

GRSE delivers India's 'largest-ever' survey vessel to Navy, says official

KOLKATA, Dec 4 (PTI)

DEFENCE PSU Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE) Ltd on Monday delivered the "largest-ever" survey vessel to be built in the country - INS Sandhayak - to the Indian Navy, an official said.

INS Sandhayak, the first in a series of four survey vessels being made by GRSE for the Navy, was launched on December 5, 2021, and was undergoing fitting out and trials thereafter.

The 110-metre-longship was delivered on December 4, which is observed as Navy Day, the GRSE official said.

The protocol of delivery and acceptance was signed



between GRSE Chairman and MD, Commodore (retd) P R Hari, and commanding officer of the vessel, Commodore RM Thomas.

INS Sandhayak is the reincarnation of another ship by the same name, which was also a survey vessel. That ship had been commissioned into the

Navy in 1981 and decommissioned in 2021, the official said.

Fully designed by the GRSE, the survey ships are capable of full-scale coastal and deep-water hydrographic survey of port and harbour approaches, as well as determination of navigation channels and routes, he said.

Govt committed to increasing strength of women in Armed Forces, says PM

MUMBAI, Dec 4 (PTI)

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said the Government is committed to increasing the strength of women in the Armed Forces.

He was speaking at the Navy Day event held in coastal Sindhudurg district of Maharashtra. "We are emphasising increasing the number of women in the Armed Forces," he said.

"Today, India is setting bigger targets for itself and is utilising its full potential to achieve those targets," he added.

Shortly before the Navy Day event, Modi unveiled a statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj at Rajkot fort in the district. Modi later witnessed the operational demonstrations by Indian Navy ships, submarines, aircraft and Special Forces from



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Maharashtra Governor Ramesh Bais, Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and Deputy Chief Ministers Devendra Fadnavis and Ajit Pawar during the 'Navy Day 2023' celebrations, in Sindhudurg district, on Monday. (PTI)

the Tarkarli beach.

Modi said India is giving unprecedented support to port-led development. "Merchant shipping is also being encouraged. India is moving towards utilising the potential of its oceans. Ranks in the Indian Navy would be renamed according to the Indian culture," he said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi Monday extended greetings on Navy Day, saying the commitment of Navy personnel in safeguarding India's seas is a testament to their unwavering dedication to duty and love for the nation. He also said he looks forward to joining the Navy Day programme at Sindhudurg in Maharashtra later on Monday. He said the spirit and resolve of Navy personnel remains unshakable in every circumstance.

Army Chief holds talks with Lankan Army Commander

NEW DELHI, Dec 4 (PTI)

ARMY Chief General Manoj Pande on Monday held wide-ranging talks with Commander of the Sri Lankan Army Lt Gen Vikum Liyange with a focus on ramping up bilateral military engagement against the backdrop of China's increasing military assertiveness in the region. The Sri Lankan military official is on a visit to India from December 3 to 7.

The Defence Ministry said Lieutenant General Liyange's visit to India is a "testimony" to the longstanding relationship between the armies of India and Sri Lanka.

Liyange was accorded a ceremonial guard of honour at the South Block lawns before he called on Gen Pande.

"They exchanged ideas and held constructive discussions

on various contemporary issues, including strengthening bilateral cooperation between the two armies," the ministry said. Thereafter, Lieutenant General Liyange interacted with Defence Secretary Giridhar Armane, Air Chief Marshal VR Chaudhari and Vice Admiral Sanjay Jasjit Singh, the Vice Chief of Naval Staff.

The Sri Lankan Army Commander is also scheduled to call on Chief of Defence Staff Gen Anil Chauhan.

"These meetings and bilateral discussions underscore the shared goals of further enhancing defence cooperation between the two nations.

"The visit marks a momentous milestone in strengthening the diplomatic and military ties between two friendly neighbours," Defence Ministry statement said.

Navy to deploy INS Vikramaditya, INS Vikrant for Milan-2024 in Vizag

VISAKHAPATNAM, Dec 3 (PTI)

THE Indian Navy has planned to deploy both its aircraft carriers INS Vikramaditya and INS Vikrant on the eastern seaboard during Milan-2024, a flagship international naval exercise hosted by Vizag from February 19-27 next year, a senior official said on Sunday.

"The event will be held under the aegis of the Eastern Naval Command (ENC) of the Indian Navy with likely participation from nearly 50 friendly countries as a delegation, and 20 foreign warships along with one maritime patrol aircraft," said Vice Admiral Rajesh Pendharkar, Flag-Officer Commanding-in-Chief (FOC-in-C) Eastern Naval Command.

Navies from the US, Japan,



Australia, France, Bangladesh, South Korea, Vietnam, Indonesia and Malaysia are set to be among the participating nations in the Milan-2024 exercise to be conducted off Visakhapatnam next year, he added.

The upcoming exercise will be the biggest multilateral military war game to be hosted by India ever. It will feature large-force manoeuvres, advanced



air defence operations, anti-submarine warfare and anti-surface drills.

The aircraft carriers INS Vikramaditya and INS Vikrant which will be the centrepieces of the exercise serve as floating sovereign airfields providing a launch platform for a wide array of aircraft.

An international maritime seminar, tabletop exercises, a demonstration of the Indian

Navy's deep submergence rescue vessel, a multilateral exercise at sea, a city parade and some other social and cultural events are part of the plans for Milan 2024, Pendharkar said. "These joint drills will also highlight the Navy's expanding role in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) as a first responder and preferred security partner. Presence and operational reach by the Indian Navy has been steadily enhanced through mission based deployments and other operational engagements," Pendharkar said.

To a question on increasing Chinese forays into the Indian Ocean, Vice Admiral Rajesh Pendharkar opined that China may have a legitimate reason to be present in the IOR for economic activities.

Crime rate declines but cyber offences up 24%

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New Delhi: Crime rate per lakh population declined to 422.2 in 2022 from 445.9 in 2021, even though cyber crime cases registered a 24.4% jump during this period. Nearly 65% of the total 65,893 cyber crimes registered were related to online or cyber fraud.

According to the 'Crime in India' 2022 report released by the National Crime Records Bureau on Monday, crimes registered nationwide under the IPC as well as Special and Local Laws (SLL) witnessed a 4.5% dip to 58.2 lakh in 2022 from 60.9 lakh in 2021. Of the total 58.2 lakh crimes registered last year, 35.6 lakh were IPC crimes, down 2.8% from 2021, and 22.6 lakh were SLL crimes, also down 7%.

Delhi recorded the highest rate of cognisable crimes (IPC & SLL) at 1,518.2, followed by Kerala at 1,274.8, Haryana at 810.4, Gujarat at 738.9 and Tamil Nadu at 617.2. The crime rate in UP was much lower at 322, as was Bengal's at 182.8. Experts said a high crime rate per lakh population could also point to higher reporting of crime in

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states like Delhi, as compared to, say, West Bengal.

Offences against the human body—physical assault, including murder, kidnapping, abduction, etc—went up by 5.3% to 11.6 lakh in 2022 from 11 lakh in 2021 and constituted 32.5% of the total IPC crimes. Murders, numbering 28,522 in 2022, showed a mar-

▶ Rioting cases dip in UP, P15

ginal decline of 2.6% as compared to the previous year.

Kidnapping and abduction cases rose by 5.8% to 1.07 lakh in 2022, with women making up 88,861 of the total 1.1 lakh victims. Crimes against women increased by 4% to 4.45 lakh cases in 2022; the majority related to 'cruelty by husband or his relatives' (31.4%), followed by 'kidnapping and abduction' (19.2%), 'assault on women with in-

tent to outrage her modesty' (18.7%) and rape (18.7%).

The crime rate per lakh of women population was up to 66.4 in 2022 from 64.5 in 2021.

Crimes against children recorded a rise of 8.7% in 2022 as compared to 2021. Nearly 46% related to kidnapping and 39.7% were registered under the Pocso Act. The crime rate registered per lakh children population was up at 36.6 from 33.6 in 2021.

A total of 53.9 lakh persons were arrested in 2022 in IPC & SLL cases. Chargesheet was filed against 43.7 lakh accused, 10.5 lakh were convicted, 9.81 lakh acquitted and 1.52 lakh were discharged.

The conviction rate, as per 2022 data, was 43.8 in murder cases, 27.4 in rape cases and 85.3 in the Excise Act cases.

A study of NCRB data over the past five years shows a 37% decline in attacks by Left-wing extremists from 355 in 2018 to 224 in 2022; police personnel killed in such attacks were down by 90%; and civilian casualties by 30%.

Attacks by insurgents in the Northeast dipped by 62%, from 68 in 2018 to 26 in 202, while offences against the state increased by 8.6%.

Modi to host Oman Sultan next wk, talks on West Asia likely

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New Delhi: In the first high-profile visit by an Arab leader to India since the Israel-Hamas war broke out, the Sultan of Oman, Haitham bin Tarik, will be hosted by PM Narendra Modi in the middle of this month. Oman is India's closest defence partner in the Arabian Gulf, and also a key Indian Ocean maritime security partner which has allowed the Indian Navy access to the strategic Port of Duqm, but the visit will draw attention also for the sultan's talks with Modi on the West Asia situation.

Modi has been keen on hosting the sultan and NSA Ajit Doval had delivered a message from the PM to Tarik when he travelled to Muscat in June this year. The sultan, who lands here on December 16, will hope to use the visit to make up for his absence at the G20 summit, where Oman, India's oldest strategic partner in the region, was one of the guest countries invited by India.

India has been in touch with Oman over the issue with foreign minister S Jaishankar having spoken to his

counterpart Badr Albusaidi in October. The Oman minister had sought an immediate ceasefire during the conversation, along with continued supplies of humanitarian aid and respect for international law to save civilian lives.

While strongly condemning the October 7 Hamas terror attacks, India has been careful not to antagonise its Arab partners by expressing support for international humanitarian law, the two-state solution and by condemning the deaths of civilians.

With defence cooperation emerging as the key pillar of its strategic partnership with Oman, the Indian government sees the Sultanate as its closest defence partner in the region. Oman was the first Gulf country to hold joint exercises with all 3 wings of the Indian armed forces. Of particular significance to India has been the access Oman has allowed India to the strategically located Duqm port in the southeast, amid growing Chinese footprints in the Indian Ocean. There's also a strong presence of the Indian community in Oman with close to 700,000 Indian nationals living there.

War shifts to south Gaza as Israel rolls in troops & tanks

Quarter Of Khan Younis City Marked As Battle Zone, Residents Told To Flee

Israel ordered Palestinians to leave parts of the main southern city in the Gaza Strip on Monday even as its bombs rained down on areas where it had told them to go. Israeli troops and tanks also pressed the ground campaign against Hamas militants in the south of the enclave after having largely gained control of the now-devastated north.

Israel's military posted a map on X on Monday morning with around a quarter of the city of Khan Younis marked off in yellow as territory that must be evacuated at once. Three arrows pointed south and west, telling people to head towards the Mediterranean coast and towards Rafah, near the Egyptian border.

Desperate Gazans in Khan Younis packed their belongings and headed towards Rafah. Most were on foot, walking past ruined buildings in a solemn and silent procession. But Rafah itself was coming under Israeli fire. The head of the United Nations agency in Gaza, Thomas White, said people there were themselves being forced to flee. "People are pleading for advice on where to find safety. We have nothing to tell them," he said on X. Bombing at one site in Rafah overnight had torn a crater the size of a basketball court out of the earth. A dead toddler's bare feet and black trousers poked out from under a pile of rubble.

Israeli forces largely captured the northern half of Gaza in November, and since a week-long truce collapsed on Friday they have swiftly pushed deep into the southern half. Around 2 million people are now crowded into the 230sqkm that make up Gaza's south. Already shelters are overwhelmed, and both Israel and neighboring Egypt have refused to accept any refugees. Tanks have driven into Ga-



Palestinians flee Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip on Sunday. Many of those fleeing were already displaced from other areas

US says ship downed 3 drones, claims Iran's hand in Houthi attack

A US navy destroyer shot down three drones during a sustained attack in the Red Sea on Sunday, the Pentagon said, heightening fears of the conflict spreading. An official said the USS Carney shot down the drones as several commercial ships nearby came under fire. The US Central Command said the attacks originated from areas in Yemen that are controlled by the Iranian-backed Houthi militia. "We also have every reason to believe that these attacks are fully enabled by Iran." NYT

za from the border fence and cut off the main north-south route, residents say. The Israeli military said the central road out of Khan Younis to the north "constitutes a battlefield" and was now shut. The commander of Israel's armoured corps, Brigadier-General Hisham Ibrahim, told Army Radio the military had almost achieved its goals in northern Gaza. "We are beginning to expand the ground manoeuvre to other parts of the Strip, with one goal: to topple the Hamas terrorist group," he said. Earlier on Sunday, an IDF spokes-

Amid war, graft trial against Bibi resumes; party calls it disgrace

Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu's graft trial resumed on Monday, despite the country's continuing war against Hamas in the Gaza Strip. The trial was suspended after the Oct 7 attack. Netanyahu, leader of Israel's right-wing Likud party, is accused of bribery, fraud and breach of trust, allegations he denies. Minister David Amsalem of Likud called the resumption "a disgrace". "War? Captives? ... No, no. The most important thing now is to renew Netanyahu's trial," he said. AFP

person said Israel was expanding its ground operations to the whole of the Gaza strip.

The military released footage of troops patrolling in tanks and on foot, in fields and in badly damaged urban areas, and firing from weapons, without specifying the location in Gaza. Witnesses told AFP that tanks, armoured personnel carriers and bulldozers were seen Monday near Khan Younis.

Israel says its evacuation orders are aimed at protecting civilians from harm, and called on international organisations to help encourage Ga-

50 killed as two schools sheltering people in north Gaza hit: Report

The official Palestinian news agency said at least 50 people were killed on Monday in an Israeli air strike that hit two schools sheltering displaced people in the north of the Gaza Strip. The reported attack took place as Israeli bombs also rained down on southern areas of the enclave and Israeli troops and tanks pressed a ground campaign against Hamas militants in that sector.

The strike hit the Daraj neighbourhood in Gaza City, the Wafa agency said. It was not immediately possible to verify the report independently, and a spokesperson for the Israeli army said it was looking into the report. It came as Gaza's health ministry said at least 15,899 Palestinians, 70% of them women or under 18s, have now been killed in Israeli air and artillery strikes on the enclave since Oct. 7. Thousands more are missing and feared buried in rubble. REUTERS

zans to move to the areas labelled safe on Israeli maps.

Israel's top ally, the US, has publicly called on it to do more to safeguard civilians in the southern part of Gaza than in last month's campaign in the north, especially as there are so many people already homeless there. Israel permitted additional humanitarian supplies to enter the enclave during the truce, but the United Nations says this was paltry compared to the territory's vast humanitarian need, and has now been interrupted by the renewed fighting. REUTERS&AGENCIES

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Sipri: 3 PSUs among world's top 100 arms producing cos

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New Delhi: Sales of arms and military services by the 100 largest armament companies in the world totalled \$597 billion in 2022, with Russia's invasion of Ukraine and geopolitical tensions fuelling a major increase in demand for weapons across the globe.

SIPRI said though the demand for arms rose sharply around the world in 2022, revenues of the 100 largest companies were 3.5% less than 2021 in real terms due to the actual production lagging behind.

"Despite receiving new orders, many US and European arms companies could not significantly ramp up production capacity because of labour shortages, soaring costs and supply chain disruptions that were exacerbated by the war in Ukraine," it said.

"In addition, countries placed new orders late in the year and the time lag between

Indian defence PSUs – HAL, BEL and MDL – benefitted from major orders by the Indian armed forces. Their sales, however, accounted for paltry 1% of the \$597 billion global arms sales

orders and production meant that the surge in demand was not reflected in these companies' 2022 revenues," it added.

Indian defence PSUs Hindustan Aeronautics (HAL), Bharat Electronics (BEL) and Mazagon Docks (MDL) figure in the list of the top 100 arms-producing companies, which was dominated by US and Chinese companies, as per a report released by Swedish think-tank Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) on Monday.

HAL was ranked 41st with \$3.4 billion in arms sales, BEL 63rd with \$1.9 billion and MDL 89th with \$1 bil-

lion, all three benefitting from the major orders placed by the 14-lakh strong Indian armed forces. But the three together accounted for just a paltry 1% of the \$597 billion global arms sales last year.

Their revenues will, of course, register a jump in the near future. The defence ministry just last week gave preliminary approval for orders worth Rs 1.8 lakh crore (around \$22 billion) for HAL, which includes 97 more Tejas Mark-1A fighters and 156 Prachand helicopters as well as upgrade of 84 Russian-origin Sukhoi-30MKI fighters.

US continues to dominate the top-100 list, despite revenues of its 42 companies falling by 7.9% in 2022. China has eight companies in the Top-100 with total arms sales of \$108 billion, accounting for the second largest share as a country in the list at 18%.

As per earlier SIPRI figures, India (\$81.4 billion) is the fourth largest military spender in the world, after the US, China and Russia.