

MARITIME DOMAIN, A SIGNIFICANT GLOBAL COMMON, has helped bridge the continents since ages. Accordingly, navies across the world have been the shining ambassadors of respective nation's international diplomatic efforts. The strategic location of Indian subcontinent has made it a focal point for trade and international relations through which there has been a constant exchange of cultures, resources, assets and ideas.

Indian Navy has thus emerged as India's tether to maintain international relations with other nations, militarily and diplomatically. Amongst the various activities being undertaken by the Indian Navy in this regard (such as Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief operations, visits to friendly countries, military assistance etc.), MILAN exercise has emerged as the Indian Navy's flagship event towards fostering camaraderie, cohesion and collaboration amongst Friendly Foreign Countries. The exercise resonates with India's international diplomatic efforts namely 'Act East' policy and 'Security And Growth for All in the Region' (SAGAR).

Milan exercise, which translates into 'meeting' or 'gathering' in Hindi, was incepted in 1995 as a biennial multinational event which flourished under the aegis of Andaman and Nicobar Command till its 10th edition and later shifted to Visakhapatnam with 11th edition. Milan 24 would be the 12th edition of this exercise and it would be conducted from 19-27 February 2024 at Visakhapatnam.

Milan 24 is likely to witness its largest-ever participation with invites extended to over 58 friendly foreign navies. Milan 24 exercise would comprise two phases: harbour phase and sea phase. The harbour phase, aimed to promote cultural and professional sharing amongst the participating nations, would comprise International Maritime Seminar, International City Parade at RK Beach, maritime Tech Exhibition, Subject Matter Expert Exchange, Milan of Young Officers and various sporting events.

In the sea phase, ships along with aircraft of friendly foreign countries would participate along with Indian navy's aircraft carrier and other units. It will involve large-force manoeuvres, advanced air defence operations, anti-submarine warfare and anti-surface operations, which are aimed at honing the skills of operators, maintainers, planners and executors across the full range of their skillsets, responsibilities and authority on-board a warship. It will also give the navies a chance to incorporate and instil the best practices and procedures and enable doctrinal learning in the maritime domain through professional interactions.

Milan exercise, from its humble beginnings of 1995, has metamorphosed itself to a stature befitting global commons and aligns with India's G20 presidency's theme of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam'. India-led exercise greatly complements the existing bilateral and multilateral maritime framework aimed at preserving the regional peace whilst fostering bonds of maritime brotherhood across the oceans. As Indian Navy projects itself as the 'preferred security partner' in the region, Milan 24 re-affirms India's unabated diplomatic efforts aimed at inclusivity of all nations and progress through peace. ||

# Milan 2024

Indian Navy's Role in Nation Building Through International Diplomacy



**LEFT & ABOVE** Demonstration of naval air operation during MILAN; Sea phase exercise by Indian and foreign naval ships and aircraft



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