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India, France set to close Rafale purchase deal at a lower price

The deal is expected to be clinched at about ` 60,000 Cr, less than what was offered by France to India during the previous UPA Govt

NEW DELHI: India and France are expected to close the purchase of 36 Rafale multi-role fighters from Dassault Aviation with the signing of an inter-governmental agreement including the commercial contract between the two countries next month. The deal is expected to be clinched at about ` 60,000 crore, less than what was offered by France to India during the previous UPA government with 2011 being the base price year.

Top government sources said after the initial price of 11.6 billion euros (` 85,000 crore) with 2015 as the base year, Dassault brought it down to 8 billion euros (` 65,000 crore) with 2011 being the base year for fixing the cost per fighter. This would have been the price of 36 fighters had India purchased planes at the cost quoted in the cancelled 126 multi-medium role combat aircraft (MMRCA) contract in which Rafale had emerged as the lowest bidder in comparison with Eurofighter. "During PM Narendra Modi's visit to France in April 2015, it was bilaterally decided that the cost of each fighter would be 10-20% less than what was being offered in the MMRCA project; we expect the jet manufacturer to further reduce price and bring it down by another 700-800 million euros before the contract is signed," a senior government official said. However, the defence ministry under Manohar Parrikar is expected to further hammer down the cost by opting out of unnecessary or what are called "over-specified" add-ons in Rafale fighters as per the initial MMRCA contract. "We expect the deal to close around ` 60,000 crore with Rafale with first deliveries in 2019. The French company also has a separate option of manufacturing the fighter in the country under the Make in India rubric. For that Rafale will have to contest with Boeing F-18 and Eurofighter in case their respective governments allow them to manufacture these platforms in India," a senior official said. The deal was scheduled to be concluded during French president Francois Hollande's visit as the guest of honour at the Republic Day celebrations on January 26 but was delayed due to protracted negotiations between both sides.

Punjab Kesari

11 February 2016

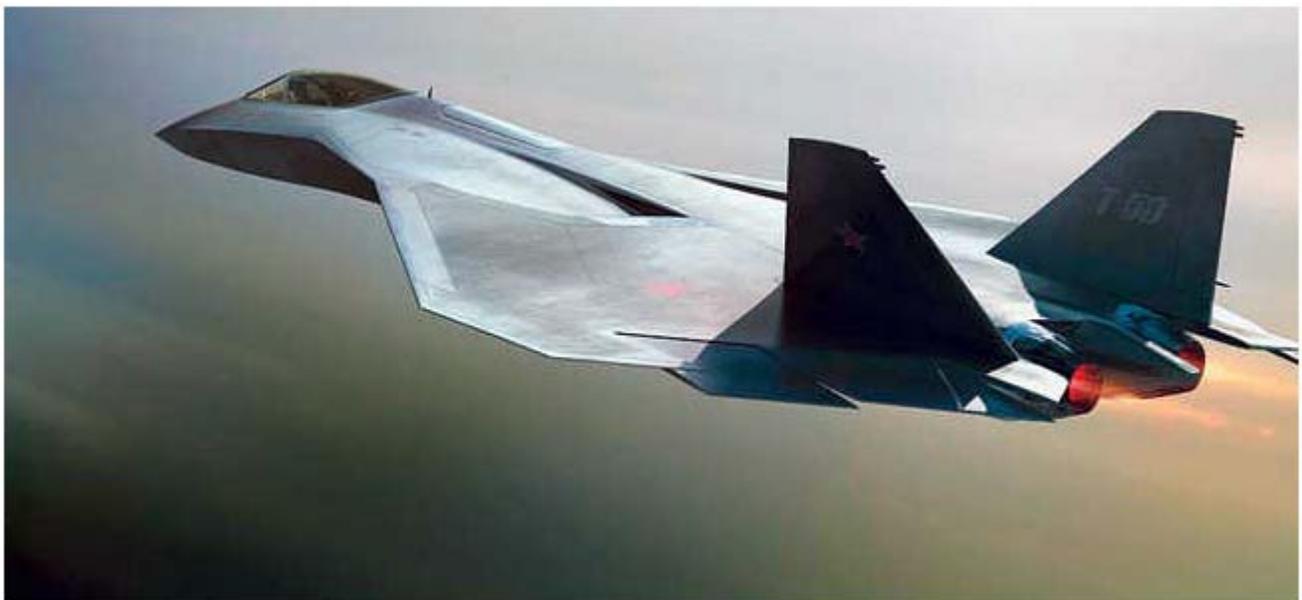
भारत, रूस ने एफजीएफए पर बातचीत फिर शुरू की

नई दिल्ली, (भाषा): भारत और रूस ने पांचवीं पीढ़ी के लड़ाकू विमानों (एफजीएफए) पर करीब एक साल के अंतराल के बाद बातचीत फिर से शुरू कर दी है और 200 कामोव 226 टी हेलीकाप्टरों के संयुक्त उत्पादों की लागत को लेकर भी बातचीत शुरू हो गई है। उच्चस्तरीय रक्षा सूत्रों ने कहा कि रूस का उच्चस्तरीय प्रतिनिधिमंडल दोनों परियोजनाओं पर बातचीत करने के लिए शहर में है। सूत्रों के अनुसार, "हमें बातचीत फिर से शुरू करने की स्वीकृति मिल गई है। उसी के अनुसार रूस का एक दल यहां है और कल लागत पर बातचीत शुरू हुई।" भारत परियोजना में पहले ही करीब 29 करोड़ डालर लगा चुका है लेकिन वायु सेना के कुछ मुद्दे होने की वजह से इसमें देरी हुई। रूस ने संयुक्त एफजीएफए पहल के तहत सुखोई टी-50 (पीएकेएफए) लड़ाकू विमानों की आपूर्ति पर भारत को नई पेशकश की है। नये प्रस्ताव के तहत भारत को प्रौद्योगिकी संबंधी जानकारी के लिए और पीएके एफ लड़ाकू विमानों के तीन प्रोटोटाइपों के लिए छह अरब डालर के बजाय 3.7 अरब डालर का भुगतान करना होगा।

India, Russia revive talks for fighter jet

By Ajay Banerjee

In a major development that will provide Indian Air Force (IAF) with cutting-edge fighter jets, India and Russia today restarted talks on co-producing the Fifth Generation Fighter Aircraft (FGFA). The step comes after Moscow agreed to reduce India's share of developmental costs to US \$3.7 billion from earlier quoted US \$5.5 billion. It will ensure technological know-how and three prototypes of twin-engine Sukhoi T-50 fighter jets that are being built under the PAK-FA (Prospective Airborne Complex of Frontline Aviation) programme run by Russia as its FGFA. It will be one of the superior planes in the world far out-pacing what China has. It combines stealth technology with super-maneuverability enabling it to penetrate deep into enemy territory and conduct bombing on ground, air and sea targets. A Russian delegation is in India today to hold negotiations on the FGFA as well as the Kamov 226T helicopter project. The Ministry of Defence-owned Public Sector Undertaking, Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), has been selected as the partner for the Kamov project. The talks had been stalled since January last year when Russian and Indian engineers had completed a preliminary design for the FGFA. India had objected to the high costs of research and development (R&D) and technology transfer issues. It had stopped short of signing a contract of US \$11 billion (Indian share US \$5.5 billion), arguing that the prototypes of the plane were already being flight tested in Russia and the Indian version had just a few variations, hence a full-fledged R&D contract of \$11 billion was a waste of time and resources. The Russians have built five prototypes in single pilot version. New Delhi has already pumped in US \$295 million on the preliminary design, but was not getting assurance of technology transfer. The decision to revive the talks was taken as the new design is different from the existing prototypes used by the Russians. Also, it meant India will pay US \$3.7 billion and get to do some part of the development. The work share has been calculated. Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar had asked to "iron out the wrinkles" and move ahead. The code name of the project in India is Perspective Multi-role Fighter (PMF). IAF wants 127 of the T-50 planes and looks to build some of these in India and procure some directly from the Sukhoi. The Russian armed forces in January last year began to accept into service the first T-50 for testing and mass delivery of the aircraft is expected in 2016. Also, the Russian delegation will hold talks with HAL for producing the twin-engine Kamov 226-T to replace the single-engine Cheetah/Chetak. The twin-rotor Kamov 226-T will also be used for armed reconnaissance, to direct artillery fire on enemy positions and fly in quick reaction teams for special missions. It has a flight ceiling of 18,700 feet.



A prototype of the fifth generation fighter aircraft, T-50, being developed by Russia and India.

The Economic Times **11 February 2016**
HAL Works On Funding Details With Russia

By Manu Pubby

FIFTH GEN FIGHTER AIRCRAFT After Parrikar push, project back on track for joint development, cost negotiations on

The long-delayed project to develop a new fifth generation fighter aircraft with Russia is now back on track with a firm push by Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar reviving talks and cost negotiations that had been stalled for over a year. A senior team from Russia is currently in the capital for joint development talks on the Prospective Multirole Fighter (PMF) with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) and commercial aspects of the deal are being worked out. India, which has already invested over \$ 290 million in the fifth generation fighter program with Russia's Sukhoi Design Bureau had earlier wavered between continuing with the joint development project or buying a few of the fighters off the shelf. Senior officials have told ET that the joint development model is now on track with Parrikar backing the development and production of the fighter as part of the Make in India initiative. Objections that had been raised by the air force with one senior officer even terming the fighter as a 'third generation' combat aircraft are likely to be addressed with a collaborative development approach. "The qualitative requirements for the fighter have been drawn up by the air force and those will be met with the joint development project. The ministry is keen to carry forward the project and not just buy some fighters off the shelf as was suggested by certain quarters," an official involved in the process told ET. While the final commercial aspects the investments to be made by either side as well as the work share agreement are likely to be concluded within the next few months, the deciding factor on going ahead will be the availability of funds with the air force to take on the project. The air force budget has been strained with a series of high value acquisitions and ongoing payments for upgrades and transport aircraft and the addition of the Rafale fighter deal expected to cost over `60,000 could leave its spending power limited over the next 2-3 years.

The Pioneer

11 February 2016

Modi personally receives Abu Dhabi crown Prince

Keeping aside the protocol, Prime Minister Narendra Modi walked up to Abu Dhabi's Crown Prince General Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and held him in a warm embrace as he alighted from his aircraft at New Delhi's Palam Technical Area on Wednesday. The Crown Prince is in India to hold talks with PM Modi on issues ranging from terrorism to investment on Thursday. Agreements pertaining to civil nuclear and Defence cooperation are also expected to be signed during his three-day visit to India. Boosting trade ties and ramping up United Arab Emirates' investment in India will also be on priority. For this Al Nahyan will attend a meeting of business heads from both countries in Mumbai on Friday. In fact, about 100 UAE business heads are travelling to India for the event. "This is Sheikh Mohammed's 1st State visit to India & am glad he is visiting with his family," PM Modi tweeted in a welcome message. The Crown Prince, who is also the Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, is accompanied by a high-level delegation comprising Cabinet Ministers, senior officials and business leaders. In the wake of rising threat of ISIS and radicalisation of youth, India wants to strengthen existing cooperation in information sharing and counter-terrorism from Abu Dhabi. UAE has deported about a dozen Indians with suspected links to ISIS group. "The security cooperation between the two countries has been exemplary. There is concrete meeting of minds on the issue," said Anil Wadhwa, Secretary (East) in the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). Besides, India has also sought assistance in freezing of funds and attaching properties of wanted terrorists like Dawood Ibrahim in UAE. In defence sector, India is looking at joint production of defence equipments under the Make in India initiative where UAE may make investment for manufacturing of military equipments and get the products' supply. In trade and economy field, UAE being one of the leading producers of oil, is expected to announce significant investment in India's energy and infrastructure sectors from its sovereign wealth fund. India has been eyeing the fund, being managed by the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority, for its infrastructure sector including for railways, ports and roads. On Wednesday External Affairs Sushma Swaraj called on Al Nahyan. On Thursday President Pranab Mukherjee will host a private lunch for him, in a reflection of importance the government has accorded to his visit. The Crown Prince will later have a working dinner with Modi. Al Nahyan will travel to Mumbai on Friday where he will visit Bombay Stock Exchange and interact with industry leaders. After visit of Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani in March last year, Al Nahyan is another important leader to visit India from Gulf region, which is home to nearly 7 million Indians who are a major source of remittances. It also fulfills 60 per cent of India's energy needs. "The visit takes place after we have decided to elevate our relationship to comprehensive strategic partnership during our Prime Minister's visit to UAE in August last year and this will provide an opportunity to have detailed discussions to consolidate the domains of existing partnership," said Wadhwa. He added the issues related to diaspora and Indian workers will also be taken up during the meeting.

Integration of forces

Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar had said in March 2015 that he was giving himself three months to create the post of Chief of Defence Staff (CDS). He said: "Integration has to be there and Chief of Defence Staff is a must. How do you work it out? Give me some time and I will work it out because the three forces' integration does not exist in the present structure." One year after the minister accepted the need for defence reforms, there has been no forward movement. Meanwhile, President XI Jinping of China has undertaken bold reforms of the PLA's command structure, including the setting up of five new "battle zones" to undertake integrated joint operations. After the Kargil conflict, the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) had appointed a Group of Ministers (GoM) to study the Kargil Review Committee's report and recommend measures for implementation. The GoM recommended sweeping reforms to the existing national security management system. The CCS accepted all its recommendations, including one for the establishment of the post of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS).

In addition, the CCS approved implementation of the following key measures:

- * Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff (IDS) was established with representation from all the Services.
- * The Andaman and Nicobar Command and the Strategic Forces Command, both tri-Service, were established.
- * The tri-Service Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) was established under the Chiefs of Staff Committee (CoSC) for strategic threat assessments.
- * Speedy decision-making, enhanced transparency and accountability were sought to be brought into defence acquisitions. Approval of the Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP 2002) was formally announced.
- * The National Technical Research Organisation (NTRO) was set up for gathering electronic and other technical intelligence.
- * The CCS also issued a directive that each of India's land borders with different countries will be managed by a single agency like the Border Security Force. The concept of "one border, one force" was adopted.
- * The CCS nominated the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) as India's primary force for counter-insurgency operations. This experiment has not yet fully succeeded as the CRPF is taking inordinately long to settle down in its new role.
- * The establishment of a National Defence University was approved.

Despite the new measures approved for implementation by the CCS on 11 May 2001, many lacunae still remain in the management of national security. In order to review the progress of implementation of the proposals approved by the CCS in 2001 and to take stock of the new developments over the last 10 years, such as the threats emanating from the sea ala the Mumbai terror strikes and the rapid deterioration of the regional security environment due to the advent of the Islamic State militia, the growing spread of radical extremism and creeping Talibanisation, the government appointed a new Task Force on National Security in mid-June 2011, led by Naresh Chandra, former Cabinet Secretary. The Naresh Chandra committee urged the government to ensure adequate military preparedness to deal with growing threats and challenges, including a militarily more assertive China. By far the most salient recommendation of the committee was to appoint a permanent Chairman of the present CoSC, that is, another four-star post in addition to the army, navy and air force chiefs of staff. This falls well short of the inescapable operational requirement of appointing a CDS and simultaneously creating integrated theatre commands for joint warfare in future conflicts. While a permanent Chairman of the CoSC will certainly be able to better coordinate the modernisation plans of the three services and improve the management of tri-service institutions than a rotating Chairman, he will have no role to play in integrating operational plans for joint warfare. The committee also recommended the creation of three new tri-Service commands to better manage future challenges and vulnerabilities. These included a Special Operations Command, an Aerospace Command and a Cyber Command. Other recommendations of the committee included the establishment of a Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs to deliberate on security issues having foreign policy implications, the setting up of an Advanced Projects Agency under the Scientific Advisor to the Defence Minister to oversee defence research and development (R&D), and the posting of additional armed forces officers to the MoD and the MEA and civilian IAS officers to the services HQ for better integration and coordination. The committee had also recommended an increase in FDI in defence joint ventures from 26 to 49 per cent; this has been implemented. The government must immediately appoint a Chief of Defence Staff (CDS). The logical next step would be to constitute tri-

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part-2

Integration of forces

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Service integrated theatre commands to synergise the capabilities and the combat potential of individual Services. It is time to set up a tri-service Aerospace and Cyber Command as well as a Special Forces Command to meet emerging challenges in these fields and to better manage all available resources. A tri-Service Logistics and Maintenance command has also been long overdue. International experience suggests that structural reform in the defence sector has to be imposed with a top-down approach and can never work if the government keeps waiting for it to come about from the bottom-up. Certain measures are imperative - Formulation of a comprehensive National Security Strategy (NSS), after undertaking a strategic defence review; the immediate appointment of a Chief of Defence Staff to head the defence planning function and provide single point military advice to the Cabinet Committee on Security; approve LTIPP 2007-22, the long-term integrated perspective plan of the armed forces and the ongoing five-year Defence Plan 2012-17, now in its fourth year; the defence budget must be enhanced in stages to 3. per cent of the GDP for meaningful defence modernisation and for upgrading the present military strategy of dissuasion against China to deterrence; the long-pending defence procurement plans such as C4I2SR, artillery modernisation, the acquisition of MMRCA fighter aircraft, aircraft carriers and submarines must be hastened; modernisation plans of the central paramilitary and police forces must also be given the attention they deserve; anomalies created by the Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Pay Commissions have led to a civil-military divide and must be redressed early, including acceptance of the ex-Servicemen's legitimate demand for one rank-one pension (OROP); and a national War Memorial must be constructed at a suitable high-visibility spot in New Delhi to honour the memory of all those soldiers, sailors and airmen who have made the supreme sacrifice in the service of India.

The Tribune

11 February 2016

Us for joint patrol in South China Sea

The United States and India have held talks about conducting joint naval patrols that a U.S. defense official said could include the disputed South China Sea, a move that would likely anger Beijing, which claims most of the waterway. Washington wants its regional allies and other Asian nations to take a more united stance against China over the South China Sea, where tensions have spiked in the wake of Beijing's construction of seven man-made islands in the Spratly archipelago. India and the United States have ramped up military ties in recent years, holding naval exercises in the Indian Ocean that last year involved the Japanese navy. But the Indian navy has never carried out joint patrols with another country and a naval spokesman told Reuters there was no change in the government's policy of only joining an international military effort under the United Nations flag. He pointed to India's refusal to be part of anti-piracy missions involving dozens of countries in the Gulf of Aden and instead carrying out its own operations there since 2008. The U.S. defense official said the two sides had discussed joint patrols, adding that both were hopeful of launching them within the year. The patrols would likely be in the Indian Ocean where the Indian navy is a major player as well as the South China Sea, the official told Reuters in New Delhi on condition of anonymity. The official gave no details on the scale of the proposed patrols. There was no immediate comment from China, which is on a week-long holiday for Chinese New Year.

The dispute

- *China claimed sovereignty over the whole of the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea after World War II
- *China views it as a part of its territory that was occupied by the Japanese army during the war
- *However, Vietnam disputes the claim, believing it to be within its legal territory and there have been two major battles between China and Vietnam since then
- *After Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei and Indonesia have also declared ownership of part of the Spratly Islands
- *At present, Vietnam controls 29 islands, the Philippines seven, Malaysia three, Indonesia two and Brunei one, while China has only nine, with one owned by Taiwan

The parties involved

- *China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei and Taiwan

Indian, US stake

- *Neither India nor the US had staked claim to the South China Sea, but both said they backed freedom of navigation and overflight in the waterway when US President Barack Obama visited New Delhi in January 2015

MoD: No Indo-US naval patrol in South China Sea

The defence ministry has denied reports that India and US have held talks about conducting joint naval patrols, which in the future could even extend to the contentious South China Sea, where Beijing is locked in bitter territorial disputes with its neighbours. "Such reports are highly speculative. Whatever concrete bilateral discussions took place between defence minister Manohar Parrikar and his American counter Ash Carter in the US are reflected in the joint statement issued on December 11," said a highly-placed MoD source on Wednesday. Apart from expressing an intent to "maintain the strong momentum in bilateral security and defence engagement", and further expand maritime cooperation in the years ahead, the joint statement had welcomed Indian participation in the Rim-of-Pacific multilateral naval exercise and Red Flag multilateral air combat exercise in the US this year. "Moreover, India's stated policy is that it does and will join any international military operation only under the blue flag of United Nations. Consequently, while we do coordinate with the ongoing multilateral policing of the Gulf of Aden, we conduct our own anti-piracy patrols there," said the source. India, of course, continues to be wary of China's rapid military modernisation and its aggressive behaviour in the Asia-Pacific, but wants to be seen as "a neutral player" in the geopolitical jostling underway in the region between Washington and Beijing. But it has obliquely criticised Beijing's strongarm tactics in the South China Sea, holding that disputes between China and countries like Philippines, Taiwan, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and others should be resolved in a peaceful manner in accordance with international laws. India has also repeatedly stressed the need for all to respect the freedom of navigation in international waters, right of passage and overflight, unimpeded commerce, and access to resources in accordance with the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

The Times of India

11 February 2016

How radio signal spurred rescue op

A day after a massive ice-wall avalanche hit an Army post in the northern part of Siachen Glacier on February 3, rescue teams established "radio contact" with one of the 10 trapped soldiers. This propelled the rescue teams, with sniffer dogs, earth-penetrating radars, radio signal detectors, as well as specialised ice-cutting and boring equipment, to "redouble" efforts at the avalanche site, which is located at an altitude of 19,600 feet. "After radio contact was established on February 4, rescue operations were stalled on February 5 due to snow storms and blizzards. Soldiers deployed at such posts keep their radio sets switched on to ensure they can be traced by signals in case of a mishap," an officer said. Once the weather cleared slightly, over 150 rescue personnel resumed attempts to locate the "general area" where the 10 soldiers were suspected to have got buried. The trapped soldiers -Lance Naik Hanumanthappa Koppad barely alive thanks to an air pocket and the others dead -were finally extricated around 7.30 pm on Monday. While Hanumanthappa was evacuated to the Army (R&R) Hospital in Delhi on Tuesday morning, the bodies of the other nine were yet to be airlifted on Wednesday night as bad weather hit helicopter operations. They have been identified as Subedar Nagesha, Havildar Elumalai, Lance Havildar S Kumar, Lance Naik Sudheesh, and sepoy Mahesha PN, Ganesan G, Rama Moorthy N, Mustaq Ahmed and nursing assistant Suryawanshi SV.

Siachen: Calls for retreat undermine strategic relevance

By Manmohan Bahadur

'Siachen' means a 'wild rose.' Yes, the Nubra valley is full of shrubs bearing these small pink and white roses, so dense in their flowering that it is difficult to spot the leaves. But lurking between them are thick, firm and sharp thorns that seem to be representative of the conflict on the Siachen Glacier - prickly, harsh and intractable. What started as naiveté on the part of cartographers of the Karachi Agreement of 1949, wherein they stopped the demarcation of the cease fire line at Point NJ9842 thinking that no one would be foolish to lay claim to the wilderness 'thence north to the glaciers,' the conflict on the highest battlefield in the world has crossed three decades. A ceasefire is in place since 2003 but loss of life due the extremely harsh terrain and weather conditions continues. The death of soldiers of the Madras Regiment due to an avalanche has rekindled the debate about the 'futility' of the Siachen conflict with the peaceniks renewing their call for a settlement between India and Pakistan. The 'cartographic aggression' by Pakistan in permitting foreigners to explore the Glacier from its side resulting in the area being shown as Pak-owned in Western maps, led to a riposte from India in 1978; Col Narendra Kumar led an expedition that climbed Teram Kangri II peak on the glacier. The Indian Air Force (IAF) gave helicopter support to the expedition, and the first landing on the Glacier - with me as co-pilot - took place on October 6, 1978 when a Chetak helicopter brought back two casualties from what is now 'Kumar' post. Expeditions from both sides continued during summers of the ensuing years and India pre-empted a Pak plan to occupy heights on the Glacier in April 1984 by moving troops by helicopters to two strategic passes, Bilafond La and Sia La on April 13 and 17. Thus commenced Operation Meghdoot, the longest continuing one, in independent India's history. The harsh reality of Siachen operations have been brought out in stark reality due to the avalanche tragedy. Here, records of resilience and fortitude are set everyday, exemplified by the sheer grit, will power, and of course God's benevolence, that Lance Naik Hanumanthappa Koppad's rescue showed after six days of internment 35 feet below the ice cap in temperatures that would have been below -45 degrees Celsius! After a strict acclimatisation process that lasts many weeks, a battalion goes for a glacier deployment for three continuous months. Almost a thousand soldiers have lost their lives, the majority due to environment related factors. The IAF has been shoulder to shoulder with the Army in air maintaining them, and a thread amongst helicopter pilots is that a tenure of Glacier flying is a must to become a true chopper jock. There have been many helicopter accidents as the machines fly at the extremes of their flying envelope, carrying out multiple landings at 20,000 feet on a daily basis. The camaraderie between the Olive Greens and the Blues on the Glacier is to be seen to be believed. But is it worth it, all this loss of life on both sides for what Stephen Cohen has termed, "two bald men fighting over a comb?" Yes it is.

Pak's ulterior motive - The incursion into Siachen Glacier was Pakistan's doing; the motive was ulterior and the aim was to legitimise its claim through a de facto international acceptance. With the ceding of the Shaksgam Valley to China in 1963, the construction of Karakoram highway close to the Glacier and now the start of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir - where Chinese personnel would be positioned - Siachen is imbued with vital strategic relevance to the security of the Nubra and Shyok Valleys, as also Ladakh. The Indian Army occupies all vantage heights on the ingress routes to the Glacier and its withdrawal to lower areas, with an assurance from Pakistan that it would not move into the heights, is fraught with danger. The Pak Army is against any accord that forces it to concede on paper that it is positioned well west of the Saltoro Range and cannot be trusted with just an assurance, as events have proven over the years. Presumably, an accord had almost been reached in 1987 on similar lines when Zia-ul-Haq was the Pakistan president. However, Zia was killed in a mysterious plane crash. Successive Pakistani civilian and military leaders have said that Kashmir is Pakistan's jugular, so it is indeed intriguing why an attempt at a selective solution to Siachen is being advanced; there are other issues like Sir Creek too and hence such a 'segmented' resolution should be rejected. Environmentalists have suggested that Siachen be made into an 'environment park,' but there are tens of other such pristine areas that can be conferred this title. The reality is that, over the years, the casualties on the Glacier due to nature's fury have come down drastically - and so have fatalities during operational activities due to fine tuning of procedures. India should not be coerced by peaceniks into reaching an agreement that threatens its security. History shows that a country claiming to be a regional power has to make sacrifices of men and material if it wants to retain that status. The Indian Army, the IAF, and indeed the nation have made countless sacrifices over the years over a piece of land that is rightfully ours. While every life is precious, let us not self-coerce ourselves due to perceived excessive losses. To regain the commanding heights of the Saltoro Range after withdrawing from them would be next to impossible. Lance Naik Hanumanthappa Koppad has shown the way with his grit and a steely resolve on the hostile mountains of Siachen that India has more than enough resilience to face adversity.

Siachen is What it Does to the Mind

By Manu Pubby

RISK OF PERMANENT SCAR Normal life eludes soldiers even after their return from Siachen or similar high-altitude assignments

It is not the biting cold, the bone-chilling winds, the lurking danger of a crevasse or an avalanche that makes Siachen arguably the toughest battlefield in the world. The unending expanse of snow and ice - broken only by jutting out jagged peaks - is a dreaded place more so because of what it does to the mind. My experience of climbing the Siachen glacier in 2008, as a guest of the Army, suggests that there is more to the battle than surviving the cold, though that is as essential as breathing or blinking. Remaining composed and focused in a sub -25 degree environment for three months, with only fellow soldiers for company, is the biggest challenge, where a post in many places is barely as large as a studio apartment for a team of 10. It is a battle of survival that the Army has been getting better at. Indian casualties on the glacier had reached a single digit till the average was disrupted by the February 3 avalanche that claimed 9 lives and raised the season's tally to 14. Before the 9 men of 19 Madras Regiment died in the ice fall, the Army lost four to a patrol party in January, apart from a Major, a doctor, who died on the glacier last year. Official data shows that climatic conditions take an average of 10 Indian lives a year on the glacier. And according to official Pakistani Army data, its army has been losing an average of 30 soldiers a year in the same sector, since 2003. However the numbers don't reflect the everyday challenges - from watching for frostbite or the Chilblains that can dismember toes, to the agony of a broken tooth or an incessant headache. I cannot forget the case of a soldier who almost died as our doctor struggled to control his diarrhoea, or the tough Sainik School student who got the shivers after just a night on the glacier. Yet, soldiers have been for almost three decades now continuously manning impossible posts at heights of over 20,000 feet, climbing up and down the receding glacier on foot and landing choppers at altitudes they were not even designed to fly. The soldiers come down as different people. On my way up the glacier in 2008, the most sobering effect was when I spoke with those coming down. Bearded and tough-shaving or even bathing at posts up high is an avoidable luxury - the eyes of the ice-aged men looked harder than the ice they were treading on. Yet they were cheerful, primarily because they were closer to attaining a normal life. But a normal life eludes them. Friends in the Army and soldiers I met over the years have told me tales of what happens to them on their return from the glacier or from similar assignments. Memory loss, shivering bouts at night, stunted hair growth, mood swings or even sexual dysfunction are price soldiers pay for guarding the Saltoro ridge. Things on the glacier have improved since the late 1980s and early 90s, when as many as 30 men died after a single incident. The Army now has better equipment, resources, training and medical facilities. Acclimatisation procedures and standard operating procedures are implemented sternly. From the timing and process of moving between posts, handling of cooking equipment to the drill to be followed to answering nature's call, the Army has rules to be adhered to stringently. The number of casualties has been brought down by laying a kerosene line on the glacier and procuring prefabricated huts and better clothing. It looks like it was one such hut that saved Hanumanthappa. DRDO's efforts in high-altitude research and medicine have helped too. But nature is supreme at the glacier and there is little humans can do to stop an ice wall collapsing or a crevasse opening on what is essentially a moving block of ice. Our soldiers do the impossible with a lot of grit, hardcore training, inspired leadership and a tribute to 'OP Baba'. A temple at the 'entrance' to the glacier beyond the shifting base camp is dedicated to the 'guardian angel' of the frozen battlefield. The legend goes that OP Baba is an unknown soldier who died on the glacier in the 1980s but whose spirit roams around the icy fortress. Soldiers seek his 'permission' to go to the glacier. The legendary soldier in return 'warns' troops on the glacier of forthcoming dangers and inspires them to carry on even after a fall. It may easily look like a superstition from the safety of a city but for thousands of soldiers like Hanumanthappa who man the glacier, what draws out the final strength to climb up to fight on the world's highest battlefield is a leap of faith.

KAMOV Helicopter - BFL May be Roped in to Make Engines

By Manu Pubby

An Indo-Russian joint venture to produce a new series of light military choppers in India is likely to rope in at least one private sector partner for the \$1-billion project, with Pune based Bharat Forge emerging as a likely contender to manufacture engines. With talks on the joint production of over 200 Kamov Ka 226 chopper progressing after an agreement was inked during PM Narendra Modi's visit to Moscow in December, officials have said that there is scope for one or two private sector companies to contribute. A senior team from Russian Helicopters is currently in New Delhi to sort out technical and financial aspects of the deal which will provide the army much-needed light choppers for operations in high altitude areas like the Siachen glacier where antiquated aircraft like the Cheetah helicopters are still operating.

The Indian Express

11 February 2016

Official Secrets Act: Panel seeks to ease criteria for classifying info

By Sagnik Chowdhury

According to government sources, the panel is likely to meet within a fortnight and seek feedback from stakeholder ministries on revising classification criteria that is decided in accordance with Departmental Security Instructions issued by the Home Ministry. A high-level committee formed last year by the Union government to look into provisions of Official Secrets Act (OSA) in light of the Right to Information (RTI) Act may soon suggest to stakeholder ministries that OSA remains unchanged and that, instead, excessive secrecy be done away with by relaxing criteria for classifying information. According to government sources, the panel is likely to meet within a fortnight and seek feedback from stakeholder ministries on revising classification criteria that is decided in accordance with Departmental Security Instructions issued by the Home Ministry. "There is no ambiguity on how OSA and RTI square up. According to the RTI Act, 2005, in case of a clash with the OSA, public interest will prevail. There is no problem with the current form of OSA and it is a necessary legislation. The real issue is rigid classification of information which leads to unnecessary secrecy," said a government source. According to Section 8(2) of RTI Act, "Notwithstanding anything in Official Secrets Act, 1923, nor any of the exemptions permissible in accordance with subsection 8(1) of RTI Act, a public authority may allow access to information, if public interest in disclosure outweighs the harm to the protected interests." "At the next meeting of the panel, the response of all stakeholder ministries will be sought on relaxing criteria for classification of secret information while being careful not to compromise national security," the source said. The committee to look into OSA, a law enacted by the British in 1923, was set up in February 2015. It comprises the Law Secretary, the Home Secretary and Secretary, Department of Personnel and Training. Depending on the level of sensitivity of the information and implications of its disclosure for national security, the four types of classification are 'Top Secret', 'Secret', 'Confidential' and 'Restricted'. 'Top Secret' is for information the unauthorised disclosure of which could be expected to cause "exceptionally grave damage" to national security or national interest. This category is reserved for the nation's closest secrets. 'Secret' is for information whose disclosure may cause "serious damage" to national security or national interest or serious embarrassment to the government. It is used for "highly important matters" and is the highest classification normally used. "Confidential" is for information that might cause "damage" to national security, be prejudicial to national interest and might embarrass the government. "Restricted" is applied to information meant only for official use, which is not to be published or communicated to any person except for official purposes. Documents that do not require security classification are regarded as 'Unclassified'. 'Top Secret' files do not travel below the Joint Secretary level; 'Secret' files do not go below the Under Secretary level. During UPA-I, the second Administrative Reforms Commission recommended repealing of the Official Secrets Act, but the government did not accept it.

China's military might, now for Africa to see

China is rapidly expanding its footprints across Africa, and its latest moves are in Djibouti where it is planning to construct its first overseas naval logistics support outpost. The West and India must keep a sharp eye. Was it a coincidence that, as China prepared to celebrate its Spring Festival, the Foreign Ministry in Beijing announced that China's first overseas naval logistics support outpost, is going to be constructed in Djibouti, in the Horn of Africa? A few days earlier, Djibouti's Foreign Minister, Mahamoud Ali Youssouf told Reuters, "We understand that some Western countries have worries about China's willingness to have military outposts outside of China", and added that they should not be too concerned. Beijing asserted that the outpost was "essential to implement highly efficient logistical support", as China needs to regularly send escort fleets to the Gulf of Aden and Somalia. In December, the Ministry of National Defence had already announced that China and Djibouti had reached a general agreement. Every two years or so, the State Council (the Chinese Cabinet) publishes a White Paper on defence; each new WP has distinctive characteristics. In May 2015, Xinhua released its Ninth White Paper on National Defence, the theme being 'active defence'. China Military Online, a website affiliated to the PLA, then explained: "The WP systematically expounded on the Chinese military's missions and strategic tasks in the new era, and pointed out that the basic point is in making preparation for military struggle." Is Djibouti naval base linked to this military concept? At that time, Defence Ministry spokesperson Yang Yujun denied that China had any intention to build military bases overseas, as China "seeks no hegemony or military expansion". However, China had already started negotiating for a military base in Djibouti. Mr Ismail Omar Guelleh, the President of Djibouti, has openly admitted that discussions were ongoing. "The Japanese want to protect themselves from piracy, and now the Chinese also want to protect their interests, and they are welcome", he said. Beijing's move should be seen in the context of the recently-announced reforms of the Chinese defence forces. On February 2, a commentary in The PLA Daily noted: "China's move to establish five new theatre commands is a breakthrough and a historic step in setting up a joint battle command system for the military." On the previous day, the seven military area commands were merged into five new battle zones, the People's Liberation Army wanting "a more efficient command chain for battles". Opening a naval base, or a 'logistics support outpost' in Djibouti, should be seen in the perspective of the general PLA reorganisation and diversification for example, the creation of two new units, a Rocket Force and a Strategic Support Force. While the PLA Rocket Force will provide a reliable nuclear deterrence and nuclear counter-attack capabilities, the PLA Strategic Support Force will deal with hi-tech warfare in space and cyberwar, the 'war of tomorrow'. It was further announced that the four old PLA departments had now been divided into 15 new units; 'diversify and rule' seems to be President Xi Jinping's new motto. The Djibouti Naval Base appears to be part of these 'reforms'. A year ago, Chinese Defence spokesperson Geng Yansheng, while defending a Chinese submarine's docking at Colombo port, called "utterly groundless" the reports that China was setting up 18 naval bases in Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Myanmar and several other nations in the western and southern Indian Ocean; he was then replying to the publication of an article in a Namibian newspaper announcing the setting up of these bases. A year later, the information has proved not so groundless. Further, it has now become 'legal' for China to carry out such operations abroad. On December 27, Xinhua reported about a new counter-terrorism law which permits the PLA to get involved in anti-terror operations abroad: "According to the law approved by China's top legislature, the PLA and China's armed police forces could carry out counter-terror missions overseas with the approval of the Central Military Commission." Another development shows this new trend of foreign intervention: On February 5, China Military Online reported that after completing "tough winter training in the Gobi Desert of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, the PLA Navy's Marine Corps and a special operation regiment began to embark on the journey returning to their stationed areas." Thousands of marines belonging to the PLA Navy carried out "a cross-region long distance maneuver covering over 5,900 km from southern province of Guangdong to northwest China's Xinjiang". According to the military website, "The marines engaged in independent confrontational exercises, round-the-clock confrontational exercises lasting 72 hours." Why should marines belonging to the PLA Navy get training

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China's military might, now for Africa to see

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in the desert (and arctic) conditions in the Gobi Desert? The answer is that China has decided to extend its tentacles abroad and Djibouti is among the first spots selected. Last year, The China Daily explained: "Djibouti is a pivotal country in the Horn of Africa standing between the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. It is a key transfer stop for international humanitarian missions, including those of the United Nations." The former French colony's peaceful environment makes it an ideal place for a naval 'outpost'. A few months ago, the visit of General Fang Fenghui, the head of the Joint General Staff Department, to a Chinese warship in Djibouti, had already prompted fears of Chinese military expansionism. The Global Times defended the move saying that it was normal for a senior military official to visit PLA soldiers; when it urged the Western media "not to politicise or over-interpret the visit", few believed it. According to Duowei News, a media outlet run by overseas Chinese in the US, Djibouti would have ordered US troops to leave Camp Obock, their secondary military base in the country; the place would be given to China. Camp Lemonnier, the main US base hosting 4,000 US soldiers, is a major drone base in the region and is used by the US for gathering intelligence for its operations against the Islamic State and al-Qaida. Today, not only is China constructing a three-billion-dollar railroad from Addis Ababa, the Ethiopian capital, to Djibouti, but it has also invested \$400 million to modernise a port. The US seems unable to follow this rhythm. This has raised serious concerns in Washington, "given the prospect that 10,000 Chinese troops will occupy a base neighboring the main US base in Africa", noted Duowei News. The London-based Daily Telegraph remarked that the move may prompt the US "to relocate sensitive intelligence-gathering operations to more secure locations". India needs to carefully watch the developments and decide on the role it wants to play in the region, and act fast accordingly.

New military for a new China

The Xi Jinping Government is reforming the military to prepare the men in uniform for their new goals: Providing the hard power that buttresses Beijing's coercive diplomacy and protecting Chinese interests abroad as part of the transnational Belt and Road project

China, under President Xi Jinping, has undertaken far-reaching military reforms of its Higher Defence Management with the twin purpose of adjusting the People's Liberation Army to the changed nature of warfare and its new roles and missions. Credibility of a nation's military power resides in its HDM which, being responsible for the political directions and war campaign planning, decides the outcome of war. These have useful lessons for India. Unlike the Cold War, in the present globalised world integrated with commerce and trade, traditional wars between powers with nuclear weapons are passé. Instead of war-fighting, military power is necessary for coercive diplomacy which China has demonstrated against India in the Himalayas and the United States in the South China Sea. India downplays the PLA's regular intrusions across the disputed border, and the US, while showcasing its naval might through frequent Freedom of Navigation patrols within 12 nautical miles of China's reclaimed land in the South China Sea, has desisted from destroying Chinese infrastructure on the disputed islands. Overtime, China will shift the Line of Actual Control to India's political-military-psychological disadvantage. And, it will continue to slowly build military capabilities on reclaimed land in South China Sea. Moreover, the PLA, traditionally responsible for continental defence, now has new roles and missions in support of Mr Xi's Belt and Road project to protect Chinese assets and interests abroad on land and sea. While the B&R was unveiled in 2013, its conceptualisation began in 2008, when China decided to abandon the supreme leader, Deng Xiaoping's dictum of keeping a low profile. Against this backdrop, Mr Xi, on assuming power as the head of fifth generation leadership in November 2012, brought in numerous reforms in the HDM. In a first, he took over as the Chairman, Central Military Commission (the highest security policy-making forum) as well as the President of China and Chairman of the Communist Party Politburo at the same time. Unlike his predecessors, he launched a massive campaign against corruption in the PLA, with as many as 30 Generals coming under the scanner in 2015. He regularly exhorted the PLA to obey the party's policies. Being a triple-hatter, the Chairman CMC interacts directly with the PLA and the Politburo at the same time. Thus views of the military are known to the Politburo and the latter's policies are acceptable to the military. The reforms are meant to ensure that once the PLA embarks in support of the B&R, it projects a clean and honest image of

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New military for a new China

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China abroad. Once the overarching ethos seeped in, Mr Xi, in four steps, brought in HDM reforms. On September 3, 2015, he announced that the PLA's strength would be reduced by 3,00,000 (three lakh) troops over five years. In step two, on January 1, 2016, he declared the creation of an Army headquarters similar to the Air Force and Navy headquarters. Hitherto, the General Staff headquarters, always headed by an Army officer, was seen as both Army and Joint Command headquarters. A new Strategic Support Force, which brings all space, cyber and electromagnetic assets, which are critical for information warfare, under one roof, was formed. These will support combat operations both for continental defence and expeditionary forces in support of B&R. This is not all. The People's Liberation Second Artillery, responsible for nuclear weapons, was renamed as the Rocket Force. This could have been done for two reasons. China's nuclear weapons' assets which were earlier seen as an extension of the artillery now have been delinked from that reference, suggesting a more professional title for strategic assets which are under modernisation for providing credible deterrence. The new name also suggests that Rocket Force will only have nuclear assets under it. The PLA's medium and short range missiles which use conventional warheads will now be under the exclusive command of concerned conventional military commanders. The third step in HDM reforms were declared by Mr Xi on January 11. The four departments, namely, General Staff headquarters, General Political Department, General Logistics Department and General Armament Department, were replaced by 15 agencies. These are: Joint Staff Department (JSD), Political Work Department, Logistics Support Department, Equipment Development Department, Training and Administration Department, National Defence Mobilisation Department, General Office, Agency for Offices Administration, Office for Reforms and Organisational Structure, Office for International Military Cooperation, Office for Strategic Planning, Audit Office, Discipline Inspection Commission, Politics and Law Commission, and Science and Technology Commission. And, finally, on February 1, the seven Military Area Commands in Shenyang, Beijing, Lanzhou, Jinan, Nanjing, Guangzhou and Chengdu were reduced to five, namely, Northern Theatre Command, Western Theatre Command, Eastern Theatre Command, Central Theatre Command, and Southern Theatre Command. Against India, the earlier Lanzhou (facing Ladakh) and Chengdu (facing Arunachal Pradesh) MACs were brought under the single Western Theatre Command based in Chengdu. Overall, the HDM reforms suggest at least four things. One, the PLA has decided to give due importance to tri-Service combined operations, a must for credible military power. The JSD as the successor of the GSHQ will have equal representation from all three Services, both for the planning of nuclear and conventional operations, and in the seamless integration of their plans. Earlier, the Army had disproportionate representation in combined operations planning at GSHQ. Better tri-Service cooperation under a single commander is also evident in the new Theatre Commands. Earlier, in the MACs, while there was unity of command under a single commander, the Air Force and the Army did two types of training. In peacetime, they honed their Service's core competencies as well as did combined operations. Now, they will devote their total time to combined operations so that the Army and Air Force understand each other's core competencies. Two, the break-down of four departments into 15 agencies reporting directly to the CMC has been done to streamline functioning with focussed results and monitoring. For example, the Audit Office agency, which was not there earlier, will ensure zero corruption within the PLA. Officers of this agency will reportedly visit command headquarters and field formations to audit disciplinary cases, and submit the report-card regularly to the CMC. This will ensure a corruption free image of the PLA abroad. Three, the renaming of the PLASA into Rocket Force is in line with China's no-first-use nuclear policy. Earlier the PLASA was responsible for both nuclear and conventional ballistic and cruise missiles. This is no longer so. The nuclear assets will exclusively be with the Rocket Force while the conventional ones will be with the Theatre Commands. Most importantly, there will be more synchronisation between the PLA and the party. Unique to China, the PLA is supposed to be loyal to the party and not the nation, since the party and nation are considered one. Thus, the PLA is not apolitical. Mr Xi's regular calls to the PLA to obey the party do not mean he foresees dissent. It means that in the exceptional concept where political officers, who are PLA officers doing party work and not party functionaries in uniform inside the PLA, should uphold party directives.

Japan announces new sanctions on N Korea

Japan announced on Wednesday that it will impose new sanctions on North Korea to protest a rocket launch seen as a test of missile technology, AP reports from Tokyo. The sanctions will include expanded restrictions on travel between the two countries and a complete ban on visits by North Korean ships to Japanese ports, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said at a news conference. "Despite our repeated requests to stop nuclear tests and missile development, (North Korea) pushed ahead with the launch. It has a direct impact on Japan and we need to show our strong determination," Suga said. He said that Japan will keep a door open for dialogue to resolve the still-outstanding issue of Japanese citizens who were abducted by North Korea decades ago.

The Times of India**11 February 2016**

Iran plans to upgrade missiles; US, UN see red

Iran will unveil an upgrade of its Emad ballistic missiles this year, the defence minister was quoted as saying, advancing a programme that has drawn criticism from the United Nations and sanctions from the United States. The country would also start taking delivery of an advanced Russian S-300 surface-to-air missile defence system in the next two months, Hossein Dehghan added - a system that was blocked before a landmark nuclear deal with world powers. Tehran agreed on curbing its nuclear work in July last year and international sanctions were lifted in January. But tensions with Washington have remained high as Tehran continues to develop its military capabilities. Iran first tested the Emad missile in October last year. With improved accuracy, Iran says the new missile will be an important part of its conventional deterrent. But the US says the Emad is capable of carrying a nuclear warhead and the test therefore violated a UN resolution. Washington imposed fresh sanctions last month against Iranian individuals and businesses linked to the missile programme. "The Emad missile is not a violation of the nuclear deal or any UN resolution since we will never use a nuclear warhead (on it). It's an allegation," Dehghan said.

The Asian Age**11 February 2016**

Russia warns over missile system deployment

Moscow on Wednesday warned that Washington's deployment of a US missile defence system to South Korea could spark an arms race in the region. South Korean and US defence officials said last week they would begin formal talks on the deployment of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defence System (THAAD) system in response to North Korea's recent nuclear and missile tests. "The appearance of elements of the US global missile defence system in the region, which is characterised by a very difficult security situation, can provoke an arms race in Northeast Asia and complicate the resolution of the nuclear problem on the Korean peninsula," said the Russian foreign ministry. "On a more global scale, this step can increase the destructive influence of the US global missile defence system on international security and stability." The foreign ministry reiterated that Pyongyang's nuclear and missile tests "could not but inspire strong condemnation". The US insists that the defence system is a deterrent necessitated by the North's advancing ballistic missile programme. China has also argued it would undermine stability in the delicately balanced region. Pyongyang has said that the deployment of a missile defence system would be a Cold War tactic to "contain" China and Russia. The THAAD system, in service since 2008, includes truck-mounted launchers, radars, interceptor missiles and global communications links. Five THAAD batteries are currently operational, according to the Pentagon's missile defence agency, and two more were ordered in 2014. North Korea's rocket launch last week, widely seen as a disguised long-range missile test, sparked international fury and prompted an agreement at the UN Security Council to slap new sanctions against the increasingly defiant state. The launch, which violated multiple UN resolutions, came just weeks after Pyongyang carried out its fourth nuclear test.

NATO BUILD-UP IN E. EUROPE TO DERAIL PEACE

Moscow: Nato's plan of its biggest build-up in eastern Europe since the Cold War is a destabilising factor designed to contain Russia, Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said on Wednesday. Worried since Russia's seizure of Crimea that Moscow could present a threat to Eastern Europe, the Western military alliance says it wants to bolster defences on its eastern flank without provoking the Kremlin by stationing large forces permanently. The Eastern European countries had cautiously welcomed Nato's announcement. Annexation of Crimea by Russia has heightened anxieties among Communist nations in the region. US president Barack Obama also had plans to quadruple defence spending in Central and Eastern Europe. "We appreciate President Obama's decision to boost funding for an increased US military presence on the territory of Nato's front-line allies," the Czech defense ministry had said. — *Reuters*

D E O C

वॉशिंगटन, 10 फरवरी (भाषा)। ओबामा प्रशासन ने पाकिस्तान के लिए 86 करोड़ डालर की मदद का प्रस्ताव दिया है। इसमें 26.5 करोड़ डालर सैन्य उपकरणों के लिए है। अमेरिका ने कहा कि यह राशि पाकिस्तान को आतंकियों से लड़ने, परमाणु हथियारों को सुरक्षित करने और भारत के साथ संबंध सुधारने में मदद करेगी।

ओबामा प्रशासन की इस मदद में 26.5 करोड़ डालर सैन्य उपकरणों के लिए प्रस्तावित हैं।

राष्ट्रपति बराक ओबामा के बजट प्रस्तावों में पाकिस्तान का कोई जिक्र नहीं था। विदेश मंत्री जॉन कैरी ने अपने प्रस्तावों में कहा कि बजट में पाकिस्तान के साथ संबंध बनाए रखने और 'चरमपंथी संगठनों को तोड़ने, निष्क्रिय करने एवं हटाने' की दिशा में आगे बढ़ने के लिए 85.98 करोड़ डालर का प्रावधान है। कैरी ने प्रस्तावों में कहा, 'यह कोष देश के उग्रवाद-विरोधी अभियानों को, स्थिरता को, आर्थिक वृद्धि को और सामाजिक सुधार को सहयोग देगा।' विदेश मंत्रालय ने विदेशों में आकस्मिक अभियानों (ओसीओ) कोष के तहत पाकिस्तान को मदद के इस प्रावधान के बारे में कहा, 'पाकिस्तान अमेरिका की आतंकवाद रोधी रणनीति के, अफगानिस्तान में शांति प्रक्रिया के, परमाणु अप्रसार प्रयासों और दक्षिणी एवं मध्य एशिया में आर्थिक एकीकरण के केंद्र में है।'

मंत्रालय ने कहा, 'ओसीओ के संसाधन पाकिस्तानी परमाणु प्रतिष्ठानों की सुरक्षा सुनिश्चित करने, बाकी पेज 8 पर

पाक को 86 करोड़ डालर की मदद देगा अमेरिका!

पेज 1 का बाकी

अफगानिस्तान में शांति प्रक्रिया को सुगम बनाने और भारत के साथ संबंध सुधारने जैसी महत्वपूर्ण अमेरिकी गतिविधियों को सहयोग देंगे।' ओसीओ अनुरोध कूटनीतिक मौजूदगी और महत्वपूर्ण सहयोगी कार्यक्रमों का समर्थन करता है ताकि ऊर्जा, आर्थिक वृद्धि, कृषि, शिक्षा, स्वास्थ्य के क्षेत्र में सुधारों और सहयोग को आगे बढ़ाया जा सके और हिंसक चरमपंथ का शिकार बने क्षेत्रों में स्थिरता लाई जा सके। मंत्रालय ने कहा कि इसमें चुनौतीपूर्ण राजनीतिक एवं सुरक्षा स्थितियों के मद्देनजर कूटनीति बरकरार रखते हुए और पहुंच बढ़ाते हुए सरकार और उसके नागरिकों को सहयोग देना शामिल है। विदेश मंत्रालय की योजना 'आतंकवाद से निपटने की हमारी अनिवार्य रणनीतिक प्राथमिकताओं को पूरा करने और अफगानिस्तान में सत्ता सौंपने के बाद पाकिस्तान और क्षेत्र में स्थिरता बढ़ाने के लिए' मौजूदगी बरकरार रखने की है।

ओसीओ के आर्थिक सहयोग कोष (ईएसएफ) के तहत विदेश मंत्रालय ने पाकिस्तान

के लिए चार करोड़ डालर का प्रस्ताव दिया है। विदेश मंत्रालय ने कहा कि यह क्षेत्र में अमेरिका के रणनीतिक लक्ष्यों को सहयोग देगा, जिनमें पाकिस्तान एवं सीमावर्ती क्षेत्रों में सुरक्षा, विकास और स्थिरता बढ़ाना शामिल है। मंत्रालय ने कहा, 'यह अनुरोध विभिन्न आपसी हितों के क्षेत्रों पर गौर करने के लिए पाकिस्तान सरकार के साथ दीर्घकालीन सहयोग को बढ़ावा देने की अमेरिकी प्रतिबद्धता को दर्शाता है।' विदेश मंत्रालय ने ओसीओ के अंतरराष्ट्रीय मादक द्रव्य नियंत्रण एवं कानून प्रवर्तन खंड के तहत अफगानिस्तान में सत्ता सौंपने के दौरान स्थिरता को बढ़ावा देने वाले पाकिस्तानी कार्यक्रमों के लिए चार करोड़ डालर का प्रावधान किया है। विदेश मंत्रालय ने प्रमुखतः सैन्य उपकरण उपलब्ध करवाने वाले विदेश सैन्य कोष के तहत 26.5 करोड़ डालर का प्रस्ताव देते हुए कहा कि अफगानिस्तान में सत्ता सौंपने और पाकिस्तान के अंदर जारी आतंकी हमलों के चलते यह जरूरी है कि अपनी पश्चिमी सीमा पर और देश के भीतर स्थिरता बढ़ाने के पाकिस्तान के प्रयासों को यह सहयोग दिया जाए।

UAE, Isro to ink deal for launching first Arab Mars mission

New Delhi, dhns: Isro will be signing a deal on Thursday with its counterpart in the United Arab Emirates to launch Arab world's first ever mission to Mars. The MoU between ISRO and UAE space agency is among several that would be signed during the visit of Emirates' de-facto ruler and crown prince of Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan to New Delhi. The countries will also ink an agreement to set up UAE-India Infrastructure Investment Fund aiming to boost UAE's investment in India's infrastructure sector up to \$75 billion. The fund would focus on railways, ports, roads, airports, industrial corridors and parks, officials told Deccan Herald Wednesday. Sheikh Mohammed, also the Deputy Supreme Commander of UAE Armed Forces, arrived in New Delhi on Wednesday. He will hold a private meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi Thursday morning and the two leaders will also lead their country's respective delegations in the evening. The Arab leader will also meet President Pranab Mukherjee. In July 2014, The UAE announced its decision to launch Arab world's first ever satellite to Mars in July 2020.

River cleaning 'RO-BOAT' To rescue maili Ganga?

Polluted Ganga river may find its saviour in an unmanned water surface vehicle 'Ro-Boat' that is capable of detecting, collecting and eliminating all kind of trash including chemical effluents and floating waste from the surface of water. The device which has been identified as possible technological intervention for the mammoth task of cleaning the river under the Union Water and Resources Ministry's Ganga Action Plan (GAP) has been developed by a Delhi-based tech company, Omnipresent Robot Tech Pvt Ltd. The Union Science and Technology Ministry which received a proposal in this regard from the firm last year, examined the prototype of the Ro-Boat and has now recommended it for the use, terming it as a potential technology for cleaning garbage or dirt from the river or water bodies. The proposal was examined by the Technology Information, Forecasting and Assessment Council (TIFAC), an autonomous body of Department of Science and Technology (DST). Now, the Small Industries Development Bank of India is studying the financial aspect for the project. Each device costs Rs 15 lakh. Depending on the length of the river, the devices will have to be deployed. Presently, trial runs are going on for the cleanliness of Yamuna river yielding good results. Aakash Sinha, CEO and founder of the company, said that the machine has to be programmed to collect all kind of pollutants and sludge through its 'robotic arms' and then offload the waste. Solar panels battery and twin propeller engine will help it to navigate while consuming less power. The device has a unique ability to completely submerge in the river to pull out the pollutants settled on the riverbed. "The key advantage with such unmanned devices is that they can work day and night continuously with little human intervention. There is also an option to go for a remote human operator to see the video data transmitted by the Ro-Boat, define and change the course of the machine," Sinha added. The Ro-Boat is equipped with fog lights and a pan-tilt zoom camera, making it capable of 24-hour operation. "Erring on the side of practicality, if we assume 12 hours of operation per day, the gadget can clean up 600 kg of waste a day, or nearly 200 tonnes of waste a year," Sinha said. The company is already making several kinds of robots for several sectors. The Ro-Boat has been awarded among top 20 innovations by Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Last year, the Government had sanctioned Rs 20,000 crore for rejuvenating the Ganga under the 'Namami Gange Project'. Under the project, an amount of Rs 1,700 crore will be released for Allahabad, Rs 1,000 crore for Kanpur and Rs 450 crore for Varanasi. The money will be utilised for purification of the river and enhancement of the capacity of sewage treatment plants (STPs), Water Resources Minister Uma Bharati had said.

Four Indian-Americans selected to U.S. National Academy of Engineering

NAE is a non-profit institution that provides engineering leadership in service to the nation.

Four Indian-Americans have been selected to the prestigious U.S. National Academy of Engineering (NAE) to be part of its new list of 80 members for their valuable contributions to the society. Anil K. Jain, Dr. Arati Prabhakar, Ganesh Thakur and Dr. K.R. Sridhar were formally made part of the NAE during a ceremony at its annual meeting here, the academy announced in a statement on Tuesday.

Accomplishments

Mr. Jain, a distinguished professor in the department of computer science and engineering at the Michigan State University in East Lansing, was elected for his contributions to the field of engineering and practice of biometrics. An IIT-Kanpur alumnus, Mr. Jain's research focuses on pattern recognition, computer vision and biometric recognition. Dr. Prabhakar, director of the US Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) in Virginia, was chosen for national leadership to advance semiconductor and information technologies. Beginning her career as a Congressional Fellow, Dr Prabhakar has also chaired the Efficiency and Renewables Advisory Committee for the U.S. Department of Energy. Mr. Thakur, who is the president of Thakur Services Inc. in Houston, Texas, was named a member for leadership in the implementation of integrated reservoir management techniques. Dr. Sridhar, the principal co-founder and chief executive officer of Bloom Energy Corporation in California, was selected for the "contributions to transport phenomena and thermal packaging of electrochemical systems and generation of clean, reliable and affordable power". Contributed to NASA Mars programme Earlier, Dr. Sridhar was director of the Space Technologies Laboratory (STL) at the University of Arizona where he was also a professor of aerospace and mechanical engineering. His contributions to the NASA Mars programme to convert Martian atmospheric gases to oxygen for propulsion and life support was recognised by Fortune magazine which cited him as "one of the top five futurists inventing tomorrow, today." Along with the new members, the total US NAE membership has up to 2,275, selection to which is considered the highest professional distinctions accorded to an engineer. Founded in 1964, the NAE is a non-profit institution that provides engineering leadership in service to the nation.

The Times of India**11 February 2016****Now, study links Zika virus to eye damage in babies****By Catherine Saint Louis**

Infants infected with the Zika virus may be born not only with unusually small heads, but also with eye abnormalities that threaten vision, researchers reported on Tuesday in the journal JAMA Ophthalmology. The study described damage to the retina or optic nerve in 10 of 29 newborns examined at Roberto Santos General Hospital in Salvador, Brazil. All the infants were presumed to have been infected with the Zika virus and had small heads, a condition called microcephaly. Other causes of the defect, like infection with rubella or toxoplasmosis, were ruled out. Seven out of the 10 newborns had defects in both eyes, while three infants had damage in a single eye. The most common problems were black speckled lesions in the back of the eye, large areas of tissue damage in the retina itself, or damage in the layer of blood vessels and tissue below the retina. Exactly how much these babies can see is unknown at this point, said Dr Lee M Jampol, a professor of ophthalmology at Northwestern University, who co-wrote an editorial accompanying the study. But, he added, when we can see these lesions, that means there's damage. The lesions themselves can't be repaired. But the earlier you make the diagnosis, the better, said Dr Rubens Belfort Jr, the paper's senior author and a professor of ophthalmology at the Federal University of Sao Paulo in Brazil. Based on my experience, I would say a large number of these kids will be blind, he added. The study's authors urged that all infants with microcephaly routinely receive examinations for lesions in the eyes.

China reports first case of virus

China's first case of the Zika virus has been found in a 34-year-old man who recently traveled to Venezuela and is now making a speedy recovery, the government said on Wednesday. The man from the southern city of Ganzhou had been treated in Venezuela on January 28 before returning home on February 5 via Hong Kong and the southern Chinese city of Shenzhen. The commission said he is being treated and that his temperature is now normal and a skin rash is receding. The commission said the chances of the virus spreading in China were "extremely low" due to cold winter temperatures and a lack of mosquito activity. AP

How bacteria can 'see' where they are going

It has taken scientists over 300 years to finally figure out how bacteria "see" their world, and they do it in a remarkably similar way to us. The team of British and German researchers revealed how bacterial cells act as the equivalent of a microscopic eyeball or the world's oldest and smallest camera eye. Cyanobacteria are found in huge numbers in water bodies or can form a slippery green film on rocks and pebbles. Synechocystis - the species used in the study - is found naturally in freshwater lakes and rivers. As light hits the spherical cell body of the bacteria, it refracts into a point on the other side of the cell. This triggers movement by the cell away from the focused spot. Within minutes, the bacteria grow tiny tentacle-like structures called pili that reach out towards the light source. As they attach to the surface that they're on, they retract and pull the bacteria along. "The physical principles for the sensing of light by bacteria and the far more complex vision in animals are similar but the biological structures are different," noted co-author Annegret Wilde from the University of Freiburg in Germany in a paper that appeared in the journal eLife. - IANS

The Indian Express

11 February 2016

Gravitational waves: Why science expects to create a ripple today

Amid expectations worldwide that the announcement will be about the discovery of gravitational waves Einstein spoke of. On Thursday, international scientists are scheduled to make an announcement that is already being billed as the unveiling of one of the most important scientific discoveries of all time. Amid expectations worldwide that the announcement will be about the discovery of gravitational waves Einstein spoke of, AMITABH SINHA explains what that would mean to science and the common man.

What are the scientists going to announce?

As of now, all that is known is that at the National Press Club in Washington, at 10:30 am local time (8:30 pm IST) Thursday, scientists of Caltech, MIT and the LIGO (Laser Interferometer Gravitational-wave Observatory) international project will present "a status report on the effort to detect gravitational waves - or ripples in the fabric of space-time - using LIGO". But the internet is already abuzz with chatter that the LIGO project has succeeded in its primary objective of detecting gravitational waves. Gravitational waves have never been detected before, though indirect evidence of these waves have been found and resulted in a Nobel Prize in 1993. Their existence had been predicted by Albert Einstein exactly 100 years ago in his paper on the General Theory of Relativity. India is an important partner in the LIGO project and the announcement will be simultaneously made at the Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics (IUCAA) in Pune.

What are gravitational waves?

It is a concept that would challenge one of the foundations of Newtonian physics. Isaac Newton had postulated that the force that makes an apple fall to earth is also the one that keeps the moon in its orbit around the earth. Essentially, every celestial body exerts an attractive force on every other. This force, he proposed, was proportional to the masses of the two bodies and inversely proportional to the square of the distance between them. So, the greater the distance between the bodies, the lower the gravitational force between them. This resulted in his famous equation of gravitation, which was written as:

$$F = G \times m_1 \times m_2 / r^2$$

where F is the strength of the force of gravitation, m1 and m2 are the masses of the two bodies, r the distance between them and G a universal constant that Newton introduced and whose value was calculated to be 6.674×10^{-21} Newton sq m/sq kg. Newton's gravitational law described the motion of heavenly bodies with amazing accuracy and withstood the test of time for about three centuries. In fact, this law is enough to guide most of the activities of modern space programmes. But just like Newton's laws of motion were found to

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Gravitational waves: Why science expects to create a ripple today

break down in some special cases in the new revolutionary physics that began in the first couple of decades of the 20th century, his law of gravitation too was considered inexplicable by Einstein. The latter went on to propose an alternative theory, which is where gravitational waves came in.

What did Einstein have a problem with?

Though mathematically accurate, Newton's law doesn't say why two bodies are attracted to each other. Einstein also had a problem with the fact that the force was exerted on the two bodies instantaneously. He had shown in his landmark papers of 1905 that nothing in the universe, not even information, can travel at speeds greater than that of light - and two bodies can be separated by any distance.

So what alternative did he propose?

While formulating his General Theory of Relativity, Einstein proposed that gravitational attraction was a result of the bending of the fabric of space-time by the equivalent of a heavy object. This is very often elucidated by an animation in which a large ball is placed on a rubber sheet, creating a curvature in the sheet. When a smaller ball is rolled on the rubber sheet, it rotates around the large ball along the curvature for a while before falling into it. Einstein said the sun, the earth and all other bodies formed similar curvatures around them, and this was the reason for smaller objects getting pulled towards them. But since the earth, sun and everything else are also moving, the curvature around them moves too. This creates ripples in space-time, just like a moving boat in water creates ripples. It is these ripples that Einstein called gravitational waves.

So what if gravitational waves have now been detected?

Besides the fact that it would establish Einstein's genius all over again, the discovery of gravitational waves would establish the correctness of General Theory of Relativity. It would assure the world that science has been developing on the right course through the last one century. The discovery of gravitational waves would mean that now all four fundamental forces of nature - electromagnetic, weak and strong nuclear forces being the other three - would be associated with wave-like properties. It would, therefore, be a significant step forward in the effort to unify the quantum theory, which operates at subatomic levels, and gravitational theory, which operates at cosmic scales, into one single theory of nature. The detection of gravitational waves would enable astrophysicists and astronomers to "see" the universe which is, as of now, invisible to them. Almost 95 per cent of the universe is known to consist of dark matter and dark energy, which does not emit any light or any other electromagnetic waves, and therefore have not been detected even by the most sophisticated instruments. Black holes, for example, cannot be "seen" but they do produce gravitational waves, and now can be detected using these.

But does it alter the common man's life?

For scientists, it changes their very understanding of the universe. With gravitational waves established, Newtonian gravity would be overthrown in favour of Einstein's gravity. The rest of the world, however, can go about their daily lives as usual - as of now. As one scientist put it, no one knew what was in store when electromagnetic waves were first discovered, just as James Clark Maxwell had predicted, in the latter half of the 19th century.

New thin film transistor may lead to flexible electronics

Researchers have invented a thin film transistor that could lead to the development of flexible electronic devices with applications such as display technology, medical imaging and renewable energy production. Researchers were exploring new uses for thin film transistors (TFT), which are most commonly found in low-power, low-frequency devices like a computer display screen. Efforts to improve the performance of transistors have been slowed by the challenges of developing new materials or slowly improving existing ones for use in traditional thin film transistor architecture, known as the metal oxide semiconductor field effect transistor (MOSFET). Instead of developing new materials, researchers from the University of Alberta in Canada improved performance by designing a new transistor architecture that takes advantage of a bipolar action. Instead of using one type of charge carrier, as most thin film transistors do, it uses electrons and the absence of electrons (referred to as "holes") to contribute to electrical output. Their first breakthrough was forming an 'inversion' hole layer in a 'wide-bandgap' semiconductor, which has been a great challenge in the solid-state electronics field. "Once this was achieved, we were able to construct a unique combination of semiconductor and insulating layers that allowed us to inject 'holes' at the MOS interface," said Gem Shoute from University of Alberta. Adding holes at the interface increased the chances of an electron 'tunneling' across a dielectric barrier. Through this phenomenon, a type of quantum tunnelling, researchers were able to achieve a transistor that behaves like a bipolar transistor. "It is actually the best performing (TFT) device of its kind - ever. This kind of device is normally limited by the non-crystalline nature of the material that they are made of," said Ken Cadien from University of Alberta. The dimension of the device itself can be scaled with ease in order to improve performance and keep up with the need of miniaturisation, an advantage that modern TFTs lack. The transistor has power-handling capabilities at least 10 times greater than commercially produced thin film transistors. "Usually tunnelling current is considered a bad thing in MOSFETs and it contributes to unnecessary loss of power, which manifests as heat," said Shoute. "What we have done is build a transistor that considers tunnelling current a benefit," she added. The findings were published in the journal Nature Communications.



New method to 'weld' neurons using lasers

Toronto, PTI: In a first, scientists have developed a method to 'weld' neurons, using ultrashort laser pulses, a breakthrough technique that may have potential applications in cancer research and post surgery treatment. The team is the first ever to find a way to bond neurons and in doing so, has given researchers a powerful new tool. Neurons are cells in the nervous system that are responsible for transferring information between the brain and the rest of the body. "The immediate application is for researchers. They finally have a new tool to do what they have not been able to do before," said Nir Katchinskiy, PhD student at the University of Alberta in Canada, who led the research. "I was really interested in the nervous system - if you have a severed nerve, you can't repair it. My thought was, what if we could 'weld' it back up right after it's injured?" Katchinskiy said. To conduct the study, two neurons, put in a special solution that prevents them from sticking together, were brought into contact with each other. Femtosecond laser pulses - each ultrashort pulse occurring every 10-15 seconds - were delivered to the meeting point of the two cells. Although the outside layer of the cells was partially compromised, the inside of that protective layer remained intact. As a result, the two cells established solid bonds forming a common membrane at the targeted area. Throughout multiple experiments, the cells remained viable and the connection strong. It took the neurons 15 milliseconds to stick to each other - the process would have taken hours to occur naturally. The biggest advantage of the discovery is that it gives researchers complete control on the cell connection process. "You can really plan any experiment. The idea is to show that you can use it (femtosecond laser) as a research tool to control what you are attaching," said Katchinskiy. "You may not be able to go in and treat the human spine with this, but it brings you closer," said Abdul Elezzabi, professor at University of Alberta. The team has applied this method to three types of cells, but the potential of the technique seems limitless, researchers said. Elezzabi said femtosecond lasers can prove efficient in prostate, brain and ocular cancer research and treatment. Another possible application is in post cancer surgery treatment. The research was published in the journal Nature Scientific Reports.

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Many galaxies behind Milky Way found

Melbourne, PTI: Scientists have discovered hundreds of galaxies just 250 million light years away from earth which had been hidden from view until now by our Milky Way galaxy. The discovery may help to explain the mysterious gravitational anomaly dubbed the Great Attractor, that appears to be drawing the Milky Way and hundreds of thousands of other galaxies towards it with a gravitational force equivalent to a million billion Suns. Using Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation's (CSIRO) Parkes radio telescope in Australia equipped with an innovative receiver, scientists were able to see through the stars and dust of the Milky Way, into a previously unexplored region of space. According to Lister Staveley-Smith, professor at The University of Western Australia node of the International Centre for Radio Astronomy Research (ICRAR), the team found 883 galaxies, a third of which had never been seen before. Scientists have been trying to get to the bottom of the mysterious Great Attractor since major deviations from universal expansion were first discovered in the 1970s and 1980s, said Staveley-Smith. "We don't actually understand what's causing this gravitational acceleration on the Milky Way or where it's coming from," he said. "We know that in this region there are a few very large collections of galaxies we call clusters or superclusters, and our whole Milky Way is moving towards them at more than two million kilometres per hour," he said. The research identified several new structures that could help to explain the movement of the Milky Way, including three galaxy concentrations (named NW1, NW2 and NW3) and two new clusters (named CW1 and CW2). Astronomers have been trying to map the galaxy distribution hidden behind the Milky Way for decades. "We've used a range of techniques but only radio observations have really succeeded in allowing us to see through the thickest foreground layer of dust and stars," said Renee Kraan-Korteweg, a professor at University of Cape Town, in South Africa. "An average galaxy contains 100 billion stars, so finding hundreds of new galaxies hidden behind the Milky Way points to a lot of mass we didn't know about until now," she said.

Google software can qualify as car driver: US

Washington/Detroit - US vehicle safety regulators have said the artificial intelligence system piloting a self-driving Google car could be considered the driver under federal law, a major step toward ultimately winning approval for autonomous vehicles on the roads. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) told Google, a unit of Alphabet Inc, of its decision in a previously unreported February 4 letter to the company posted on the agency's website this week. Google on November 12 submitted a proposed design for a self-driving car that has "no need for a human driver", the letter to Google from NHTSA Chief Counsel Paul Hemmersbaugh said. "The NHTSA will interpret 'driver' in the context of Google's described motor vehicle design as referring to the (self-driving system), and not to any of the vehicle occupants," the NHTSA's letter said. "We agree with Google its (self-driving car) will not have a 'driver' in the traditional sense that vehicles have had drivers during the last more than one hundred years." Major automakers and technology companies such as Google are racing to develop and sell vehicles that can drive themselves at least part of the time. All participants in the autonomous driving race complain that state and federal safety rules are impeding testing and eventual deployment of such vehicles. California has proposed draft rules requiring steering wheels and a licensed driver in all self-driving cars. Karl Brauer, senior analyst for the Kelley Blue Book automotive research firm, said there were still significant legal questions surrounding autonomous vehicles. But if "the NHTSA is prepared to name artificial intelligence as a viable alternative to human-controlled vehicles, it could substantially streamline the process of putting autonomous vehicles on the road," he said. In its response to Google, the federal agency offered its most comprehensive map yet of the legal obstacles to putting fully autonomous vehicles on the road. It noted existing regulations requiring some auto safety equipment cannot be waived immediately, including requirements for braking systems activated by foot control. - Reuters

Deccan Herald**11 February 2016**

Key role of HR in branding

By Rajeev Bhardwaj

A corporate brand is the sum total of several ideas. It encompasses your organisation's philosophy, culture, and approach to business as well as its reputation among its customers. A brand is reflected not just by the belief system of the top management but by each and every cog in the establishment's wheel. For people who like to see the world in boxes, HR managers are merely tools for ensuring a good flow of talent into the company, and have little bearing on the brand. However, a closer look at the interconnected aspects of branding will prove that HR managers are key to the organisation's branding. They not only ensure compliance with labour laws and employment ethics, but also make sure that people in the organisation are in sync with the brand image and value of the establishment and also reflect it externally. A brand is the identity of a company in the eyes of its customers. To put it more precisely, it's the promise that customers associate with the experience, value and quality of the services extended by the organisation. If the promise is not delivered to the customers each and every time, the brand image suffers. Richard Branson, the founder of Virgin Group, famously said that organisations should look after their employees, who in turn will automatically look after the customers and maintain the brand value. This is why the role of HR managers is important and key to the brand image. By being the vanguard of an organisation's culture, by moulding the environment of the organisation, by instilling the right values in new employees and bringing them in sync with the organisation's core values and beliefs, HR professionals determine the continuity of the organisation's brand at every level. In this manner, they also act as brand ambassadors of the company they represent. More precisely, they ensure that each employee becomes a brand ambassador of the company. Competitive pressure in today's business environment has catapulted the HR department from an administrative over-

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Key role of HR in branding

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head to the fountainhead of innovative solutions to cultivate and nurture talent, and act as the conduit between the top management and the ground level executers. This is how the core philosophy of brand flows from top to bottom internally. Learning about the standards and trends prevalent in the industry is the key HR solutions provider as it helps organisations keep pace with the changing needs of time. For example, companies today are adopting employee friendly measures such as flexible timings, work from home options, paternity leaves and longer paid maternity leaves to make working more amenable and happy experience for employees.

Better retention results

Companies that take lead in adopting such friendly measures will automatically rank higher on employee preference and will have better retention results. Happy employee translates into the most suitable brand ambassador of an organisation as he/she act as an influencer in the industry and persuades more talented individuals to join the firm. Today, HR managers need to think like marketers and know how to market USPs of their organisation to potential talent. Their role is crucial in explaining their company's work culture and benefits to prospective candidates. It's also crucial in retaining experienced candidates as they seek job security. Hence, the importance of retention, particularly of quality talent is key to maintaining the organization's brand value. HR is often characterised as a faceless part of the organisation. However every HR should work as an integral part of the business. Innovation is the crux of every business nowadays. Companies should work to strengthen their R&D departments. HR manager can play a crucial role in this aspect also. An organisation should be like a home where employees would desire to return again and again. It's the HR's job to take care of various activities which make the office set up more desirable to employees. The office premises should have a cafeteria where employees can enjoy healthy meals. Further, games should also be arranged as it helps to keep employees in shape. Organising tours and camps also count as important aspects of a HR's job and is a major way of developing a healthy relationship and a friendly ambience within the organisation. Further, such practices help employees to rejuvenate and be more focused on their job. The HR's job is to support top performers while encouraging others to expand their areas of expertise. The HR can help an organisation excel and enhance its brand value to a large extent.