



Delhi Policy Group

# India Defence Digest

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Delhi Policy Group

Core 5A, 1st Floor, India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road, New Delhi- 110003

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# DPG India Defence Digest

## Volume 1, Issue 1

### February 2019

#### ABOUT US

Founded in 1994, the Delhi Policy Group is among India's oldest independent think tanks with its primary focus on international and strategic issues of critical national interest. Over the past decades, the Delhi Policy Group has established itself in both domestic and international circles, particularly in the area of national security.

In keeping with India's increasing global profile as a leading power and the accompanying dynamism of India's foreign and security policy, the Delhi Policy Group has expanded its focus areas to include India's broader regional and global role; India's initiatives to strengthen its strategic periphery; India's political, security and connectivity challenges and policies across the Indo-Pacific; and the strategic partnerships that advance India's rise. To support these goals, the DPG undertakes research, publishes policy reports and organises conferences on strategic and geo-political, geo-economic, and defence and security issues.

#### DPG India Defence Digest

DPG India Defence Digest is compiled by our research team from publicly available information and open source media. Your comments and feedback can be addressed to Aashna John at [aashna@dpg.org.in](mailto:aashna@dpg.org.in).

#### Cover Photographs:

*(Photographs top to bottom)*

*Aero India 2019 at the Yelahanka Airbase in Bengaluru, February 20-24, 2019. Source: Business Insider*

*The multi-mission, heavy-lift transport Chinook helicopter was delivered at the Mudra port in Gujarat, February 10, 2019. Source: Twitter/@Boeing In*

*Raksha Mantri Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman visited Germany, February 12, 2019. Source: Embassy of India in Germany*

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## PART I: INDIA'S DEFENCE SCENE

### *Defence Budget*

The Interim Budget for the Financial Year 2019-20, was presented to Parliament on February 01, 2019. The government has provisioned for Rs.3,18,931.22 crores (USD 44.6 billion) for defence, a 6.89% increase over the allocation for FY 2018-19. The defence budget comprises 11.5% of total Central government expenditures and a meagre 1.52% of GDP.

### *Aero India 2019*

India's Ministry of Defence organised the 12<sup>th</sup> biennial Aero-India exhibition at the Yelahanka Air Base in Bengaluru, from February 20-24, 2019. Approximately 600 Indian companies, 200 foreign companies and 61 aircraft participated in the event. The highlight of the event included:

- Lockheed Martin unveiled the F-21 multi-role fighter jet with India specific upgrades.
- Swedish company Saab signed agreements with three Indian companies (Dynamatic Technologies, CIM Tools, and Sansera Engineering) to support its bid to supply Gripen fighter aircraft to the Indian Air Force (IAF).
- Russian Helicopters Company signed MoUs with five Indian companies to localise components for the Kamov-226T utility helicopter selected for the Indian Army and Air Force. The MoUs were signed with Elcom, Valdel Advanced Technologies, Dynamatic Technologies, Integrated Helicopter Services, and Bharat Forge to produce fuselage, blades, radio stations, and landing gear. Under the deal, 60 helicopters will be imported from Russia and another 140 will be built in India by a Joint Venture (JV) between HAL and Russia's Rostec – JSC Rosoboronexport and Russian Helicopters.
- HAL also signed MoU for stage 2 works of Infrastructure development at its green field helicopter factory in Tumkur (Karnataka) for structural assembly and equipping of Kamov-226T helicopters.

### *Defence Procurement Policy*

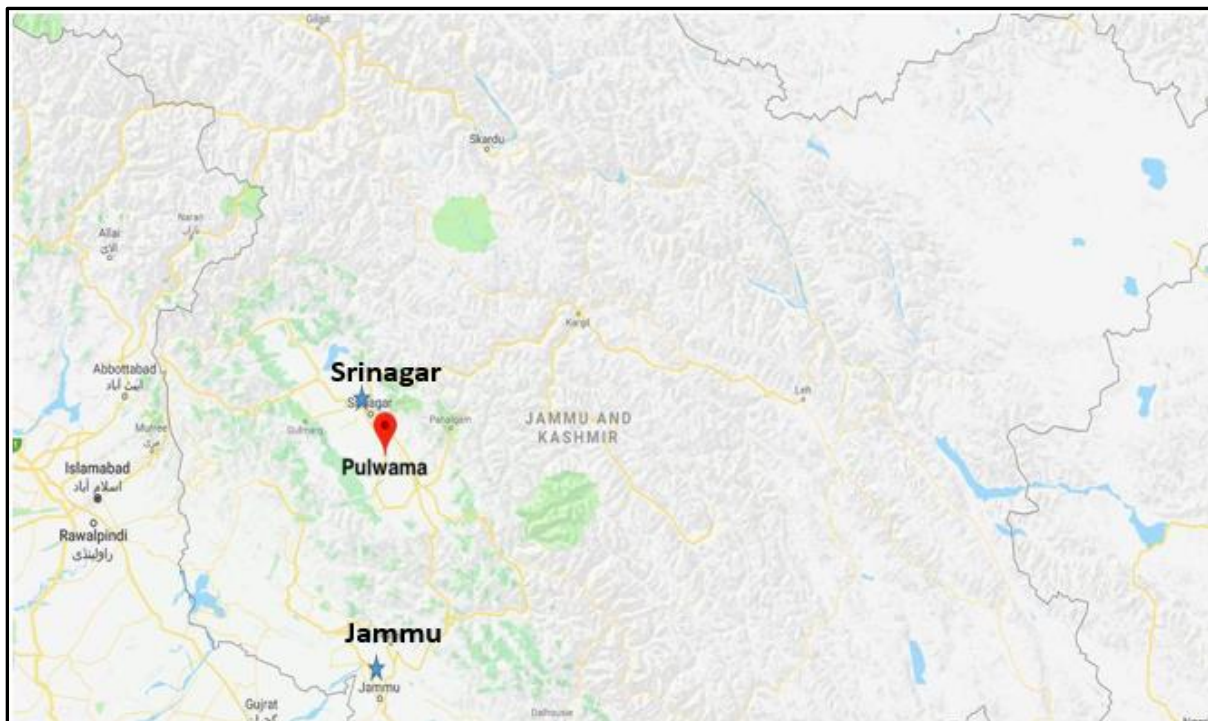
Approval was reported to have been accorded for amendments to the Defence Procurement Policy 2016 with the following provisions:

- a. Simplification of the best price determination process incorporating the latest government policies on GST and customs duties.

- b. Submission of bank guarantees from RBI-authorized Indian private sector banks, besides currently permitted public sector banks. This will enable competitive pricing by reducing overhead costs of sellers incurred on obtaining guarantees from banks<sup>1</sup>.

### *India's Counter Terrorism Response*

During the month of February, two major incidents related to the Pakistan sponsored proxy war raised India-Pakistan tensions and resulted in cross border air operations, not seen since the 1971 India-Pakistan war. The Pakistan based Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) terror group launched a massive suicide car bomb attack on a CRPF convoy at Pulwama on the Jammu-Srinagar highway, 32 km South of Srinagar, on February 14, 2019, killing 40 security personnel. Responsibility was claimed by the Bahawalpur (Pakistan) based JeM, which has in the past also claimed responsibility for attacks on the Indian Parliament in 2001 and on the Pathankot air base in January 2016. The scale of casualties in this terror incident was the highest since the October 1, 2001 car bomb attack in Srinagar, in which 38 persons were killed.



Source: Google Map

<sup>1</sup>"Defence acquisition council nods ₹40,000 crore project to build 6 submarines", *Live Mint*, January 31, 2019 <https://www.livemint.com/industry/manufacturing/defence-acquisition-council-nods-rs-40-000-crore-project-to-build-6-submarines-1548947203181.html>



India launched a “non-military, pre-emptive” air strike on a JeM training camp at Balakot (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan) on February 26, 2019.



Source: *The Indian Express*

On February 27, Pakistan launched air strikes to hit military targets in the Naushera-Rajauri Sector of Jammu & Kashmir, employing 24 aircraft, which included F-16s, JF-17s and J-15s. The Indian Air Force successfully thwarted the PAF attack. In this aerial encounter, a Mig-21 of the IAF was shot down and its pilot Wg. Cdr. Abhinandan was held captive by the Pakistani military till his repatriation on March 1, 2019. An F-16 aircraft of the PAF was shot down and crashed inside Pakistan controlled POK. At month end, intense cross LOC artillery and small arms fire was continuing.

### *Exercises*

‘Vayu Shakti’, a once in three years India Air force firepower exercise, was held at the Pokhran Range on February 16-17, 2019. 138 aircraft including 81 fighter jets (Su-30, Mig-27, Mig-29, LCA-Tejas, Mirage-2000, Mig-21 and Hawk) participated.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> “IAF carries out mega exercise at Pokhran”, *The Economic Times*, February 18, 2019. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/iaf-to-display-firepower-in-pokhran-on-saturday/articleshow/68008089.cms>



*Indian Air Force demonstrates its combat and firepower during 'Vayu Shakti 2019' at Pokhran, Rajasthan. Source: News 18*

INS Trikanth participated in the Exercise 'Cutlass Express-19' organised by U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM), and conducted by Naval Forces Africa (NAVAF), off the coasts of Djibouti, Mozambique and the Seychelles, from January 27-February 6, 2019. The objective of the exercise was to improve maritime law enforcement capacity, promote national and regional security cooperation in Eastern Africa, and shape security force assistance (SFA) efforts<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> "INS Trikanth participates in exercise Cutlass Express 2019", *Press information Bureau*, February 8, 2019. <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=188260>



*Comoros sailors prepare to participate in visit, board, search and seizure training aboard the Indian Talwar-class frigate INS Trikand (F 51) during exercise Cutlass Express 2019 in Djibouti, Feb. 4, 2019. Source: Defence Visual Information Distribution Service*

### **Capability Development**

On January 31, 2019 the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) approved the indigenous manufacture of six diesel-electric attack submarines (SSK) at a total cost of Rs.40,000 crores. The likely foreign contenders for the programme include: Rubin Amur 1650 (Russia), Naval Group Advanced Scorpene Class (France), TKMS Type 214 Class (Germany), Navantia S-80 (Spain) and Saab Kockum A-26 (Sweden). Mazagon Docks Ltd (MDL), which is currently constructing six Scorpene (Kalvari Class) submarines, has also been permitted to bid. It is likely to launch an IPO to raise 6000 CRs<sup>4</sup>. The DAC also approved the procurement of 5,000 French-made second-generation MILAN anti-tank guided missiles (ATGM) worth \$167 million from Bharat Dynamics Ltd. (BDL).

On February 12, 2019 India's MOD invited global Expressions of Interest (EoI) for the manufacture of 111 Naval Utility Helicopters (NUH) to replace the navy's outdated fleet of Chetak helicopters. The NUH project is estimated to be worth Rs.21,738 crore. The DAC had cleared the NUH project in August 2018 under the Strategic Partnership (SP) Model. Indian companies likely to express interest include: Tata Advanced Systems Ltd., Mahindra Defence, Adani Defence, L&T,

<sup>4</sup> "Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders can bid for Rs 40k cr Submarine contract", *Defence News*, February 8, 2019. <http://defencenews.in/article/Mazagon-Dock-Shipbuilders-can-bid-for-Rs-40k-cr-Submarine-contract-582993>

Bharat Forge and Reliance Infrastructure. The OEMs likely to participate in the project are: Lockheed Martin, Airbus Helicopters, Bell Helicopters, and Rosoboronexport<sup>5</sup>.

Other developments related to defence procurements during the month are listed below:

- The Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) has received clearance from the Indian Army and the Ministry of Defence for production of 114 'Dhanush' 155/45 mm Artillery guns<sup>6</sup>.
- MoD concluded a contract worth of Rs.647 crore for the procurement of 72,400 new assault rifles for the infantry from the US under the fast-track procurement (FTP) route. The 7.62x51 mm rifles from SiG Sauer will be delivered within this year.
- After final trials, the Army accepted an improved version of the MK1-A Arjun main battle tank (MBT), trials for which were completed in December 2018. Production is likely to commence soon at the Indian Ordnance Factory in Avadi, Tamil Nadu. Army is expected to receive 118 MK1-A in the coming years. The DRDO, meanwhile, is also working on an improved version of Arjun MK2<sup>7</sup>.
- Indian Air Force is in advanced talks with the Russian Government to acquire 21 MiG 29s, which are available in an unassembled state, at a cost of around Rs.6000 crore. These aircraft are likely to provide an economical option for making up operational voids<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> "Centre sets ball rolling for Rs 21,738-cr indigenous naval chopper project", *Hindustan Times*, February 13, 2019. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/centre-sets-ball-rolling-for-rs-21-738-cr-indigenous-naval-chopper-project/story-S1JcMp74Z0pfNNK2HKBPBL.html>

<sup>6</sup> "Ordnance Factory Board gets clearance for producing 114 long-range artillery gun 'Dhanush'", *The Financial Express*, February 20, 2019. <https://www.financialexpress.com/defence/ordnance-factory-board-gets-clearance-for-producing-114-long-range-artillery-gun-dhanush/1492943/>

<sup>7</sup> "Army accepts 'Mark1-A' version of Arjun tanks", *The Tribune*, February 18, 2019. <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/nation/army-accepts-mark1-a-version-of-arjun-tanks/730651.html>

<sup>8</sup> "IAF in talks with Russia for urgent MiG 29 purchase", *The Economic Times*, February 13, 2019. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/iaf-in-talks-with-russia-for-urgent-mig-29-purchase/articleshow/67968978.cms>

- HAL has revived development of its Intermediate Jet Trainer (IJT) project, with the first IJT to be tested early this year. IJT is an indigenously designed and developed aircraft to replace Kiran Jet trainers<sup>9</sup>.
- India test-fired Helina, the helicopter-launched version of the Nag Anti-Tank Guided Missile (ATGM) with a range of 7-8 km, at the Integrated Test Range (ITR) at Chandipur in Balasore district. The indigenous ATGM is being developed to be fired from the HAL manufactured Light Combat Helicopter (LCH)<sup>10</sup>.
- Out of a total of 15 such helicopters ordered from the U.S., the first batch of four Chinook Helicopters were delivered to the Indian Air Force by Boeing in February. The CH-47F (I) Chinook is an advanced multi-mission heavy lift helicopter and will be used for air maintenance of forward troops<sup>11</sup>.
- India has concluded an agreement to equip two VVIP Boeing 777 aircraft on order with self-protection suites from the US at a cost of \$190 m.

### *Infrastructure Development*

On February 9, 2019 Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone of a tunnel across the strategic Se La (Pass) in West Kameg District of Arunachal Pradesh. The tunnel forms part of a strategic road project connecting Tezpur (Assam) in the Brahmaputra plains to the border town of Tawang. Aimed at providing all-weather connectivity and reducing travel time, the tunnel is likely to be completed by December 2022.

<sup>9</sup> "HAL revives intermediate jet trainer programme to help rookie IAF pilots", *Indian Express*, February 22, 2019 <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/hal-revives-intermediate-jet-trainer-programme-to-help-rookie-iaf-pilots-5595606/>

<sup>10</sup> "Helicopter-launched anti-tank missile 'Helina' test-fired", *The Economic Times*, February 8, 2019. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/helicopter-launched-anti-tank-missile-helina-test-fired/articleshow/67900023.cms>

<sup>11</sup> "4 Chinook helicopters arrive in India from US, to be deployed in Chandigarh", *India Today*, February 10, 2019. <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/4-chinook-helicopters-arrive-in-india-from-us-to-be-deployed-in-chandigarh-1452663-2019-02-10>



*Sela Pass. Source: Google Map*

A Border Roads Organisation (BRO) Report indicates that 61 strategic roads, covering a total length of 4634 Km, are being constructed along India-China border. Significant among these are: a 35 Km road to the site of 2017 Doklam standoff in East Sikkim (likely to be completed this year) and a road connecting Leh-Darbuk to Daulat Beg Oldie (by 2020).

The government is also set to clear the construction of 44 more “strategically important roads” along the India-China Border in Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Jammu and Kashmir, Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, along India’s northern borders.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> “India pushes to complete 61 strategic roads on China border by 2022”, *Hindustan Times*, February 7, 2019. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/india-pushes-to-complete-61-strategic-roads-on-china-border-by-2022/story-mN9y4D98UOUu72me9RrmTI.html>

### *Visits/Dialogues*

Following the release of the European Union's India Strategy Paper, which calls for the development of mil-to-mil relations with India, a dialogue on expanding maritime security partnerships in the Indian Ocean was held in Delhi and Mumbai between senior Indian, French and EU officials from January 22-24 2019. This coincided with the port call of French Navy Destroyer Cassard to Mumbai. The delegation also visited India's Information Fusion Centre (IFC) –Indian Ocean Region (IOR) near New Delhi.

Defence Minister Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman paid a bilateral visit to Germany on February 12-13, 2019 and reviewed defence cooperation which is emerging as an important facet of the India-Germany Strategic Partnership with her counterpart. An Agreement on implementing 'Arrangement on Enhanced Defence and Defence Industry Cooperation' was signed to strengthen industry and R&D cooperation in the field of defence<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> "Visit of Raksha Mantri to Germany", *Press information Bureau*, February 13, 2019  
<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=188556>

## PART II – NEIGHBOURHOOD DEFENCE

### *China*

During a US Senate hearing on February 12, 2019 Admiral Philip S. Davidson, Chief of INDOPACOM, affirmed that the PLA is rapidly increasing its ability to project power and influence beyond the First Island Chain. In highlighting PLA military modernization, Davidson pointed to the PLAN's first aircraft carrier group, Liaoning, having acquired initial operational capability since mid-2018<sup>14</sup>.

The first unclassified report of the Department of Defence Intelligence Agency in the United States<sup>15</sup> highlights that the PLA is becoming increasingly adept at militarizing commercial space technologies, while conducting "sophisticated satellite operations". China regards the ability to use space-based systems and denying these to adversaries as central to enabling modern warfare.

In its endeavour to progress PLA military reforms in a volatile security environment, China is likely to increase its defence budget in 2019 to about 1.2 trillion Yuan (\$179 billion). The figure is expected to be released in early March<sup>16</sup>.

In January 2019<sup>17</sup>, China reportedly tested a high-yield H-6K bomb dubbed the Chinese version of the "Mother of All Bombs". It is developed by the China North Industries Corporation (Norinco), the primary supplier of combat platforms and weapons to the People's Liberation Army (PLA). According to military analysts, the weapon's blast can destroy fortified ground targets such as reinforced buildings, blast pens and underground shelters.

<sup>14</sup> 'US Pacific Command Boss: the Chinese Military is the Principal Threat', *National Interest*, February 14, 2019. <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/us-pacific-command-boss-chinese-military-principal-threat-44497>

<sup>15</sup> 'Defense intelligence report: China in steady pursuit of space capabilities to outmatch U.S.', *Space News*, January 16, 2019. <https://spacenews.com/defense-intelligence-report-china-on-steady-pursuit-of-space-capabilities-to-outmatch-u-s/>

<sup>16</sup> 'China likely to boost defense budget', *Global Times*, February 13, 2019. <http://www.defense-aerospace.com/articles-view/release/3/199915/china-%27likely%27-to-again-boost-defense-budget.html>

<sup>17</sup> 'China tested its most powerful non-nuclear weapon', *Defence Blog*, January 4, 2019. <https://defence-blog.com/news/china-tested-its-most-powerful-non-nuclear-weapon.html>



As per new data, China leads research in hypersonic technology<sup>18</sup>. This could allow missiles to travel five times the speed of sound and outmanoeuvre air defence systems. It is also believed that the introduction of hypersonic technology to warfare could revolutionize it in the same way as stealth technology did a generation ago.

In its continued efforts to enhance defence exports, China is now shifting its efforts towards West Asia. The China Shipbuilding Industry Corporation (CSIC), set up its first overseas representative office in Dubai to expand sales across the Gulf region. It is learnt that China will be customizing more weapons for the Middle East, where the arms market is growing due to widespread conflict<sup>19</sup>.

China, the first foreign customer of the Russian S-400 surface to air missiles, will receive replacements from Russia for missiles damaged in transit during a storm in the English Channel, about a year ago<sup>20</sup>.

The PLA is upgrading one of the civil airports in Gonggar in Tibet. It is also planning to build three new airports at Burang, Lhunze and Tingri in southern Tibet under '3+1 project' at a total cost of \$2.6 billion, which is due to be completed by 2021.



The proposed three new airports (in black). Source: Free Tibet

<sup>18</sup> 'China leads research into hypersonic technology:report', *Politico*, February 2, 2019. <https://www.politico.eu/article/china-leads-research-into-hypersonic-technology-report/>

<sup>19</sup> 'China eyes bigger role in growing Middle East arms trade', *South China Morning Post*, February 24, 2019. <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/2187436/china-eyes-bigger-role-growing-middle-east-arms-trade>

<sup>20</sup> 'Russia to ship to China S-400 missiles instead of those damaged during delivery', *TASS*, February 18, 2019. <http://tass.com/defense/1045269>

Two PLA Navy ships, the amphibious Landing Ship Dock (LSD) Kunlunshan and supply ship Luomahu with 500 sailors embarked, participated in the Pakistan hosted Multinational Naval exercises, AMAN<sup>21</sup>. The joint exercise was held from February 8-12 off the coast of Karachi. Navies of over 45 countries participated.

Despite China's continued emphasis on defence diplomacy, the PLA reportedly took part in much fewer joint exercises during the year 2018. This was reportedly to enable it to focus on improving combat readiness with respect to the United States<sup>22</sup>.

The former Chief of Joint Staff of the PLA, Gen. Fang Fenghui, has been sentenced to life imprisonment for corruption. He was found guilty of bribery and amassing wealth beyond known sources of income. This is part of the ongoing national anti-corruption drive which covers all echelons of the PLA<sup>23</sup>.

Australian Defence Minister Christopher Pyne visited Beijing in late January 2019 as part of his three-nation Asia tour, which included Japan, China and Singapore<sup>24</sup>. Pyne and his counterpart Wei Fenghe signed a memorandum of understanding on expanding military ties. He also visited the Southern Command of the PLA at Guangzhou.

### *Sri Lanka*

Pakistan's President Dr. Arif Alvi conferred the military honour of Nishan-i-Imtiaz on the Chief of Defence Staff of the Sri Lankan Armed Forces, Admiral Ravindra Chandrasiri Wijegunaratne, at a special investiture ceremony held at Islamabad on February 14, 2019<sup>25</sup>. President Alvi emphasised the importance

<sup>21</sup> 'China participates in Pakistan's naval drills in a big way', *Bharat Shakti*, February 12, 2019. <https://bharatshakti.in/china-participates-in-pakistans-naval-drills-in-a-big-way/>

<sup>22</sup> 'China's military pulls back from joint war games to focus on training at home', *South China Morning Post*, February 24, 2019. <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/2187439/chinas-military-pulls-back-joint-war-games-focus-training-home>

<sup>23</sup> 'China's former military chief of staff jailed for life for corruption', *The Guardian*, February 20, 2019. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/feb/20/chinas-former-military-chief-of-staff-jailed-for-life-for-corruption>

<sup>24</sup> 'China, Australia defence ministers talk closer military ties as Australian writer Yang Hengjun held in Beijing', *South China Morning Post*, January 25, 2019. <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/2183632/chinas-detention-australian-writer-raised-defence-ministers>

<sup>25</sup> 'Pakistan confers honour on Chief of Defence Staff', *The Daily News*, February 15, 2019. <http://dailynews.lk/2019/02/15/local/177638/pakistan-confers-honour-chief-defence-staff>

that Pakistan attached to its relations with Sri Lanka and to enhancing the capability of its armed forces. The President also underlined future connectivity of the ports of Gwadar and Karachi with Colombo and Hambantota for strengthening 'economic bonds'.

Admiral Philip S. Davidson, of INDOPACOM in his testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, emphasized that Sri Lanka remains a significant strategic opportunity in the Indian Ocean and it is in America's interests to continue military collaboration and cooperation with the Sri Lankan Forces. This could involve increasing navy-to-navy engagement between the INDOPACOM and the Sri Lankan armed forces<sup>26</sup>.

Notwithstanding its ties with China, Sri Lanka is also emerging as a logistics supply hub for US warships in the Indian Ocean Region. US aircraft carrier USS John C. Stennis (CVN 74) received supplies through Bandaranaike International Airport as part of a 'temporary cargo transfer initiative' between US and Sri Lanka at the beginning of this year<sup>27</sup>.

Political controversy has emerged in Sri Lanka due to an 'alleged' secret extension of the "Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement" with the US that expired on March 5, 2017. It is being suggested that the new agreement has provided immense privileges to members of the US military (personnel, contractors and suppliers) by granting them the same perks and privileges granted to technical and administrative officers of the US Embassy. It also allows them to enter the country with only a US Government Issued ID card (without a passport). Critics apprehend that the agreement would take away Sri Lanka's right to inspect US aircraft or naval vessels and prosecute any personnel under Sri Lankan law for any offence<sup>28</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> 'US commander seeks sustained engagement with Sri Lanka', *Business Standard*, February 13, 2019. [https://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/us-commander-seeks-sustained-engagement-with-sri-lanka-119021300502\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/us-commander-seeks-sustained-engagement-with-sri-lanka-119021300502_1.html)

<sup>27</sup> 'Sri Lanka supplies logistics to US aircraft carrier in Indian Ocean Region; balances ties with China', *Economic Times*, January 25, 2019. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/sri-lanka-supplies-logistics-to-us-aircraft-carrier-in-indian-ocean-region-balances-ties-with-china/articleshow/67683046.cms>

<sup>28</sup> 'Details on secretive US-SL military agreement revealed', *News1st*, February 22, 2019. <https://www.newsfirst.lk/2019/02/22/details-on-secretive-us-sl-military-agreement-revealed/>

## Maldives

India-Maldives defence ties are getting revived post the recent visits to India of President Ibrahim Solih<sup>29</sup>, Defence Minister Mariya Didi and the Chief of the Maldivian Defence Forces, Abdulla Shamaal. Emphasis is being laid once again on strengthening maritime security cooperation and completing the Coastal Radar Surveillance System (CSR). It has also been confirmed by the Maldives that the Indian military helicopters that had been grounded by the previous government, would resume operations<sup>30</sup>.

## Bangladesh

Bangladesh and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia signed a defence cooperation agreement on February 14, 2019 at Riyadh, during the visit of the Bangladesh Chief of Army Staff, General Aziz Ahmed. It has been reported that post the deal, 1,800 Bangladeshi troops will be deployed to Saudi Arabia to defuse and remove mines along the borders with war-torn Yemen<sup>31</sup>.

The United States has extended an offer to sell military equipment to Bangladesh. The offer was reportedly made by the American Ambassador to the Foreign Minister of Bangladesh. Reluctance has however been voiced by Bangladesh which regards American products as too expensive<sup>32</sup>.

The Chief of Air Staff of the Indian Air Force paid a goodwill visit to Bangladesh from February 10- 15, 2019<sup>33</sup>.

## Myanmar

Civil-military confrontation seems to be building up in Myanmar over attempts by Aung Sang Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy's to alter the essence

<sup>29</sup> 'Maldives to get major military push after President Ibrahim Solih's visit to India', *Times Now News*, January 22, 2019.

<https://www.timesnownews.com/international/article/maldives-president-ibrahim-solih-india-visit-narendra-modi-military-defence-boost-economic-cooperation-china/351633>

<sup>30</sup> 'Maldives govt welcomes Indian military backing', *Avas News*, January 27, 2019.

<https://avas.mv/en/59512>

<sup>31</sup> 'Dhaka to sign military pact with Riyadh next week', *Dhaka Tribune*, February 4, 2019.

<https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/military-affairs/2019/02/04/bangladesh-ksa-to-sign-defence-deal-feb-14>

<sup>32</sup> 'US offers to sell weapons to Bangladesh', *Dhaka Tribune*, January 31, 2019.

<https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/foreign-affairs/2019/01/31/us-offers-to-sell-weapons-to-bangladesh>

<sup>33</sup> 'Indian Air Force Chief Calls on Bangladesh Air Force', *Dhaka Tribune*, February 11, 2019.

<https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/military-affairs/2019/02/11/indian-air-force-chief-calls-on-bangladesh-air-force-chief>

of the country's Constitution, which grants the armed forces substantial control in Parliament by being permanently vested with leadership of security ministries and reservation of a quarter of unelected parliamentary seats<sup>34</sup>.

Israel recently reiterated its existing friendship with Myanmar and stated its resolve to continue selling arms to it, notwithstanding prevailing human rights concerns or violence against the Rohingyas and other minorities<sup>35</sup>.

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<sup>34</sup> 'Myanmar moves to pursue Constitutional change to curb military role', *Wall Street Journal*, January 29, 2019. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/myanmar-moves-to-pursue-constitutional-change-to-curb-military-role-11548771330>

<sup>35</sup> 'Israel media: Tel Aviv still arming Myanmar military despite allegations of genocide', *Middle East Monitor*, February 6, 2019. <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20190206-israel-media-tel-aviv-still-arming-myanmar-military-despite-allegations-of-genocide/>







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