



Delhi Policy Group

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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.

Cover Photographs:

(Photographs top to bottom)

Indian Air Force soldiers march past their C-17 Globemaster military transport aircraft during the Indian Air Force day parade at the Hindon air base on the outskirts of New Delhi, Source: Deccan Chronicle

Brahmos missile, Source: Millennium Post

Precision Approach Radar, Source: Bharat Rakshak

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PART I: INDIA'S DEFENCE SCENE

New Provisions/Laws

1. **Chief of Defence Staff for Indian Armed Forces:** On August 15, 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that the Indian Armed Forces will have a Chief of Defence Staff (CDS). This is in compliance with the recommendations of the Kargil Review Committee (1999) and Report of the Group of Ministers (GOM) on National Security (2001)¹. The CDS will provide single point military advice to the government and help resolve substantive inter-service doctrinal, planning, policy and operational issues. He will also enable overcoming systemic limitations in the defence acquisition process. A Committee has been constituted to work out the modalities of implementation and submit its recommendations within 2-3 months. For further details please refer to DPG Policy Brief Vol IV, Issue 23 at https://www.delhipolicygroup.org/uploads_dpg/publication_file/indias-chief-of-defence-staff-1178.pdf
2. **Amendment to Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act:** The Indian Parliament, on July 30, 2019, approved an amendment to the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) of 1967 to give powers to the Central Government to designate an individual as a terrorist and seize his properties. The amendment gives powers to the Director General (DG), National Investigation Agency (NIA) to attach properties acquired from proceeds of terrorism. Earlier, the law required NIA to take prior permission from the respective state DGP to attach the proceeds of terrorism and only officers of the ranks of DSP and above were empowered to investigate cases under Section 43 of UAPA. The amendment now empowers officers with the rank of inspectors and above to do the same².
3. **Repealing of Article 370:** On August 5, 2019 the Indian Parliament approved a resolution to repeal Article 370 of the Constitution of India, whereby all provisions under Article 4 of the Constitution would now be uniformly applicable to Jammu and Kashmir. The Parliament also passed the Jammu and Kashmir (Reorganisation) Bill, 2019, which reorganises the

¹ "Independence Day: PM Modi announces creation of Chief of Defence Staff; here's what it means", Business Today, August 15, 2019, <https://www.businesstoday.in/current/economy-politics/pm-modi-major-independence-day-announcement-creation-chief-of-defence-staff-tri-services/story/372769.html>

² "Parliament approves UAPA Bill, allows Centre to tag individual as terrorist", Business Standard, August 2, 2019, https://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/parliament-approves-amendment-to-uapa-amendment-bill-119080200722_1.html

state into two Union Territories- Jammu and Kashmir which will have a legislature and Ladakh, which will be without a legislature. The Government has highlighted that the decision to revoke Article 370, a temporary provision of the Constitution of India, is the sole prerogative of the country. The new provisions are aimed at promoting better governance and socio-economic development. There is no implication either on external boundaries of India or the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China³. It has also been stated in Parliament that the legislature of the Jammu and Kashmir state would be restored once the situation normalises.

Defence Cooperation Activities

4. **Overseas Deployments of Indian Navy- South East Asia:** As part of Indian Navy's overseas deployment to South East Asia and Western Pacific, INS Sahyadri, a frigate and INS Kiltan, a corvette, made a port call at Laem Chabang, Bangkok from August 31 to September 3, 2019. Both ships are indigenously designed and built. The ships are equipped with a versatile array of weapons and sensors and have multi-role helicopters on board. During the port call, there was professional interaction between the personnel of the two navies. A PASSEX was also carried out⁴.
5. **Overseas Deployments of Indian Navy- Africa and Europe:** As part of Indian Navy's overseas deployment to Africa, Europe and Russia, INS Tarkash made a three days port call at Cadiz, Spain on August 19, 2019 and Dakar, Senegal on August 27, 2019. In Dakar she carried out a Passage Exercise (PASSEX) with ships of the Senegalese Navy⁵. DPG India Defence Digest Volume 1, Issue 6, Para 15, at Page 5 also refers.
6. **India Military Training Teams for Zambia:** During the recent visit to India of the President of Zambia, Edgar Chagwa Lungu, on August 15, 2019, the two countries signed an MOU on defence cooperation. Under this MOU, Indian Army and Air Force training teams will be deployed in Lusaka to assist in capability development of the Zambian armed forces. Indian

³ "Parliament approves Resolution to repeal Article 370; paves way to truly integrate J&K with Indian Union", PIB, August 6, 2019, <https://pib.gov.in/Pressreleaseshare.aspx?PRID=1581391>

⁴ "Visit of Indian Naval Ships to Laem Chabang, Thailand", PIB, August 31, 2019, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleseDetail.aspx?PRID=1583762>

⁵ "INS Tarkash at Dakar, Senegal", Indian Nay, August 27, 2019, <https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/node/23786>

side also presented five fire tenders for employment on Zambian Air Force bases⁶.

7. **Indian Participation in Russian Multilateral Exercise:** Russia is preparing to host a multinational military exercise TSENTR-2019 in mid-September (16-21 Sept 2019) at Orenburg, Russia. The exercise is part of the annual training schedule of the Russian Armed Forces, wherein it conducts a major military exercise annually at one of its four military Commands -- Vostok (East), Zapad (West), Tsentr (Centre) and Kavkas (South). Military contingents of nine countries including India, China and Pakistan will participate⁷.
8. **India-Thailand Defence Cooperation:** India and Thailand are exploring diverse areas of defence cooperation. A proposal has been received by India to repair and refurbish Thai Dornier Maritime Patrol aircraft. A joint team of Indian Navy, Bharat Electronics Ltd (BEL) and Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL) visited Thailand earlier this year to discuss the proposal. The Royal Thai Navy is also exploring options of acquiring new ships, including cooperation with Indian Navy on ship design and possible construction at one of India's defence shipyards. In addition, discussions are underway to integrate Thailand into India's coastal surveillance radar chain network. Thailand has also evinced interest in acquiring Brahmos Missile from India, but little progress has been made so far⁸.
9. **Indo-Pacific CDS Conference:** The Chief of Air Staff and Chairman Chiefs of Staff Committee, Air Chief Marshal BS Dhanoa, was on a three-day visit to Thailand beginning August 26, 2019. During this visit, he attended the Indo Pacific Chiefs of Defence (CHOD) Conference in Bangkok, in which CDS equivalents of more than 33 countries participated. The theme for the conference was "**Collaboration for a Free and Open Indo - Pacific**"⁹.

⁶ "India, Zambia sign 6 pacts; strengthen cooperation in defence, mineral resources", Business Line, August 21, 2019, <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/national/india-zambia-sign-6-pacts-strengthen-cooperation-in-defence-mineral-resources/article29212686.ece>

⁷ <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-to-participate-with-pakistan-china-in-sco-exercise/articleshow/70581258.cms?from=mdr>

⁸ "Thailand in talks with India to buy BrahMos cruise missiles", The Hindu, August 1, 2019, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/thailand-in-talks-with-india-to-buy-brahmos-cruise-missiles/article28775607.ece>

⁹ "IAF chief Dhanoa will visit Thailand to attend Indo Pacific Chiefs of Defence conference", Business Standard, August 25, 2019, <https://www.business-standard.com/article/news->

10. **Visit of JS SAZANAMI to Kochi:** Japan Maritime Self Defence Force (JMSDF) ship JS SAZANAMI (DD 113), a missile destroyer, proceeding as the 'Deployment Surface Force for Counter Piracy Enforcement (34th DSPE)' to the Gulf, made a port call at Kochi on August 13-14, 2019. During the visit, the ship's personnel visited India's Anti-Submarine Warfare School and the Naval Offshore Patrol Vessel, INS Sunayna at Kochi¹⁰.
11. **Exercise Konkan:** Indian Navy frigate INS Tarkash and Royal Navy destroyer HMS Defender participated in the annual bilateral **Exercise Konkan**, held in the English Channel on August 15, 2019. The exercise has been conducted regularly since 2004 and is aimed at promoting interoperability and coordination between the two navies. During the exercise, the two navies practised anti-submarine warfare and carried out boarding operations¹¹.

Capability Development

12. **Review of Regulations for Defence Acquisition:** The government has set up an eleven member empowered committee under the Director General (Acquisition) to carry out a comprehensive review of defence procurement procedures over the next six months. This committee would review the Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP) 2016, the base document for capital acquisitions, and the Defence Procurement Manual (DPM) 2009, the base document for revenue procurements.¹² The exercise will be carried out simultaneously by three sub-committees, one each on **Aero- systems**, under the Deputy Chief of Air Staff; on **trial and testing** under Deputy Chief of the Integrated Defence Staff (Policy Planning and Force Development) and the third, under DG (Acquisition) for **integrating all acquisition procedures** related to 'Make 1, Make 2, IDEX' and procurement from 'technology development funds'. The review is to be complete by March 2020¹³.

[ani/iaf-chief-dhanoa-will-visit-thailand-to-attend-indo-pacific-chiefs-of-defence-conference-119082500526_1.html](https://www.defence.gov/iaf-chief-dhanoa-will-visit-thailand-to-attend-indo-pacific-chiefs-of-defence-conference-119082500526_1.html)

¹⁰ Twitter/ jmsdf_pao_eng, https://twitter.com/jmsdf_pao_eng/status/1161904740227117057?lang=en

¹¹ "BRITISH AND INDIAN NAVIES JOIN FORCES IN CHANNEL", MOD UK, August 15, 2019, <https://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/news-and-latest-activity/news/2019/august/15/190815-british-and-indian-navies-join-forces-in-channel>

¹² "Panel set up to speed up military purchases, push indigenisation", Hindustan Times, August 18, 2019, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/panel-set-up-to-speed-up-military-purchases-push-indigenisation/story-c1fZ9XflPIsaVkaA2ZGOygK.html>

¹³ShuklaAjai. Business Standard, New Delhi. September 06, 2019. Pg 18.

13. **Approval to Procure Software Defined Radios (SDR) and Maritime Mobile Coastal Batteries:** The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) approved procurement of indigenous Software Defined Radio (SDR Tactical) and Next Generation Maritime Mobile Coastal Batteries (NGMMCB) for the Indian Navy.
- The SDR is a state of art highly secure communication system, which has been indigenously designed and developed by DRDO, BEL and Weapons Electronics System Engineering Establishment (WESEE). It enables communication through high-speed data and secure voice communication with anti-jamming capability.
 - The NGMMCB, would be equipped with supersonic BrahMos surface-to-surface cruise missiles , which would be deployed for coastal defence¹⁴.
14. **Air Force Radars:** On August 26, 2019 MOD concluded a contract with Data Pattern (India) Pvt Ltd. for installation and commissioning of nine 'Precision Approach Radars'. The contract of Rs 380 crore (US \$ 54 million approximately) is under the 'Buy Indian' category of DPP 2016. The installation of these radars is to be completed by end 2022. It will enhance flight safety at the terminal stages of aircraft landing¹⁵.
15. **C-17 Globemaster Acquisition:** Boeing delivered the eleventh C-17 Globemaster III transport aircraft to the Indian Air Force on August 23, 2019, enhancing IAF's strategic airlift capability. This is reportedly the last aircraft of the category to be exported. At present, there are approximately 275 C-17s operating globally, with Boeing providing life cycle support¹⁶.
16. **Spectrum for 5G:** The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has begun consultations with the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and the Department of Space to examine spectrum availability in the 3,300-3,600 megahertz (MHz) band for the upcoming 5G spectrum auction. The auction is expected to take place by the end of the year. Currently, 25 MHz

¹⁴ "Rajnath Singh approves big purchases for Indian Navy", The Asian Age, August 9, 2019, <https://asianage.com/india/all-india/090819/rajnath-singh-approves-big-purchases-for-indian-navy.html>

¹⁵ "Defence ministry signs contract with Data Pattern India for 9 precision approach radars", Defence Star, August 26, 2019, <http://www.defencestar.in/industry/privatesector/make-in-india-in-defence-defence-ministry-signs-contract-with-data-pattern-india-for-9-precision-approach-radars/>

¹⁶ "Boeing delivers 11th and the World's last C-17 Globemaster to India", Defence News, August 26, 2019, <http://www.defencenews.in/article.aspx?id=586724>

of spectrum is with the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and 40 MHz is with MoD, which constitutes approximately 22% of the bandwidth under consideration¹⁷.

¹⁷ "DoT consults MoD, ISRO to make airwaves available for 5G spectrum auctions", Business Standard, August 7, 2019, https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/dot-consults-mod-isro-to-make-airwaves-available-for-5g-spectrum-auctions-119080701843_1.html

PART II: NEIGHBOURHOOD DEFENCE SCENE

China

17. **Challenge to ONGC Videsh Exploration in South China Sea:** Chinese activities are intensifying in the South China Sea. Concerns were raised by Vietnam in July 2019 over recent marine survey conducted by Chinese seismic survey vessel- Haiyang Dizhi accompanied by their Coast Guard and fishing vessels within Vietnamese territorial water. According to Vietnamese reports, Chinese vessels have also threatened ONGC Videsh to stop exploration work at the Block 06.1. India is watching the developments no formal measures have been initiated yet¹⁸.
18. **Border Personnel Meetings (BPM):** Ceremonial Border Personnel Meetings were held at designated points, along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China on the occasion of India's Independence Day. Designated BPM points include Daulat Beg Oldie (DBO) and Chushul-Moldo in Ladakh, Nathu La in Sikkim, and Bumla and Kibithu in Arunachal Pradesh. Both sides renewed their commitments to maintaining peace and tranquillity, and adhering to the Confidence Building Measures (CBM).¹⁹
19. **High Altitude Warfare Exercise:** China recently conducted a high altitude warfare exercise in the area of Qinghai-Tibet plateau, where it used some of its advanced weaponry including Type 99A main battle tanks and battlefield robots capable of operating in snow covered terrain²⁰.
20. **New Counter-Terrorism Unit:** The Chinese People's Armed Police (PAP) has raised a new counter-terror special operations unit in Northwest China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region for conducting internal security operations. China already has two counter-terrorism units: the

¹⁸"Tensions in the South China Sea simmer as Vietnam objects to Chinese activity in its EEZ" ANI News, July 29, 2019. <https://www.aninews.in/news/world/asia/tensions-in-south-china-sea-simmer-as-vietnam-objects-to-chinese-activity-in-its-eez20190729172544/>

¹⁹"As Pakistan sulks, Indian and Chinese troops hold ceremonial BPMs on India I-day", Economic Times, August 16, 2019. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/as-pakistan-sulks-indian-chinese-troops-hold-ceremonial-bpms-on-india-i-day/articleshow/70696173.cms>

²⁰"China uses battlefield robots, new tanks in drill on plateau, possibly near India", Hindustan Times, August 20, 2019. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/china-uses-battlefield-robots-new-tanks-in-drill-on-plateau-possibly-near-india/story-PXJ7sa9q6CiJEPRTqBo16K.html>

Guangzhou based 'Snow Leopard' Unit, which was established in 2002, and the Beijing based 'Falcon' Unit, established in 1982. Continued raising of these units is indicative of the changing threat perception and enhanced emphasis on conducting counter-terrorism operations²¹.

21. **China Declines US Navy Port Call Request:** For the second time in the last one month, China has declined a request by the US Navy (USN) for its warships to visit the port city of Qingdao. China had earlier rejected a request by two USN ships to visit Hong Kong on August 13, 2019, as the crisis emerging from anti-government protests in Hong Kong intensified.²²
22. **China Protests FONOPs by US Navy:** On August 28, 2019 the US Navy guided missile destroyer USS Wayne E Meyer sailed within 12 nautical miles of Fiery Cross and Mischief reefs, two of the biggest artificial islands in the Spratly Archipelago. China has strongly protested US naval patrol near these islands, over which it claims sovereignty²³.
23. **Chinese Nuclear Power Group on US Entity List:** The US Department of Commerce has added China's biggest state-owned nuclear company, China General Nuclear Power Group to its 'entity list'. American companies are now barred from selling products to the Chinese company after reports that it diverts U.S. technology to Chinese military use. Companies on the 'entity list' are also required to obtain approval from the US Commerce Department when acquiring materials and technology from the U.S. In practice however, approvals are rarely granted²⁴.

²¹"Chinese army new counter-terror special operations unit in Northwest China", Army Recognition, August 22, 2019. https://www.armyrecognition.com/armies_in_the_world_analysis_focus/chinese_army_new_counter-terror_special_operations_unit_in_northwest_china.html

²²China denies Qingdao port visit for US warship amid tensions, Al Jazeera, August 28, 2019 <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/08/china-denies-qingdao-port-visit-warship-tensions-190828042249333.html>

²³ Beijing hits out as US sends warship past two disputed reefs in South China Sea for the first time, South China Morning Post, August 29, 2019 <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3024849/beijing-hits-out-us-sends-warship-past-two-disputed-reefs><https://asia.nikkei.com/Economy/Trade-war/US-adds-China-s-biggest-nuclear-company-to-entity-list>

²³Destroyer USS Wayne E. Meyer sails past fiery cross, mischief reefs in latest FONOPs", USNI News, August 29, 2019. <https://news.usni.org/2019/08/28/destroyer-uss-wayne-e-meyer-sails-past-fiery-cross-mischief-reefs-in-latest-fonops>

²⁴"US adds China's biggest nuclear company to 'entity' list", Nikkei Asian Review, August 14, 2019. <https://asia.nikkei.com/Economy/Trade-war/US-adds-China-s-biggest-nuclear-company-to-entity-list>

24. **Joint China-Thailand Air Force Exercise:** Aircraft of the PLA Air Force arrived at the Udorn Royal Thai Air Force Base (Udorn RTAFB) to participate in the fourth edition of joint Air Force exercise "Falcon Strike 2019". The exercise is being held from mid-August to early September. It aims to promote cooperation and interoperability between the two air forces, hone air combat tactics and develop greater understanding of each other's equipment and weapon systems²⁵.

Pakistan

25. **Extension of Tenure of Pakistan Army Chief:** Pakistan extended its Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa's term as COAS for another three years. A statement released by the Pakistan PM's office points to the 'regional security environment' being the reason for this decision. The extension, which was widely expected, marks the second time in a decade that the country's Army Chief has had his traditional three-year term extended²⁶.

26. **China-Pakistan Defence Cooperation:** General Xu Qiliang, Vice Chairman, Central Military Commission (CMC) visited Pakistan on August 26, 2019. During the visit, an MoU for enhanced defence cooperation between the two countries and capacity building of Pakistan Army was signed²⁷.

27. **China-Pakistan Joint Air Force Exercise:** China and Pakistan conducted a joint Air Force exercise 'SHAHEEN' during the last week of August 2019 at Hotan, Tibet, approximately 200km north of Leh. Pakistan is participating with JF-17 fighter jets while China fielded J10 and J11 fighter aircraft²⁸.

28. **Activities in Kashmir:** Post repealing of Article 370 of the Indian Constitution, Pakistan has intensified its bellicose behaviour and vitriolic

²⁵"China, Thailand host joint air force exercise Falcon Strike 2019", China Military, August 20, 2019. http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/view/2019-08/21/content_9597046.htm

²⁶"Pakistan extends military chief's tenure amid Kashmir row", AFP, August 19, 2019. <https://www.yahoo.com/news/pakistan-extends-military-chiefs-tenure-amid-kashmir-row-004653115.html>

²⁷Pakistan, China Sign Agreement To Enhance Defence Cooperation, NDTV, August 27, 2019 <https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/pakistan-china-sign-agreement-to-enhance-defence-cooperation-2090846>

²⁸IAF keeping close eye on Pakistan, China aerial exercise, The Economic Times, August 26, 2019 <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/iaf-keeping-close-eye-on-pakistan-china-aerial-exercise/articleshow/70843649.cms?from=mdr>

attacks on India, even at the level of their Prime Minister. Some of the actions being taken by Pakistan are:

- Pakistani Prime Minister has threatened India with nuclear war saying that the country would go to any extent on the Kashmir issue²⁹.
- Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi and Army spokesperson Major Gen Asif Ghafoor have asserted that the Pakistan Army is 'fully prepared' to face any challenge and that the Kashmir issue is a 'nuclear flashpoint'³⁰.
- It has intensified efforts to increase the strength of terrorists at launch pads along the Line of Control (LC) and International Border (IB) with an intention to push infiltrators into Indian territories in Jammu and Kashmir and other parts of the country.
- Troops and military equipment have been airlifted to the Skardu air base opposite Ladakh. Reports of deployment of JF-17 fighters at this base have also emerged³¹.
- A special Kashmir Cell has been set up in the Pakistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A nodal person on Kashmir affairs is also being appointed at each of its embassies to propagate its Kashmir perspective at the global level.

Sri Lanka

29. **New Army Chief:** Government of Sri Lanka appointed Lt Gen Shavendra Silva as the new Army Chief, to relieve Lt Gen Mahesh Senanayake who superannuates on August 21, 2019. Gen Silva has been the Adjunct General and Director of Operations of the Army and the General Officer Commanding 58 Division during the Sri Lanka civil war. He has also served as Sri Lankan Ambassador and the Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations. In 2013 he was indicted by the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in 2013 for human rights abuse by the Sri

²⁹"Imran Khan addresses Pakistan on Kashmir, threatens nuclear war once again", India today, August 26, 2019. <https://www.indiatoday.in/world/story/imran-khan-addresses-pakistan-on-kashmir-threatens-nuclear-war-once-again-1591842-2019-08-26>

³⁰"Pakistani army calls Kashmir issue nuclear flashpoint after India's warning on no first use", News18, August 17, 2019. <https://www.news18.com/news/india/pakistani-military-calls-kashmir-issue-nuclear-flashpoint-a-day-after-indias-warning-on-no-first-use-2274017.html>

³¹"Pakistan deploying fighter jets to Skardu, near Ladakh; India keeping an eye", Business Standard, August 12, 2019. https://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ani/pak-deploying-fighter-jets-to-skardu-near-ladakh-india-watching-closely-119081200225_1.html

Lankan Army. The government of Sri Lanka has, however, denied these allegations³².

30. **Military Reforms:** The new Sri Lankan Army Chief has announced that the country's Military Intelligence structures would be reorganised to enhance their performance to international standards. He has also assured measures to enhance the professional standards of all ranks of Sri Lankan Army by imparting them higher operational and administrative training³³.
31. **India – Sri Lanka Coast Guard Meeting:** Under the provisions of a MoU signed between India and Sri Lanka for establishment of a collaborative mechanism for combating transnational illegal activities at sea and developing regional cooperation, a four member delegation of the Sri Lankan Coast Guard held a Joint Conference with Indian Coast Guard on August 20, 2019. They discussed issues of mutual concern pertaining to the maritime domain and discussed measures for capacity building and training of the Sri Lankan Coast Guard³⁴.

Bangladesh

32. **Utilization of Defence Line of Credit:** India's External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar in a meeting with his Bangladeshi counterpart Dr. A. K. Abdul Momen urged Bangladesh to utilize a \$500 million line of credit extended by India for purchasing military equipment under suppliers' credit system. The MoU was signed during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to India in April 2017³⁵.

Maldives

33. **US – Maldives Joint Exercise:** A joint military Exercise 'Balance Metal' was conducted by Maldives National Defence Forces (MNDF) with the US Military from August 01 to 22, 2019 at MNDF's Central Area in Kadhdhoo.

³²"Sri Lanka names controversial field commander, Lt. Gen. Shavendra Silva as Army Chief", News18, August 19, 2019. <https://www.news18.com/news/world/sri-lanka-names-controversial-field-commander-lt-gen-shavendra-silva-as-army-chief-2275835.html>

³³"Sri Lanka Army Commander to reorganize all military intelligence units", Lanka Business Online, August 22, 2019. <https://www.lankabusinessonline.com/sri-lanka-army-commander-to-reorganize-all-military-intelligence-units/>

³⁴"Coastguards of India and Sri Lanka agree to address maritime issues", United News of India, August 20, 2019. <http://www.uniindia.com/coast-guards-of-india-and-sri-lanka-agree-to-address-maritime-issues/india/news/1703908.html>

³⁵"Delhi asks Dhaka to use defence loan", New Age Bangladesh, August 20, 2019. <http://www.newagebd.net/article/82076/delhi-asks-dhaka-to-use-defence-loan>

Officers from MNDF's Special Forces, Marine Corp and Coast Guard took part in the exercise³⁶.

Nepal

34. **Amending Nepal Army Act:** Nepal is in the process of amending the Nepal Army Act of 2006, to enable the Army to engage in commercial ventures as a promoter. The existing Nepal Army Act prevents the Army from investing in mega projects like hydropower. Once the amendment is approved, the Army, with government approval, would be able to invest like any other private entity³⁷.
35. **Induction of New Military Aircraft:** Nepal armed forces will shortly be inducting CASA CN-235 aircraft, manufactured by Indonesian aerospace manufacturer PT Dirgantara (PTDI). All flight tests and pre induction formalities for this have already been completed. In addition, it is also proposed to induct two M28 Skytruck light cargo and troop transport aircraft in December 2019. These aircraft, which have been used earlier in Afghanistan and Iraq by the troops of the Special Operations Command are being provided by the U.S. Government to Nepal as a grant³⁸.
36. **Uncertainty over Nepal – China Military Exercise:** Holding of the Nepal-China joint military Exercise '**Sagarmatha Friendship**', initially scheduled to be held in Nepal in August, still remains uncertain as the two countries are yet to start formal discussions about the event. The event was initially projected as a joint military exercise, then 'downgraded' to 'training' programme to enhance the capacity of personnel from the two countries. Nepal's participation in a joint military exercise with China has raised concerns in India.³⁹

³⁶"MNDF concludes joint military exercise with the US", Avax Maldives, August 24, 2019. <https://avas.mv/en/68762>

³⁷"Nepal Army amending law for commercial activities", The Weekend leader, August 10, 2019. <http://www.theweekendleader.com/Headlines/34223/nepal-army-amending-law-for-commercial-activities.html>

³⁸"Nepali Army most awaited CN 235 Aircraft arriving in October", Aviation Nepal, August 07, 2019. <https://www.aviationnepal.com/nepali-army-most-awaited-cn-235-aircraft-arriving-in-october/>

³⁹"Third edition of Nepal-China Military drill still uncertain", Online Khabar, August 15, 2019. <https://english.onlinekhabar.com/third-edition-of-nepal-china-military-drill-still-uncertain.html>

Bhutan

37. **US Highlights Bhutan's Role in the Region:** The US Deputy Secretary of State John J. Sullivan visited Bhutan on August 12-13, 2019, during which he underscored the importance of protecting and enhancing a rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific and Bhutan's place in this region. He is the highest ranking American to have visited the country in two decades⁴⁰.

⁴⁰"Top US Diplomat visits Bhutan, calls for rules based order in Indo-Pacific region", Economic Times, August 14, 2019.
<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/top-us-diplomat-visits-bhutan-calls-for-rule-based-order-in-indo-pacific-region/articleshow/70670082.cms>



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