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Fund-starved Army saddled with Rs 5k-cr GST

Even as the Army is battling with critical shortage of ammunition, arms, assault rifles, battle tanks and bulletproof jackets and inadequate Budget to tide over these issues, the Government has saddled them with an additional burden of Rs 5,000 crore in the form of Goods and Services Tax (GST). There is no provision in the 2018-19 allocations to fill this gap.

The Navy already faced with a Budget deficit of 40 per cent accumulated over the past few years, and the IAF also faced the same problem thereby impacting their modernisation drive. In fact, customs duties and new taxation laws have hit the three forces hard.

In addition, the Rashtriya Rifles, the Army's anti-insurgency force now tackling terrorism in Jammu & Kashmir, is also short of funds by more than Rs 136 crore due to less Budget.

It is likely to have an adverse impact on the sustained campaign in the strife-torn State and the Rashtriya Rifles desperately needs state-of-the-art close quarter battle weapons, bulletproof jackets and communication systems. Nearly 65 battalions (one battalion has 1,000 soldiers) are now deployed in J&K. The force was raised in the early 1990s after full blown insurgency erupted in the border State.

As the Army flagged these matters during its deposition before Parliament's Standing Committee on Defence, the panel noted that "an additional burden of Rs 5,000 crore will be levied on the Army because of the new taxation laws in the form of GST. This has not been accounted for in the current year's Budget for the Army."

Urging the Defence Ministry and the Government to take note of this issue, the Standing Committee said "reasonability be shown in the Budget by way of providing for the additional burden to the extent of Rs 5,000 crore." In its report tabled in Parliament recently, the panel said it desires to be apprised of the measures taken in this direction.

Raising concern over a deficit revenue Budget to the tune of Rs 9,282 crore, the panel urged the Government to do the needful to plug the gap. Revenue Budget caters to day-to-day operations, including maintenance of weapons, supply of ammunition and fuel.

The Committee said the Budget for operations and maintenance is a critical component for ensuring operational preparedness at any given point of time.

Problems on this count will not only affect the serviceability of the equipment that the Army is holding but may also lead to legal issues on account of not making payments in time.

The amount of Rs 9,282 crore covers mandatory requirements under transportation (Rs 889 crore), maintenance works (Rs 1,413 crore), supplies (Rs 1,419 crore, ordnance store (Rs 5,425 crore) and Rashtriya Rifles (Rs 136 crore).

In fact, Army vice-chief Lt General Sarath Chand in his deposition before the parliamentary panel said the "budget has dashed its hopes," and the Army may be forced to close down as many as 25 'Make in India' projects. He also said there is no separate allocation for ensuring the safety of Army camps, which have been subjected to several 'fidayeen' attacks.

"This money has to be found from the same Budget, leaving us with no choice but to re-priorities either to reduce our requirement as far as security of military stations are concerned or to go slow in other acquisition," he said. The vice-chief also informed the panel headed by BJP leader Major General BC Khanduri (retired) that at present 68 per cent of its equipment is in the "vintage" category.

During the deliberations in the panel on Demands for Grants (2018-19), the Committee said any modern armed forces should have one-third of its equipment in the vintage category, one-third in the current category and one-third in the state of the art category.

However, the Army at present has 68 per cent in vintage category, just about 24 per cent of the current category and only eight per cent of the state of the art category. Observing that this situation does not “auger” well for the Army to fight a two-front war with Pakistan and China, the panel said the huge deficiencies and obsolescence of weapons, stores and ammunition is matter of concern.

But the allocation for modernisation in this year’s Budget has a “different story to tell,” said the committee, adding the allocation of Rs 21,338 crore for modernisation is insufficient even to cater to committed payments to the extent of Rs 29,033 crore earmarked for 125 ongoing schemes, emergency procurements of armaments and weaponry for ten days of intense war.

As regards the Navy, due to new taxation laws and customs duties, it will have to shell out Rs 800 crore while this figure stood at Rs 427.28 crore in the last fiscal. Similarly, in the case of the IAF, the parliamentary panel was apprised of the fact that the Service paid Rs 943.62 crore in 2016-17 which was hiked to Rs 1,614.28 crore in 2017-18. This amount was not reimbursed to the IAF, the panel noted.

The estimated fund outgo for next fiscal is Rs. 1726.98 crore. The fund allocated against committed liabilities is Rs 33,100 crore against projection of Rs 72,482 crore. In case of new schemes, the allocation is Rs 2,670 crore against a required projection of Rs 5,483 crore.

The panel suggested that appropriate allocation be made so as to address the issues of taxation in the budget 2018-19 and by way of keeping in mind, the additional burden levied on the Air Force on account of hike in duties paid during the year, 2017-18.



Wed, 21 Mar, 2018

Can tackle China’s J-20 jet, says IAF

New Delhi: China’s new J-20 fighter jet is not stealthy enough and the Indian Air Force (IAF) has the capability to tackle the threat posed by it, said a senior air force officer familiar with Beijing’s military modernisation plans.

“With the S-400 Triumf air defence missile systems being bought from Russia and our existing medium-range surface -to- air missile systems, we are quite capable of shooting down the J-20,” the officer said and added that the J-20 was not a true fifth generation fighter as “neither is the aircraft’s design stealthy, nor can it super-cruise with the existing WS-10 engines”.

Super-cruise is a mode of flight that makes detection harder as it allows stealth fighters to fly at supersonic speeds in combat configuration without kicking in fuel-guzzling afterburners.

China’s ministry of national defense announced last month that the People’s Liberation Army Air Force was in the process of inducting J-20 stealth fighters. India’s plans to build a fifth-generation fighter aircraft (FGFA), however, remain on the drawing board.

“I will go with the IAF’s assessment that India can tackle the J-20 threat,” said Air Marshal KK Nohwar (retd), additional director general of the Delhi based Centre for Air Power Studies and a former IAF vice chief.

As reported by HT on March 17, a multi-billion dollar programme to produce a stealth fighter with Russia is in peril, with the IAF voicing its reservations as it believes the platform lacks the desired stealth characteristics and is inferior to the US-made F-35 and F-22 jets.

India is in talks with Russia to buy five advanced S-400 missile systems, capable of destroying jets, missiles and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) at a range of 400km, in an almost ₹39,000-crore deal.

Discussions on the proposed deal are likely to take place during defence minister Nirmala Sitharaman's visit to Russia in April. "Cost is the biggest worry... We will be posing some questions to the Russians on the S-400," a defence ministry official said on the condition of anonymity. "It's an expensive platform but packs a tremendous punch," said another IAF officer tracking the air force's modernisation.

At present, the central government is finding it hard to reconcile two contrary points of view on FGFA. While the IAF wants the project abandoned, a high-powered panel appointed by the defence ministry to examine different aspects of the FGFA, recommended in its report last year that India should go ahead with the programme.



Wed, 21 Mar, 2018

IAF Hawk trainer jet crashes in Odisha, pilot safe

An Indian Air Force (IAF) Advanced Hawk Jet (AJT) trainer crashed along Odisha-Jharkhand border with the pilot reportedly ejecting at the last minute to save his life, said police on Tuesday.

The incident took place on Subarnarekha River bed near Mahulatangili village under Jharpokharia police station limits of Odisha's Mayurbhanj district 350 km from here. The impact of the accident was so severe that the jet was reduced to a mangle of metal and parts of the jet got buried under sand. The seriously injured pilot was admitted into Bahadaguda hospital in Jharkhand.

"Our police and fire personnel had rushed to the spot to attend injured one. We do not have any idea whether the jet was on operational duty or making training sorties. A pilot was rescued from the spot," said Awinash Kumar, Superintendent of Police of Mayurbhanj, told *The Hindu* over phone. A team of IAF has already reached the spot and started rescue operation.

Mr. Kumar said the cause of the crash would be ascertained only after detail investigation by appropriate authority. The AJT had met with an accident after getting airborne from Kalaikunda on a routine training sortie.



Tue, 20 Mar, 2018

Indian Science Congress concludes, 14 talents bag Young Scientist Award

Imphal: Young Scientist Awards 2017-2018 were given to 14 talented scholars from across the country today during the valedictory function of the 105th Indian Science Congress (ISC) which was held at Manipuri University, Imphal for five days.

Prime Minister, Narendra Modi inaugurated the science congress on March 16 at Manipur University, Imphal which was concluded today.

The Indian Science Congress Association gave Best Posters Awards to 20 awardees, Best Science Model to five individuals for their models and Pride of Indian Exhibition Awards to awardees from across the country.

Delivering the valedictory address governor, Najma Heptulla said the congregation of eminent scientists from across the country and scientific discourses of the highest order were able to see during the ISC.

Stating that an event of this magnitude takes several gruelling months in preparation and for a small state like Manipur, it is a big task to organise; the governor appreciated Manipur University for organising it successfully and grandly and also to ISC authorities who supported it all the way.

Claiming that the government has been steadily increasing its spending on research and development and has a critical mass of well educated professionals and has been producing a large numbers of scientists, she said that the country is becoming one of the world's powerhouses for scientific research.

Heptulla said "Our endeavour should be to spread the wing of knowledge and development to every nook and corner of the country touching the life of every citizen through science and technology." Scientists, researchers and scholars play a key role in spreading the wing, she added.

The state has a lot of potential for food processing as the natural attributes including weather are conducive but the key to unlock the potentialities is science and technology, continued the governor.

Stating that the state is rich in bio-diversity and moreover many new species of plants and animals are discovered frequently Heptulla said that the state is a great place for researchers and scientists.

Mentioning that scientific temperament should be sustained and there should be continuity in their quest to better the condition of the people, the governor urged all the scientific community of the country not to render their research work in a onetime exercise for a limited purpose.

She added that setting up of a research centre of a national level in the state will help the research work go on with focus on practical applicability of science.

The ISC was scheduled in the state for the first time and second time in the entire North Eastern state. The next Indian Science Congress will be held at Barkatullah University, Bhopal in January 2019.



Wed, 21 Mar, 2018

India joins Europe's satellite data sharing pool

Can access info from Copernicus programme

India has joined Europe's mega global arrangement of sharing data from Earth observation satellites, called Copernicus.

Data from a band of Indian remote sensing satellites will be available to the European Copernicus programme while designated Indian institutional users will in return get to access free data from Europe's six Sentinel satellites and those of other space agencies that are part of the programme, at their cost.

The space-based information will be used for forecasting disasters, providing emergency response and rescue of people during disasters; to glean land, ocean data; and for issues of security, agriculture, climate change and atmosphere, according to a statement issued by the European Commission here.

The agreement was signed in Bengaluru on Monday by Philippe Brunet, Director for Space Policy, Copernicus and Defence, on behalf of the EC and by P.G. Diwakar, Scientific Secretary, Indian Space Research Organisation.

The multi-billion-euro Copernicus is Europe's system for monitoring the Earth using satellite data. It is coordinated and managed by the EC.

Wide range

The free and open data policy is said to have a wide range of applications that can attract users in Europe and outside. The Copernicus emergency response mapping system was activated on at least two Indian occasions — during the 2014 floods in Andhra Pradesh in October 2014 and after the 2013 storm in Odisha.

"Under this arrangement, the European Commission intends to provide India with free, full and open access to the data from the Copernicus Sentinel family of satellites using high bandwidth connections.

Reciprocally the Department of Space will provide the Copernicus programme and its participating states with a free, full and open access to the data from ISRO's land, ocean and atmospheric series of civilian satellites (Oceansat-2, Megha-Tropiques, Scatsat-1, SARAL, INSAT-3D, INSAT-3DR) with the exception of commercial high-resolution satellites data," EC said.

The arrangement includes technical assistance for setting up high bandwidth connections with ISRO sites, mirror servers, data storage and archival facilities.



Wed, 21 Mar, 2018

US-S Korea to resume military drills

The United States and South Korea announced on Tuesday that their annual joint military drills would go ahead next month, with no significant downsize in scale despite an ongoing diplomatic thaw with North Korea. The large-scale exercises involving tens of thousands of ground troops are a perennial source of tension between the two Koreas, with Pyongyang condemning them as provocative rehearsals for an invasion of the North. With talks under way to set up a North-South summit, followed by a proposed face-to-face meet between Donald Trump and Kim Jong Un, there was speculation that this year's drills might be scaled back to avoid derailing the discussions.

They had already been delayed to avoid clashing with the Pyeongchang Winter Games in the South last month. But Washington and Seoul said the exercises would kick off on April 1 and be "similar" in size to those of previous years. "Our combined exercises are defence-oriented and there is no reason for North Korea to view them as a provocation," the Pentagon said in a statement, adding that Pyongyang had been informed in advance of the dates and nature of the drills. According to a senior South Korean envoy who made a rare visit to Pyongyang earlier this month, Kim had made it clear he "understands" the need for the drills to go ahead. Such an acknowledgement is in stark contrast to the Kim regime's denunciations of the exercises in the past.

The North has often responded to the drills with its own military actions, and last year fired four ballistic missiles close to Japan. "Foal Eagle" is a series of field training exercises with approximately 11,500 US forces taking part, together with 290,000 South Korean troops, while "Key Resolve" is a command post exercise using mainly computer based simulations.



Wed, 21 Mar, 2018

Plastic particles 'part of air we breathe'

The alarming spread of the airborne plastics we eat and inhale can be revealed today. An investigation found that tiny potentially dangerous plastic particles have become "part of the air we breathe" as the Chief Medical Officer for England warned the health consequences were "unquantified".

It had been thought the risk to health was largely limited to eating fish from oceans polluted with plastic. But the leading scientist who oversaw our investigation said micro-plastics had become "part of the air we breathe". MPs said the findings were shocking. Experts warn that ingesting the particles can damage lungs, poison kidneys and interfere with hormones. The micro-plastics can even travel across a mother's placenta.

A report from four parliamentary committees demanded action against our "poisonous air". Leading micro-plastics experts said that 'we just don't know' how dangerous the particles may be.

The research follows the ten year anniversary of this newspaper's first campaign against plastic pollution. Welden, who has studied micro-plastics for six years, said: "I wouldn't be surprised if they're not

building up in the air in the same way as in the oceans. They will be fragmenting and still not going away. We have no knowledge on what a healthy level of airborne micro-plastics contamination would be. Some of the stuff that we're putting out there may have a detrimental effect." Zac Goldsmith, a Tory member of the Commons environmental audit committee, said: "This shocking investigation shows that this is not a remote problem when micro-plastics are found in the air we breathe and the food we eat.

We have seen some initiative on plastic bags, micro-beads and other single use plastics, but that is a start, not the end. We need to wage war against plastic pollution."

पंजाब केसरी

Wed, 21 Mar, 2018

नासा के सोलर प्रोब के साथ सूरज पर भेजें अपना नाम



पंकज सुमन

नई दिल्ली, (पंजाब केसरी): नासा इस वर्ष जुलाई में पार्कर सोलर प्रोब सूर्य पर भेजने जा रहा है, जो सूरज के वातावरण का अध्ययन करेगा। अगर आप अपना नाम भी सूर्य पर भेजना चाहते हैं तो आपके पास एक सुनहरा मौका है। आप 27 अप्रैल 2018 तक आवेदन भेज सकते हैं। नासा के hot ticket' page पर जाकर अपना नाम, ईमेल एड्रेस दर्ज करें। इसके बाद नासा आपको एक ईमेल भेजेगा।

इस मैसेज में जाकर link पर click करें। इसके बाद 'confirm my submission' का चयन करें। एजेसी आपको फ्री डिजिटल सर्टिफिकेट भी देगी, जिस पर आपका नाम होगा। आप इसे प्रिंट और डाउनलोड कर सकते हैं। नासा ने अपनी वेबसाइट पर लिखा है कि अपना नाम जमा करें जिसे मेमोरी कार्ड में शामिल किया जाएगा जो पार्कर सोलर प्रोब. स्पेस क्राफ्ट के साथ जाएगा।

नासा के इस सोलर प्रोब को 31 जुलाई को केप केनवरल से लांच किया जाएगा। यह यान सूर्य के कोरोना का अध्ययन करेगा जहां तापमान एक मिलियन डिग्री से भी अधिक है।

प्रक्षेपण की तिथि

31

जुलाई 2018

● मैग्नेटो मीटर इलैक्ट्रिक तथा मैग्नेटिक क्षेत्र, रेडियो विकिरण तथा तरंगों का अध्ययन करेगा

27 अप्रैल तक भेजें आवेदन

- नासा के hot ticket' page पर जाकर अपना नाम, ईमेल एड्रेस दर्ज करें।
- इसके बाद नासा आपको एक ईमेल भेजेगा।
- मैसेज में जाकर link पर click करें और 'confirm my submission' चयन करें
- एजेसी आपको फ्री डिजिटल सर्टिफिकेट भी देगी, जिस पर आपका नाम होगा।
- आपका नाम उस मेमोरी कार्ड में शामिल किया जायेगा जो सोलर प्रोब के साथ जायेगा

Contd...

2024

सूरज पर पहुंचेगा यह यान

- नासा का यह यान सूरज के काफी करीब तक जाएगा।
- यह अंतरिक्ष यान लगभग 4,30,000 एमपीएच की रफतार से सूरज तक पहुंचेगा
- हाई-गेन एंटीना डाटा, रेडियो सिग्नल भेजेगा
- इलेक्ट्रोमैग्नेटिक तरंग एंटीना सूरज और सौर तरंगों के रेडियो विकिरण का अध्ययन करेगा
- सौर पैनल प्रोब को ऊर्जा प्रदान करेगा और सूरज पर पहुंचने के बाद इससे अलग हो जाएगा
- 4.5 इंच मोटा कार्बन कम्पोजिट थर्मल शिल्ड उपकरण को सुरक्षा प्रदान करेगा
- डिटेक्टर सौर वायु कणों को एकत्रित करेगा