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GEO-STRATEGIC SCAN

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Japan's
New
Security
Strategy Is
A Game-
Changer In
The Indo-
Pacific

*Putin Oversees
Commissioning of
New Russian Navy
Warships*

PEOPLE IN
PAKISTAN'S
GWADAR CITY
RISE UP
AGAINST CPEC

Chinese FM Wang Yi:
Ready To Work With
India For Growth Of
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**Biden Approves
Record \$858 Billion
U.S. Defence
Spending Bill**

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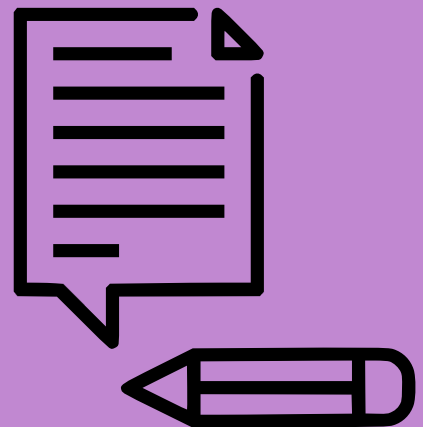
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Global Alarm Grows Over China's Covid Surge

<https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20221229-global-alarm-grows-over-china-s-covid-surge>

Hospitals across China have been overwhelmed by an explosion of Covid cases following Beijing's decision to lift strict rules that had largely kept the virus at bay but tanked its economy and sparked widespread protests.

COMMENTS

On Monday, the country said it would bring an end to mandatory quarantine on arrival -- prompting many jubilant Chinese citizens to make plans to travel abroad.

In response, the United States and a number of other countries announced they would require negative Covid tests for all travellers from mainland China. The US move came after Italy, Japan, India and Malaysia announced their own measures in a bid to protect against importing new Covid variants from China.

The recent rapid increase in Covid-19 transmission in China increases the potential for new variants emerging. Beijing has provided only limited data about circulating variants in China to global databases and its testing and reporting on new cases has also diminished. China still does not allow foreign visitors, however, with the issuance of visas for overseas tourists and students still suspended. But the lifting of mandatory quarantines sparked a surge in interest in overseas travel by Chinese citizens, who have been largely confined to their country since Beijing pulled down the drawbridge in March 2020.

Italy said it would make coronavirus tests for all visitors from China mandatory. The measure is considered essential to ensure the surveillance and identification of any variants of the virus in order to protect the population. Paris is also closely monitoring the evolution of the situation in China.

Beijing has hit out against "hying, smearing and political manipulation" by the Western media concerning its Covid response. According to China's foreign ministry spokesman, currently China's epidemic situation is all predictable and under control.

Bodies piling up

On the frontlines of China's Covid wave, hospitals are battling surging cases that have hit the elderly and vulnerable hardest. China's National Health Commission (NHC) last week said that it would no longer release an official daily Covid death toll.

With the end of mass testing -- and China's decision to reclassify Covid deaths in a move analysts said would dramatically downplay the fatalities -- those numbers were no longer believed to reflect reality.

In an authoritarian regime like China, leadership has no value for human lives. During Mao's Great Leap Forward programme, millions of people died in China, with estimates ranging from 15 to 55 million people. During the previous COVID19 pandemic outbreak which commenced from Chinese central city of Wuhan and even now, the truth will never be out from China about the actual human lives lost. However, the world at large and India in particular have to take all possible preventive measures against the spread of new Corona virus strain from China.

Chinese FM Wang Yi: Ready To Work With India For Growth Of Ties

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/china-ready-to-work-with-india-for-sound-growth-in-ties-fm-wang-yi-101671946569387.html>

In a video address at a symposium on "International Situation and China's Foreign Relations" in Beijing, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said that China is ready to work with India for "steady and sound growth" of bilateral ties. He said, "China and India have maintained communication through diplomatic and military-to-military channels, and both countries are committed to upholding stability in the border areas."



Source: The Global Times

COMMENTS

Wang's remarks came a fortnight after the border clash in Yangtse, the Tawang sector of Arunachal on December 9 in which soldiers from both sides were injured. Further, corps commanders of the two countries met on December 20 to ensure "security and stability on the ground." In his address, Wang briefly touched on Sino-India ties and spoke more on China's problems with the US and the upswing in its ties with Russia. On Pakistan, he said the two countries had "continued to firmly support each other".

In the context of India, he cited the Quad (India, the US, Australia and Japan) as a symbol of "bloc confrontation" and the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) as the "most influential" platform for South-South cooperation. India has consistently maintained that peace and tranquillity along the LAC are critical for the overall development of bilateral relations with China. India's external affairs minister S Jaishankar has also said that the normalisation of India-China relations is in the interest of the countries and the region. In November, Jaishankar told China's outgoing ambassador Sun Weidong that the "3 Mutuals" - mutual respect, mutual sensitivity and mutual interest - should guide Sino-India ties and that "peace and tranquillity in the border areas is essential".

China Sends 71 Warplanes And 7 Ships Toward Taiwan In 24 Hours

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/china-taiwan-us-defense-spending-bill-rcna63221>

The Chinese military sent 71 aircraft and seven ships toward Taiwan in 24 hours, in its biggest show of force since House Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited the island this year.

COMMENTS

The aggression toward Taiwan came after the Chinese government objected to a U.S. defense bill signed into law on Friday that includes greater support for Taiwan's military. The \$858 billion U.S. defense bill authorizes up to \$10 billion in military grant assistance to Taiwan over five years and accelerates the weapons procurement process for the island, with which Washington has unofficial relations. Taiwan welcomed the measure; China said some of its provisions would "cause serious damage to peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait."

The Chinese military action, which lasted from 6 a.m. 25 December (Sunday) until 6 a.m. Monday, included J-10, J-11 and J-16 fighter jets, as well as drones, according to Taiwan's defense ministry. The ministry said 47 of the planes crossed the median line, an unofficial boundary in the Taiwan Strait.

China has stepped up its military harassment of Taiwan in recent years, sending planes or ships toward the island almost daily. Its planes have crossed the median line more regularly and in greater numbers since Pelosi's visit in August. Beijing viewed the trip as de facto recognition of Taiwan's independence, and the Chinese government responded with large-scale live-fire military drills.

China, which has never renounced the use of force to bring Taiwan under its control, said that it had held joint exercises in the sea and airspace around the island. Shi Yi, the spokesman for the Eastern Theater Command of the People's Liberation Army, the Chinese military, said in a statement Sunday night, "This is a firm response to the current U.S.-Taiwan escalation and provocation."

A White House National Security Council spokesman said, "We will continue to assist Taiwan in maintaining a sufficient self-defense capability in line with our long-standing commitments and consistent with our one China policy".

The West And Russia-Ukraine Conflict

- *Reuters Wednesday, December 21, 2022*
- *The Economist Wednesday, Decembe21, 2022*
https://www.economist.com/leaders/2022/12/15/a-looming-russian-offensive?utm_campaign=r.subscriberonly_live_event_followup.2022-12-
- *The AP News: <https://apnews.com/article/zelenskyy-biden-europe>*
- *The Japan Times: <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2022/12/25/national/japan-nuclear-power-turnaround>*
- *The Euro Asian Times: <https://eurasianimes.com/russia-to-bolster-it-military-will-create-nine-new-regiments-to-meet-security-needs-russian-defense-minister>.*
- *TOI. http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/96470732.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst*

Scenario: Drone Attacks On Russian Air Bases

- Russian President Vladimir visited Belarus on Monday, fueling Ukrainian fears he intends to pressure his ally to join a new offensive, Russian troops will conduct military exercises in Belarus, which neighbours Ukraine. In October, Belarus announced the formation of a joint regional force with Moscow with several thousand Russian servicemen arriving in the ex-Soviet country. Putin's visit to Belarus as Russian drones attacked Kyiv in the latest assault targeting key infrastructure, stoking speculation that the former Soviet ally could reopen a new front against Ukraine. Belarus has provided large quantities of ammunition from its Soviet-era stockpiles, according to Western officials.[1]. President Lukashenko of Belarus has repeatedly said he does not plan to send Belarusian troops to Ukraine.
- On 22 December 2022, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy arrived for a surprise visit with President Joe Biden and an address to Congress.. During a Wednesday news conference with Zelensky, President Biden said that provision of some of the weapons Ukraine wants could shatter unity among alliance partners who were “not looking to go to war with Russia.” U.S. lawmakers were expected to approve a \$45 billion aid package for Ukraine, as President Volodymyr Zelenskiy returned from Washington with the promise of Patriot missiles to help fend off Russia's invasion. Lawmakers in Washington gave final approval Friday to legislation that includes nearly \$50 billion in emergency funding for Ukraine on 23 December 2022.

[1]https://www.economist.com/the-economist-explains/2022/12/20/is-russia-running-out-of-ammunition?utm_content=article-link-2&etear=nl_today_2&utm_campaign=r.the-economist-today&utm_medium=email.internal-newsletter.np&utm_source=salesforce-marketing-cloud&utm_term=12/21/2022&utm_id=1428356

RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT

- Volodymyr Zelensky, Ukraine's president, met with Andrzej Duda, his Polish counterpart, with whom he said he discussed "strategic plans for the future". The meeting took place on Mr Zelensky's way back from a flying visit to America.
- Russian shells pumelled the Southern Ukranian City of Kherson killing at least seven people and injuring 58 more in the city that Moscow's forces abandoned last month. In a recent interview with The Economist General Valery Zaluzhny, Ukraine's most senior officer, warned that Russia was preparing for a fresh offensive in the spring, which could include another attempt on Kyiv. More than 300 days into Russia's invasion of Ukraine, about 7,000 civilians have been killed and 10,000 more injured, according to the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights. About 16 million Ukrainians have fled their homes.
- The Russian Defense Minister announced significant structural changes to the Russian Army that will create six Army aviation brigades and strengthen the Russian Aerospace Forces by nine aviation regiments. To ensure the successful execution of operations to secure Russia's security, he said, the nation needs a 1.5 million-strong military.
- Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba stated in an interview with the Associated Press that Ukraine wants a peace summit sponsored by the UN to put an end to its conflict with Russia. However, the U.N. gave a cautious response, stating that it could only mediate if all parties consented.
- Sergei Lavrov, Russia's foreign minister, told Ukraine to submit to the Kremlin's demands or the "issue will be decided by the Russian army". Mr Lavrov said Ukraine must surrender territory currently occupied by Russian forces. His ultimatum came a day after Vladimir Putin, Russia's president, said he was ready to negotiate peace.
- During a phone chat with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy cited a 10-point "peace formula" India's G20 leadership may have given Ukraine the immediate backdrop it needed to ask India for backing for the plan that was initially presented at the G20 summit in Bali in November. Among other things, it calls for the removal of Russian troops from Ukrainian territory, a reaffirmation of Ukrainian sovereignty by Moscow, the payment of war reparations, and the creation of a special court to punish Putin and other individuals for invading Ukraine.
- Ukrainian officials urged residents of Kherson to evacuate as Russian forces escalated their attack on the southern city, which was liberated in November having been occupied by the Russians since the start of the war. Russian shelling of the city has intensified in recent days, causing hundreds to flee.



Source: *The New York Times*

BACKGROUND

As combat has reached a stalemate with the arrival of winter, and while the still-outnumbered and outgunned Ukrainians prepare new offensives to regain more Russian-occupied territory.

COMMENTS

- The build-up of Russian forces in Belarus is reportedly part of a plan by Moscow to set the conditions for a renewed invasion of northern Ukraine possibly aimed at Kyiv[2]. Belarus had allowed its territory to be used as a launchpad for Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, but has not joined the fighting directly.
- The military aid from the U.S. has been indispensable to Ukraine's war effort. Without Western aid, Russian forces would have succeeded in capturing Kyiv in the early days of the war. The U.S. supply of High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) and M270 Multiple Launch Rocket Systems (MLRS) had allowed Ukraine to knock out Russian logistical nodes, ammunition depots, and command and control centres. U.S. intelligence seems to have been critical in providing detailed information about Russia's plans.
- This week, Russia celebrates two milestones: the 100th anniversary of the Soviet Union's creation, which took place on December 30, 1922, following the Bolshevik Revolution, and the 26th anniversary of the Soviet Union's disintegration as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The world order established after World War II has been upended by Russia's invasion of Ukraine on February 24.

[2]<https://www.newsweek.com/russia-ukraine-belarus-dangerous-action-putin-lukashenko-1769475>

RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT

- This invasion also has resulted in three shocks that have combined to cause this turmoil. The biggest is geopolitical where the existing world order is being challenged. The second shock is impacting the world's food and energy security. Putin's invasion of Ukraine has demonstrated how dependent Europe is on Russian energy. The third shock is driving the global economy into a recession 2023 is shaping up to be the third-worst year for global growth this century, right behind the pandemic in 2020 and the financial crisis of 2009, according to the World Bank, which noted that the three largest economies—the U.S., China, and Europe—are “slowing sharply” while inflation is running at decade-high levels. The IMF has warned that “the worst is yet to come.” To deal with the sharp decline, experts say that world leaders will have to tighten monetary and fiscal policies to control inflation.
- At the Strategic Level, Russian President Putin in December stated that Russia might look in to modifying its military doctrine of ‘no first use’, in the event of the increased threat of nuclear weapons, while reacting to the ‘preventive blow’ statement imbibed in the newest US NPR 2022 [3]. NATO conducted its two-week long annual exercise in Oct “Steadfast Noon” while Russia simultaneously conducted its annual Exercise “Grom” at the same time.
- The more than ten-month-old confrontation between Russia and Ukraine still doesn't seem to be over. However, it is crucial that both parties declare that they are ready for dialogue if they wish to be seen as trying to terminate it. But it's obvious that there isn't a meeting spot yet. President of Russia Vladimir Putin has said that he wants to talk with Ukraine, but its western allies are obstructing this. According to Ukraine, Putin is distancing himself from his actual desire to annexe its territory. Nevertheless, despite the bluster, people are starting to realise that the fight cannot continue indefinitely.

[3] <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/12/09/europe/russia-putin-nuclear-weapons-intl/index.html>

Biden Approves Record \$858 Billion U.S. Defence Spending Bill

<https://www.thenationalnews.com/world/us-news/2022/12/23/biden-approves-record-858-billion-us-defence-spending-bill/>

The United States' (U.S.) President Joe Biden signed the National Defence Authorisation Act into law on 23 Dec, officially approving a record funding bill for the Pentagon and U.S. defence programmes. Earlier the bill had been passed by the House and Senate by an overwhelming bipartisan majority.



Source: *thenationalnews.com*

The \$858 billion legislation includes \$816.7 billion for the Department of Defence, with most of the rest destined for national security programmes within the Department of Energy. The amount was \$45 billion more than Mr Biden had asked for and was more than 8% increase over fiscal 2022 defence budget. It includes a 4.6% pay raise for troops as well as billions of dollars in additional funding to help the Pentagon cope with inflation, expand capacity for the defence industrial base to produce major weapons systems and continue certain programs the Biden administration had sought to cancel. "The Act provides vital benefits and enhances access to justice for military personnel and their families, and includes critical authorities to support our country's national defence, foreign affairs, and homeland security," Mr Biden said.

Further sharpening its focus on China, it increased U.S. investments in the Pacific Deterrence Initiative, and authorised the Taiwan Enhanced Resilience Act of 2022, which is designed to increase security co-operation with Taiwan. It authorized \$10 billion in military aid for Taiwan through FY27 and includes measures intended to help address the multibillion-dollar backlog of U.S. foreign military sales for the island nation.

USA

The Act emphasised modernisation and includes efforts to bolster Washington's support for Ukraine and the NATO alliance and mandates the Captagon Act aimed at combatting the Middle East's drug trade. It would extend and modify the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative, as well as authorize \$800 million in funding in fiscal year 2023, which is \$500 million more than was contained in last year's defence bill.

It authorises funding for five more F-35A aircraft as well as F-22 modernization and more funds to develop hypersonic weapons. Amid concerns over China's naval modernization efforts, the bill authorises \$32.6 billion to increase the U.S. naval fleet, including 11 battle force ships. The final bill includes a requirement for the U.S. Navy to maintain 31 operational amphibious ships, despite opposition from the White House.

For the Army, it authorizes funding increases for the CH-47 heavy-lift helicopter, the UH-60 Blackhawk medium-lift helicopter and the MQ-1 Gray Eagle drone. The bill also pushes back against the Biden administration's efforts to cancel the sea-launched cruise missile nuclear development program, also known as SLCM-N, by authorizing \$25 million for its continuation. It does allow the Biden administration to proceed with plans to retire the A-10 aircraft, a move that Congress has long opposed. It also addresses disruptive technologies like hypersonic, AI, and quantum computing.

The legislation allocates more than \$8 billion to procure high-priority munitions while granting the Pentagon emergency procurement powers to bolster production and refill U.S. stockpiles sent to Ukraine. It also allocates \$2.7 billion to procure new munitions; this is in part to backfill equipment sent to Ukraine but also designed to generally expand production capacity. This would enable paying industry to produce weapons and security assistance to send to Ukraine, rather than drawing directly from current U.S. stockpiles of weapons. This is expected to expedite the delivery of munitions to Ukraine and the replenishment of associated U.S. stockpiles by streamlining acquisition requirements and authorizing multiyear procurement for certain munitions, according to the House Armed Services Committee. The authorization would also provide stocks of munitions to U.S. allies and partners, as well as increase the number of munitions that would be needed if China takes action against Taiwan.

The NDAA provides \$1 billion to more than double the National Defense Stockpile — the U.S. strategic reserve of critical minerals – after years of depletion, highlighting congressional efforts to decrease Chinese influence in the U.S. defence supply chain.

The budget also mandates co-ordination between Washington's intelligence community, State Department, and the Pentagon to produce a report for Congress on “the use of online social media platforms by entities designated as foreign terrorist organisations” for recruitment, fund-raising, and the dissemination of radicalising information.

USA

The NDAA seeks to strengthen U.S.-India relations by directing the Departments of Defense and State to pursue greater engagement and expanded cooperation with India related to emerging technology, joint research and development, defence and cyber capabilities, and other opportunities for collaboration including for reducing India's reliance on Russian-built defence equipment. According to Section 1260 of the NDAA, among the new areas of expanded defence cooperation with India need to include intelligence collection capabilities, unmanned aerial vehicles, fourth and fifth-generation aircraft, depot-level maintenance, fifth-generation wireless communication, open Radio Access Network technologies, defensive cyber capabilities, cold-weather capabilities and critical and emerging technologies.

COMMENTS

The NDAA outlines the policy agenda for the U.S. Department of Defense and the U.S. military and authorises spending in line with their priorities. Keeping up with the trends in U.S. defence related expenditure (according to the Institute for Policy Studies, **U.S.' 2021 budget accounted for almost 40 per cent of the world's total military spending**), the fiscal year 2023 defence budget is huge and a substantial increase over last year. According to estimates, U.S. pays more for defence than the next nine countries combined. As its Senator Barbara Lee posted on Twitter, \$858 billion - **“That's \$2.3 billion a day. \$97 million an hour. All being funneled to an agency that has never passed a SINGLE audit and can't account for over HALF its assets.”**

The bipartisan support to the budget, providing way more than what the President had asked for and countering some of his initiatives to downsize the force, displays the importance the U.S. places on the military to maintain its dominance globally.

The 4.6% pay raise for troops, the largest troops have received in 20 years and nearly \$19 billion in extra funding to deal with extra inflation costs on construction, fuel prices and other military purchases has been well received within the uniform community that has been facing manpower challenges.

Funding to various initiatives across the world, is demonstrative of the resolve and commitment to its global actions, in support of its geostrategic interests. **Towards Ukraine, it has eased contract of weapons, equipment and munitions beyond the billions of dollars in weapons that President Joe Biden has already transferred to Kyiv** using appropriate presidential authority. It indicates that the government intends to continue supporting Kyiv against Russia. Military aid to Taiwan is clearly to counter China's growing influence and aggression in the Indo-Pacific region.

One of the key concerns throughout the ongoing conflict in Ukraine has been whether the industrial bases of the U.S. and other allied nations can meet the demand required to support Ukraine. The new measures defined in the NDAA seek to reduce bureaucratic red tape to help industry produce those weapons for Ukraine faster.

USA

The modified language also allows portions to go toward replenishing equipment for allies and partners that have sent weapons to Ukraine, with an aim to ensure ongoing and future support.

Some of the important proposals that did not form part of the 'compromise bill' are indicative of the continuing U.S. policy. These are those related to the arms transfers to some countries and irregular forces over human rights concerns, limiting future offensive arms sales to Saudi Arabia until the country stops targeting dissidents at home and abroad and preventing the transfer of two guided-missile frigates to Egypt unless President Biden certifies the country is in compliance with a 2017 Russia sanctions law and is not wrongfully detaining U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents.



Source: CNBC

For India, the mention within the U.S. NDAA of the intent to expand cooperation with India on multiple security and defence related sectors is a welcome step. The emphasis, as stated, is on reducing India's reliance on Russian-built military equipment. India should grasp this opportunity of greater military and technological cooperation, while ensuring that it keeps its national interests foremost.

Pakistan Taliban Kills 6 Security Personnel In Multiple Attacks In Balochistan

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/pakistan-taliban-kill-security-personnel-in-multiple-attacks-in-balochistan/article66305106.ece>

The notorious terrorist group Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has claimed the lives of six security personnel and injured a few others by carrying out several attacks in the restive Balochistan province. According to a statement released by Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), a terrorist and a soldier were killed during an exchange of fire between militants and the security forces in an intelligence-based operation conducted in the Sambaza area of Zhob district. The objective was to “deny terrorists the use of few suspected routes to move across the Pakistan-Afghanistan border to sneak into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa along the interprovincial boundary and target citizens and security forces”.

Hostage crisis ends, Pakistan army kills all 33 TTP terrorists

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/pakistan/hostage-crisis-ends-pakistan-army-kills-all-33-ttp-terrorists/articleshow/96384493.cms>

Pakistan's special forces have raided a counterterrorism centre in a remote northwestern district, killing all of the 33 Pakistani Taliban fighters whom earlier this week overpowered guards at a facility, seized arms and taken hostages. The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) fighters had killed two hostages. Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif told the parliament that two hostages were killed by the fighters and the rest had been freed. Asif said 15 security forces were wounded in the operation. He said there were 33 hostage-takers, all of whom were killed by the security forces in the operation.

COMMENTS

Since its formation in 2007, the TTP has been waging a rebellion against the state of Pakistan, demanding stricter imposition of Islamic laws, the release of its members arrested by the government, and a reversal of the merger of Pakistan's tribal areas with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. Pakistan is facing a resurgence of violent attacks, with analysts saying the government must immediately devise a strategy to counter the threat to internal security as the country heads into an election year. The TTP only last month unilaterally declared an end to a ceasefire agreed upon with the government and issued orders to its fighters to carry out attacks across the country.

REGIONAL SCAN: PAKISTAN AND SRI LANKA

There is clear instability and polarisation in society, which is leaving a vacuum. TTP is utilising this space and exerting pressure on a government which is facing multiple challenges. It is a good moment for them to perpetrate violence and force the government to negotiate with them on their terms. If Pakistan doesn't actively wage a war against these armed groups, we should brace ourselves for a volatile, violent year in terms of internal security. The TTP and its affiliate groups have carried out more than 150 attacks in the first 11 months of this year, resulting in more than 150 deaths, most of which belong to law enforcement agencies. The rising trend of attacks portrays a grim situation for Pakistan. It could be reminiscent of the 2013 election campaign which was quite bloody, and we may see a repeat.

Pakistan is already reeling from a crippling economic situation with foreign exchange reserves depleted to \$6.7bn, a four-year low, and record-breaking inflation. It is also dealing with the aftermath of catastrophic floods this summer that killed more than 1,700 people and caused damages estimated at over \$30bn as the waters destroyed crops, roads, bridges and homes. We will keep monitoring for future implications.

Pakistan PM Shehbaz Sharif Vows To Eliminate Terrorism In All Its Forms

https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/pakistan-pm-shehbaz-sharif-vows-to-eliminate-terrorism-in-all-its-forms-122122700384_1.html

As Pakistan reels from multiple incidents of terrorism, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has reaffirmed his vow to eradicate the menace amid criticism from ousted premier Imran Khan on the government's "failure" to curb militancy during its eight-month stint. Addressing a gathering in the Dera Ismail Khan district of the restive Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province, Sharif said that the menace of terrorism was on the rise and the state would crush it very soon. He said that with the help of provincial governments and security forces, the government would eliminate terrorism in all its forms.



Source: The Economic Times

Former Prime Minister Mr Khan said that his government had controlled terrorism and was proudly leading the country towards making it one of the world's top tourism destinations. He expressed his concern over the situation at the Pakistan-Afghan border as well.

COMMENTS

Regarding supporting the terrorists for the attack on India by Pakistan, now Pakistan is facing the same situation as Afghanistan TTP is carrying out terroristic attacks in Pakistan. Pakistan is facing a classic blowback. The patron-client relationship with the Afghan Taliban was envisioned by the Pakistan military establishment as a way to create a weak state in Afghanistan and at the same time, allow Islamabad to regain strategic depth. Now, Islamabad appears to be scrambling to ensure its decades-long investment in the former insurgents does not go awry. Taliban refuses to accept the Durand Line as the international border and has repeatedly opposed attempts to fence the border. The other allegation is the sanctuary provided to TTP.

Pakistan had hoped that the Afghan Taliban would reign in TTP to agree to a peace deal. TTP potential, vide its sanctuaries in Afghanistan, remain more or less intact, giving it a remote control of sorts to increase or decrease the level of violence at the time of its own choosing. In recent days, terror attacks have been carried out in Islamabad, Lahore, and other places with the government calling on the Taliban government in Afghanistan to stop its land from being used by the TTP and other terrorist groups for attacks in Pakistan.

Taliban's symbiotic relationship with the TTP runs both at the ideological, ethnic and operational levels. It has found tactical pressure to limit Pakistan's control over Kabul. Pakistan had hoped that the Haqqani would be more amenable to maintaining their subservient ties with Pakistan. Given the development in Afghanistan, Islamabad can at best hope to have a friendly or cooperative regime in Kabul. Defence Minister Mullah Yaqoob said that the American drones had entered Afghanistan's airspace from Pakistan. The outreach to India, especially Yaqoob's request for India's assistance to train troops, is another indicator of how the Taliban is trying to depict independence from Pakistan. The ensuing developments pose a significant security and foreign policy challenge for Islamabad. We will keep monitoring for future implications.

People In Pakistan's Gwadar City Rise Up Against CPEC

<https://dailynews19.com/2022/12/30/people-in-pakistan-gwadar-city-rise-up-against-cpec/>

People of Balochistan are rising up in protests across the Pakistan province, threatening a stumbling country, challenging the politicised army and upsetting Chinese dreams of a transnational corridor project. Public anger has now spilt out into the streets of the port city of Gwadar where shelling and stoning between the police and the protesting public have become a common occurrence. The public protests are being organised under the banner of a new group called Haq Do Tehreek (Give Rights Tehreek). The group is led by Maulana Hidayatur Rehman Baloch, who is also the general secretary of the Balochistan chapter of Jamaat-e-Islami.



Source: India Today

COMMENTS

The Haq Do Tehreek group is angry at the federal and provincial governments for ignoring the genuine demands of the people. These demands include illegal trawling in Gwadar's water, high number of security checkpoints and trade on the Pakistan-Iran border. Although the government is trying to calm down the protest by agreeing to many of their demands, one demand which cannot be met involves the army. The local communities want a visible reduction in the military presence in the strife-torn province. The Baloch militants have of late become active in the region, targeting the military.

What has caused the government to act in haste is the impact of such protests over the Chinese-funded mega project CPEC. The project is making the majority of people worry about their future. The CPEC projects Gwadar as the next Dubai, a dream which is fast turning into a nightmare for the local fishermen communities. Anger and frustration have grown across the region against the CPEC projects. The Chinese are deeply worried about the protests. Protestors have also targeted the Gwadar East Bay Expressway and the under-construction New Gwadar International Airport. At a time when Pakistan is facing instability in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, another threat, this time to the diplomatic ties between China and Pakistan is brewing in Balochistan. The government, instead of using talks to address the real issues, has adopted a hardline approach by mass-scale arrests, cases filed against activists, shutting down of communication networks and cane-charging of protesters.

'No Other Option' But To Implement IMF Deal Pak PM Shehbaz Sharif

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/pakistan/no-other-option-but-to-implement-imf-deal-pak-pm-shehbaz-sharif/articleshow/96566894.cms>

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has said that his government has “no other option” but to implement the International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme to revive the cash-starved economy. He regretted that if the government wanted to give any subsidy in any sector, it had to go to the IMF “which is a factor and a painful reality”. He said the coalition government never wanted to transfer the burden of price hikes to the people but added that the country would have to implement the IMF programme as “they had no other option”.

COMMENTS

Cash-strapped Pakistan revived a stalled USD 6 billion IMF programme this year which was initially agreed upon in 2019 but is finding it hard to meet the tough conditions of the Washington-based global lender. There are reports that the IMF may not release more funds under the programme until the pledges made by the government are met. The Pakistan Government said that they had devised a plan to immediately convert all the federal government entities' buildings to solar power by April next year to slash the country's fuel import bill of around USD 27 billion. With these urgent measures, they would be able to generate 300 MW to 500 MW of cheap power, thus reducing the import bill worth billions of dollars each year.

Pakistan is in need of funds to bolster its struggling economy, amplified by devastating floods that affected the country's agriculture and infrastructure in recent months. The power sector has become the biggest stumbling block in the way of the 9th IMF review mission, which is the prerequisite for the approval of the next loan tranche of over USD 1.1 billion. As per the revised schedule, the IMF board was supposed to approve the 9th IMF review and release of the tranche by 03 November. However, due to Pakistani authorities' failure to meet the programme conditions for the 9th IMF review, the global lender has not yet dispatched a mission to Pakistan. The IMF is seeking a clear roadmap for the power sector, taxation and addressing any fiscal imbalances due to three key factors – higher than agreed circular debt during the current fiscal year, higher than agreed primary budget deficit and expenses on flood rehabilitation and reconstruction.

Navy Chief Holds Discussions With Top Political And Defence Leadership In Sri Lanka To Boost Bilateral Military Ties

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/navy-chief-holds-discussions-with-top-political-and-defence-leadership-in-sri-lanka-to-boost-bilateral-military-ties/articleshow/96242678.cms>

Indian Navy chief Admiral R Hari Kumar has held discussions with senior political and defence leadership of Sri Lanka, including President Ranil Wickremesinghe, on furthering defence cooperation between the two nations. Discussions focused on furthering defence cooperation between India and Sri Lanka towards strengthening bilateral ties. Sri Lanka's role in steering Colombo Security in the region was acknowledged. These visits took place amid persisting concerns in New Delhi over a Chinese military vessel "re-entering" the Indian Ocean Region. The agenda of his visits included Review of the Commissioning Parade at the Naval and Maritime Academy (NMA), Trincomalee, interacting with the top political as well as defence leadership of that country and visiting other defence establishments of the Sri Lanka Armed Forces.

COMMENTS

The visit comes even as Indian authorities reportedly flagged Chinese military vessel 'Yuan Wang 5' "re-entering" the Indian Ocean Region. While there was no official comment immediately, but Indian Navy was "keeping an eye" on the movement of the Chinese satellite tracking ship. Apart from India, the United States, too, had conveyed its apprehensions to Sri Lankan authorities at the highest levels. Indigenous Indian Naval Ship Sahyadri, a multi-role missile frigate of the Indian Navy has also reached during his visits and make a port call at Colombo. The ship has engaged in training engagements with Sri Lanka Navy and participates in Maritime Partnership Exercises with Sri Lanka Navy. The visits have enhanced the bilateral defence cooperation between the two countries, especially in the maritime domain.

There are regular interactions between the two navies through the medium of annual Staff Talks and also pursue several operational engagements. The Indian Navy supports several capacity-building measures of the Sri Lankan Navy including, indigenously constructed Offshore Patrol Vessels (OPVs) and has also deployed Dornier aircraft to Sri Lanka. The aircraft that has been handed over to Sri Lanka will be flown and maintained by 15 Sri Lanka Air Force (SLAF) crew who have undergone training in India for four months. And they will be supervised by an Indian technical team attached to the SLAF. The navy is engaged in other capability enhancement projects like training of the Sri Lanka Navy personnel in India. The Navy of the island nation is a regular participant in different multilateral engagements which are hosted by the Indian Navy like the Goa Maritime Conclave, the MILAN exercise etc.



Source: Twitter

Not Against India, Will Forget Old Disputes, Says Nepal PM Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachand'

<https://news.abplive.com/news/world/nepal-pm-pushpa-kamal-dahal-prachanda-exclusive-interview-abp-news-cpn-maoist-centre-president-bidya-devi-bhandari-pm-modi-india-1572132>

A day after CPN-Maoist Centre Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda" was appointed as Nepal's new Prime Minister by President Bidya Devi Bhandari, the newly appointed Prime Minister vowed to strengthen Nepal's relations with India in an exclusive interview with ABP News. "We want good relations with India," he said. "I am not against India, will forget the old disputes and move forward," said Prachanda. "According to the mandate given, the government has been formed in the country. The public wanted everyone to work together, and that's why they formed the government together. Our government will complete its term. Work will be done according to the constitution."

COMMENTS

This is Prachanda's third stint as the head of government since Nepal's monarchy was abolished. Before joining mainstream politics in 2006, he had led the Maoist revolt in Nepal for over a decade. Given the current political situation, Nepalese Government is likely to be unstable in times to come. However, since Prachanda has been a beneficiary of India's support since 2005 and in 2016, this relationship is likely to be of immense importance to India.



Source: ABP News

Keel Laying Of Hangor Class Submarine Held At Karachi Shipyard

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2392665/keel-laying-of-hangor-class-submarine-held-at-karachi-shipyard>

The keel laying ceremony of the first Hangor-class submarine and the steel cutting of the second submarine were held at Karachi Shipyard & Engineering Works (KS&EW) on Saturday, said the Pakistan Navy. Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi graced the occasion as chief guest. According to a press release, the defence agreement between Pakistan and China included the development of eight Hangor-class submarines including four under construction at Wuchang Shipbuilding Industry Group (WSIG) in China and the remaining four being built at KS&EW under the Transfer of Technology (ToT) agreement.

COMMENTS

The construction work of the first submarine to be made at KS&EW Pakistan commenced on 21 December. The keel laying is a major milestone in the history of any Naval vessel being constructed at KS&EW. Concurrently, construction work on a subsequent submarine of the HANGOR class has started with its steel cutting at the same shipyard. Pakistan Navy is attempting to catch up with the evolving geo-strategic situation in the region and will continue to develop Naval potential in the future. It is looking at improving shipbuilding infrastructure and equip platforms with advanced weapons, and sensors to counter traditional as well as asymmetric threats. The Pakistan Navy has a depleting submarine fleet and is maintaining the ageing submarine fleet despite the economic crisis.

The Hangor-class submarines are an export variant of the PLAN's Type 039A/041 Yuan-class submarines. Pakistan accepted the purchase of eight submarines from China in April 2015. HANGOR-class Submarine is capable of undertaking a variety of missions as per operational dictate. The submarine possesses advanced stealth features and is fitted with state-of-the-art weapons and sensors to operate under a multi-threat environment and can engage targets at stand-off ranges.

Thai Navy Hunts for 33 Missing Marines After Warship Sinks

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/12/19/dozens-of-sailors-missing-after-thai-navy-ship-sinks>

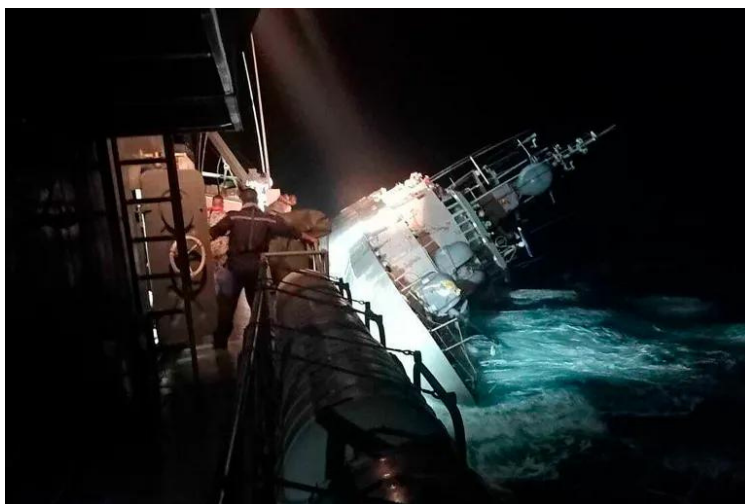
The ship was on patrol 32km east of Bang Saphan in Prachuap Khiri Khan province when it was trapped in a storm on 18 Dec 22. Pictures uploaded to the Thai Navy's Twitter handle reveal the warship tilting to the starboard side and supporting rescue boats searching for survivors in rough seas. Thailand's military has dispatched helicopters, planes and ships to rescue dozens of sailors missing after a Navy vessel sank during a storm in the Gulf of Thailand.

MARITIME

The HTMS Sukhothai was carrying 106 people when it went down. By midmorning on 19 Dec, 75 sailors had been rescued and 31 were still in the water, the military said. At least three of the survivors were “seriously injured”, the Bangkok Post newspaper reported. The HTMS Sukhothai had taken on seawater after it was hit by strong waves, causing it to tilt to one side, according to the Bangkok Post.

COMMENTS

The Thai Navy had dispatched three frigates and two helicopters with mobile pumping machines to assist the disabled ship by removing seawater, but the rescue efforts were unsuccessful due to strong winds. The incident had occurred while the warship was on patrol at sea 32km (20 miles) from the pier at Bangsaphan district in Prachuap Khiri Khan province. The HTMS Sukhothai warship suffered an engine malfunction and went down just before midnight about 20 nautical miles off the coast. The corvette class ship, had been in use since 1987, which had suffered a power blackout coupled with an engine malfunction. The Sukhothai, a U.S.-built corvette was hit by strong waves on Sunday, forcing it to tilt to one side before becoming flooded with seawater. Ingress of sea water coupled with a power blackout results in an ageing vessel results in suboptimal damage control capabilities.



Source: Al Jazeera

Putin Oversees Commissioning of New Russian Navy Warships

<https://apnews.com/article/putin-politics-russia-government-military-technology-british-columbia-e56c6a0b434b169ca42762979f4af044>

Russian President Vladimir Putin oversaw the commissioning of new warships and vowed to further strengthen his country's Navy. We will speed up and increase the volumes of construction of ships of various projects, equip them with the most modern weapons, and conduct the operational and combat training using the experience received during the special military operation,” Putin said, referring to Russia's 10-month-old campaign in Ukraine.

COMMENTS



Source: Al Jazeera

The newly commissioned vessels included a corvette, a minesweeper and the Generalissimus Suvorov nuclear submarine. The submarine is armed with Bulava nuclear-tipped intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM) and is the sixth submarine of the new Borei-class to join the Russian Navy. These newly commissioned vessels are likely to ensure Russia's security for decades ahead. submarine of the same type, Emperor Alexander III, was also launched during that ceremony. The Russian Navy has plans to commission it following successful sea trials.

Japan's New Security Strategy Is A Game-Changer In The Indo-Pacific

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/japans-new-security-strategy-is-a-game-changer-in-the-indopacific-101671344835575.html>

The NSS has called out both China and Russia separately as threat to global peace and security with Beijing making unilateral changes in status quo in the Indo-Pacific and Moscow shaking the foundation of rule of order by invading Ukraine. "The possibility cannot be precluded that a similar serious situation may arise in future in the Indo-Pacific region, especially in East Asia," says the document alluding to the possibility of China invading Taiwan.

COMMENTS



Source: East Asia Forum

The National Security Strategy released by Japan will shift Japan's defensive defence system to an offensive one. China's enhanced military activities remains a major reason behind Japan's shift in its security policies. China's tussle with Australia over the South Pacific Islands i.e., Solomon and Vanuatu islands, with Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam and Taiwan over South China Sea are serious concerns. Considering the surrounding security environment and Xi's assertive security policies Japan came up with the National Security Strategy, National Defence Strategy and Defence Build-up Programme.

The Japanese are also talking about "Counter-strike capability" because all these while, Japan's security was outsourced to America as a part of the "Yoshida Doctrine", The Yoshida doctrine emphasised on economic development of Japan and use economic diplomacy to project its power and influence globally while leaving military and security to the US. Meanwhile, China over the years have been creating tension in the Senkaku Islands. Its target over Taiwan is also a major concern for Japan's security as the Japanese Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) is quite close to Taiwan, a frontline state. Therefore, it is salient for Japan to play a role in Taiwan's Defence system.

In the above background, the document mentions the salience of acquiring advanced missile related technology, ballistic missile capabilities etc. To defend its mainland, Japan realises that it is of utmost significance to upgrade its ballistic missile system and needs a weapon system that can hit enemy territory especially counter-strike against an opponent to prevent further strikes. Japan can relate this with Russia's attack on Ukraine.

To improve the fire power of the Japanese armed forces is a major target of the new security policies. It is expected that by 2027, Japan will be the third strongest military power in the world both in defense spending and military power. Another major aspect of the document is that the Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) under which Japan gives cheap loans to countries for infrastructure development, for example Japan's ODA to India to construct metro rail, shall be diverted for its defence purpose and this is a major takeaway.

In terms of nuclear capabilities, Japan has so far refrained from constructing brand-new nuclear power reactors and modernising old ones. If any new plants are constructed, they would be the first since the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear reactor experienced meltdowns in 2011 as a result of the horrific Tohoku earthquake and tsunami. However, on August 2022, Prime Minister Kishida ordered the research and building of next-generation nuclear power stations. This signalled a new chapter in Japan's nuclear energy strategy and represents a significant change from the nation's post-Fukushima policy of opposing the construction of new nuclear power facilities. The action would assist Japan in lessening its reliance on energy imports in the midst of a worldwide energy shortage and prevent stress on a power grid that has already been overworked this summer.

The National Security Strategy mentions that Japan would take serious action to maintain the security of vital infrastructure, such as nuclear power plants, that support the nation's citizens' way of life. Japan will specifically start working on projects to achieve a decarbonized society through structural changes in the energy and industrial sectors, including optimising the use of renewable and nuclear energies.

In case of India, the late Prime Minister Shinzo Abe established a solid basis for Indo-Japan cooperation. Both the countries plan to initiate joint fighter drills and India wishes to purchase Japanese UNICORN for its navy vessels. A collaborative endeavour to create unmanned vehicle weapons has already been initiated by the defence ministries of the two nations. Meanwhile, China remains a major concern for both the countries. Both India and Japan being QUAD members, balancing China has been one of their major policy agendas.

Under the National Security Strategy, Japan's strike power capabilities will improve and can assist nations like India to strengthen their strike force against Chinese aggression. It is expected that India and Japan will share closer defence ties between them under the new security policy. Apart from these, the document emphasises on strengthening its relationship with like-minded countries in which it mentions US, Australia, India, Republic of Korea and ASEAN.

Another Fighter Jet Goes Down While Attempting To Combat A 'Cheap' Suicide Drone? Comes After Ukraine Lost MiG-29 To Shahed-136

<https://eurasianimes.com/another-fighter-jet-goes-while-attempting-to-combat-cheap/>

While working to counter the drones, a South Korean KA-1 light attack aircraft crashed immediately after taking off from its Wonju base in the country's east, according to a defense ministry official. The two KA-1 crew members flying a light attack aircraft parachuted to safety. A KA-1 aircraft, a weaponized version of South Korea's KT-1 trainer, can carry a 12.7mm machine gun pod and 70mm rockets. The South Korean military didn't say whether the drone was directly to blame for the plane crash or if any other technical problems contributed to it.

COMMENTS

According to South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff, five drones from North Korea were found crossing the border, one of which made it as far north as the capital region, which is approximately an hour's drive away. To shoot down the North Korean drones, the military launched fighter jets and assault helicopters in response to warning rounds being fired. Although a total of 100 rounds were fired by the attack helicopters, it wasn't immediately clear whether the North Korean drones had been downed. According to the Defense Ministry, there were no early reports of civilian casualties on the ground in South Korea. The recent launches were considered as a protest against the joint air exercises between South Korea and the US, which North Korea considers as a practise of invasion. A KA-1 light attack aircraft, one of the South Korean fighters scrambled and crashed during takeoff, but both of its two pilots survived.

Drones have significantly increased as a threat to military around the world in recent years. Throughout the Russia-Ukraine war, drones have been used in a variety of activities, demonstrating their lethal capability. Another Ukrainian MiG-29 fighter jet was shot down by a Russian military-operated Shahed-136 kamikaze drone during the crisis in Ukraine. It was the first time a combat aircraft had been brought down by a kamikaze drone.

The South Korean military officially apologised on 27th December, 2022 for its failed attempt to shoot down five North Korean drones that had violated the country's airspace. It also pledged to intensify efforts to enhance counter-drone capabilities. There have also been claims that the North Korean government has attempted to imitate Chinese designs. This includes developing more capable "man-in-the-loop" kinds that are more competent in nature. It is clear that Pyongyang has closely followed developments in Ukraine, especially those involving the use of Iranian-made Shahed-136 drones and domestically produced long-range kamikaze drones.