



# Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



# India Defence Digest

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Delhi Policy Group

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## DPG India Defence Digest Volume 2, Issue 5 May 2020

### ABOUT US

Founded in 1994, the Delhi Policy Group (DPG) is among India's oldest think tanks with its primary focus on international and strategic issues of critical national interest. DPG is a non-partisan institution and is independently funded by a non-profit Trust. Over past decades, DPG has established itself in both domestic and international circles and is widely recognised today among the top security think tanks of India and of Asia's major powers.

Since 2016, in keeping with India's increasing global profile, DPG has expanded its focus areas to include India's regional and global role and its policies in the Indo-Pacific. In a realist environment, DPG remains mindful of the need to align India's ambitions with matching strategies and capabilities, from diplomatic initiatives to military modernisation.

At a time of disruptive change in the global order, DPG aims to deliver research based, relevant, reliable and realist policy perspectives to an actively engaged public, both at home and abroad. DPG is deeply committed to the growth of India's national power and purpose, the security and prosperity of the people of India and India's contributions to the global public good. We remain firmly anchored to these foundational principles which have defined DPG since its inception.

### 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 Shreyas Deshmukh at [Shreyas@dpg.org.in](mailto:Shreyas@dpg.org.in).

### Cover Photographs:

*(Photographs top to bottom)*

*Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhadauri at induction ceremony of Tejas Mk-1 FOC into No 18 Sqn, the "Flying Bullets" at Air Force Station Sulur, May 27, 2020. Source: PIB*

*INS Kesari delivering essential medicines to Mauritius on May 23, 2020. Source Twitter/@SpokespersonNavy*

*INS Jalashwa at Kochi harbour to disembark evacuees from the Maldives as part of Phase 2 of Operation Samudra Setu on May 17, 2020. Source:Twitter/@SpokespersonNavy*

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**Contents**

<b>PART I: INDIA'S DEFENCE SCENE</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<i>Defence Policy</i> .....	<b>1</b>
<i>Operations and Exercises</i> .....	<b>1</b>
<i>Capability Development</i> .....	<b>3</b>
<i>Other Issues</i> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>PART II: NEIGHBOURHOOD DEFENCE SCENE</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<i>China</i> .....	<b>6</b>
<i>Pakistan</i> .....	<b>8</b>
<i>Nepal</i> .....	<b>8</b>

## PART I: INDIA'S DEFENCE SCENE

### *Defence Policy*

#### 1. [Restructuring of Military Engineering Services](#)

May 7, 2020, PIB

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has approved the proposal for abolition of 9,304 posts in the Military Engineering Services, in line with the recommendations of the Shekatkar Committee. The recommendation was aimed at making MES an effective organisation with a leaner workforce, well equipped to handle complex issues in the emerging scenario in an efficient and cost-effective manner.

#### 2. [Border Infrastructure](#)

May 18, 2020, PIB

The Government has accepted and implemented three recommendations of Committee of Experts (CoE) under the Chairmanship of Lt General D B Shekatkar (Retd) relating to border Infrastructure. These were related to speeding up road construction, leading to socio economic development in the border areas. The Government has implemented recommendation of CoE to outsource road construction work beyond optimal capacity of Border Roads Organisation. With the empowerment of field officers through enhanced delegation of financial and administrative powers, there has been significant improvement in faster financial closure of works.

### *Operations and Exercises*

#### 3. [Operation Samudra Setu](#)

May 5, 2020, PIB

The Indian Navy has launched Operation Samudra Setu under the Vande Bharat Mission to repatriate Indian citizens from overseas, tasking INS Jalashwa and INS Magar for evacuation operations. In the first phase between May 10-12, INS Jalashwa evacuated 698 and INS Magar 202 Indian nationals stranded in the Maldives. In the second phase INS Jalashwa evacuated 588 personnel on May 16.

#### 4. [Mission SAGAR](#)

May 10, 2020, PIB

As part of the Government of India outreach amidst the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, Indian Naval Ship Kesari has departed for Maldives, Mauritius, Seychelles, Madagascar and Comoros, to provide Food Items, COVID related Medicines including HCQ Tablets and Special Ayurvedic Medicines with Medical Assistance Teams. This deployment, named 'Mission Sagar', is in line with India's role as the first responder in the region and is intended to battle the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact. On May 12 INS Kesari visited Male and handed over 580 tons of food provisions to the Maldivian authorities. The ship visited Port Louis, Mauritius on May 23 where it provided COVID related essential medicines and a special consignment of Ayurvedic medicines. In addition, a 14-member Specialist Medical Team comprising Indian Navy doctors and paramedics alongside their Mauritian counterparts rendered assistance for COVID-19 related emergencies.

#### 5. [Chinese Aggression](#)

May 26, 2020, Delhi Policy Group

Over the last month, the Chinese PLA has made three significant incursions into the Indian side of the Line of Actual Control (LAC). On May 9, 2020 Chinese troops encroached into settled borders in north Sikkim at Naku La, an area which is generally peaceful, resulting in a physical scuffle with Indian troops. The attempt appeared to be to reopen the boundary issue by challenging Indian sovereignty. Incidents at the Pangong Tso lake on May 5-6 and the Galwan valley in Ladakh are even more serious developments. The PLA's intrusion at Pangong Tso is turning into an occupation on the Indian side of the LAC at a spur called Finger 4 on the north bank of the 134 km long brackish water lake, one third of which is on the Indian side and two thirds in the territory under Chinese control. The area is of great operational importance for both India and China as the two shoulders of the lake are considered the likely corridors of possible Chinese offensives in eastern Ladakh. The latest PLA moves, which include consolidation of military positions, are a major escalation which will have to be vacated by China, failing which this standoff could develop into a prolonged confrontation. However, on May 27, Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian that the situation on LAC was "generally stable and controllable". The sides were communicating through military and diplomatic channels.

## *Capability Development*

### 6. [Work on Strategic Atal Tunnel Restarted](#)

May 5, 2020, PIB

Proactive measures are being taken by Border Roads Organisation to complete the work on strategic Atal Tunnel in the Pir Panjal ranges of Himachal Pradesh. The work was halted for 10 days due to the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak. The tunnel will connect Manali to Lahaul Valley throughout the year and will reduce the road length of Manali-Rohtang Pass Sarchu-Leh road by 46 kilometres and aid forward connectivity offering the security forces a major strategic advantage.

### 7. [Modernisation of Military Airfields](#)

May 8, 2020, PIB

The Ministry of Defence signed a contract for Modernisation of Airfield Infrastructure (MAFI) of 37 airfields for Indian Air Force, Navy and Coast Guard with M/s Tata Power SED at a cost of Rs 1,200 crore on May 8. The MAFI Phase-II is a follow-on programme based on MAFI Phase-I that included upgradation of 30 airfields of IAF. The turnkey project includes installation and commissioning of modern airfield equipment like Cat-II Instrument Landing System and Cat II Airfield Lightning System, etc. The upgradation of navigational aids and infrastructure under this project would enhance the operational capability by facilitating air operations of military and civil aircrafts even in poor visibility and adverse weather condition while enhancing aerospace safety.

### 8. [Commissioning of ICGS Sachet and C-450 & C-451 into the Indian Coast Guard](#)

May 15, 2020, PIB

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh commissioned Indian Coast Guard Ship (ICGS) Sachet and two interceptor boats (IBs) C-450 and C-451 on May 15. The first in the series of five offshore patrol vessels, ICGS Sachet has been designed & built indigenously by Goa Shipyard Limited. The 105 M long ship displaces approximately 2,350 tons and is propelled by two 9,100 KW diesel engines designed to attain a maximum speed of 26 knots, with an endurance of 6,000 nautical miles. The ship is designed to carry a twin-engine helicopter and four high speed boats and one inflatable boat for swift boarding and search & rescue operations. The ship is also capable of carrying limited pollution response equipment to undertake oil spill

pollution response at sea. The IBs C-450 and C-451 are indigenously designed & built by Larsen & Toubro Shipyard Hazira and fitted with latest navigation and communication equipment. The two 30 M long boats can achieve speeds in excess of 45 knots and are designed for high speed interception, close coast patrol and low intensity maritime operations.

#### 9. [Commissioning of INLCU L57 into the Indian Navy](#)

May 15, 2020, PIB

Lt. Gen. PS Rajeshwar, Commander-in-Chief A&N Command, commissioned INLCU L57 into the Indian Navy on 15 May 2020 at Port Blair. INLCU L57 is the seventh Landing Craft Utility (LCU) MK-IV class to be inducted into the Indian Navy. The ship has been designed and built by M/s Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata. The ship is an amphibious vessel with a designated primary role of transporting and deploying Main Battle Tanks, Armoured Vehicles, troops and equipment from ship to shore. The ship is fitted with state-of-art equipment and advanced systems, like Integrated Bridge System and Integrated Platform Management System. The last ship of the same class is at an advanced stage of construction at M/S GRSE, Kolkata, and is scheduled to be inducted by end of 2020.

#### 10. [Defence Testing Infrastructure Scheme](#)

May 15, 2020, PIB

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has approved the launch of Defence Testing Infrastructure Scheme with an outlay of Rs 400 crore for creating testing infrastructure for this sector. The Scheme would run for five years and envisages the setting up of six to eight new test facilities in partnership with private industry. Projects under the Scheme will be provided with up to 75 percent government funding in the form of 'Grant-in-Aid'. The remaining 25 per cent of the project cost will have to be borne by the Special Purpose Vehicle whose constituents will be Indian private entities and State Governments.

#### 11. [Induction of MK-1 FOC Aircraft](#)

May 27, 2020, PIB

The Indian Air Force inducted Tejas Mk-1 FOC aircraft into the recently resurrected No 18 Sqn, the "Flying Bullets" at Air Force Station Sullur, on May 27. This will enhance the operational capability of the Air Force. The Squadron is the first in the IAF to induct this platform. Tejas Mk-1 FOC is a

single engine, light weight, highly agile, all weather multi role fighter aircraft capable of air-to-air refueling.

### *Other Issues*

12. [Telephonic Conversation Between India and Australia Defence Ministers](#)

May 26, 2020, PIB

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh held a telephonic conversation with Australian Minister of Defence Ms Linda Reynolds on May 26. The two Defence Ministers had discussions on their respective responses against the COVID-19 pandemic. Both ministers conveyed their commitment to take forward the initiatives of bilateral defence and security cooperation under the framework of the India-Australia Strategic Partnership.

13. [Telephonic Conversation Between India and Japan Defence Ministers](#)

May 8, 2020, PIB

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh held a telephonic conversation with Japan's Minister of Defence, Japan Mr Taro Kono on May 8. The two Defence Ministers had discussions on their respective responses against the COVID-19 pandemic. Both ministers conveyed their commitment to take forward the initiatives of bilateral security cooperation under the framework of the India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership.

14. [Appointment of GOC-IN-C ARTRAC](#)

May 4, 2020, PIB

Lt. Gen. Raj Shukla was appointed GOC-in-Cof the Army Training Command on May 1. He was earlier Director General of Perspective Planning.

15. [Army Commanders' Conference](#)

May 26, 2020, PIB

The bi-annual Army Commanders' Conference which was earlier scheduled for April 2020 and postponed due to COVID-19 pandemic has now been organised in two phases. The first phase of the conference was held from May 27-29. The second phase will be in last week of June. During the first phase various aspects pertaining to operational and administrative issues including studies pertaining to logistics and human resources were discussed.



## PART II: NEIGHBOURHOOD DEFENCE SCENE

### *China*

#### Defence Policy

16. [China Announces \\$178.2 billion Military Budget](#)

May 23, 2020, Defense News

China has announced a 6.6% growth in its defence budget for this year, which would see spending rise from \$167 billion last year to \$178.2 billion, an increase of about \$11 billion, despite the economic impact of COVID-19.

17. [Xi Jinping Stresses Strengthening National Defence, Armed Forces](#)

May 26, 2020, China Military

Chinese President Xi Jinping stressed achieving the targets and missions of strengthening the national defence and armed forces for 2020, while maintaining effective epidemic control on a regular basis. Speaking at a plenary meeting of the PLA Army and Armed Police Force delegations, he ordered the military to think about worst-case scenarios, scale up training and battle preparedness, promptly and effectively deal with all sorts of complex situations and resolutely safeguard national sovereignty, security and development interests.

#### Operations and Exercises

18. [Chinese Tracking Vessel Sails to Pacific Ocean for Monitoring Missions](#)

May 20, 2020, China Military

China's upgraded tracking vessel Yuanwang 6 is sailing to the Pacific Ocean from a port in Jiangsu province for multiple maritime missions of spacecraft monitoring. Yang Bianjiao, the captain of Yuanwang 6, said the upcoming mission will test the vessel's new equipment and improvement in measuring and controlling operation, laying foundations for future missions including the Mars exploration and the Chang'e 5 lunar probe launch.

## Capability Development and Sales

### 19. [Chinese Navy Puts Two New Nuclear Submarines into Service](#)

April 29, 2020, South China Morning Post

According to Chinese military sources, two new upgraded nuclear-powered strategic submarines have gone into service in China in time for the 71st anniversary of the navy. The vessels are revamped versions of the Type 094, or Jin-class, nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines (SSBN), and have had upgrades to technology such as radar, sonar and torpedoes.

### 20. [PCL-181 Brings Improvement for PLA Artillery Troops](#)

May 07, 2020, China Military

Reports state that China's new generation of 155mm vehicle-mounted howitzers, the PCL-181, have been delivered to troops of a brigade under the People's Liberation Army Eastern Theatre Command in batches. This reveals both the renewal of the main equipment, and the overall improvement of command and control, tactical thinking, and equipment system of the PLA Army artillery troops.

### 21. [First Domestically Made Airdrop-Capable Armoured Vehicle Enters Military Service](#)

May 11, 2020, China Military

China's first batch of homemade airdrop-capable four-wheeled armoured vehicles have entered service, and are expected to boost the all-terrain mobilisation capacity of the People's Liberation Army Air Force and provide paratroopers enhanced firepower, mobility and protection.

### 22. [PLAGF Units Training with New Vehicle-Mounted Electronic Warfare Systems](#)

May 15, 2020, Janes

Chinese state-owned media have released video footage which shows the People's Liberation Army Ground Force (PLAGF) units conducting training exercises with two of the vehicle-mounted electronic warfare systems paraded by Beijing on 1 October 2019: confirming that they have entered service. The systems, which are mounted on 6x6 Dongfeng Mengshi CSZ181 armoured vehicles, were shown in a report by the China Central Television 7 channel being operated by a unit within the 78th Group Army of the PLA's Northern Theatre Command.

## *Pakistan*

23. [U.S. Special Representative for Afghan Reconciliation Calls on Chief of Army Staff](#)

May 08, 2020, ISPR Pakistan

The U.S. Special Representative for Afghan Reconciliation, Zalmay Khalilzad called on General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Chief of Army Staff on May 08. They discussed issues of mutual interest and overall regional security situation including Afghan reconciliation process during the meeting.

24. [Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Calls on Chief of Army Staff](#)

May 12, 2020, ISPR Pakistan

Yao Jing, the Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan called on General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Chief of Army Staff on May 12. The two discussed matters of mutual interest including regional security issues and COVID-19. COAS expressed gratitude for China's support regarding immediate medical supplies and the visit of Chinese medical experts to help Pakistan fight the pandemic.

25. [Pakistan Navy Chief Outlines Aviation Modernisation Plans](#)

May 24, 2020, Quwa

The Pakistan Navy Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Zafar Mahmood Abbasi, stated in an interview that the Pakistan Navy is working to acquire long-range maritime patrol aircraft (LRMPA), unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV), and multi-mission helicopters. He did not reveal the status of any of these programs, or the expected procurement timeline.

## *Nepal*

26. [Nepal to Establish APF Border Outpost near Kalapani](#)

May 12, 2020, My Republica

At the International Relations Committee under the House of Representatives, Nepal's Foreign Minister Pradeep Kumar Gyawali said that the Nepal government is soon establishing an Armed Police Force border outpost (BoP) near Kalapani, a territory that it claims as its own, and views as occupied by India. The outpost is being set up at Chhangru of Byas Rural Municipality. A squadron of Armed Police Force will be

permanently stationed at Chhangru area, near Kalapani, and a battalion of the APF will be stationed there gradually.



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