

Headlines at a Glance - 19th October 2020

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Naval version of BrahMos supersonic cruise missile test-fired

India on Sunday successfully test fired the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile from the indigenously-built stealth destroyer INS Chennai, with the weapon hitting a pre-designated target in the Arabian Sea, the defence ministry said in a statement.

The 290-km range missile — an Indo-Russian joint venture — has land, air and naval variants. “The missile hit the target with pin-point accuracy after performing high-level and extremely complex manoeuvres. BrahMos as prime strike weapon will ensure the warship’s invincibility by engaging naval surface targets at long ranges, thus making the destroyer another lethal platform of Indian Navy,” it said. The missile has a top speed of Mach 2.8 — nearly three times the speed of sound. Defence minister Rajnath Singh congratulated the Defence Research and Development Organisation, BrahMos and the Indian Navy for the successful launch. India has test-fired a string of weapons during the last two months in the midst of the ongoing tensions with China in the sensitive Ladakh sector.

SOURCE: *Hindustan Times*

India-Sri Lanka to hold SLINEX military exercise

The navies of India and Sri Lanka will conduct a three-day military exercise off Trincomalee beginning Monday, in a show of growing congruence in their strategic interests and operational convergence in the region, officials said. The eighth edition of the annual SLINEX exercise will feature a series of complex drills including surface and anti-air weapon firings and cross deck flying operations with an aim to further fine-tune the “high degree” of interoperability between the two navies, they said. The Indian Navy will deploy anti-submarine warfare corvettes INS Kamorta and INS Kiltan as well as a sizeable number of advanced light helicopters, Chetak helicopter and Dornier maritime patrol aircraft in the exercise, the officials said. The Sri Lanka Navy will be represented by offshore patrol vessel Sayura and training ship Gajabahu. The previous edition of SLINEX was conducted off Visakhapatnam in September 2019. The Indian Navy has participated in a number of joint maritime exercises in the last few weeks including a three-day drill with Japanese navy from September 26-28.

SOURCE: *The Print*

CRPF inks MoU with DRDO and IIT Delhi

The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) signed an MoU with IIT-Delhi and the DRDO on Saturday to create a pool of officials who will work to find technology solutions for its operational challenges. The about 3.25 lakh-strong force has about 500 officers and sub-officers who hold professional degrees in engineering and technology.

The Memorandum of Understanding between the country’s largest paramilitary force, the Indian Institute of Technology-Delhi and the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) will enable these officers to undertake short-term specialised courses at these institutions and also pursue research work. A selected group of officers from this trained batch will undergo higher degree courses at the IIT-Delhi. These trained officers will act as tech advisors to the force, the spokesperson said. The chosen officials will also be associated with joint research projects undertaken by the DRDO and IIT-Delhi in defence and security technology solutions, he said, adding the first batch is expected to undertake courses and research work in ballistics, building and infrastructure, information technology and communication. The CRPF is designated as the lead internal security force of the country and is the mainstay for anti-Naxal operations in Left Wing Extremism-affected states and counter-terrorist combat in the Kashmir Valley.

SOURCE: *The Hindu*

Decade-long travel, arms embargo imposed by UN on Iran ends

Iranian officials have hailed the lifting of a 13-year UN arms embargo on their military as a momentous day, claiming they were once again free to buy and sell conventional weapons in an effort to strengthen their country's security. The embargo was lifted on Sunday morning despite US protests and was in line with the five-year timetable set out in the Iran nuclear deal, which was signed in 2015. Russia and China are the two countries now most likely to offer arms to Tehran, making Iran less dependent on its own weapons industry – and smuggling. But Iran's parlous financial state, and the continued threat of US sanctions on anyone trading with the country, means Tehran is unlikely to go on a short-term buying spree, or reach anything like the defence spending levels of its chief Gulf rivals Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. The European Union and the UK are to maintain a separate arms embargo on Iran despite the lifting of the UN one. In the summer, France, Germany and the UK rejected US efforts to impose a snapback of all UN sanctions on Iran, fearing Tehran would pull out altogether from the joint comprehensive plan of action (JCPOA), the official name for the 2015 deal.

SOURCE: *The Guardian*

US retains top position in Asia Power Index for 2020

China is closing in on the U.S. as the most powerful country influencing the Asia-Pacific, as America's handling of the Covid-19 pandemic tarnishes its reputation, a study showed. While America retained its place as the region's top superpower, its 10-point lead on China two years ago has been halved, according to the Sydney-based Lowy Institute's Asia Power Index for 2020, which ranks 26 nations and territories. The U.S. "lost prestige" due to its poor response to the pandemic, multiple trade disputes and President Donald Trump's moves to withdraw from multilateral deals and agencies, according to Herve Lemahieu, the study's research chief and director of Lowy's Asian Power and Diplomacy Program. The U.S. economy could take until 2024 to recover to pre-pandemic levels, the institute said. In contrast, China's economy has rebounded from the virus and is the only large economy forecast to recover in 2020.

This could give it an advantage against neighbours over the next decade. China stayed firmly in second place for the third year running, despite seeing a "notable fall" in diplomatic clout after facing accusations of withholding information about the severity of the Wuhan outbreak.

SOURCE: *The Hindu*