

NAVY'S MILAN TO BRING TOGETHER 46 COUNTRIES

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Test fire: Indian Navy ships testing weapons at the Eastern Naval Command, in Visakhapatnam. File Photo

The Navy is set to hold the 12th President's Fleet Review (PFR) on February 21 at Visakhapatnam and few days from that it will host the largest multilateral exercise in this region, Milan 2022, which will see participation of all major Navies including Quad countries, Russia and from West Asia amid tensions in Ukraine and developments in West Asia.

Exercise Milan is scheduled to be held from February 25 to March 4 for which 46 countries have been invited. So far over 35 countries having confirmed participation, this will be the largest multilateral exercise in this region, a defence official said on Friday.

This year's Milan will see the participation of all Quad countries, with the U.S. being invited for the first time.

The invitees include all Indian Ocean littoral states and countries from south-east Asia among others. For the 2020 edition of the exercise, 41 countries of which 30 had confirmed participation but the exercise was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The harbour phase is scheduled from February 25 to 28 and the sea phase from March 1 to 4. It has several themes such as ant-submarine warfare among others along with deliberations, including by subject matter experts.

During the exercise, the Navy will also be showcasing its Deep Submergence Rescue Vessel (DSRV) capabilities meant to rescue submarines in distress. India is one of the few countries in the region which possesses this capability.

Fleet Review

A Fleet Review is usually conducted once during the tenure of the President. Since Independence 11 PFRs have been conducted by the Navy, of which two have been International Fleet Reviews in 2011 and 2016. In terms of significance, the Navy's Presidential review is second only to the Republic Day Parade, one official stated.

More than 60 ships from the Navy, Coast Guard, Shipping Corporation of India and the National Institute of Ocean technology and submarines and more than 50 aircraft are expected to be part of the PFR this year.

Over 44 ships will be at anchorage and one of the ships will be converted into the President's yacht.

There has been huge increase in the Indian Navy's engagements in the Indo-Pacific with several countries keen on exercising with India.

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