

Maldives gets two Made in India warships

AJAI SHUKLA

New Delhi, 2 May

On the penultimate day of his three-day visit to the Maldives, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh handed over two Made in India warships to the Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF).

One of them, a fast patrol vessel (FPV), capable of coastal and offshore surveillance at high speeds, was commissioned as MNDF Coast Guard ship Huravee.

The other vessel he presented was a landing craft assault (LCA), capable of carrying personnel and equipment and landing them on a beach in the face of opposition. In the Union Budget for 2023-24, New Delhi allocated ₹400 crore to the Maldives, towards lines of cred-

it for the supply of such Indian defence assistance.

Maldivian President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih and Defence Minister Mariya Ahmed Didi were present on the occasion. Speaking on the occasion, Rajnath described the handing over of the two naval platforms as a symbol of the shared commitment of India and the Maldives towards peace and security in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

Citing India's robust defence manufacturing ecosystem, Rajnath said the country has significantly enhanced its capabilities to support partner countries. "India has emerged as a leading defence exporter in recent years. A defence manufacturing ecosystem has been created which has the advan-



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday handed over a fast patrol vessel and a landing craft to the Maldives even as he and Maldivian President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih held talks to expand the already close bilateral strategic ties

tage of abundant technical manpower. We produce world-class equipment to meet not only our own needs but also for exports," said Rajnath at the handing-over ceremony.

"India offers an enhanced defence partnership to friendly

foreign countries, that is accommodative of their national priorities and capacities. We wish to create symbiotic relationships where we can learn from each other. India's commitment to supporting the Maldives will only get stronger

with time," he said. Referring to India's strong defence relations with the Maldives, Rajnath asserted that the ties emanate from the twin policies of 'Neighbourhood First' and 'SAGAR' (Security and Growth for All in the Region).

Rajnath recalled PM Narendra Modi's visit to the Maldives in June 2019, in which he emphasised that within India's 'Neighbourhood First' priority, "Maldives is top priority". "The IOR is our shared space. Peace and security of a region are best secured with cooperation and collaboration of the regional players." Noting Maldives' vulnerability to the vagaries of climate change, he voiced India's willingness to work with its neighbour for adaptation and mitigation.