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India eyes uranium from Africa

Likely to ask the nations to relax commitment to Pelindaba Treaty

On the sidelines of its campaign for membership in the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), India is likely to ask African countries to relax commitment to the Pelindaba Treaty which controls supply of uranium from key mineral hubs of Africa to the rest of the world.

Senior diplomatic sources told *The Hindu* that President Pranab Mukherjee would begin the process by trying to convince Namibia next week, during his June 15-18 trip, to implement a bilateral treaty with India and supply uranium to Indian nuclear energy projects.

“India’s agreements with Namibia have not moved ahead. We will try to remind Namibia to ratify the agreement that was concluded for supplying uranium to India,” said a senior diplomatic source on Wednesday as the travel schedule of Mr. Mukherjee to Ghana, Cote d’Ivoire and Namibia was announced. The visit will begin on June 12.

The Pelindaba Treaty signed in 1996, also known as the African Nuclear Weapon Free Zone Treaty, aims at preventing nuclear proliferation and preventing strategic minerals of Africa from being exported freely.

Two pacts with Namibia

India and Namibia signed two MoUs on Cooperation in the field of geology and mineral resources and Cooperation in peaceful uses of nuclear energy during the visit of President Hifikepunye Lucas Pohamba to India in 2009.

However, diplomats pointed out that Namibia’s membership of the Pelindaba Treaty has prevented it from ratifying the agreements. Namibia is the fourth largest producer of uranium.

The visit by Mr. Mukherjee, diplomats said, will give India a chance to persuade Namibia to ratify the MoUs of 2009. A major focus of Mr. Mukherjee’s three-nation visit will be on energising India’s existing business ties with Ghana, Namibia and Cote d’Ivoire. Two major business delegations are likely to accompany Mr. Mukherjee on his three-nation tour.

GRSE Close to Sealing Deal with Philippines Navy

Kolkata Inching closer towards finalising a deal with the Philippines Navy, defence PSU Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE) has emerged as the lowest bidder for exporting two frigates to the Southeast Asian island country. “We are the lowest price bidder for the order. Now the government is evaluating other aspects before placing the order,” Commodore Ratnakar Ghosh, Director (shipbuilding), GRSE, said. The shipyard exported India's first warship, an offshore patrol vessel, to Mauritius in December 2014.

Thursday, 09 June 2016

Army to train Namibian forces

By Vijay Mohan

Pact to set up a training school likely during Prez's visit to African nation next week

India to press for uranium supply

- *An agreement was signed with Namibia, the fourth largest producer of uranium, for peaceful civilian use of nuclear energy*
- *However, its implementation has been held up as it is still to be ratified by the Namibian legislature*

The Indian Army will help establish Signals training school for the Namibian armed forces in the African country as part of its growing engagement with countries located in what was known as the dark continent. At the same time, India, besides focusing on bilateral trade and cultural relations, will also push for procurement of uranium from Namibia.

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) for helping setting up the military school was expected to be signed between the two countries during President Pranab Mukherjee's state visit to Namibia next week, senior officials of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said. Besides Namibia, the president will also visit Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast).

While this is the first-ever visit of an Indian President to Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana, a presidential visit to Namibia, is being undertaken after 21 years. The reaching out to African countries, many of which have historical and cultural ties with India, comes in the backdrop of China having made significant inroads in that continent. China has major presence in the aforementioned countries with major developmental projects and high volume of trade. A team of three Indian Army officers and other staff will proceed to Namibia for the project once the formalities are worked out. A defence cooperation agreement with Namibia was signed in 1995, following which Indian Air Force training teams have been stationed in Namibia, which has also procured some defence equipment from India, including three transport helicopters from Hindustan Aeronautics Limited.

MEA officials said an agreement was signed with Namibia, which is the fourth largest producer of uranium, for peaceful civilian use of nuclear energy, but its implementation had been held up as it was still to be ratified by the Namibian legislature. An agreement among African countries on uranium export is another impediment to the agreement. A number of other agreements are also expected to be signed with the countries that the President is visiting, besides holding delegation level talks with leaders of the respective countries and interaction with the local diaspora.

An agreement for setting up a gas-powered fertiliser plant in Ghana and reopening the regional office of the EXIM Bank for West Africa are also on the agenda. The President will address a joint business forum and students and faculty of the University of Ghana besides unveiling a statue of Mahatma Gandhi gifted by the Indian Council of Cultural Relations. In Cote d'Ivoire, among other official engagements, Mukherjee will be honoured with the National Order of the Republic of Ivory Coast, the highest civilian award of that country.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

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Thursday, 09 June 2016

Doors open for India to military logistics, cutting-edge weaponry

By Rajat Pandit

Doors are now being yanked open for Indian armed forces to extend their operational reach in the critical Asia Pacific region and beyond with logistical help from the US, as also acquire some cutting-edge military products like the Predator surveillance and armed drones after joining the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR).

These, in effect, were the key takeaways in the defence sector from the flurry of announcements made after the Modi-Obama meet in Washington on Tuesday. The bilateral Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA), which will now be inked after finalisation of its text, envisages Indian and American militaries providing logistics support, refuelling and berthing facilities to each other's warships and aircraft on an equal-value exchange basis seamlessly.

The LEMOA will give the US forces regular access to Indian military bases, which has led to some criticism about India surrendering its traditional strategic autonomy. But, as reported by TOI earlier, the pact will also allow Indian forces access to US bases ranging from Djibouti (Horn of Africa) and Diego Garcia (central Indian Ocean) to Guam (western Pacific) and Subic Bay (the Philippines).

The LEMOA basically revolves around “functional arrangements“ for exercises, joint trainings, port calls and HADR (humanitarian assistance and disaster relief) operations. Defence minister Manohar Parrikar and top officials have stressed the pact will not lead to any permanent stationing of US troops on Indian soil. India will also have the right to refuse logistical support for any US military action.

India's quest to acquire armed HALE (high-altitude, long endurance) drones or UAVs (unmanned aerial vehicles) as well as some key space technologies, in turn, will now become easier after joining the 34-member MTCR, which prevents proliferation of missiles and UAVs over the range of 300-km. India has been in talks with the US for acquiring Predator/Avenger drones, which have been used extensively in the Af-Pak region to take out terrorists with their deadly Hellfire missiles, for quite some time but not being an MTCR member was a major hurdle in the way till now.

Apart from the launch of the bilateral maritime security dialogue, the conclusion of a technical arrangement for sharing of commercial 'White Shipping' information between India and the US is another step towards promoting overall maritime domain awareness. India, incidentally, is trying to finalise such pacts with over 25 countries from the African east coast to the western Pacific to strengthen maritime security from conventional as well as unconventional threats.

Categorisation of India as a 'Major Defence Partner' by the US on Tuesday is also a step forward, which will help process Indian applications faster through the American bureaucracy and control regulations. But it's still not enough to meet the aspirations of India, which has given arms contracts worth over \$13 billion to the US over the last decade.



India set to be in missile regime, thanks to Italy

By Anirban Bhaumik

New Delhi: If New Delhi went past the last hurdle in its bid to get into the Missile Technology Control Regime, it was largely due to recent upturn in India-Italy ties.

Italy has been lobbying against India's bid to enter the MTCR over the past several months. Rome's relations with New Delhi had turned sour over the past four years following arrest of two Italian marines in India. This came in the way of India's bid to win support of Italy for admission into the MTCR, which controls global trade in missiles and missile technology.

The MTCR had set June 7 as the deadline for its members to formally submit its objections to proposed admission of India.

But amid recent signs of a thaw between India and Italy, Rome chose not to formally convey its objection to the French government, which has been serving as a point-of-contact for the MTCR since its inception.

The MTCR is one of the four export control regimes India has been trying to enter ever since it inked the civil nuclear cooperation agreement with US in 2008, the others being Nuclear Suppliers Group, Wassenaar Arrangement and Australia Group.

India on May 12 last applied for membership of the NSG, but is facing strong opposition from China. The NSG controls global nuclear trade.

That China is not a member of the MTCR also made India's entry to the cartel easier, compared to its move for an NSG berth.

India, however, is yet to seek membership of the Wassenaar Arrangement and Australia Group, which too did not include China.

The Wassenaar Arrangement controls global commerce of conventional weapons and dual-use goods and technologies, while the Australian Group governs international trade of materials used to make chemical and biological weapons.

As the deadline passed on Tuesday without any formal objection from any of the MTCR's 34 members, India's entry to the cartel now appears to be a fait accompli.

The breakthrough came just 10 days after Italian Navy sergeant Salvatore Girone returned home. Girone and his colleague Massimiliano Latorre were arrested four years back for killing two fishermen of Kerala off the southern coast of India on February 12, 2012. The Supreme Court eased the bail conditions of Girone, who was staying in Italian Embassy in New Delhi, and allowed him to go home after noting that the government of India had no objection to the relaxation.

Defence: Sorting a few legacy issues, framing a new agenda

By Sushant Singh

LEMOA or Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement is another name for Logistics Support Agreement (LSA), an agreement the US has with many of its allies.

Ten paragraphs of the India-US Joint Statement, The United States and India: Enduring Global Partners in the 21st Century, cover issues related to defence. Some of these are legacy issues finally nearing closure; others are new entrants in the bilateral agenda.

LEMOA

LEMOA or Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement is another name for Logistics Support Agreement (LSA), an agreement the US has with many of its allies. But this has been especially tailored for India, following negotiations for over a decade. The US gave a final draft in January, and a team of Pentagon lawyers flew to Delhi for negotiations in February. During Secretary of Defence Ashton Carter's visit in April, Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar announced an in-principle approval to sign the LEMOA, pending a final exchange of drafts. Those have now been exchanged, and the Joint Statement says the LEMOA text has been finalised by the two sides. It will be signed once India completes its process, which is mainly about approval by the Cabinet Committee on Security.

LEMOA allows each military to avail logistics support facilities — fuel, spare parts, mechanics, etc. — of the other while on joint training, Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR), and port calls. The agreement lays out the procedure for billing for these facilities as part of a larger accounting transaction, and details are contained in the clarifying protocols annexed to LEMOA.

Under LEMOA, while Indian logistics support will be available to the US military, Indian armed forces will benefit from access to a large number of US military bases globally, particularly while undertaking HADR missions in a diaspora crisis. It will allow India to respond promptly to emerging situations or humanitarian crises, and will expand Indian military's operational environment globally.

Major Defence partner

The US has recognised India as a Major Defence Partner (MDP). This follows a long-standing Indian demand to provide predictability and transparency in the US system that approves transfer of military equipment and technology. MDP is not an established category, and this nomenclature has been especially created for India, because a legislative amendment to bring a change in India's status would have been a long-drawn and difficult process.

By recognising India as an MDP, the White House is signalling its system to expedite Indian defence licences. Coupled with India's entry into the MTCR, this is going to help India get modern defence technology from the US by moving to the approved category of the Arms Control List. But as it is neither a Presidential Directive nor a legislative amendment, the robustness of the process will be brought out by the outcomes.

White Shipping Agreement

The Statement welcomes the conclusion of a technical arrangement for sharing “White Shipping” information. The countries signed the White Shipping Agreement (WSA) last month, which enhances their maritime domain awareness and fits in with the Maritime Security Dialogue, the only 2+2 dialogue that India has with any country.

The WSA establishes an information network protocol that allows the two navies to exchange information about ships in their waters. Ships are usually classified into white (commercial ships), grey (military vessels), and black (illegal vessels). After signing the WSA, the two sides will be able to exchange information about white ships, which may not be known to the other side. The Navy’s Information Management and Analysis Centre (IMAC) at Gurgaon will be the nodal centre for WSA.

Information Exchange Annex

India is constructing an indigenous aircraft carrier (IAC-1) at its shipyard in Cochin, and has plans for a second aircraft carrier (IAC-2) in the near future. For availing technologies available with the US, an agreement and protocol for sharing information — maintaining its confidentiality and integrity — was needed to be signed. The Information Exchange Annex is that protocol. Since then, a team of senior US Navy officials has visited the shipyard at Cochin last month to help with some issues in the IAC-1.



Thursday, 09 June 2016

India, US now ‘major defence partners’

The US gave India the status of a “major defence partner” — on a par with some of Washington’s closest allies, like the Europeans and the Japanese.

Making India a “major defence partner” of the US in technology transfer and a “priority partner” in the Asia-Pacific, asking other countries to support India’s bid for admission to the Missile Technology Control Regime and the Nuclear Suppliers Group, and treating the Pathankot terror attack with the same level of seriousness as the Mumbai 26/11 terror attacks — these are some of the major outcomes of the Indo-US joint statement, issued hours after Prime Minister Narendra Modi met US President Barack Obama on Tuesday.

These, apart from the setting up of six nuclear reactors in India by Westinghouse, a separate joint document focusing on cyber security and a funding initiative towards climate change, were described as “consolidation” of the gains made over the last few years.

Foreign Secretary S Jaishankar called the Westinghouse decision to go ahead with six AP1000 reactors a “big, decisive step forward”.

However, unlike the previous 2015 joint statement, two notable issues were missing from this one — a reference to the Haqqani network was quietly dropped and there was no direct reference to South China Sea in the document either.

Titled “The United States and India: Enduring Global Partners in the 21st Century”, the joint statement puts cooperation in the strategic sector — from defence to cyber security, terrorism to export control regimes, nuclear to Asia-Pacific — at the centre stage.



The US gave India the status of a “major defence partner” — on a par with some of Washington’s closest allies, like the Europeans and the Japanese. (Source: AP)

In the defence sector, the US gave India the status of a “major defence partner” — on a par with some of Washington’s closest allies, like the Europeans and the Japanese. The joint statement called their defence relationship an “anchor of stability”.

This means that the US is willing to transfer technology to India, just like it does with its “closest allies and partners”. India can now receive licence-free access to a wide range of dual-use technologies that are critical to defence.

“This will give us access to better quality and faster access to defence technology... and access to dual-use technology.

It will also help the Make-in-India initiative,” Jaishankar said, calling it as a “big step”. These issues were separately discussed when Defence Secretary Ashton Carter called on Modi on Tuesday afternoon.

On India’s bid to become a member of the four export control regimes, the US called on all NSG countries to support India’s application at the plenary meeting on June 24. The two countries also, for the first time, confirmed that they were looking forward to “India’s imminent entry into the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR)”.

“US has been supportive of the NSG process... and we count on US’s support,” Jaishankar said, adding that there were “expressions of welcome” on MTCR.

Moving ahead from the 2015 joint strategic vision on Asia Pacific and Indian Ocean region, the two countries declared themselves “priority partners” — a move that may not go down well with China.

In a new area of cooperation, ‘Cyber’ was identified as a “common space and threat”. Again aimed at Beijing, a separate joint document was reached to finalise the framework for the US-India Cyber Relationship in the near term. “They committed to enhance cyber collaboration on critical infrastructure, cyber crime, and malicious cyber activity by state and non-state actors...,” the joint statement said.

In a veiled reference to China, they also emphasised that “no country should conduct or knowingly support online activity that intentionally damages critical infrastructure or otherwise impairs the use of it to provide services to the public”.

The US also called on Pakistan to bring perpetrators of the 2016 Pathankot terror attack and the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks to justice.

However, Washington’s selective branding of terrorists was apparent as the Haqqani network — one of the listed groups in the January 2015 statement that has been accused of attacking the Indian embassy in Kabul in the past — was dropped from the joint statement. The Haqqani network are going to replace Mullah Mansour as the next Taliban chief and the US — which is willing to negotiate with the Taliban — appears to have backed off on account of this.

The statement said that the leaders are committed to strengthening cooperation against terrorist threats from extremist groups such as Al-Qaeda, Islamic State, Jaish-e Mohammad, LeT, the D Company and their affiliates.

Both Modi and Obama affirmed their support for a UN Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism that advances and strengthens the framework for global cooperation and reinforces that no cause or grievance justifies terrorism. “There has broadly been a meeting of minds,” the foreign secretary said.



Thursday, 09 June 2016

India-US defence ties now have new script

New Delhi a major partner

- *In the joint statement issued on Tuesday, the US recognises India as a ‘Major Defence Partner’*
- *The new nomenclature means the US bureaucracy will deal with India-related issues on priority*
- *It will facilitate technology sharing with India to a level commensurate with that of the US’ closest allies*
- *India’s entry into the MTCR means it can now shop armed drones and other long-range missiles*
- *The text of the logistics exchange memorandum of agreement has also been finalised*

Contours emerging from last night’s India-US joint statement hint at a new script in the defence relationship of the two nations.

The text of the logistics exchange memorandum of agreement (LEMOA) — which will allow US warships and planes to be refuelled and repaired in India — has been finalised. The US now recognises India as “major defence partner” and New Delhi’s entry into the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) means it can now shop armed drones and other long-range missiles.

The joint statement was made around 3 am IST on Wednesday after Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Barack Obama met in the US. The LEMOA will not just help the US, it will act as a vital tool for India as it expands its Naval footprint and outreach. The US has a string of bases in East Africa, Persian Gulf, Diego Garcia (Indian Ocean), The Philippines, Japan, Australia and Japan. Indian warships and planes can

seek similar refuel and repair facilities at these bases on long deployments, which are very frequent nowadays.

The LEMOA will cover four aspects — training, exercises, port calls and the humanitarian assistance. Indian planes used refuelling facilities at Djibouti for evacuating Indian citizens from Yemen last year. Both countries will have to seek advance permission to seek facilities and it does not entail any permanent bases for the US in India like it has in countries like Japan.

A formal signing of the LEMOA could happen soon and the pact will go through the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS). The LEMOA will be facilitator as earlier such matters of refuelling and repair were considered on a case-to-case basis.

The other important aspect of the statement is the US recognising India as a “Major Defence Partner”. This will be a new nomenclature for the US bureaucracy and lawmakers to apply as a priority-yardstick on dealing with India-related issues. Though this does not mean that India will get unhindered access to technology like the NATO allies of the US get, it will fix a kind of parameter and send a signal to the officialdom. The US is looking toward facilitating technology sharing with India to a level commensurate with that of its closest allies and partners.



Thursday, 09 June 2016

Entry to Big Boys Club

MTCR is a boost to India's global ambitions

India's entry into the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), one of the four global nuclear regimes, under the leadership of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, must be hailed as a significant achievement in the country's recent history of nuclear disarmament. Notably, India's entry to the 34 member group was not opposed by a single member, as confirmed by the current Dutch chairperson of the MTCR. India's membership had been blocked by Italy in 2015, which was directly linked to the standoff over the detention of the two Italian marines in the case of killing two Kerala fishermen. However, realising a fresh diplomatic logjam, the Modi Government had taken the quick decision to allow the second Marine, Salvatore Girone, to return to Italy. This brings special significance in clinching the deal for entering the MTCR. Besides, the major breakthrough comes days after India declared that it is subscribing to The Hague Code of Conduct against ballistic missile proliferation that is considered to be complimentary to the MTCR. Back in 1987, the MTCR was founded with an objective to limit the spread of ballistic missiles and other unmanned delivery systems that could be used for chemical, biological and nuclear attacks. The MTCR urges all its members, which include most of the world's key missile manufacturers to restrict their exports of missiles and related technologies capable of carrying a 500kg payload for at least 300km or delivering any type of weapons of mass destruction. In fact India was among the five nations which were regarded as Unilateral Adherents to the basic norms of the MTCR since 2008.

What is likely to follow from India's membership of the MTCR is that potential sale of predator series of unmanned aircrafts for the Indian military might get a boost. With a full-fledged US backing, the MTCR entry will be a stepping stone for expediting India's membership to the coveted Nuclear Supplier's Group (NSG). India has already initiated the process of joining the NSG, a big 48 member group which governs trade in commercial nuclear technology and was established in response to India's first nuclear test in 1974. At the moment, China, a member of the NSG, is blocking India's membership to the club. However, the US

has strongly backed India's membership to the three other nuclear regimes-NSG, Australia Group and the Wassenaar Arrangement. As India is already jointly making supersonic cruise missiles the Brahmos, with Russia its admission to the MTCR will facilitate the country to become a major arms exporter for the first time in its history. Also, being an MTCR member, India will be able to buy high-end missile technology and surveillance drones like the Predator.

It must be noted that after Modi's recent visit to the US during the last two years, Washington, DC has started visualising him as a shrewd pragmatist, but with a strong nationalist flavour. It has been observed so far that most US politicians, policymakers and business leaders can work comfortably with Delhi now more than ever before. Bringing strategic autonomy and non-alignment together in his diplomatic lexicon, Modi is fast on the road to clinch critical deals not only with the US, but also with other major global powers.



DECCAN HERALD

Thursday, 09 June 2016

Brave N-world: NPCIL, US firm to begin engineering, site design

Westinghouse to set up 6 N-reactors

Washington: The Nuclear Power Corporation of India and US firm Westinghouse have agreed to begin engineering and site design work immediately for six nuclear power plant reactors in India.

The two sides will work toward finalising the contractual arrangements by June 2017, the White House said on Wednesday.

Culminating a decade of partnership on civil nuclear issues, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Barack Obama during their White House meeting "welcomed" the start of preparatory work on site in India for six AP1000 reactors to be built by Westinghouse, officials here said.

The two leaders also noted the intention of India and the US Export-Import Bank to work together toward a competitive financing package for the project, the White House said.

Once completed, the project would be among the largest of its kind, fulfilling the promise of the US-India civil nuclear agreement and demonstrating a shared commitment to meet India's growing energy needs while reducing reliance on fossil fuels.

These reactors would bring clean energy to India and generate thousands of jobs in the US, Brian Deese, Senior Advisor to the US President, told reporters in a conference call.

The White House said the steps that the two governments have taken in the last two years through the US-India Contact Group, including by addressing the nuclear liability issue, inter alia, through India's ratification of the Convention on Supplementary Compensation for Nuclear Damage, have laid a strong foundation for a long-term partnership between US and Indian companies for building nuclear power plants in India.

India, US to Ink Cyber Framework Accord

Ushering in a new era of collaboration in the cybersphere, India and the US will sign a framework for the bilateral cyber relationship between the two countries within the next two months.

The announcement in this regard was made in a joint statement after the White House meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Barack Obama.

During the meeting the two leaders emphasised that cyberspace enables economic growth and development, and reaffirmed their commitment to an open, interoperable, secure, and reliable Internet, underpinned by the multi stakeholder model of Internet governance.

"They committed to deepen cooperation on cybersecurity and welcomed the understanding reached to finalise the Framework for the US-India Cyber Relationship in the near term," the joint statement said.

A fact sheet issued by the White House said the framework would be signed within 60 days.

During the meeting Modi and Obama committed to enhance cyber collaboration on critical infrastructure, cybercrime, and malicious cyber activity by state and non-state actors, capacity building, and cybersecurity research and development, and to continue discussions on all aspects of trade in technology and related services, including market access.

They have committed to continue dialogue and engagement in Internet governance fora, including in ICANN, IGF and other venues, and to support active participation by all stakeholders of the two countries in these fora.

Obama and Modi committed to promote stability in cyberspace based on the applicability of international law including the United Nations Charter, the promotion of voluntary norms of responsible state behaviour during peacetime, and the development and implementation of practical confidence building measures between states.

According to the White House fact sheet, cooperation on cyber issues is a key component of the bilateral relationship between India and the United States.

The two countries have a strategic cyber relationship that reflects their shared values, common vision, and shared principles for cyberspace. Both sides recognise the value of enhancing and further institutionalising their broad-based cooperation on cyber issues, and in that respect, intend to complete a framework based on the following shared principles and intended forms of cooperation, it said.

The fact sheet said the two countries committed to voluntary norms under which a state should not conduct or knowingly support online activity that intentionally damages critical infrastructure or otherwise impairs the use of critical infrastructure to provide services to the public.

"A state should not conduct or knowingly support activity intended to prevent national Computer Security Incident Response Teams (CSIRTs) from responding to cyber incidents. States should also not use CSIRTs to enable online activity that is intended to do harm," the fact sheet said.

The two countries agreed that a state should cooperate, in a manner consistent with its domestic law and international obligations, with requests for assistance from other States in investigating cyber crimes, collecting electronic evidence and mitigating malicious cyber activity emanating from its territory.

They also agreed that a state should not conduct or knowingly support ICT-enabled theft of intellectual property, including trade secrets or other confidential business information, with the intent of providing competitive advantages to companies or commercial sectors.

Shared principles for the US-India cyber relationship include, a commitment to an open, interoperable, secure, and reliable cyberspace environment; a commitment to promote the internet as an engine for innovation, economic growth, and trade and commerce.

THE HINDU

Thursday, 09 June 2016

Strategic considerations behind frequent Modi-Obama meetings: Xinhua



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with U.S. President Barack Obama during a meeting in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington on Tuesday. Strategic consideration were the reasons behind frequent meetings between Mr. Obama and Mr. Modi, the Xinhua news agency said, cautioning India that it cannot rise by “containing” China or picking one side against the other.

Strategic consideration were the reasons behind frequent meetings between U.S. President Barack Obama and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chinese state-run media said on Wednesday and cautioned India that it

cannot rise by “containing” China or picking one side against the other. “For Obama, improving U.S.-India ties will help consolidate his diplomatic legacy as seven months are left before he leaves office; for Modi, his visit is aimed at seeking new momentum for developing ties with Washington,” Xinhua news agency said in a commentary on Indo-U.S. ties.

His fourth trip to U.S., as PM - “Strategic consideration is behind the frequent meetings between Obama and Modi as the latter is paying his fourth trip to the U.S. since he took office in 2014,” the commentary said, a day after the two leaders met at the White House. It said the change in treatment Mr. Modi has received from America was viewed by many as the result of a warming India-U.S. relationship, which has seen ups and downs in recent years.

Banned in the past, now a royal welcome - “Just a few years ago, Modi was banned from entering the U.S. soil...Now, Modi was greeted by a flag-bearing military honour guard when he arrived at the entrance to the West Wing for talks with Obama,” the commentary said. “What is behind the veil is strategic consideration from both Washington and New Delhi,” it said.

U.S. seeking Asia-Pacific balance - “U.S. attaches importance to India’s strategic value, economic development potential and ideological advantage,” Xinhua quoted Jin Canrong, vice president of the School of International Studies at Renmin University, as saying. “Embracing India will help consolidate the U.S. rebalance to the Asia-Pacific,” he said. According to Mr. Jin, India is willing to deepen the India-U.S. relations out of the consideration in both strategic security and economic development.

‘India has independent policy’ - The U.S. and India values do not fit each other completely, the news agency quoted Zhao Gancheng, an India expert with Shanghai Institutes for International Studies, as saying.

“India adopts an independent foreign policy and has tried to keep neutral when dealing with major countries,” Mr. Zhao said. “Modi is also a nationalist leader and he will not blindly follow the United States,” he said.

Logistics pact, 6 n-reactors - Referring to various outcomes of the Obama-Modi meeting, it is said the text of a logistics agreement, which will allow the countries’ militaries to use each other’s land, air and naval bases, would be signed soon. It also highlighted the announcement to start preparatory work on site in India for six nuclear reactors to be built by an American company. The two countries also pledged to develop their defence relations into “an anchor of stability.” Earlier an article in the state-run *Global Times* said that India cannot rise by “containing” China or picking one side against the other, while taking note of the Indo-U.S. ties which are being ramped up to an “unprecedented level.”

India’s multi-faceted diplomacy - “Picking one side or camp against the other is not the way India will rise. New Delhi is looking into a multi-faceted diplomacy,” it said.

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Beijing isolated, but NSG race set for photo-finish

By Indrani Bagchi

Narendra Modi should be able to convince the Mexican leadership to support India's membership quest in the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) when he arrives in Mexico City on Thursday. So, after getting support from

Switzerland, the US and Mexico, what are India's realistic chances of getting past the door into the world's only nuclear cartel?

The US-India joint statement laid out the US support. "The leaders looked forward to India's imminent entry into the Missile Technology Control Regime. President Obama welcomed India's application to join the NSG, and reaffirmed that India is ready for membership. The US called on NSG participating governments to support India's application when it comes up at the NSG plenary later this month."

India's entry into the MTCR adds to its street cred. One of the four non-proliferation regimes, India's application cleared all hurdles earlier this week to MTCR, a 34-nation exclusive club which controls transfer of missile, space and related technology. More important, the grouping does not include China, India's primary opposition in the NSG.

But, as everybody gears up for the big NSG meet in Vienna and later Seoul, it's very clear this may not be enough.

Just as India changed its strategy by targeting NSG and MTCR rather than all four, so has China. In 2008, China was the "silent opposition" preferring to hide behind a group of nations. Ultimately, it needed a phone call from the White House to Beijing to bring China around.

This time, China declared its opposition early by publicly linking NSG membership with Non-Proliferation Treaty accession. This has several implications -by outing itself as the main opposition, it can hope to rally other 'reluctants' behind it; climbing down would be a significant loss of face, unacceptable in China; and it raises the costs of appeasing or overcoming China's opposition exponentially for the other side. It will take much more than a phone call.

The other side, in 2008 and now, remains the US. US-China ties under Obama in 2016 are very different from the Bush regime in 2008. While Bush plumped for India secure in his belief that it was the right thing to do, Obama has no such conviction.

The only difference is that India has as much of a transactional leader in Modi, as the Chinese knew where they stood with Bush. With Obama, they are not sure. In addition, thanks to the deterioration in economic and security ties, China may be unwilling to accommodate an Obama phonecall, if he makes it.

Negotiations, deals this time round will go down to the wire. India, China and the US are playing a close game. The stakes are higher.

New Zealand to 'carefully consider' India bid

India's bid for the NSG membership will likely go right down to the wire, as it did eight years ago when India finally managed to get a clean waiver from the group to carry out nuclear commerce. One of the three main hold-out nations then, New Zealand, has told TOI through its foreign affairs and trade ministry that India's application will be a subject of "careful consideration" later this month. New Zealand was the most vocal among a group of six countries including Ireland, Austria, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Norway, which India suspected were instigated in 2008 by China to resist the India-specific exemption NSG was contemplating. While the remaining three relented after a while, New Zealand, along with Austria and Ireland, continued to seek conditionalities. Government sources in New Delhi said they were expecting New Zealand to ask some tough questions but added that eventually it was going to support India.

Quest for another holy grail

By T.P. Sreenivasan

Nuclear Suppliers Group membership for India is unlikely and will not result in substantial gains.

India's 30-year-old effort to secure a permanent seat on the UN Security Council has been characterised as the pursuit of a diplomatic holy grail. The chance of success in that pursuit has been receding like a mirage, though there have been tantalising signs of progress. A similar, but less intense effort is on to seek admission to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), a body which should have included India in the first place. Here again, there is no sign of India being invited, even as the 10-year moratorium on new membership has expired. India has now embarked on another quest, this time to seek membership of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG). The Prime Minister himself has travelled to Switzerland to seek support and he will also go to Mexico for the same purpose. It is surprising that India is investing much diplomatic effort on this issue when there is little chance of India being invited to the group.

An American initiative - India seeking membership of the NSG is like Russia seeking membership of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation: the NSG was invented to prevent Indian advance towards possession of nuclear weapons after the technology demonstration test of 1974. If India joins it, the very nature of the NSG will change and dilute its fundamental position that all members should be signatories to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Though the U.S. has stated repeatedly that it would like to see India in the NSG, it cannot be expected to be a party to the fundamental alteration of the NPT regime.

Interestingly, it was a U.S. think tank which brought up the topic in a Track II discussion with some of us in 2007. The suggestion was not that India should be given membership of the NSG, but that India should join all multilateral export control regimes like the NSG, Missile Technology Control Regime (which it is set to join later this year), the Wassenaar Arrangement for control of conventional weapons and the Australia Group for control of chemicals that could contribute to chemical and biological weapons. It appeared then that the whole proposal was to drag us into Wassenaar Arrangement and the Australia Group by presenting them as a package. We had refrained from joining both, though they were open for us from the beginning, for our own reasons. Our response to the U.S. proposal was guarded as we did not want a bargain on all the groups together. We did, however, emphasise that India's membership of the NSG would be helpful as it had received an exemption from the NSG guidelines. As a member of the group, we could contribute to the discussion if it sought to amend the guidelines in any manner. In other words, it was not an Indian initiative to press for admission to the NSG.

U.S. President Barack Obama formalised the proposal in 2010, as though it was a concession to India, in his bid to win various contracts, including nuclear supplies. Perhaps, he was aware that a decision on the NSG was not in his hands, but promised to take up the matter with the others just to win some goodwill in the process. As was expected, the fundamental requirement that every member should be a signatory to the NPT was brought up not only by China but several others. There was similar opposition in the case of the exemption from NSG guidelines at the time of the nuclear deal also, but our bilateral efforts and heavy lifting by the U.S., including a final phone call from the U.S. President to his Chinese counterpart, resulted in the exemption. The strength of the argument was that this would be a one-time exemption with no strings attached.

No great gains in the offing - Interestingly, the NSG is an informal grouping, which is referred to in the International Atomic Energy Agency documents only as “certain states”, and there is no precise procedure for seeking admission. But since the group takes all its decisions by consensus, it follows that new members should also be by consensus. For those outside the group, there is an outreach programme which is being pursued vigorously. The outreach programme is meant merely for conveying information and not for consultation. New Delhi hosted an outreach meeting a few years ago, but it was found that the exercise was not of much use in influencing the guidelines.

The pursuit of membership of the NSG by India at the highest level has aroused suspicion that India is aiming to be in the group to deny entry to Pakistan. Such an interpretation is the result of lack of any clarity as to the benefits that will accrue to India by joining the NSG. In fact, membership of the group will not immediately open up nuclear trade as India has already pledged not to transfer nuclear know-how to other countries. If we attempt to dilute the guidelines to liberalise supply, it will be resisted by the others. Membership of the NSG will only mean greater pressure on us to sign the NPT and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and commit in advance to a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty, which would impose restrictions on existing stockpiles of fissile material.

China has given scant attention to the NSG guidelines and has violated them in the case of Pakistan by claiming to act under an agreement reached before China joined the NSG. Unlike India, Pakistan has not even sought an exemption from the NSG. To say, therefore, that India and Pakistan should be equated on nuclear matters is unreasonable, to say the least. But the NSG did not even challenge the supply of two new reactors to Pakistan by China. The NSG’s ineffectiveness in countering proliferation makes it even less attractive as a group India should join. The green signal for India to join the MTCR came when Mr. Modi was in Washington purely by coincidence, as the last date for filing objections happened to be that day. Italy had held up its approval on account of the Italian marines issue, but did not file a formal objection because of the decision to let the marines go home. Membership of the MTCR, which restricts the weight and range of missiles, is being projected as clearing the way for NSG. This is not likely because of China except that we can now threaten to veto China if it applies for membership of the MTCR.

When India is not anywhere near the permanent membership of the Security Council and even APEC membership remains elusive, the high-level pursuit of NSG membership may give the impression that India is unrealistic in its expectations from the international community. Support by Switzerland and Mexico will not make any difference as there will not be a vote on the issue. The U.S. may reiterate its support, but the objection will come from China and even some others. It will be better for India to concentrate on one or two fundamental objectives rather than fritter away our diplomatic resources on matters of marginal interest.

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Thursday, 09 June 2016

Will India Breach The Chinese Wall?

By Sachin Parashar

Joint Statement 'Mum' On South China Sea

Just when they were expected to address the South China Sea (SCS) disputes in a more upfront manner, India and the US have quietly dropped a specific mention of SCS from their joint statement issued after the summit meet between PM Narendra Modi and President Barack Obama.

In both the previous summits, September 2014 and January 2015, the countries specifically mentioned SCS as they addressed the issue of maritime disputes and the significance of freedom of navigation and overflight.

Tuesday's summit came just ahead of an international tribunal ruling on the Philippines' lawsuit against Chinese territorial claims in SCS. China has declared it won't accept the tribunal ruling.

India's decision to put SCS in joint documents with the US, and indeed Japan, under the Modi regime has been seen as a sign of strategic boldness.

This time though, the statement only addresses the SCS issue in an inferential manner as it speaks about the importance “they attach to ensuring freedom of navigation and overflight and exploitation of resources as per international law, including the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, and settlement of territorial disputes by peaceful means“.

The second Modi-Obama joint statement in January 2015 was accompanied by a document called Joint Strategic Vision for Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean Region which affirmed the importance of “safeguarding maritime security and ensuring freedom of navigation and over flight throughout the region, especially in the South China Sea“.

However, the latest joint statement says the leaders applauded the completion of a road map for the 2015 'vision' which, it adds, will serve as a guide for collaboration in the years to come.

Strategic affairs expert Brahma Chellaney says this implies collaboration on common interest issues, including SCS. “The SCS was central to the vision unveiled in January 2015,“ he says. It also says that they resolved that the US and India should look to each other as priority partners in the Asia Pacific and Indian Ocean.

No specific mention of SCS, though, also assumes significance in the context of the Russia-India-China trilateral in April this year which saw the three countries saying in a joint communique that maritime disputes “should be addressed through negotiations and agreements between parties concerned“. The Chinese media was quick to lap it up claiming that India had finally endorsed its position on SCS.

Fears of a flare-up in SCS, 85% of which is claimed by Beijing under its so called nine-dash line, persist with US military patrols hardly making any impact on what countries in the region see as provocative behaviour by China, notably its construction of artificial islands dotted by airstrips and ports in the Spratly Islands. Beijing has already declared it won't accept any ruling by the tribunal and that, as it reiterated in a statement Wednesday, the dispute with Philippines should be resolved through bilateral negotiations.



Thursday, 09 June 2016

India, US, Japan to play war games from Friday

New Delhi: Four Indian naval ships including two stealth frigates and elite Marine Commandos (Marcos) will take part in a trilateral maritime exercise Malabar-16, starting Friday, that will see India, US and Japan playing war games in seas off Japan. The Indians ships participation in Malabar-16 with the US Navy and JMSDF, reflects the vital strategic importance of the region to India. The exercise also assumes significance as it is conducted in East Asia at a time when the South China Sea issue is a raging issue in the region.

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Thursday, 09 June 2016

Army blames defective ammo for Pulgaon fire

By Shishir Arya

In a meeting held by defence secretary D Mohan on Pulgaon Central Ammunition Depot (CAD) blast, senior army officers said defective ammunition made by Ordnance Factory in Chandrapur could have been the cause of the tragedy .

The factory didn't respond to repeated requests to either take it back or give permission to destroy the ammunition, they said.

Sources in Ordnance Factory said that army's quality assurance team was supposed to okay each stage of production and asked how did it accept defective ammunition. In the meeting, the OF was blamed for apathy that led to the blast.

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Thursday, 09 June 2016

Chinese hackers may have stolen govt info: Experts

Chinese cyber espionage group Danti may have breached computers of top-ranking bureaucrats in Delhi and elsewhere, according to cyber security company Kaspersky Labs.

While department of electronics and information technology (DeitY) officials confirmed a “big“ cyber-attack, they refused to divulge details, saying the probe was sensitive. But, an official source, reacting to the report, said there was indeed a breach in a few computers in the Union Cabinet secretariat, but it has been plugged now.

“It was identified during an investigation and requisite steps were taken immediately,” the source said, adding “opportunities for misuse“ exist in such attacks. “However, this did not seem to be a serious threat,” the official said. According to Kaspersky Labs, one of the world's top cyber-security companies, Danti possibly breached dozens of computers that are used by Cabinetrank officials in the national capital. Speaking to TOI over the phone from Mumbai, Kaspersky LabsSoutheast Asia managing director Altaf Halde said, “We've been following a trail of malware that was used to siphon away sensitive information from government computers.

“Our team tracked the malware strain to computers used by Cabinet secretariat of the Indian central government. These hackers have a special focus on diplomatic entities. We presume they may already have full access to internal networks in the Indian government,” Halde said. He said it delivers the malware through spearphishing emails and comments written in Mandarin, but in order to attract the attention of potential victims, the email addresses are in the names of several high-ranking government officials.

Once a victim, in this case a bureaucrat, opens the mail, the Danti backdoor is installed and sensitive data is siphoned off from the infected computer. Kaspersky said they tracked several such malicious emails to Indian embassies in Hungary , Denmark and Colombia, which were targeted by Danti. “In the case of the Indian embassy in Hungary , it looks like the original message was forwarded from the embassy to the Indian IT security team in the MEA,” Halde added. Experts said they've come across similar complaints and will probe whether it is the handiwork of Danti group.

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Thursday, 09 June 2016

Pak lobbies against India's NSG entry

Pakistan has stepped up its diplomatic outreach among NSG members to thwart India's bid for a seat in the cartel, warning that country-specific exemptions could negatively impact strategic stability in South Asia. Pakistan foreign ministry's UN desk on Wednesday held a briefing in Islamabad for diplomatic missions of NSG member-countries. The PM's foreign affairs adviser Sartaj Aziz telephoned a few foreign ministers, including from Russia, New Zealand and South Korea, to seek backing for Pakistan's membership of the group.



DECCAN HERALD

Thursday, 09 June 2016

Pakistan ups efforts for NSG membership

Pakistan on Wednesday asked NSG member states to be "objective and non-discriminatory" while deciding on expanding the grouping's membership as Islamabad stepped up diplomatic efforts to raise support for its inclusion in the elite 48-nation bloc whose membership India is also eyeing.

The Pakistan Foreign Office (FO) said in a statement that Additional Foreign Secretary (UN and Economic Coordination) Tasnim Aslam held a briefing session for the NSG countries' diplomatic missions here ahead of NSG plenary session this month in Vienna.

It said that the briefing was part of the ongoing diplomatic efforts for mobilising support for Pakistan's membership of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG).

"The Additional Secretary highlighted the factors which placed Pakistan's application for NSG membership on solid grounds, including Pakistan's technical experience, capability and well-established commitment to non-proliferation and nuclear safety and security," it said.

India's Missile Test May Lead To Unexpected Complications: Aziz

India's recent test-firing of an anti-ballistic missile system may give it a "false sense" of security but could lead to "unexpected complications", Pakistan's Advisor on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz has warned.

Expressing serious concern over the May 15 successful test-firing of indigenously developed supersonic interceptor missile capable of destroying any incoming ballistic missile from a test range off Odisha coast, Aziz said such actions are contrary to India's policy of a friendly neighbourhood.

The criticism came in yesterday's Senate meeting, the Express Tribune reported today.

"Massive conventional nuclear and missile development programmes pursued by India are now leading to nuclearisation of the Indian Ocean," Aziz said in government's response to the Senate.

"The development of an anti-ballistic missile system (ABM) may give India a false sense of security, leading to unexpected complications. Such actions are also contrary to the policy of a peaceful and friendly neighbourhood, which our prime minister (Nawaz Sharif) has repeatedly espoused," he said.

Pakistan has serious concerns over these developments and will take "all necessary measures to augment its defence capabilities", Aziz said.

Senator Javed Abbasi of the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) said the "balance of power has been disturbed in South Asia the way it was disturbed following India's nuclear tests in 1998".

"I'm not aware of our military's response, but I suggest that the security establishment take note of the Indian interceptor missile test and devise a strategy accordingly," he said.

"The (interceptor missile) test has increased military threats from India," said Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed of opposition Pakistan Muslim League Quaid-e-Azam (PMLQ).

Referring to the upcoming meeting of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) in Seoul, Mushahid said ground was being prepared for India's elevation to the NSG.

"This is our diplomatic failure. The Indians are encircling us from all sides. Even our immediate neighbours, like Afghanistan and Iran, have gone to India. It's a result of our failed diplomacy and traditionally passive foreign policy," he added.

Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Senator Farhatullah Babar blamed flawed security policies for the foreign policy debacle.

"Isn't it a reality that we protected non-state actors to further our security agenda? Our age-old policy of harbouring non-state actors is taking toll on us," he said.

Chairman of the Senate Raza Rabbani said a clear strategy must be devised to respond to the situation created by India's missile test.

China-U.S. strategic dialogue was ‘marginally helpful’

Talks on security and economy took place in the backdrop of escalating tensions on the bilateral front over the South China Sea issue

Chinese state media has called the Beijing-Washington strategic dialogue that concluded on Tuesday, as being marginally helpful in easing tensions, which had spiraled on account of the growing discord between the two countries over South China Sea (SCS).

An editorial in the state-run tabloid *Global Times* on Tuesday, titled, “China-U.S. tension eased a bit by dialogue,” points out that talks on the twin security and economic platforms, were “a chance to sort out the bilateral relationship.”

Kerry’s harsh talk

The China-U.S. Strategic and Economic Dialogue (S&ED) dialogue ended on Tuesday, following weeks of spiraling tensions which had peaked when U.S. Secretary of State, John Kerry, responded harshly to a poser from the Chinese side that Beijing could impose an Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ) in the SCS. The SCS, the international trade artery through which goods worth 5 trillion dollars pass each year, has become a hotbed of contested territorial claims between China and several regional littoral states, including Vietnam, Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei.

Speaking in Mongolia on Sunday, Mr. Kerry warned that a Chinese ADIZ over the SCS would be seen as a “provocative and destabilising act.”

After an article in Hong Kong’s SCMP

Mr. Kerry’s remarks followed an article in the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post (SCMP), which, quoting sources close to the People’s Liberation Army (PLA), has said that China is preparing an ADIZ in the SCS, two years after it announced a similar one in the East China Sea.

“If the U.S. military keeps making provocative moves to challenge China’s sovereignty in the region, it will give Beijing a good opportunity to declare an ADIZ in the SCS,” the SCMP source said.

‘Freedom of navigation’ patrols

The possibility that China may enforce an ADIZ, in turn, was fueled by the U.S. conduct of “freedom of navigation” patrols in the SCS—moves, which evoked a robust response from China. In May, the U.S. launched its third “freedom of navigation” operation, in the disputed Spratly Islands, followed by the flight of a U.S. EP-3 Aries surveillance aircraft, which was challenged by two Chinese fighter jets.

The back and forth between the U.S. and China, mirrored China’s vocal response in the SCS to President Barack Obama’s “Pivot to Asia” doctrine, which plans to position nearly 60 per cent of U.S. military forces in the Pacific.

The *Global Times* editorial said that, “The U.S. military has exposed the negative side of Washington’s strategic circle toward China in recent years.” But it added: “Through the S&ED, the US seems to swing back a little. But it still remains uncertain whether Washington will restrain its provocation on the South China Sea issue.”

Economic dialogue

No less riveting was the economic dialogue between the two countries, where the debate over Chinese overcapacity flooding the markets of the West, and, presumably, weakening economic recovery there, had pitted U.S. Treasury Secretary Jack Lew against Luo Jiwei, China's Finance Minister. To Mr. Lew's assertion on Monday, that the off-loading of Chinese excess capacity, especially in the steel and aluminum sectors had a "damaging effect on global markets," Mr. Lou replied that, the U.S. official was only telling one part of the story. Mr. Lou stressed that China's steel overcapacity was accumulated during the post-economic crisis period, when \$609bn were pumped into the economy towards infrastructure — a move that contributed to more than half of global growth in the 2009-11 period.

"At the time, the whole world was grateful that China had boosted world growth," he said. "Now the world is pointing its finger at China's overcapacity problem, saying it's dragging down the whole world. What about what the world was saying before?"



DECCAN HERALD

Thursday, 09 June 2016

'N Korea restarts plutonium production for N-bombs'

Washington, Reuters: North Korea has restarted production of plutonium fuel, a senior U.S. State Department official said on Tuesday, showing that it plans to pursue its nuclear weapons program in defiance of international sanctions.

The U.S. assessment came a day after the U.N. nuclear watchdog said it had "indications" that Pyongyang has reactivated a plant to recover plutonium from spent reactor fuel at Yongbyon, its main nuclear complex.

The latest developments suggest North Korea's reclusive regime is working to ensure a steady supply of materials for its drive to build warheads, despite tightened international sanctions after its fourth nuclear test in January. The U.S. official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said that Washington is worried by the new plutonium reprocessing effort, but he offered no explicit word on any U.S. response. "Everything in North Korea is a cause for concern," the official told Reuters.

"They take the spent fuel from the 5 megawatt reactor at Yongbyon and let it cool and then take it to the reprocessing facility, and that's where they've obtained the plutonium for their previous nuclear tests. So they are repeating that process," the official said. "That's what they're doing."

North Korea, which conducted its fourth nuclear test in January, vowed in 2013 to restart all nuclear facilities.

THE  **HINDU**

Thursday, 09 June 2016

France launches 'terror alert' smartphone app

A new smartphone app to alert users to possible terror attacks was launched by the French government on Wednesday in time for the start of Euro 2016, amid growing security concerns over the tournament.

The application, which is free to download in both French and English, will send users a warning “in case of a suspected attack,” said the Interior Ministry, which has piloted and introduced the service.

It will also alert users — who must agree to be geolocated — about “unexpected events” such as the breaching of flood defences.

Alerts will appear on the app less than 15 minutes after the incident has been confirmed by authorities, and will be customised according to the user’s exact location.

The month-long Euro tournament kicks off on Friday and is expected to attract two million visitors to France. Users of the app will also be able monitor alerts for up to eight different geographical zones, allowing them to check on family members or friends. It will also provide advice on how to stay safe, with information tailored to each particular situation, the Ministry added.

THE ASIAN AGE

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Thursday, 09 June 2016

India top in virus trouble

In a stinging review of India’s continuing troubles with Botnet, global threat intelligence analyst Spamhaus has listed the country on top of a list of ten other countries.

Vietnam comes in second followed by China and the United States is ranked 10. A bot is a type of malware that allows attackers to take control over an affected computer. Bots are also responsible for much of the spam you see around you today. A botnet ref-ers to an active network of computers infected with malware that are used to transmit spam, viruses and conduct other digital crimes.

Last year, the Indian government sanctioned Rs 100 crore to fight the botnet menace. “We are setting up ‘botnet’ cleaning and malware analysis centre within three months. It will automatically detect botnets that trigger various cyber crimes and suggest the device owner to remove it from their device with help of our facility,” IT secretary R.S. Sharma had said at the time.

The project is currently a part of the Digital India programme and aims to create safe and secure cyber space. The centre is being set up with an outlay of about Rs 100 crore and national cyber security watchdog Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (ICERT) has selected vendor for the same.

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India, US on same page on bringing Paris climate agreement into force

Though the wording is just a little vague, India seems committed to ratify the Paris climate change agreement by the year-end, aligning Indian and US objectives in making the accord a binding one for achieving national carbon reduction goals.

The India-US joint statement indicates that the two countries will work towards ensuring that 55 nations, accounting for 55% of global emissions, ratify the Paris climate pact. This will bring the agreement into force and its terms cannot be altered for four years, with even a Trump presidency unable to undo the US decision to ratify the climate pact.

This will be a matter of relief to US President Barack Obama who has invested a lot of political capital in the Paris agreement and had urged India to support the initiative when he met Modi last year ahead of the COP-21 meet. India submitted ambitious national goals that were appreciated by the US and the agreement seeks to commit signatories to nationally determined contributions that will be reported regularly and undergo an international review.

The statement said: “The United States reaffirms its commitment to join the (Paris) agreement as soon as possible this year. India similarly has begun its processes to work toward this shared objective“. The implications of the decision to work towards “shared objectives“ are clear enough when seen in the light of the Paris accord's ratification. Seeing nuclear energy as a path to clean energy, the statement said the two governments had addressed the nuclear liability issue through India's ratification of the convention on supplementary compensation for nuclear damage.

This has laid a strong foundation for a long-term partnership between US and Indian companies for building nuclear power plants in India and the US export-import bank will work out a competitive financing package.

Stating that India and the US were close partners in the fight against climate change, the two countries said they were committed to working together and with others to promote full implementation of the Paris agreement. India can be expected to benefit from US support to pursue low greenhouse gas emission development strategies in the pre-2020 period and also to address greenhouse gas emissions from international aviation.

The leaders welcomed the signing of an MoU to enhance cooperation on energy security, clean energy and climate change, and another on cooperation in gas hydrates.



Thursday, 09 June 2016

High-yielding variety of seabuckthorn to meet demand

By Bhanu P Lohumi

MGNREGA benefit

- *In a major initiative to boost the seabuckthorn cultivation in Lahaul-Spiti, Pooch and Pangri, the Seabuckthorn (SBT) Task Force has decided to give payment under MGNREGA to those who involve in its plantation and collection of leaves, picking up fruits and other activities*
- *The move will encourage more farmers to go for seabuckthorn plantation*

The Seabuckthorn Task Force (SBT), which met at Keylong yesterday under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Vivek Bhatia, decided to grow the high-yielding Russian variety “drilbu” in 1,000 hectares for 10 years, yielding an income of over Rs 40 crore.

The necessity to give a special attention to the SBT is felt as the demand for its fruit and leaves is going up rapidly and the government agencies and the Lahaul SBT Society have received a demand for 3,000 tonnes leaves and 1,000 tonnes of fruit. The meeting which was attended by representatives of Forest, Horticulture, the DRDO, Lahaul seabuckthorn variety and experts from CSK Agriculture University, Palampur, also decided to raise orchards and plant 3-lakh saplings by involving the Yuvak Mandals, Mahila Mandals and other voluntary organisations.

Prof Virendra Singh of CSK Agriculture University, who has already trained over 1,000 farmers in the seabuckthorn cultivation under the Central Government-funded “A value chain on seabuckthorn” project, said: “There is need for massive cultivation of seabuckthorn by the Forest Department and farmers and supply of raw material on sustainable basis to combat climate change and conservation of soil, water and biodiversity in this environmentally fragile region of the state.”

Farmers want the state government to help them in carrying out massive plantation through schemes such as Chilgoza and MGNREGA and also provide facilities of irrigation and fencing to seabuckthorn plantations for the higher survival rate and better growth on marginal lands.

About 2-lakh saplings were planted under the project and survival rate was 52 per cent and plantation of 3-lakh more saplings of seabuckthorn will bring revolution in economy of tribal people, said Prof Varinder.

Experts from the agriculture university will organise training camps for the forest and horticulture staff in cultivating seabuckthorn in a scientific manner.

Patanjali Ayurved, which has already signed an MoU with the Lahaul Seabuckthorn Society and is using the leaves for Patanjali tea and other such products. Some other companies, Synthesise based in Cochin, Chandigarh-based Agrotech and a Faridabad-based company have also approached the society for the supply of seabuckthorn fruit for oil extraction and leaves for other purposes.

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

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Thursday, 09 June 2016

China Is Planning a Massive Sea Lab 10,000 Feet Underwater

China is speeding up efforts to design and build a manned deep-sea platform to help it hunt for minerals in the South China Sea, one that may also serve a military purpose in the disputed waters. Such an oceanic “space station” would be located as much as 3,000 meters (9,800 feet) below the surface, according to a recent Science Ministry presentation viewed by Bloomberg. The project was mentioned in China’s current five-year economic plan released in March and ranked number two on a list of the top 100 science and technology priorities.



Space mission opens up new window onto universe

Paris: A ground-breaking physics mission has opened up space as the next frontier for exploring a ubiquitous, invisible force predicted by Albert Einstein a century ago, project leaders said Tuesday.

A demonstration probe dubbed LISA Pathfinder was launched by Europe last December on the first stage of a decades-long mission to observe gravitational waves from space.

Pathfinder was designed to test technologies to be fitted into a massive space lab, the Laser Interferometer Space Antenna (LISA), sketched for launch in 18 years' time.

Announcing early results, delighted scientists said Pathfinder's performance raised hopes that LISA will contribute to proving core predictions of Einstein's theory.

"We now know that we have sufficient sensitivity to observe them (gravitational waves) from space," Fabio Favata of the European Space Agency's science directorate told journalists by webcast from Madrid.

"A new window to the Universe has been opened."

In his General Theory of Relativity, Einstein theorised in 1916 that space and time are interwoven into a fourth dimension called space-time. He predicted the acceleration of objects with mass would warp space-time and create ripples known as gravitational waves.

Theoretically, the strongest waves would be caused by the most cataclysmic processes in the Universe -- black holes coalescing, massive stars exploding, or the very birth of the Universe some 13.8 billion years ago.

Gravitational waves do not interact with matter, and thus travel through the Universe unimpeded.

They are so small -- less than the radius of an atom -- as to be almost undetectable.

In February, scientists using earth-based instruments announced they had detected a gravitational wave for the first time ever.

Oz scientists pull off `smart glass' breakthrough

In a major step towards `smart glass' applications, such as 3D display screens, scientists have developed a method to embed light-emitting nanoparticles into glass without affecting their properties.

"These novel nanoparticles, called upconversion nanoparticles, have become promising candidates for a whole variety of ultra-high tech applications such as biological sensing, biomedical imaging and 3D volumetric displays," said Tim Zhao, from the University of Adelaide.