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Seychelles India agree to work on Naval Base project

New Delhi: India and Seychelles said on Monday they would work together on developing a naval base on Assumption Island while keeping “each other’s interests” in mind, days after reports suggested the Indian Ocean archipelago had scrapped an agreement on the project.

Following talks in Delhi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Seychelles President Danny Faure said both sides will continue working on the Assumption Island project.

Modi announced a \$100-million line of credit that Seychelles can use to acquire Indian defence equipment to boost its maritime capacity. He also said India will provide a second Dornier aircraft for the Seychelles military.

The remarks by both leaders assume significance as Faure had said earlier this month his government had scrapped an agreement with India for setting up a naval base on Assumption. He had also said the project “will not move forward” and the issue wouldn’t be discussed with Modi during his visit.

Two days before the president began his visit, secretary of state for foreign affairs Barry Faure, who is Faure’s brother, told Reuters the government wouldn’t present the agreement on Assumption Island to the National Assembly for “approval because opposition members (who are the majority) have already said they will not ratify it”. During a joint media interaction with Faure, Modi said: “In the context of the Assumption Island project, we are agreed on working together in each other’s interests.” He did not give details.

Faure added, “In the context of maritime security, Assumption Island was discussed. We are equally engaged and will continue to work together, bearing each other’s interests in mind.”

The first agreement on the project was signed during Modi’s visit to Seychelles in March 2015. Following public protests in Seychelles, the two sides signed a revised agreement in January to build military facilities on the remote island. Under the revised pact valid for 20 years, India was to build an airstrip and a jetty for its navy on Assumption.

Faure is expected to face an uphill task in getting the project ratified by Parliament that is dominated by the opposition, which has been opposing any Indian military presence on Assumption.

India has been working overtime to bolster its naval presence in regional waters to counter China, which last year inaugurated its first overseas military base in Djibouti, near one of the world’s busiest shipping lanes.

Defence and security issues were a key part of the discussions between the two leaders and Modi said both countries have a “geo-strategic vision for peace, security and stability in the Indian Ocean” and have to contend with various traditional and non-traditional threats.

While working together to derive benefits from a “blue economy”, Modi said the two sides will also have to jointly confront challenges such as piracy, drugs, human trafficking and trans-national crimes.

He added that India will help Seychelles to build a new police headquarters, a new office for the attorney general and a new government house, and that Indian experts will be sent on deputation to the archipelago.

Faure described India as “one of our closest and reliable partners” and said Seychelles will benefit from the line of credit to aid the military and defence forces. He said he and Modi had “expressed our strong desire to elevate our bilateral relations to a more comprehensive partnership of a greater strategic importance”.

The two sides signed six agreements on issues such as infrastructure development in Seychelles, cyber-security, sharing of white shipping information that will enable them to exchange data on the identity and movement of non-military commercial vessels.

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While Israeli diplomats insist that the agenda for Adams's trip is global defence and security related issues, India will also discuss the possible purchase of two more PHALCON-AWACS for the air force from Israel. This state-of-the-art radar with deep penetration capability is mounted on the Russian IL-76 platform and is expected to cost around \$1 billion. India already has three of these advance warning and early detection planes which can look deep into enemy territory. The other military hardware deal on the agenda would be manufacture of TAVOR-21 assault rifles for the Indian security forces under the "Make in India route".

Apart from reviewing the progress of ongoing bilateral defence deals, Adams and Mitra are expected to exchange views on the evolving situation in West Asia and Iran and the security environment in Asia and the Indo-Pacific. track of the functioning of the judiciary as a whole."

Besides the problem of pendency, the CJI in another letter to the high courts has highlighted the problem of vacancies in the lower judiciary and directed the high courts to make immediate appointments where vacancies are more than 15%. "Take immediate steps to ensure filling up of vacancies and set up an online portal for continuous monitoring of the vacancies," reads the letter.

DefMin, J&K gov review security ahead of yatra

Srinagar, June 25: Jammu and Kashmir governor N.N. Vohra and defence minister Nirmala Sitharaman reviewed on Monday the security situation and the arrangements for pilgrims ahead of the start of the annual Amarnath Yatra on Thursday.

Army Chief Gen Bipin Rawat, DGP S.P. Vaid and other senior Army and defence officials were present at the meeting.

Ms Sitharaman undertook an aerial survey of the yatra route along the Pahalgam axis, and inspected the arrangements at Baltal before reaching Srinagar, a Raj Bhawan spokesman said.

The 60-day annual pilgrimage to the 3,880-metre high holy cave shrine is scheduled to start on June 28.

During the meeting, she



Defence minister Nirmala Sitharaman visits Chinar Corps in Srinagar on Monday to review overall security situation prevailing in the Valley. — PTI

stressed that the security forces must act with synergy to achieve effective results.

Reiterating the importance of a secure environment to enable a smooth passage of the Yatra and encourage tourists to visit the state, the defence minister asked the security

forces to continuously review the arrangements and ensure swift and targeted counter-terror response on the ground.

Governor Vohra said the police will continue to review arrangements in the coming days to ensure effective security.

— PTI



Nirmala Reviews Security Situation In Valley

By Khurshed Wani

On her maiden visit to embattled Jammu and Kashmir after the imposition of Governor's rule, Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday reviewed the security situation at a high level meeting in Srinagar attended by Governor NN Vohra and Army chief General Bipin Rawat. The meeting took place ahead of the beginning of annual Amarnath yatra and a possible renewed offensive against militancy in the State. The separatists had called for a daylong shutdown in the Valley against the "spree of civilian killings" even as the top separatist leaders were detained or restricted to the confines of their homes. Sitharaman arrived here on Monday morning for a daylong visit. Before landing in capital Srinagar she went for aerial reconnaissance of the routes leading to holy Amarnath cave from Baltal and Pahalgam axes. An official spokesman said that Sitharaman reviewed the security framework put in place by the security forces for the Amarnath yatra and stressed that all security forces must act with complete synergy to achieve effective security on the ground. Later after landing in Srinagar she held a top-level security meeting at Raj Bhawan along-with Governor NN Vohra.

Defence Minister tells forces to leave no security gaps

Sitharaman does Aerial Recce during review of yatra security

Defence minister Nirmala Sitharaman reviewed the security scenario in the Kashmir valley along with Army chief Bipin Rawat. Sitharaman held discussions with Governor NN Vohra and Army commanders on the prevailing situation in the state.

The minister also visited the Srinagar-based 15 Corps (Chinar Corps) in Badamibag, where she was briefed on the security and administrative arrangements for the Amarnath yatra which begins on Thursday. She later flew to the Amarnath Yatra base camp in Sonamarg of northern Kashmir and also undertook an aerial recce of the yatra route along the Pahalgam axis in southern Kashmir.

This is the defence minister's first visit to the valley after BJP pulled out of the coalition with PDP last week. At Chinar Corps, Northern Army Commander Lt Gen Ranbir Singh, and Chinar Corps Commander Lt Gen AK Bhatt, updated her on the latest security scenario in the Valley including details of counter-infiltration and anti-militancy operations undertaken recently. During her meeting in Raj Bhavan, the minister said the security forces should work in complete synergy to achieve results.

Security forces should constantly review and identify any gap in the security arrangements and ensure swift and targeted counter terror responses on the ground," Sitharaman said at the meeting.

The government is determined to ensure the smooth conduct of Amarnath yatra under governor's rule. Over 213 additional companies of para military forces have been deployed to secure the route from Jammu to the two base camps of Baltal in Sonamarg and Nunwan in Pahalgam. The government has also deployed specialised forces including NSG.

MAIL TODAY

YET ANOTHER Chinese space station could be about to plunge back to Earth. Three months after Tiangong-1 made a fiery re-entry into our atmosphere, its sister craft, Tiangong-2, looks like it's about to do the same. But unlike Tiangong-1, Tiangong-2 could have a more controlled descent. The spacecraft was observed plummeting around 60 miles (95 km) toward the surface of the planet. It has since returned to its normal orbital height, sparking speculation that China may be preparing to decommission the vessel in the near future.

China's Tiangong-2 craft drops strangely close to the earth

China will be hoping to avoid an embarrassing repeat of the events of April, when the nation's out-of-control Tiangong-1 space station returned to Earth with a bang. China's Manned Space Engineering Office has yet to release an official statement on the latest situation. The manoeuvres became apparent thanks to orbital information made public by US Strategic Command. Its Joint Space Operations Center, located at Vandenberg Air Force Base in California, claims the station lowered from an altitude of between 236 and 240 miles (380 to 386 km) to between 181 to 185 miles (292 to 297 km) on June 13. It remained at that altitude for ten days, before returning its original height above the planet. Experts believe this suggests China is preparing to decommission the station in a more controlled manner than Tiangong-1. Tiangong-1 spiralled out of control, with little certainty possible about when and where it might land. China's controlled thrust tests, lowering and raising the satellite on command, hint at a desire to bring the station down at a time and place of their choosing.

Is another Chinese space station about to plunge back to Earth?



Daily Mail

Low-cost plastic sensors can diagnose diseases

London: Scientists have developed a low-cost sensor made from semiconducting plastic that can be used to diagnose or monitor a wide range of health conditions, such as surgical complications or neurodegenerative diseases. The sensor can measure the amount of critical metabolites, such as lactate or glucose, that are present in sweat, tears, saliva or blood, and, when incorporated into a diagnostic device, could allow health conditions to be monitored quickly, cheaply and accurately. The device, described in the journal *Science Advances*, has a far simpler design than existing sensors, and opens up a wide range of new possibilities for health monitoring down to the cellular level. Semiconducting plastics are being developed for use in solar cells and flexible electronics, but have not yet seen widespread use in biological applications.

"In our work, we've overcome many of the limitations of conventional electrochemical biosensors that incorporate enzymes as the sensing material," said Anna-Maria Pappa, a post-doctoral researcher at University of Cambridge in the UK. "In conventional biosensors, the communication between the sensor's electrode and the sensing material is not very efficient, so it's been necessary to add molecular wires to 'boost' the signal," said Pappa. To build their sensor, researchers used a newly-synthesised polymer that acts as a molecular wire. When the material comes into contact with a liquid such as sweat, tears or blood, it absorbs ions and swells, becoming merged with the liquid. This leads to significantly higher sensitivity compared to traditional sensors made of metal electrodes. — PTI