tive buildings sustained damage, according to the regional prosecutor's office.

In the Kyiv region that surrounds the capital, a Russian drone attack caused a fire to break out at a critical infrastructure facility, local officials said. They did not identify the facility further.

The Russian attacks came after shelling in the centre of the Russian border city of Belgorod on Saturday killed 24 people, including three children.

A further 108 people were wounded in the strike, Regional Governor Vyacheslav Gladkov said on Sunday, making it one

of the deadliest attacks on Russian soil since the start of Moscow's invasion of Ukraine 22 months ago.

Russian authorities accused Kyiv of carrying out the attack, which took place the day after an 18-hour Russian aerial bombardment across Ukraine killed at least 41 civilians.

Russia's Defence Ministry said it identified the ammunition used in the strike as Czech-made Vampire rockets and Olkha missiles fitted with cluster-munition warheads. It provided no additional information, and The Associated Press was unable to verify its claims.

"This crime will not go

unpunished," the Ministry said in a statement on social media.

In an emergency meeting at the UN Security Council demanded by Russia on Saturday night, envoy Vasily Nebenzya accused Kyiv of a "terrorist attack." In comments carried by Russian State media, Nebenzya claimed Ukraine had launched "a deliberate act of terrorism directed against civilians." Shelling in the centre of the Russian border city of Belgorod Saturday killed 21 people, including three children, local officials reported. A further 110 people were wounded in the strike, said Vyacheslav Gladkov.

# NAVY boosts SURVEILLANCE in Arabian Sea, Gulf of Aden

NEW DELHI, Dec 31 (PTI)

**THE** Indian Navy has significantly enhanced its surveillance apparatus in the Arabian Sea and the Gulf of Aden by deploying frontline destroyers and frigates in view of recent incidents of attacks on merchant vessels.

Liberian-flagged cargo vessel MV Chem Pluto, with 21 Indian crew members, was the

target of a drone attack off India's west coast on December 23, triggering security concerns as the incident came amid Iran-backed Houthi militants launching strikes on several commercial ships.

Another commercial crude oil tanker, MV Sai Baba, that was on the way to India came under a suspected drone strike in the Southern Red Sea on the same day. "The last few weeks have

witnessed increased maritime security incidents on merchant vessels transiting through international shipping lanes in Red Sea, Gulf of Aden and Central/North Arabian Sea," the Navy said. It also referred to a recent piracy incident on merchant ship MV Ruen approximately 700 nautical miles from the Indian coast.

"The piracy incident on MV  
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# 'Recruitment of locals into militancy witnessed drop of 80%'

JAMMU, Dec 31 (PTI)

A TOTAL of 76 terrorists, including 55 foreigners, were neutralised, 291 terrorist associates arrested and 201 overground workers booked under the Public Safety Act in Jammu and Kashmir this year, Director General of Police R R Swain said on Saturday.

Swain further said that only 31 local terrorists – an all time low – are left in the Union Territory, while the recruitment of locals into militancy has witnessed a drop of 80 per cent this year.

"In 48 anti-terrorist operations, we have neutralised 76 terrorists, including 55 foreigners. The trend of foreign terrorists getting killed more starting in 2022 and continued this



DGP R R Swain

year, making it clear that our actual fight is against infiltrators," he said, asserting that the anti-terrorism operations will continue next year with more vigour. He said there are 31 identified local terrorists – four in Jammu region's Kishtwar and 27 in the Valley – who are active

and the number is at an all-time low. "There is an 80 per cent decline in terror recruitment this year. Year-on-year comparison shows that 130 locals joined terrorism in 2022 and this year, till date the number is 22. We will try to stop the recruitment completely which is essential to end the cycle of violence. "When there is recruitment, action happens and the fallout follows, continuing the cycle. I am seeing the decline in recruitment as saving 113 people from getting killed this year," he said.

The DGP said that against 31 civilian killings by terrorists last year, the number dropped to 14 this year and the terror-related incidents declined from 125 in 2022 to 46 in 2023, recording a drop of 63 per cent.

## J&K police chief vows to wipe out terror from Rajouri-Poonch belt

JAMMU, Dec 31 (PTI)

ADMITTING to the presence of foreign terrorists in the woods of Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri-Poonch belt, Director General of Police RR Swain on Saturday said security agencies are committed to wiping out terrorism from the south of the Pir Panjal region.

The terrorists are operating from hideouts deep inside the forests, with the support of some locals whose numbers are "very very limited," he said.

The twin districts of Rajouri and Poonch in the Jammu region have witnessed a spurt in terror activities this year, leaving 19 Army personnel and seven civilians dead. As many as 25 terrorists have also been killed in encounters, mostly along the Line of Control (LoC), as the security forces foiled several infiltration attempts.

However, Swain said the number of terror supporters is "very very limited" and added that it is a challenge to identify these "very very limited" people.