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## CHINA

### **Type 054B Frigate *Luohe* Commissioned**

Around late January, China commissioned its first [Type 054B \*Luohe\* frigate](#) at the military port in Qingdao in Shandong province. The frigate with a displacement of 5000 tonnes is equipped with high-tech technologies such as stealth, combat command and firepower integration. According to Chinese sources these upgrades and new ships are People's Liberation Army (PLA)'s efforts to increase its combat power and in line with its overall naval development objectives. For instance, upgrade in capabilities are intended to enable the frigate to carry larger utility helicopters such as the Z-20. Additionally, capabilities in anti-submarine, anti-ship and air defence are likely to be directed to handle diverse maritime threats, made part of aircraft carrier and amphibious assault formations, or used to provide escort to other roles. The combat readiness of the PLA Navy has been a priority for Beijing and combat patrols are being conducted to test its readiness. For instance, the [PLA Southern Theatre Command](#) on 19 January, conducted sea-air joint readiness patrols in the South China Sea. The press statement noted that the patrol was conducted to "maintain peace and stability in the area".

### **The Third Plenary Meeting of the 11th Party Committee of the Tibet Military Region was Held**

In mid-January, the [Third Plenary Meeting](#) of the 11th Party Committee of the Tibet Military Region was held in Lhasa. Wang Junzheng, Secretary of the Party

Committee of the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and First Secretary of the Party Committee of the Tibet Military Region (TMR) in his speech at the meeting emphasised that the Army should adhere to [Xi Jinping's Thought on Strengthening the Army](#) to fulfil the objective of consolidating the border and stabilizing Tibet. At the meeting, the Party Committee decided to "implement the overall national security concept and the military strategic policy of the new era and solidly promote the modernisation of national defense and the army". Further, decision was taken to "improve the joint logistics mechanism between the party, government, military, police, and the local government, promote the complementary advantages and strengths of the military and the local government, and ensure the consolidation of border defense and border security". The meeting also noted that the Party Committee of the TMR, over the past year, has implemented Xi Jinping's thoughts on strengthening the military, improving political guidance, training and preparation for war, cadre building and serving of local areas.

## JAPAN

### **India-Japan Coast Guard Drills**

The ICGS *Shaunak* [made](#) a goodwill visit to Yokohama, Japan on 7 January for a weeklong port call punctuated by bilateral maritime drills as well as other public activities. The Sahyog-Kaijin drills were observed by Indian Coast Guard Director General Paramesh Sivamani and his Japanese counterpart Japan Coast Guard Commandant Yoshio Seguchi. Observers

from the coast guards of the United States of America and Australia also participated in the exercise. This year marks the 20<sup>th</sup> year of the drills.

The exercise, which was held at the Yokohama Maritime Disaster Prevention Base on 9 January, focussed on protocols to contain oil spills and other forms of chemical leakage. Commandant Seguchi of the JCG boarded the *Shaunak* to be briefed about Indian protocols in place to prevent the spread of oil and other chemicals, followed by a JCG briefing on protective gear worn by its personnel conducting rescue operations aboard ships carrying hazardous substances and rescue methodologies followed to rescue stranded crews. After the event, Commandant Seguchi praised the exercises and noted that further Quad-level exercises would help the four nations build mutual understanding and trust. Director-General Sivamani for his part expressed gratitude to the JCG for sharing knowledge of technologies used by it, and noted that joint drills enhance mutual interoperability among both coast guards.

### **Chinese PLA Delegation Visits Japan**

A delegation of senior officers from the PLA of the People's Republic of China (PRC) [visited](#) Japan for a week between 13 and 17 January, led by the Deputy Commander of the PLA's Eastern Theatre Command, General Chen Yueqi. During its visit, the delegation visited the Ministry of Defence, where they interacted with Director-General Taro Yamato of the Defence Policy Bureau, as well as Admiral

Shinichi Kawamura, Director of Operations of the Office of the Joint Staff of the Japanese Self-Defence Forces (JSDF). The delegation later also visited the JSDF Central Hospital in Tokyo and the Japan Maritime Self-Defence Forces (JMSDF) base in Maizuru on the Sea of Japan coast. The Japanese side is believed to have conveyed their grave concerns over Chinese activities in and around the Japanese maritime domain, and pointed out the need for frank conversations across all levels in order to reduce misunderstanding.

## **TAIWAN**

### **Volunteers Leaving Military Service**

The Taiwanese media [reported](#) that a total of 1,565 voluntary military personnel chose to quit the military service in 2024. They quit the service under the opt-out clause of the service rules, which allows them to leave the service on paying a financial penalty. The number of quitters has increased around fourfold since 2020 when a total of 401 volunteers left the service. Their departure from the service brought down the strength of serving volunteer military personnel to 152,885 in 2024, which was the lowest number since 2018, per media reports. In a separate development Jong Shyn Shipbuilding Group delivered a [600-ton corvette](#), Chang Bin, to Taiwan's Coast Guard Administration (CGA). This corvette was given to the CGA in South Taiwan. The CGA will soon receive two another 600-ton Anping-class corvettes for its eastern branch.

## THE KOREAN PENINSULA

### North Korea Tests Ballistic Missiles

North Korea [launched](#) a ballistic missile on 6 January. Reportedly, the South Korean military could not identify the type of the missile tested by Pyongyang. This was the first missile test by North Korea in 2025. It was reported in the South Korean media that the missile [tested](#) by North Korea was possibly a hypersonic missile, and it flew for about 1100 kilometres before it landed into the East Sea. On the other hand, North Korea [claimed](#) that it tested a “new-type of intermediate-range hypersonic missile”, which moves at 12-times the speed of the sound. Later on 14 January, North Korea [fired](#) several short-range ballistic missiles. These missiles were launched from North Korea’s Jagang Province and they fell into the East Sea. Further, on 25 January, North Korea [tested](#) strategic cruise missiles. The North Korean state media [confirmed](#) this testing of “sea (underwater)-to-surface strategic cruise guided weapons”.

### South Korea Conducts Air Drills with US and Japan

The South Korean Air Force [conducted](#) a joint exercise with the American and Japanese Air Force on 15 January. The joint air drills involved the participation of B-1B bomber from the United States along with the South Korean F-15K and Japanese F-2 fighter planes. This trilateral exercise was conducted in the backdrop of North Korean ballistic missile tests in 2025. However, North Korea [criticised](#) this

trilateral air drills by the US, South Korea and Japan. Pyongyang also [condemned](#) Tokyo for opening an independent mission in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).