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CHINA

Increase in China's Defence Expenditure

During the annual session of China's National People's Congress, Beijing declared that it will [increase](#) its defence budget to 7.2 percent. Briefing the media about this decision, China's Defence Ministry spokesperson, Col. Wu Qian, informed that the national defence spending will increase to 1.81 trillion yuan (approx. USD 250 billion) including the 1.78 trillion (approx. USD 244.27) allocated at the central level. He opined that the increase in defence budget is [aimed](#) to enhance China's combat capabilities amidst a "complex security environment" and also realise [China's goal](#) of building the People's Liberation Army (PLA) into a "world class army" by its hundredth centenary. It is noteworthy that China's defence budget has consistently increased by 7.2 percent for the past two consecutive years while its economic growth target has stagnated at 5 percent. Further, the continuous increase also comes in the backdrop of increasing Sino-US rivalry and tensions in the South China Sea (SCS).

PLA Tibet Military Region Conducted Live-Fire Drills

In late March, a unit of the PLA Tibet Military Region [organised](#) live-fire shooting test of light weapons. Reportedly, the exercise was aimed to enhance Chinese troops' ability to execute varied diversified military operations and assess the combat readiness of the troops. The training process included emergency handling, mountain raids, camouflage pursuit, covert approach,

etc. These drills were included to improve actual combat capabilities in complex terrain and conditions. The military unit also [organised](#) competitions and lectures on use of new equipment and weapons to enhance the officers' and soldiers' ability to use news advanced weapons. Although, no detail about the number of participants and the site of the exercise was revealed but the images published in the media suggest that the exercise was held at a high snowy mountain.

JAPAN

6th Dharma Guardian Exercise Concludes

The sixth edition of the bilateral Dharma Guardian exercises were [held](#) from 25 February to 9 March 2025 at the Camp Fuji Training Grounds in Japan. This year's exercise, which focused on counter-terrorism drills, saw the participation of a 300-strong contingent from the Indian Army, the largest grouping so far. On the Japanese side, a company-sized contingent from the elite 1st Infantry Division of the Ground Self-Defence Forces participated. Amb. Sibi George, Ambassador of India to Japan and Lt. Gen. Seiji Toriumi, Commanding Officer of the 1st Division, [attended](#) the opening ceremony and highlighted the importance of these exercises to India-Japan defence cooperation. Aside from urban counter-terror drills, the two contingents also participated in simulations of United Nations peacekeeping missions in hostile areas, underlining their stated focus on responding to real-world situations as part of a multinational force.

JSDF Inaugurates New Joint Command Staff

The Japanese Self-Defence Forces (JSDF) [inaugurated](#) on 24 March a new command that is expected to serve functions akin to India's Chief of Defence Staff or the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the United States. Named the Japan Joint Operations Command (JJOC), it will be [headed](#) by General Kenichiro Nagumo, a four-star general officer from the Air Self-Defence Forces (ASDF). The new command is expected to integrate the three land, naval and air forces of the country under one roof, and Gen. Nagumo and his successors will hold coequal rank with the three service chiefs within the JSDF hierarchy. The headquarters and its 240 staff are to be located within the Defence Ministry building in Ichigaya, Tokyo. At the raising ceremony held on the same date in Tokyo, Defence Minister Gen. Nakatani handed over to Gen. Nagumo the official flag and a self-calligraphed signboard carrying the name of the command, stating to reporters that the current instability in the international situation necessitated a rapid response on the part of the JSDF, a role he hoped the new command would undertake. Gen. Nagumo in his remarks at the raising ceremony expressed the determination to 'respond appropriately across a range of situations from peacetime to a contingency in order to protect the peaceful livelihood of Japanese citizens'.

TAIWAN

Revised Military Training

The Taiwanese media reported that Taiwan's Air Force is [revising](#) its training

curriculum for fighter pilots. Until now the trainee pilots have been trained first through "three aircraft models—the T-34 Mentor, AT-3 Tzu Chung, and Brave Eagle advanced jet trainer—before advancing to fighter jets." However, now the requirement of training on the AT-3 has been done away with and the trainees will be able to directly transition to Brave Eagle.

Military Discipline to be Implemented

Taiwan is considering to bring back the [military trial system](#) with a view to crack down on "China's infiltration and espionage" in the Taiwanese military. The proposal is part of Taiwan's broader effort to curb the infiltration and espionage. Apart from espionage, the military trial system will also deal with offences such as dereliction of duty and insubordination among other criminal cases, involving in-service military personnel. The system was abolished in 2013.

THE KOREAN PENINSULA

South Korea-US Military Alliance

The USS Carl Vinson aircraft carrier visited the Busan port in South Korea in early March 2025. Reportedly, the move was aimed to show [strength](#) of the United States (US) and South Korea alliance. The American aircraft carrier was accompanied by USS Princeton and USS Sterett. On the other hand, North Korea, justifying its nuclear weapons programme, [criticised](#) the visit of USS Carl Vinson to South Korea as a sign of American hostility. Later on 10 March, the US and South Korea [conducted](#) Freedom Shield military exercise. Both countries also [held](#) firepower drills at a

short distance from inter-Korean border. However, South Korean Air Force accidentally [dropped](#) bombs on the civilian population in South Korea causing injuries and damage to properties. The North Korean media took note of this accident to [criticise](#) the US-South Korea military exercises.

North Korea's Developing Military Capabilities

According to a South Korean news media outlet, Pyongyang is in an advanced stage of [developing](#) its airborne early warning system. This would “significantly” enhance North Korea’s military capabilities. It was speculated that North Korea might have received some help from China in developing this system. In another news report, North Korea was claimed to be [enriching](#) uranium at two different sites for its nuclear weapons programme which is in violation of the United Nations Security Council resolutions. Also, the National Intelligence Service (NIS) of South Korea [warned](#) of more sophisticated cyber-attacks from North Korea. North Korean soldiers were also reported to be [learning](#) new techniques of drone technology from Russia. Further, the North Korean state media reported about the [construction](#) of a “nuclear-powered strategic guided missile submarine” in the country. In a separate development, North Korea also [tested](#) several unknown ballistic missiles on 10 March 2025. Later, in the same month, Pyongyang [test-fired](#) an advanced version of its surface-to-air missile and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un [examined](#)

suicide drones which have artificial intelligence system.