

Nuclear-armed nations deepening reliance on N-arms: Think tank

COPENHAGEN, June 17 (AP)

THE world's nine nuclear-armed States continue to modernise their nuclear weapons as the countries deepened their reliance on such deterrence in 2023, a Swedish think tank said.

"We have not seen nuclear weapons playing such a prominent role in international relations since the Cold War," said Wilfred Wan, director of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's weapons of mass destruction programme.

Earlier this month, Russia

and its ally Belarus launched a second stage of drills intended to train their troops in tactical nuclear weapons, part of the Kremlin's efforts to discourage the West from ramping up support for Ukraine. In a separate report, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, ICAN, said the nine nuclear-armed States spent a combined total of USD 91.4 billion on their arsenals in 2023 - equivalent to USD 2,898 per second.

The Geneva-based coalition of disarmament activists won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2017.

The group said that figures show a USD 10.7 billion increase in global spending on nuclear weapons in 2023 compared to 2022, with the United States accounting for 80 per cent of that increase. The US share of total spending, USD 51.5 billion, is more than all the other nuclear-armed countries put together. "There has been a notable upward trend in the amount of money devoted to developing these most inhumane and destructive of weapons over the past five years," said Alicia Sanders-Zakre.

China, Philippine naval ships collide in SCS

■ By K J M Varma
BEIJING/MANILA, June 17 (PTI)

THE China-Philippines confrontation to assert their claims in the disputed South China Sea took a violent turn on Monday as their naval ships collided in the first such incident after Beijing issued new rules to act against foreign vessels and detain foreigners "suspected of violating" regulations in the Chinese waters.

China claims most of the South China Sea (SCS), which is hotly disputed by the Philippines, Malaysia, Vietnam, Brunei and Taiwan.

A Philippines ship and a

Chinese vessel collided after the former "illegally entered" the waters near the Second Thomas Shoal and "dangerously approached" the Chinese ship, China Coast Guard (CCG) said. The navies and the coast guards of the two countries were having face-offs in the last few months as the Philippines made a strong bid to assert its claims over the Second Thomas Shoal in the SCS claimed by China.

China alleges that the Philippines deliberately ran a naval ship aground in 1999 at the Second Thomas Shoal, which it calls Ren'ai Jiao, and converted the damaged ship

into a permanent installation manned by naval personnel.

According to the CCG, the Chinese vessel collided with the Philippines ship on Monday morning in a bid to prevent it from delivering construction materials.

The CCG statement said its vessel has taken regulatory measures to respond to an illegal intrusion by a Philippine vessel into waters near Ren'ai Jiao on Monday morning.

A Philippine supply vessel, in disregard of repeated stern warnings from the Chinese side, deliberately and dangerously approached Chinese vessels navigating normally in

adjacent waters of Ren'ai Jiao, it said. This violated the International Regulations for the Prevention of Collisions at Sea. The act led to a slight collision, for which the responsibility lies entirely with the Philippine side, the statement added. However, the statement did not mention any damage or injuries on either side.

Also, the Chinese Navy has for the first time deployed an amphibious assault ship in Nansha Islands (or Spratly Islands) in the SCS, a move experts said on Sunday is a preparation for any emergency response amid repeated provocations by the Philippines, the

state-run Global Times reported. China's Type 075 landing helicopter dock, an amphibious assault ship, was spotted near Zhubi Jiao (or Zhubi Reef) on Friday, marking its first deployment to the Nansha Qundao in the South China Sea, the report said.

Defending the CCG's action, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian said: "China Coast Guard only took necessary control measures against the Philippine vessels in accordance with the law, and the on-site operation was conducted in a professional, restrained, reasonable and lawful manner."

India, US unveil vision to boost strategic tech ties

NEW DELHI, June 17
(PTI)

INDIA is committed to further strengthen its comprehensive global strategic partnership with the US for global good, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Monday after meeting US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan.

Earlier, NSA Ajit Doval and Sullivan held wide-ranging talks focusing on implementation of the ambitious India-US Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET).

"Met US National Security Advisor @JakeSullivan46. India is committed to further strengthen the India-US Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership for global good," Modi said on 'X'.

In the Doval-Sullivan talks, the two sides firmed up a num-



Prime Minister Narendra Modi meets with US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, in New Delhi on Monday. (ANI)

ber of significant initiatives to bolster cooperation in areas of critical technologies, defence, semiconductor, advanced telecommunications, artificial intelligence, quantum, biotechnology and clean energy.

Sullivan is visiting Delhi from June 17 to 18, in the first trip to India by a senior Biden administration official after the Modi Government came to power for the third term.

9 killed | Goods train rams into Kanchanjunga Exp in WB

NEW JALPAIGURI /KOLKATA
/NEW DELHI, June 17 (PTI)

AT LEAST nine people were killed and 41 injured after a goods train rammed into the Sealdah-bound Kanchanjunga Express from behind in West Bengal's Darjeeling district on Monday, a senior railway official said.

Among the deceased were the pilot of the goods train and the guard of the passenger train, he added.

The injured have been shifted to North Bengal Medical College and Hospital for treatment.

Some local reports attributed to senior West Bengal Police officials put the casualty count at 15.

(Contd on page 5)



Rescue work underway after a collision between the Kanchanjunga Express and a goods train, near Rangapani railway station, on Monday. (PTI)

Rs 10 lakh ex-gratia for kin of deceased

NEW DELHI, June 17 (ANI)

THE BJP-led Central Government has announced an enhanced ex-gratia compensation for victims in the train mishap in West Bengal's Darjeeling involving the Kanchanjunga Express passenger train and a goods train in which at least eight people were killed and over 20 people sustained injuries.

Families of the deceased will be provided Rs 10 lakh each while a sum of Rs 2.5 lakh and Rs 50,000 will be provided to those who sustained grievous and minor injuries respectively, said Union Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw.

PM Modi condoles loss of lives

NEW DELHI, June 17 (PTI)

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Monday condoled the loss of lives in the train accident in West Bengal and announced an ex-gratia of Rs two lakh each from the Prime Minister's (Contd on page 5)

PM to release 17th installment of PM-KISAN scheme today

■ More than 9.26 crore farmers will receive benefits amounting to over Rs 20,000 crore

NEW DELHI, June 17 (ANI)

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi will release the 17th instalment of the PM-KISAN scheme on Tuesday at Varanasi in which more than 9.26 crore farmers will receive the benefits amounting to over Rs 20,000 crore.

The Prime Minister will also distribute the certificates to



more than 30,000 SHGs trained as Krishi Sakhis to work as para extension workers. The event will be attended by Anandiben Patel, Governor of Uttar Pradesh, Yogi Adityanath, CM of Uttar Pradesh, Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Union Agriculture Minister and several State Ministers. More than 2.5 crore

farmers will join the event including those at 732 Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs), over 1 lakh Primary Agricultural Cooperative Societies, and 5 lakh Common Service Centres across the country, the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare stated.

“On the 50 selected Krishi Vikas Kendras (KVKs), a special event is being organised where a good number of farmers will join the event. On these centres, several Union Ministers will also visit and interact with the farmers,” it stated.