

India's Arjun main battle tank praised by Chinese military

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Beijing: India's indigenous main battle tank Arjun was today praised by a top Chinese military official who said it is "every good" for Indian conditions as the PLA for the first time opened its facilities for Indian media to provide an insight into its massive modernisation.

In a sign of improved military relations, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) opened the doors of the key military institute "Academy of Armoured Forces Engineering" which trains over 6,000 cadets per year to a team of visiting Indian journalists.

Asked for his impressions of the Arjun battle tank developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation, Senior Colonel Liu Degang, deputy commander of the Academy which keeps a close watch on the military hardware of India, said it is "every good" and suits Indian conditions.

The Arjun is a third generation main battle tank developed by DRDO for the Indian Army. It is powered by a single MTU multi-fuel diesel engine and can achieve a maximum speed of 67 km/h and a cross-country speed of 40 km/h.

Liu attributed the rare interaction with the Indian media to a new found confidence in line with China's opening politically and militarily to the outside world. The academy specialises in training at various levels of cadets from diploma to masters and even doctorate studies in tanks and armoured vehicles.

Liu said his academy has hosted 300 delegations from about 70 countries and trained 2,700 army personnel from 40 countries and sent more than 500 personnel to conduct international academic exchanges or as UN military observers. Housed in 453 hectares, the sprawling academy, was built in 1.20 lakh metres of built up area.

It is one of PLA's 16 diploma granting institutions fostering officers for its armoured mechanised forces. Besides training cadets for PLA, it also provides training for overseas cadets specially for various South Asian countries, including Pakistan.

Besides briefing on the Academy's academic activities, the team of Indian media flown in from New Delhi at the invitation of the state-run All China Journalists Association (ACJA), were shown China's Main battle tank 96A, infantry fighting vehicles, armoured personnel carriers, anti-tank missiles launcher T-89, which has 12 missiles on board.

Most of the China's land-based military hardware goes through mandatory trials and exercises in the extreme conditions of Tibet on the India-China border.

The 2.3 million-strong world's largest standing military, the PLA, has launched a massive military modernisation drive in the past few years.

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