

फरवरी

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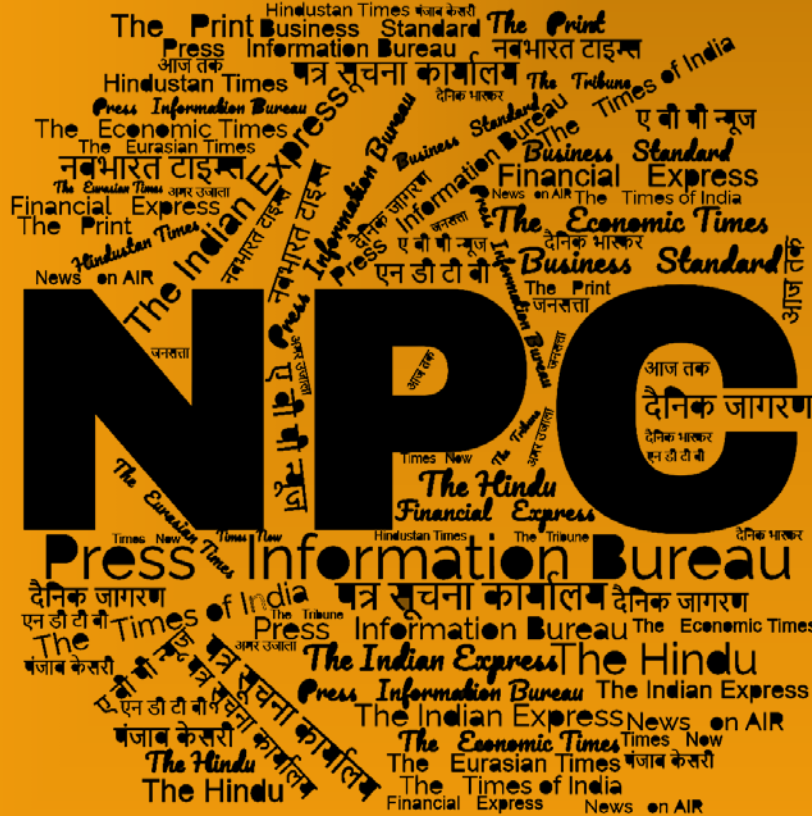
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Wed, 01 Feb 2023

Army Conducts Joint Exercise in North Bengal Near Siliguri Corridor

The Army conducted a joint training exercise 'Trishakti Prahar' in North Bengal close to the strategic 'Siliguri' corridor, also called Chicken's neck. The drill started on January 21 and concluded on Tuesday. The exercise enabled rehearsal and coordination amongst various agencies for "quick movement and employment of forces" across North Bengal, Army sources said. "The aim of the exercise was to practice battle preparedness of the security forces using latest weapons and equipment in a networked, integrated environment, involving all arms and services of the Army, the Indian Air Force (IAF) and the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF)," an Army source said.

The Siliguri corridor, located in West Bengal, is a stretch of land bordering Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal, measuring approximately 170X60 km; at the narrowest it is about 20-22 km.

As part of the exercise, swift mobilisation and deployment practices were carried out in various locations across North Bengal, the source stated. "Efforts of all agencies including the Civil Administration, civil defence organisations, the police and the CAPFs were coordinated to ensure efficient move and quick mobilisation."

The exercise culminated on January 31 with an Integrated Fire Power Exercise in Teesta Field Firing Ranges, which was aimed at synergising the firepower assets of the armed forces and CAPFs, to orchestrate an integrated battle.

The exercise showcased the joint application of various ground and aerial assets to include the latest generation fighter aircraft, helicopters, tanks, infantry combat vehicles, medium and field artillery guns, infantry mortars and various new generation infantry weapons and equipment in a networked environment, sources said.

The fire power exercise was reviewed by Eastern Army Commander Lt. Gen. R. P. Kalita.

Terming the Siliguri corridor as "sensitive", Army Chief Gen. Manoj Pande as the Eastern Army Commander had stated in November 2021 that a joint coordinating centre under the Army was set up and had proved to be effective to coordinate actions of all agencies that worked there.

Noting the geostrategic significance of the Siliguri corridor as it connected the Northeast India to the rest of the country, Gen. Pande had noted then that it also stemmed from the proximity of the Chumbi valley of the Tibet Autonomous Region.

“Efforts of all agencies including the Civil Administration, civil defence organisations, the police and the CAPFs were coordinated to ensure efficient move and quick mobilisation”SourceThe Indian Army

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/army-conducts-joint-exercise-in-north-bengal-near-siliguri-corridor/article66455102.ece/amp/>



Tue, 31 Jan 2022

President Lauds Defence Indigenisation, Govt’s Record on National Security

President Droupadi Murmu on Tuesday praised the government’s record on defence indigenisation and highlighted the success of the Narendra Modi government’s signature Atmanirbhar Bharat programme.

In her address in Parliament at the beginning of the Budget session, the President said India’s defence exports had increase six-fold over the last few years. Between 2017 and 2021, India’s defence exports increased from ₹1,520 crore to ₹8,435 crore.

In 2021-22, this number crossed ₹14,000 crore according to an announcement by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh.

The country has also made prominent defence export deals in the last few years, including the sale of BrahMos missiles to the Philippines.

Speaking on the Atmanirbhar Bharat program, President Murmu referred to the induction of INS Vikrant as the first “swadeshi” aircraft carrier. INS Vikrant, which was the country’s first indigenously manufactured aircraft carrier, was commissioned in September last year by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Built at the cost of ₹20,000 crore, INS Vikrant is the largest warship in India’s naval arsenal. The carrier, which was built by scores of domestic manufacturers, represented a major step forward for the country’s defence indigenisation ambitions.

She noted that India’s border infrastructure had improved a great deal despite the presence of geographic challenges. Since the border standoff with China in the summer of 2020, the speed of border infrastructure development has increased with a particular focus on India’s Northeastern states like Arunachal Pradesh.

In both the North-East and Kashmir, the government had taken positive steps to ensure a stable peace and counter terrorism, the President said. This was a particularly important goal given the threat posed by terrorism to development.

<https://www.livemint.com/news/world/president-lauds-defence-indigenisation-govt-s-record-on-national-security-11675149239828.html>

Over 500 MSMEs Helped Build India's Flagship Aircraft Carrier INS Vikrant: Economic Survey 2022-23

With the aim to achieve self-reliance and promote 'Make-in-India', the strategically important shipbuilding industry has seen active participation from the country's MSME sector with over 500 small businesses engaged in building the aircraft carrier INS Vikrant.

India's annual pre-budget Economic Survey on Tuesday focused upon the key initiatives such as Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Schemes taken by the government creating jobs for small scale industries. The Survey tabled in Parliament by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman stated that a slew of "indigenisation initiatives" implemented by the Indian Navy gave significant boost to economic activity by creating employment opportunities for MSMEs and other industries. "The recently commissioned INS Vikrant alone engaged approximately 500 MSMEs, 12,000 employees from ancillary industries, and 2,000 shipyard employees," the Economic Survey 2022-23 says.

INS Vikrant is the largest ship ever built in maritime history of India and houses state-of-the-art automation features. The Survey adds that shipbuilding with its links to other ancillary industries, including steel, engineering equipment, port infrastructure, trade and shipping services has the potential to create a collaborative production eco-system. "With the development of these ancillary industries, the sector generates opportunities for smaller businesses and strengthens supply chain networks," says the Survey.

Earlier, President Droupadi Murmu also highlighted initiatives taken by the government, which resulted in increasing India's defence exports six times. "I am proud that today the first indigenous aircraft carrier in the form of INS Vikrant has also joined our Navy," said Murmu while addressing the joint session of Parliament and marked the beginning of the Budget Session ahead of the Economic Survey 2023 presentation. In pursuit of the objectives of the Make-in-India programme and with a vision to achieve Aatmanirbharta, the government launched the PLI scheme. The scheme is expected to attract a capex of approximately Rs 3 lakh crore over the next five years. It has the potential to generate employment for over 60 lakh in India and increase the share of the manufacturing sector in total capital formation, which currently stands at around 17-20 per cent between FY12 and FY20.

The Economic Survey by Chief Economic Adviser (CEA) V Anantha Nageswaran was tabled in the parliament on Tuesday afternoon by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. The Economic Survey is the government's review of how the domestic economy performed in the past year.

https://m.economictimes.com/small-biz/sme-sector/over-500-msmes-help-build-indias-flagship-aircraft-carrier-ins-vikrant-economic-survey-2023-24/amp_articleshow/97488716.cms

Zorawar Light Tank: Kalyani Group to Enter Race, Compete with DRDO

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) may have to face a new competitor in the race to build a new light tank for the Indian Army. The Kalyani Group may enter the race to build 354 light weight tanks for the Indian Army. The government may grant permission to the Kalyani Group to go ahead with its plans although the company – which has previously collaborated with American General Dynamics Land Systems – is yet to disclose its partner in this process. American General Dynamics Land Systems has extensive experience in defence production, having previously developed a Mobile Protected Firepower vehicle, which is basically a light tank since it is an armoured, turreted and tracked vehicle with a large gun.

The Kalyani Group has given rise to speculations of a possible collaboration with Turkish military vehicle manufacturer Otokar Otomotiv ve Savunma Sanayi as documents made public by the company feature the TULPAR Light Tank developed by the Turkey based group. However, it is not clear whether the image of the TULPAR Light Tank used by the Kalyani Group in its documents was for representational purposes or if it is actually trying for a collaboration with the Turkish defence manufacturer.

<https://www.firstpost.com/india/zorawar-light-tank-kalyani-group-to-enter-race-compete-with-drdo-12078252.html/amp>

The Armed Forces Hope for More Allocation – All you Want to Know

With major capital acquisition programmes in the pipeline the expectation from the upcoming annual budget for FY 2023-24 the expectations are high. All the three services in their presentations to the Ministry of Defence (MoD) ahead of the Budget presentation sought higher allocations which have been shared with the Ministry of Finance. The focus this year according to sources in the defence and security establishment is expected to be on the pension allocation. As recently One Rank One Pension scheme has been revised and this is expected to result in an additional annual expenditure of Rs 8,450 crore. And arrears amount of Rs 23,638 crore needs to be paid over a period of three years.

Non-lapsable funds

For the modernization plans, the Armed forces are also hoping for the institution of a non-lapsable fund. According to sources at times the services are unable to spend the allotted budget

during the FY, or at times the delivery of the particular system is delayed, therefore there is an urgent need to consider that a non-lapsable fund is required.

Immediate Payments

The Indian Army is in the process of getting new artillery gun systems, drones, Light Battle Tanks, new armoured vehicles, including building infrastructure for faster movement of the troops along Line of Actual Control (LAC). Next round of payments need to go for the S-400 Air Defence systems from Russia, purchase of drone systems for the Indian Army and Air Force, missiles systems as well as upgrades of the fighter fleet of SU-30 MKI of IAF.

Which items are in the pipeline?

The Project 75I for building six new submarines is expected to be inked this year under the Strategic Partnership Model for the Indian Navy. If and when this project takes off six conventional submarines — P 75 (I) are expected to be built at a cost of Rs 45000 crore. So far the project has been pushed back due to concerns raised by the foreign OEMs. However, recently reports suggested that the concerns raised by the stakeholders have been resolved and the project will take off soon. “In that case the first tranche of payment has to be kept in consideration in the Defence allocation,” explained a senior officer.

In case the Project 75I fails to take off the Indian Navy is likely to go for a follow-on order of the ‘Scorpene’ class of submarines under Project 76. This is expected to be announced during the forthcoming visit of the French President Emmanuel Macron. In the new FY Indian Navy is also expected to place an order for 27 fighter jets for its aircraft carrier and it is expected that the announcement for buying the marine version of Rafale (M) is likely to be made when the French President visits in early March. The Indian Navy is the lead service for the Predator drones from the US based General Atomics and this deal too is expected to be signed in FY 2023-24. For this deal too the first tranche of payment will have to be made. Payments for the ongoing projects like the new destroyers and frigates are on the list.

For the Indian Air Force the race for additional fighter jets is high on the list for which six global OEMs are in the race for MRFA (Multi-role Fighter Aircraft). It’s going to be a choice between single Vs twin engines. However reports indicate that IAF may go for a follow-on order of Rafale fighters from Dassault Aviation. In the 2022-23 budget allocation the government had increased the capital outlay for procurement of new equipment to Rs 1.52 lakh crore. This allocation was revised from Rs 1.38 lakh crore of 2021-22 allocation. The private sector is hoping that this year there is higher allocation for capital expenditure as it would open up procuring more platforms and weapons for the armed forces. According to reports the private sector companies are hoping that the government will allocate funds towards R&D.

Industry View

Drones share similarities with the aerospace domain. Prototyping is not only limited but expensive too, the testbeds are expensive and limited and “government support in this field would give a great boost to the industry,” says Kishan Tiwari, Co-Founder and CEO, TSAW Drones. “As a drone technology and drone development company a more inclusive environment needs to be created for prototyping, testing and making the product market ready,” he adds.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/budget/budget-2023-the-armed-forces-hope-for-more-allocation-all-you-want-to-know-2966146>

‘Coast Guard Always Prepared to Tackle any Situation on Seafront’

The Indian Coast Guard’s (ICG) is always prepared to tackle any situation and eventualities on the seafront, said Inspector General Iqbal Singh Chauhan, TM Commander Coast Guard Region (North East). Asked about the terror threat scenario and growing instances of smuggling of goods and drugs through sea route, Chauhan said, “Threats will always be there, but we are there to tackle these.” He was addressing the media on board ICG ship ‘Vijaya’ at Khidirpur Dock of Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port on the eve of the 47th Raising Day of the Indian Coast Guard.

Speaking about the ICG maintaining a good relationship with its Bangladeshi counterparts, he said constant patrolling and surveillance is still carried out along the India-Bangladesh maritime boundary. “An ICG ship is positioned at the India-Bangladesh maritime border on the Bay of Bengal, and two-three Dornier aircraft patrol the area constantly to keep an eye on movement in the sea.” Chauhan said the ICG has three Dornier patrol aircraft based in Kolkata, while there are four newly acquired Advanced

Light Helicopters (ALH) in Bhubaneswar and there are plans to induct more aircraft. Apart from these, two offshore patrol vessels, one of which is ICGS Vijay, are stationed at Paradip, while at Haldia, four hovercrafts are positioned, he added.

<https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/kolkata/coast-guard-always-prepared-to-tackle-any-situation-on-seafront-8416476/>

GE-414 Military Jet Engines Set to be Manufactured in India

India and US will take their defence cooperation to the next level with the Joe Biden administration giving a green signal to GE, a world leader in military jet engines, to manufacture 98 kilo-newton thrust GE-414 engines in India in collaboration with the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and a still-to-be-identified private defence equipment maker. The India specific GE-414 INS6 engine will power the LCA (light combat aircraft) Mark II, which will be rolled out by Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) early next year and take to the skies by the end of 2024, and the under-development twin engine Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft.

While the Narendra Modi government is tight-lipped about the entire project, HT learns that the GE-414 engine will be manufactured under terms that include 100% transfer of technology (ToT), with the deal likely to be sealed during the on-going visit of the high-level delegation led

by National Security Adviser Ajit Doval's visit to the US. Accompanying Doval to the bilateral dialogue on "Critical and Emerging Technologies" with US NSA Jake Sullivan are scientific adviser to Raksha Mantri, Satheesh Reddy, DRDO chief Samir V Kamat, principal scientific adviser Ajay Sood, and secretary (telecom) K Rajaram.

One Monday night, at a dinner hosted by Indian Ambassador Taranjit Sandhu and attended by senior US officials including Sullivan, Doval highlighted the need to convert intentions and ideas into actions and specific deliverables through focused steps in a timebound manner.

The negotiations for 100% local manufacturing of GE-414 engines began when then DRDO chief Satheesh Reddy under instructions of NSA Doval visited US in May 2022 to meet US undersecretary of defence for research and engineering Heidi Shyu, and her colleague Terry Emmert, the principal deputy chief technology officer for mission capabilities.

While GE-404 engine powers 4+ generation LCA Tejas Mark I aircraft, the GE-414 engine will power the 4.5 generation Mark II Tejas, which will carry nearly 6.5 tonnes of missiles and ammunition and will be a replacement for Mirage 2000 and MiG-29 aircraft. The LAC Mark I, which is a replacement for MiG-21, carries only 3.5 tonnes of missiles and ammunition and has half the operational range and war fighting capability of Mark II.

India plans to produce more than six squadrons (each squadron has 18 aircraft) of the Mark II aircraft for the Indian Air Force, and will also be exporting the fighter to interested countries.

The GE-414 engine will also power the twin-engine advanced medium combat aircraft (AMCA) under development by ADA, which is the nodal agency under DRDO for the development of LCAs. The fighter is expected to take to the skies at the end of this decade with its naval version operating on aircraft carriers.

With the Biden administration giving permission for 100% manufacturing TOT to GE, this will lay the foundation for future joint design, development, and manufacture of high-powered engines beyond 110 KN thrust between two countries. This will not merely showcase Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Atamanirbhar Bharat' mission but also make India one of the leading civilian as well as military aircraft manufacturers in the world.

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/ge414-engines-set-to-be-manufactured-in-india-101675221969866.html>

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Wed, 01Feb 2022

Made-in-India GE Jet Engines Sought in Closer US Security Ties

The US and India plan to share advanced defense and computing technology, including the potential joint production of General Electric Co. jet engines, as the Biden administration seeks to shift New Delhi away from Russia and counter China. Details of the plan, known as US-India Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies, released Tuesday bolster Washington's

broader agenda of strengthening military, technology and supply-chain links with partner countries.

US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said in a briefing that the framework won't be solely driven by the geopolitical challenges posed by Moscow or Beijing. But he added that China's aggressive military moves and economic practices have had "a profound impact on the thinking in Delhi" and other capitals around the world. "The China-Russia factors are real, but so is the idea of building a deep, democratic ecosystem of high technology," Sullivan said Tuesday, previewing the partnership with reporters. "So, geopolitics doesn't sit off to the side, but it's not a comprehensive explanation for what's at work here."

One area of interest for India would be domestically producing GE jet engines, which it uses in its combat aircraft. US officials are evaluating a proposal from GE to approve joint production of jet engines for Indian warplanes, Sullivan said Tuesday. He wouldn't speculate on how soon an announcement might come, while adding that the countries are aiming for "fast and ambitious progress." Clearance for assembly of GE engines in India would be a step toward lessening the country's historic reliance on Russia for military hardware — a boost for American diplomacy in the effort to isolate Moscow over its invasion of Ukraine. India now flies a mix of Russian, European and locally produced jets in its fighter fleet, a reflection of its position outside the superpowers' orbits. Beyond GE engines, the initiative on critical and emerging technologies also includes cooperation on artillery systems, armored-infantry vehicles and maritime security, as well as semiconductors, quantum computing and artificial intelligence.

Sullivan met with his Indian counterpart, Ajit Doval, on Tuesday. The duo on Monday attended an event with executives from American and Indian tech firms and university presidents. President Joe Biden is expected to travel to India for the Group of 20 leaders' summit in September and see Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Australia at a summit of the so-called Quad security partners, which includes Japan. Sullivan acknowledged that the partnership with India isn't without its risks, given the weapons trade between India and Russia, but he stressed that the initiative wasn't sparked by the war in Ukraine or efforts to drive a wedge between New Delhi and Moscow.

"I'm not going to say that facilitating the movement of India off of Russian equipment to other equipment is an irrelevant consideration — of course it is not," he said. The teams are also seeking to cooperate on semiconductors, where India can play a role in diversification of supply chains. India is interested in growing its packaging and legacy chip manufacturing capabilities, Sullivan said. Those efforts could also include efforts to build out and deploy an alternative to compete with Huawei Technologies Co. Ltd on 5G telecommunications equipment. The White House is now considering a full ban on US firms selling equipment to China's Huawei, which has already been crippled by years of US national security actions.

The impediment to India having its own chips fabrication facilities is a matter of "political and policy will," not lack of know-how or talent, Sullivan said. The US effort to bring advanced semiconductor manufacturing back to the America largely hinges on finding a qualified workforce. One part of the strategy also includes a streamlining of the US's visa system, and the White House is working with Congress to address existing issues with H1B visas and ensure the US continues to attract science and engineering talent.

https://m.economictimes.com/news/defence/made-in-india-ge-jet-engines-sought-in-closer-us-security-ties/amp_article/show/97505765.cms

The Tribune

Tue, 31 Jan 2023

Doval for Time-Bound Progress in Indo-US Tech Ties

National Security Adviser Ajit K Doval, speaking about US-India ties in frontier areas, has highlighted the need for specific deliverables through focused steps in a time-bound manner.

Speaking at a roundtable in the US, Doval highlighted India's capacity for technology development and absorption and said it uses technology not only to boost economic growth but also as an instrument of social inclusion.

Doval met Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark Milley as well as interacted with two senior US Cabinet Ministers as well as CEOs of MNCs to accelerate India-US technology partnership and policy alignment. The meeting took place on Monday at the India House in Washington. "Fruitful discussion on various aspects of India-US bilateral cooperation," tweeted the Indian embassy.

Indian Ambassador to India Taranjit Singh Sandhu hosted a reception which was attended by US NSA Jake Sullivan, Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo, Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman and NASA Administrator Bill Nelson. The US Chamber of Commerce also hosted a roundtable on advanced technologies, including semiconductor design and manufacturing, commercial electronics, aerospace and defence and IT services.

"Insightful conversations on building bilateral cooperation in critical and emerging technologies," tweeted Sandhu about the reception.

The roundtable was attended by CEOs of Micron, Lockheed Martin, Applied Materials, Global Foundries, General Atlantic, General Atomics and General Catalyst. From the Indian side, there were officials from Tata Sons, Bharti Enterprises, L&T, Bharat Forge, Reliance Jio, Adani Defence, Mahindra and Mahindra and ArcelorMittal. There were also representatives of Indian start ups including from Dhruva Space, Digan-tara (space tracking), Pixxel (satellite imagery), 3rdi Tec (communication), Q Pi-Ai(AI & Quantum) and Saankhya Labs (wireless communication).

The interaction was held before the Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET) to be co-chaired by Sullivan and Doval. iCET was announced after a meeting between US President Joe Biden and PM Narendra Modi in Tokyo in May last year to strengthen US-India partnership on technologies.

<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/nation/doval-for-time-bound-progress-in-indo-us-tech-ties-475392>

India-US Agree on Joint Defence Industrial Cooperation Road Map at ICET

In order to strengthen the India-United States (US) technology and defence industrial partnership, the two countries have agreed to a new bilateral defence industrial cooperation road map to accelerate defence tech cooperation for joint development and production and launch a new innovation bridge to connect Indian and US defence start-ups, senior US administration officials have said.

The US administration has also pledged to work towards lifting existing export controls, including by working with the US Congress, to overcome barriers in executing the road map.

The two countries will also strengthen their innovation ecosystems in the field of artificial intelligence, establish a joint India-US quantum coordination mechanism, work together on determining standards and benchmarks on AI in technical bodies, set up a taskforce on semiconductor manufacturing collaboration, strengthen cooperation in the realm of space, embark on new public-private dialogue on advanced telecom technologies, and enhance academic collaboration.

These are among the expected outcomes of the first high-level dialogue of the initiative on critical and emerging technologies (ICET) between and the Indian and American national security advisers Ajit Doval and Jake Sullivan, respectively, in Washington DC.

According to a senior US administration official, four factors — the fact that the dialogue is a result of a high-level political understanding and is being led by the national security councils, the issues covered are broad, there is deep stakeholder engagement including with the business and academic communities, and it is based on a strategic alignment — make ICET “unique”. The mechanism isn’t meant to replace existing platforms of cooperation and dialogue but energise it further, the official clarified.

A second administration official said the US views it in its strategic interest to support India’s rise as a global power and participate in it. Officials acknowledged that the China challenge was a key dimension in shaping the mechanism and its outcomes. “China is clearly on our minds...it has proven time and again to be a challenge for India and the world...but what is important to remember is that this is larger than one dimension and much more about India’s rise.”

The first official also pointed out that the fact that US was imposing export restrictions on China, while lowering barriers on India, was a clear message in itself.

Acknowledging that there are regulatory issues on both ends to operationalise the agreements, administration officials said there had been candid discussions on it. Some barriers are statutory but given the bipartisan support for the relationship, the administration hopes that the US Congress will help in lifting it; others are more in the domain of rules and policies. But the expectation is that given there is a strategic vision and commitment to achieving the objectives, it can drive “regulatory shifts”.

“The only thing that is limiting the dialogue is imagination. There is nothing that it doesn’t touch,” said one of the officials.

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/india-us-agree-on-joint-defence-industrial-cooperation-road-map-at-icet-101675219387887-amp.html>

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Tue, 31 Jan 2022

India, US Discuss Situation in Indo-Pacific

India and the US on Tuesday reaffirmed their commitment to a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific, with the objective of ensuring peace, stability and prosperity in the region. The situation in the Indo-Pacific came up for discussion during talks between Foreign Secretary Vinay Mohan Kwatra and visiting US Under Secretary of State for Political Victoria Nuland.

In the talks, held under the framework of annual India-US Foreign Office Consultations, the two sides covered contemporary regional developments in South Asia, Indian Ocean Region and the Indo-Pacific, according to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).

"The two sides reiterated their commitment to a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific, with the objective of ensuring peace, stability and prosperity in the region," it said in a statement. The MEA said both sides reviewed progress made towards further consolidating the India-US Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership. It said Kwatra and Nuland took stock of a number of initiatives and frameworks that reflect common strategic interests, including Quad, I2U2, the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) and the Indo-Pacific Maritime Domain Awareness Initiative (IPMDA).

While the Quad comprises India, the US, Australia and Japan, the members of the I2U2 are India, Israel, the US and the United Arab Emirates. US President Joe Biden in May last year launched the IPEF, which is an initiative aimed at deeper cooperation among like-minded countries in areas like clean energy, supply-chain resilience and digital trade.

In May last year, the Quad leaders launched the IPMDA which is primarily aimed at monitoring regional waters against the backdrop of China's increasing muscle-flexing in the region. "Both sides agreed to work together during India's ongoing G20 Presidency. They also agreed to intensify cooperation in multilateral fora and international organisations, including the UN, on global issues of mutual interest," the MEA said. "The productive and substantive meeting enabled both sides to continue a regular dialogue that has been instrumental in enhancing mutual understanding and in identification of opportunities for further growth and enrichment of the India-US partnership," it added.

https://m.economictimes.com/news/defence/india-us-discuss-situation-in-indo-pacific/amp_articleshow/97500996.cms

US to Train Indian Astronauts, Cooperate on Planetary Defence

The US will provide advanced training for an Indian astronaut and the two countries will cooperate on planetary defence against dangerous asteroids and comets, according to the White House. Strengthening cooperation in human space flight through an exchange that includes advanced training for an Indian astronaut at NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas, was among the initiatives launched at the inaugural meeting of the US-India initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET) in Washington on Tuesday, the White House said. National Security Advisers (NSA) Ajit Doval of India and Jake Sullivan of the US led the iCET meeting at which space, scientific, defence and commerce officials participated.

Another initiative at the iCET meeting was to include planetary defence in the agenda of the US-India Civil Space Joint Working Group (CSJWG), according to the White House. The US planetary defence programme monitors asteroids and comets to identify those that can potentially cause harm to the earth and issue warnings and develop actions to mitigate their effect. Cooperation with the US on manned space flight would be a departure for India, which has so far relied on the Soviet Union and, after its dissolution, with Russia. India, which plans to send astronauts as early as next year on board the Gaganyaan spacecraft, has been training four astronauts in Russia under an agreement with that country's Glavkosmos organisation.

While astronauts from several countries, including Saudi Arabia, have flown on NASA space missions, none from India have. The only Indian citizen to have been in outer space is Rakesh Sharma, a former Air Force pilot who flew on a Soviet Soyuz mission in 1984. Other initiatives from the iCET meeting, according to the White House, include strengthening bilateral commercial space partnerships through the US Commerce Department and the Indian Department of Space. Earlier, Indian and US space officials held two days of discussions on several areas of cooperation at a two-day meeting of the CSJWG on Monday and Tuesday covered collaboration in human space flights, Earth and space science as well as global navigation satellite systems, spaceflight safety and space situational awareness, and policies for commercial space activities, according to the State Department.

The meeting was co-chaired by Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Jennifer Littlejohn and National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Associate Administrator Karen Feldstein on the US side and by Shantanu Bhatawdekar, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) Scientific Secretary on the Indian side. A highlight of the NASA-ISRO cooperation is the Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR) mission, planned for next year.

It is expected to systematically map Earth, using two different radar frequencies to monitor resources such as water, forests and agriculture. It will provide information about ecosystems, the Earth's surface, natural hazards, sea level rise and the cryosphere, the frozen parts of the earth, with applications in forestry, agriculture and ecology.

According to NASA, it will also help with providing prompt responses to natural and human-created disasters. NASA head Bill Nelson and Executive Secretary of the National Space Council

Chirag Parikh gave the welcoming remarks for the meeting and ISRO Chairman S Somanath and Taranjit Singh Sandhu spoke. While no Indian citizen has been on US space missions, four Indian-Americans have. Those who flew on NASA missions are Kalpana Chawla, who died in the Space Shuttle Columbia disaster in 2003, Sunita Williams and Raja Chari. Sirisha Bandla flew on a very brief private-sector Virgin Galactic test flight in 2021.

<https://telanganatoday.com/us-to-train-indian-astronauts-cooperate-on-planetary-defence>

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Amid China Threat, US & India Plan to Take Strategic, Scientific Ties to Next Level

In June 2008, amid giddy talk of US-India nuclear cooperation and strategic alignment, a district court in Washington DC sentenced Parthasarathy Sudarshan, CEO of an electronics firm with offices in South Carolina, Singapore, and Bangalore, to 35 months in prison for conspiring to illegally export 500 i960 microprocessors to aid in the development of India's ballistic missiles, space launch vehicles, and fighter jets, including Tejas.

Aside from the fact that the i960 chips were so basic that more advanced microprocessors could be bought in a store, the incident came even as China was laughing its way to parity with the US, easily circumventing American export restrictions while Washington slept at the wheel, to the extent of purloining classified information relating to Inter-Continental Ballistic Missiles (ICBM) and nuclear weapons designs.

Washington finally appears to have woken up to the Chinese threat and its misplaced mistrust of India that goes back generations. In an unprecedented engagement, top officials from the two sides are meeting this week to advance the US-India Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET) aimed at overcoming residual wrinkles and developing an eco-system driven by mutual trust. Following up on the decision taken by President Biden and Prime Minister in May 2022, a delegation of top Indian strategic and scientific heads are meeting their US counterparts in Washington today to put ties on the next level.

The composition of the Indian delegation itself offers a clue to what is on the table. Led by National Security Advisor Ajit Doval, it includes ISRO Chairman S Somnath, Principal Scientific Advisor to the Prime Minister, Ajay Kumar Sood; Scientific Advisor to the Defense Minister, G Satheesh Reddy; Department of Telecom Secretary K Rajaram and Director General of Defense Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) Samir Kamat.

In support of the iCET, the US Chamber of Commerce on Monday held a roundtable with industry executives across the spectrum of advanced technologies, including semiconductor design and manufacturing, commercial electronics, advanced telecommunications, commercial space, aerospace and defense, and information technology services. With US Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo and US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan in attendance, officials and executives "discussed opportunities to promote development of critical and emerging technologies such as quantum computing and artificial intelligence," the US India Business Council, which hosted the roundtable, said.

A key theme throughout the roundtable was how both governments could facilitate deeper alignment on technology issues, including encouraging semiconductor supply chain resilience. “iCET is about much more than technology cooperation, it's a platform to accelerate our strategic convergence and policy alignment, ” US NSA Sullivan said, adding that Washington and New Delhi “want to establish a list of 'firsts,'” -- “firsts in removing barriers—on both sides—to enable greater ambition by all of you.”

According to the USIBC statement, NSA Ajit Doval and India's Ambassador to the US Taranjit Sandhu highlighted India's remarkable capacity for technology development and absorption, and emphasized India's use of technology not only as an enabler of economic growth but as an instrument of social inclusion. Both officials spoke of the “natural complementary strengths of the Indian and American economies and the growing strategic convergence between both nations. They also emphasized India's growing role as a trusted supply chain partner and contributor in the global technology value chain, and underlined the importance of easing export control measures to facilitate technology access, co-production, and co-development between India and US.

Much of the growing engagement is of course driven by the dazzling heights the techies and executives of Indian origin have attained in the US, including heading storied tech companies such as Microsoft and Google. In one of the sessions, the roundtable discussed microchips as a critical technology and the important role the US-India relationship could play in building a reliable semiconductor supply chain, even as Washington has become leery of China.

“It is promising to see the US and India prioritize the necessary discussions and investments that will enable greater semiconductor leadership within and among partner economies. The US Chamber of Commerce, as a major advocate for the CHIPS and Science Act and now the host of the US-India iCET dialogue, is creating compelling opportunities for public-private partnership that will ultimately strengthen our economies. Micron looks forward to continuing to work with both governments, the Chamber, and industry as part of this key forum.” Sanjay Mehrotra, President and CEO of Micron Technology told the meeting.

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/us-india-ramp-up-strategic-tech-engagement-amid-growing-mistrust-of-china/articleshow/97500913.cms>

नवभारत टाइम्स

Wed, 01 Feb 2023

क्या भारत-पाक में हो सकता है परमाणु युद्ध?

रंजीत कुमार

अमेरिका के पूर्व विदेश मंत्री माइक पॉम्पियो के दावे पर यकीन किया जाए तो दोनों देशों के बीच फरवरी, 2019 में परमाणु युद्ध छिड़ सकता था, जिसे रुकवाने में उन्होंने अहम भूमिका निभाई। पिछले साढ़े तीन दशकों में अमेरिकी अधिकारियों ने ऐसा दावा चौथी बार किया है। भारत और पाकिस्तान के बीच तनावपूर्ण रिश्तों का यह डरावना पहलू है, जिस पर अंतरराष्ट्रीय परमाणु सुरक्षा के ठेकेदारों को गंभीरता से विचार करना चाहिए। परमाणु बम की ताकत हासिल कर पाकिस्तान ने भारत के साथ पिछले तीन दशकों से कम तीव्रता (लो इंटेन्सिटी) वाला युद्ध छेड़ रखा है। इसी रणनीति के तहत पाकिस्तानी सेना ने पुलवामा में CRPF

के 40 जवानों को शहीद किया तो गुस्साए भारत ने पाकिस्तान के भीतर बालाकोट में जैश-ए-मोहम्मद के एक आतंकवादी शिविर पर हवाई हमला किया, जिसके जवाब में पाकिस्तान ने भी भारतीय ठिकानों पर अमेरिकी लड़ाकू विमान एफ-16 से हमला किया।

दावों में दम

माइक पॉम्पियो का दावा हालिया प्रकाशित उनकी आत्मकथा 'नेवर गिव एन इंच: फाइटिंग फॉर एन अमेरिका आई लव' में सामने आया है, जिस पर भारत और पाकिस्तान ने कोई आधिकारिक प्रतिक्रिया नहीं दी है। हालांकि सामरिक पर्यवेक्षक इन दावों में दम मानते हैं।

दावे के मुताबिक फरवरी, 2019 में भारतीय वायुसेना की ओर से पाकिस्तान के बालाकोट आतंकवादी शिविर पर किए गए हवाई सर्जिकल स्ट्राइक के बाद भारत और पाकिस्तान के बीच परमाणु युद्ध छिड़ने की आशंका पैदा हो गई थी जिसे रुकवाने के लिए उन्होंने देर रात रावलपिंडी में जनरल कमर जावेद बाजवा को फोन किया था।

ताजा दावे से साफ है कि भारत और पाकिस्तान के बीच तनाव कभी भी बड़े संघर्ष में बदल सकता है जो एक-दूसरे पर परमाणु हमले में भी तब्दील हो सकता है।

अमेरिकी अधिकारी परमाणु युद्ध रुकवाने में अपनी भूमिका का गर्व से बखान करते हैं, लेकिन क्या उन्हें नहीं पता कि दक्षिण एशिया में छिड़े इस परमाणु युद्ध की आंच अमेरिका तक भी जाएगी? ध्यान रहे, परमाणु अप्रसार संधि के प्रणेता अमेरिका ने इराक के कथित परमाणु बमों को नेस्तनाबूद करने के नाम पर उसके खिलाफ जिस तरह की कार्रवाई की, उससे कुछ कम तीव्रता वाली कार्रवाई भी तब पाकिस्तान के खिलाफ की गई होती तो आज दक्षिण एशिया परमाणु युद्ध के साये में नहीं जी रहा होता।

कई बार बिगड़े हालात

- भारत और पाकिस्तान के बीच इसके पहले 1987, 1990 और 1999 में परमाणु युद्ध छिड़ने की नौबत आ गई थी। लेकिन अमेरिकी हस्तक्षेप से इसे रोक लिया गया।
- 1987 में भारतीय सेना ने ऑपरेशन ब्रासटैक्स नाम से एक बड़ा युद्धाभ्यास पाकिस्तान से लगी राजस्थान व पंजाब सीमा पर किया था, जिसमें मेन बैटल टैंकों और तोपों से लेकर अन्य सभी किस्मों के हथियारों के साथ 60 हजार से अधिक सैनिकों ने भाग लिया था।
- जवाब में पाकिस्तानी सेना ने भी ऑपरेशन जर्ब-ए-मोमिन नाम का विशाल युद्धाभ्यास किया।
- दोनों सेनाओं द्वारा इस तरह तलवारें भांजने से तनाव काफी बढ़ गया था। तब पाकिस्तान आधिकारिक तौर पर परमाणु संपन्न देश घोषित भी नहीं हुआ था, लेकिन माना जाता था कि भारत और पाकिस्तान दोनों ने परमाणु बम हासिल कर लिए हैं।
- इसके तीन साल बाद 1990 में दूसरी बार भारत और पाकिस्तान के बीच तनाव बढ़ा और दोनों देशों के बीच परमाणु युद्ध होने की आशंका अमेरिका ने जाहिर की। पत्रकार सेमूर हर्ष ने अमेरिकी खुफिया एजेंसी के उप-निदेशक रिचर्ड केर के हवाले से कहा था, 'दोनों देश एक दूसरे पर परमाणु बम चलाने के काफी नजदीक पहुंच गए थे। हालात काफी खतरनाक हो गए थे। इतने कि क्यूबा मिसाइल संकट से भी भयावह स्थिति लग रही थी।'
- नौ साल बाद दोनों देशों के बीच फिर तनाव भड़का जब पाकिस्तानी सेना ने जिहादियों के भेष में सैकड़ों सैनिकों को भेजकर जम्मू-कश्मीर के करगिल में नियंत्रण रेखा पर स्थित पर्वतीय चोटियों पर चुपचाप डेरा जमा लिया था।

- भारतीय सेना को जब इसका पता चला तो पाकिस्तानी सैनिकों के खिलाफ जवाबी सैन्य कार्रवाई की गई। इस दौरान पाकिस्तान और भारत की ओर से एक-दूसरे पर परमाणु बम चलाने की खुलेआम धमकियां दी जाने लगीं।
- 4 जुलाई, 1999 को अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति बिल क्लिंटन ने भारतीय प्रधानमंत्री अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी और पाकिस्तानी राष्ट्रपति नवाज शरीफ को आमंत्रित किया। वाजपेयी ने तो वॉशिंगटन जाने से इनकार कर दिया, लेकिन वाइट हाउस पहुंचे नवाज शरीफ को दो टूक कहा गया कि करगिल की चोटियों से अपनी फौज जल्द से जल्द हटा ले।
- तब प्रधानमंत्री वाजपेयी ने सेना को निर्देश दिया था कि किसी भी हालत में फौज को नियंत्रण रेखा पार नहीं करना है। पाकिस्तानी सेना के खिलाफ जो भी सैन्य कार्रवाई होनी है, वह भारतीय सीमा के अंदर रहकर ही होगी। यदि भारतीय सैनिक सीमा पार करते तो दोनों देशों के बीच पूर्ण स्तर का खुला युद्ध छिड़ जाता और इसके परमाणु युद्ध में तब्दील होने की आशंका अमेरिकी अधिकारियों ने जाहिर की थी।

प्रायोजित आतंकवाद

पाकिस्तान द्वारा भारत के खिलाफ प्रायोजित आतंकवाद की नीति पर चलते रहने से भारत के साथ अक्सर तनाव भड़क जाता है। भविष्य में भारत के किसी ठिकाने पर बड़ा आतंकवादी हमला भारतीय रक्षा कर्णधारों को पाकिस्तानी इलाके में जवाबी हमले के लिए उकसा सकता है। पाकिस्तान भी इसका जवाब देने को तैयार हुआ तो दोनों देशों के बीच परमाणु युद्ध होने की आशंका से इनकार नहीं किया जा सकता। पारंपरिक युद्ध में भारत से हार का सामना करने के बाद शर्मिंदा पाकिस्तान परमाणु हमला करने से नहीं हिचकेंगा। जवाब में भारत ने भी पाकिस्तान के इलाके पर परमाणु बम गिराया तो इससे अकल्पित तबाही पूरी पृथ्वी पर हो सकती है।

<https://blogs.navbharattimes.indiatimes.com/nbteditpage/mike-pompeo-on-nuclear-war-between-india-and-pakistan/>

नवभारत टाइम्स

Tue, 31 Jan 2023

चीन के साथ युद्ध के लिए तैयार नहीं अमेरिकी सेना... जनरल की चेतावनी से खुल गई पोल

अमेरिका और चीन के बीच युद्ध की आशंकाओं के बीच पूर्व मिलिट्री जनरल ने बड़ी चेतावनी दी है। रिटायर्ड अमेरिकी जनरल जैक कीन ने सोमवार को कहा कि अमेरिका की सेना चीन के साथ युद्ध के लिए तैयार नहीं है। अमेरिका और चीन के संबंध लंबे समय से तनावपूर्ण बने हुए हैं। दोनों ही देशों में ताइवान, दक्षिण चीन सागर, तिब्बत, हॉंग कॉन्ग, उइगर जैसे कई मुद्दों पर विवाद है। इस बीच अमेरिकी वायु सेना के एयर मोबिलिटी कमांड के प्रमुख जनरल माइक मिन्हान ने अधिकारियों को मेमो भेजकर चीन के साथ युद्ध की भविष्यवाणी की है। अमेरिकी कांग्रेस के वरिष्ठ रिपब्लिकन सांसद माइकल मैककॉल ने भी जनरल माइक मिन्हान के बयान का समर्थन करते हुए कहा था कि ताइवान के मुद्दे पर चीन से संघर्ष की आशंका काफी ज्यादा है। पूर्व जनरल का दावा - चीन के पास ज्यादा हथियारफॉक्स न्यूज पर इंटरव्यू के दौरान पूर्व

अमेरिकी जनरल जैक कीन ने कहा कि अगर चीन के साथ कोई संघर्ष हुआ तो अमेरिका तैयार नहीं हो सकता है। उन्होंने कहा कि वास्तविकता यह है और हमें ध्यान देना चाहिए कि हम उतने तैयार नहीं हैं जितना हमें होना चाहिए। हमारे पास इस क्षेत्र में एक प्रभावी सैन्य प्रतिरोध नहीं है। चीन के पास अमेरिका से अधिक जहाज, अधिक विमान और अधिक मिसाइलें हैं।

ताइवान की तुलना रूस-यूक्रेन युद्ध से की

जनरल कीन ने ताइवान के भविष्य पर चेतावनी देते हुए रूस-यूक्रेन युद्ध से तुलना की। उन्होंने कहा कि अमेरिका को ताइवान की सैन्य जरूरतों को जल्द पूरा करना चाहिए। उन्होंने इशारा करते हुए कहा कि अमेरिकी कंपनियों के पास मित्र देशों के कई हथियारों की डील लटकी पड़ी है। उन्होंने कहा कि में उस सिस्टम को सुधारना होगा, जिससे मदद को जल्दे जल्दे जा सके। ताइवान ने 2019 में अमेरिका के साथ एम1ए2 टैंक की डील की थी। लेकिन, अब अमेरिका ने पहले यूक्रेन और फिर पोलैंड को टैंक भेजने का निर्णय लिया है।

अमेरिकी सेना को हमेशा तैयार रहने का दिया मंत्र

कीन ने कहा कि हमें ताइवान की मदद करनी है और हमें अपनी समस्या खुद सुलझानी है। वास्तव में हमें इसी पर ध्यान केंद्रित करना चाहिए। हमें जोखिम को दूर करना होगा और हमेशा तैयार रहना होगा। ऐसे में ही हम युद्ध को रोक सकते हैं। उन्होंने कहा कि वह अमेरिकी वायु सेना के जनरल माइक मिन्हान के चीन के साथ युद्ध के जोखिम की भविष्यवाणी से असहमत हैं।

https://navbharattimes.indiatimes.com/world/america/us-china-war-news-us-military-is-underprepared-for-war-with-china-top-army-general-warns/amp_articleshow/97485523.cms

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Tue, 31 Jan 2022

Joe Biden Rejects F-16s for Ukraine as Russia Claims Advances

President Joe Biden said Monday the United States would not provide F-16 fighter jets to Ukraine, as Kyiv expands the list of weaponry it needs to be better able to drive Russian forces from occupied territories. Fighting continued at key points along the long front as Russian forces sought to expand their hold on territory in the Donetsk region of eastern Ukraine. The Kremlin-appointed Donetsk leader, Denis Pushilin, claimed Russian forces were advancing near Vugledar, a strategically valuable town southwest of Donetsk city.

"Now we can say that units have established positions in the eastern part of Vugledar, and work is also being carried out in the vicinity," Pushilin said, according to Russian news agencies. But Kyiv rejected the claim, while conceding that the fighting there was tough. "There are constant attempts to break through our defence," Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky said late Sunday. "The enemy... maintains a high intensity of attack." Last week, Western countries including the United States and Germany approved the delivery of heavy battle tanks to Ukraine. The move is a departure from a previous position that tanks were considered a step too far in their support for Ukraine and could risk a widening backlash from Russia.

But Biden on Monday appeared to draw the line on supplying American fighter jets to Ukraine. "No," he said when asked by reporters at the White House if he was in favor of sending F-16s or others.

- Brazil has 'no interest' - But European leaders said

They were open to the idea, even if Ukraine has not yet formally requested advanced fighter aircraft from its allies for the war. Analysts believe both Ukraine and Russia are gearing up for significant offensive movements in the coming months and Western aircraft could increase Kyiv's strength, with its own air force significantly depleted by 11 months of war.

French President Emmanuel Macron said Monday he would not rule out giving fighter aircraft to Ukraine but warned against the risk of escalation in the conflict. Macron had talks with Netherlands Prime Minister Mark Rutte, who has already floated the idea of sending Dutch F-16s to Ukraine.

"Nothing is excluded in principle," Macron said.

Any arms delivery "must not weaken the capacity of the French armed forces," he said, adding that France would have to be confident that the weapons would not be used to strike inside Russia, which could escalate the war.

"There is no taboo but it would be a big step," said Rutte.

Over in South America, President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said Brazil "has no interest in sending ammunition to Ukraine" during a meeting with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz -- the first Western leader to meet the leftist premier since he took office.

"Brazil is a country of peace... My suggestion is that we create a group of countries to sit at the table with Ukraine and Russia to try to reach peace," Lula said.

He added that he had discussed this idea with Macron and would bring it up with Biden and Chinese leader Xi Jinping in future planned visits.

Lula caused a stir last year when he claimed that Zelensky was "as responsible as" Russian President Vladimir Putin in the conflict.

Now, he said he believes Russia "made the classic mistake of invading another country's territory" -- but maintained his position of non-engagement.

"If one doesn't engage, then the two (sides) won't fight," Lula said.

- Artillery shells - With Ukraine's supplies of artillery munitions heavily depleted, France and Australia announced Monday a deal to jointly produce 155 mm shells for Kyiv's forces.

"Several thousand 155 mm shells will be manufactured jointly," French Defense Minister Sebastien Lecornu said.

"There are some unique capabilities that exist in Australia and some synergies that can be achieved by Australia and France working together," said his Australian counterpart Richard Marles.

Meanwhile in Seoul, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg asked South Korea to "step up" military support for Ukraine, suggesting it reconsider its policy of not exporting weapons to countries in conflict. There is an "urgent need for more ammunition", Stoltenberg said.

It is "extremely important that President Putin doesn't win this war," he stressed. Tehran on Monday summoned a Ukrainian diplomat to protest at remarks made by an aide to Zelensky following unattributed weekend strikes that targeted an Iranian defense industry site in Isfahan that reportedly produced drones.

Although no link could be made between the weekend strikes and Ukraine, Mykhailo Podoliak tweeted about the "explosive night in Iran", highlighting the site's drone and missile production and oil refineries.

"Ukraine did warn you," he said.

Iran has been supplying attack drones to Russia for use against Ukraine.

Ukraine's charge d'affaires in Tehran was summoned to provide "an official and immediate explanation" for remarks it called "strange and biased", said Iran's foreign ministry.

https://m.economictimes.com/news/defence/joe-biden-rejects-f-16s-for-ukraine-as-russia-claims-advances/amp_articleshow/97473575.cms



Tue, 31 Jan 2023

Western Allies Differ Over Jets for Ukraine as Russia Claims Gains

Ukraine's Defence Minister is expected in Paris on Tuesday to meet President Emmanuel Macron amid a debate among Kyiv's allies over whether to provide fighter jets for its war against Russia, after U.S. President Joe Biden ruled out giving F-16s.

Ukraine planned to push for Western fourth-generation fighters like F-16s after securing supplies of main battle tanks last week, an adviser to Defence Minister Oleksiy Reznikov said on Friday.

Asked at the White House on Monday if the United States would provide F-16s, Mr. Biden told reporters: "No."

But France and Poland appear to be willing to entertain any such request from Ukraine, with Mr. Macron telling reporters in The Hague on Monday that "by definition, nothing is excluded" when it comes to military assistance.

In remarks carried on French television before Mr. Biden spoke in Washington, Mr. Macron stressed any such move would depend on several factors including the need to avoid escalation and assurances that the aircraft would not "touch Russian soil." He said Mr. Reznikov would also meet his French counterpart Sebastien Lecornu in Paris on Tuesday.

In Poland Monday, Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki also did not rule out a possible supply of F-16s to neighbouring Ukraine, in response to a question from a reporter before Biden spoke.

Mr. Morawiecki said in remarks posted on his website that any such transfer would take place "in complete coordination" with NATO countries.

Andriy Yermak, head of the Ukraine President's office, noted "positive signals" from Poland and said France "does not exclude" such a move in separate posts on his Telegram channel.

Mr. Biden's comment came shortly after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said Russia had begun exacting its revenge for Ukraine's resistance to its invasion with relentless attacks in the east, where it appeared to be making incremental gains.

Mr. Zelenskiy has warned for weeks that Moscow aims to step up its assault after about two months of virtual stalemate along the front line that stretches across the south and east.

Ukraine won a huge boost last week when Germany and the United States announced plans to provide heavy tanks, ending weeks of diplomatic deadlock on the issue.

While there was no sign of a broader new Russian offensive, the administrator of Russian-controlled parts of Ukraine's eastern Donetsk province, Denis Pushilin, said Russian troops had secured a foothold in Vuhledar, a coal-mining town whose ruins have been a Ukrainian bastion since the outset of the war.

Mr. Pushilin said that despite "huge losses" Ukrainian forces were consolidating positions in industrial facilities.

‘Battle for every metre’

Mr. Pushilin said Ukrainian forces were throwing reinforcements at Bakhmut, Maryinka and Vuhledar, towns running from north to south just west of Donetsk city. The Russian State news agency TASS quoted him as saying Russian forces were making advances there, but "not clear-cut, that is, here there is a battle for literally every metre."

Ukrainian military analyst Oleh Zhdanov said Ukraine still controlled Maryinka and Vuhledar, where Russian attacks were less intense on Monday.

Mr. Pushilin's adviser, Yan Gagin, said fighters from Russian mercenary force Wagner had taken partial control of a supply road leading to Bakhmut, a city that has been Moscow's focus for months.

A day earlier, the head of Wagner said his fighters had secured Blahodatne, a village just north of Bakhmut, although Kyiv said it had repelled assaults on Blahodatne.

Reuters could not independently verify the battlefield reports. But the locations of the reported fighting indicated clear, though gradual, Russian gains.

In central Zaporizhzhia region and in southern Kherson region, Russian forces shelled more than 40 settlements, Ukraine's General Staff said. Targets included the city of Kherson, where there were casualties.

The Russians also launched four rocket attacks on Ochakiv in southern Mykolaiv, the army said, on the day Mr. Zelensky met the Danish Prime Minister in Mykolaiv city, to the northeast.

Western delays

Mr. Zelensky is urging the West to hasten delivery of its promised weapons so Ukraine can go on the offensive, but most of the hundreds of tanks pledged by Western countries are months away from delivery.

British Defence Minister Ben Wallace said the 14 Challenger tanks donated by Britain would be on the front line around April or May, without giving an exact timetable.

Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said Western countries supplying arms leads "to NATO countries more and more becoming directly involved in the conflict – but it doesn't have the potential to change the course of events and will not do so."

The U.S.-based Institute for the Study of War think-tank said "the West's failure to provide the necessary materiel" last year was the main reason Kyiv's advances had halted since November.

The researchers said in a report that Ukraine could still recapture territory once the promised weapons arrive.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine, which Moscow justifies as necessary to protect itself from its neighbour's ties with the West, has killed tens of thousands of people and driven millions from their homes.

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/western-allies-differ-over-jets-for-ukraine-as-russia-claims-gains/article66454905.ece/amp/>



Wed, 01 Feb 2023

Japan and NATO Pledge 'Firm' Response to China, Russia Threats

Japan and NATO must "remain united and firm" in the face of security threats posed by China, North Korea and Russia's war in Ukraine, Jens Stoltenberg said on Tuesday in Tokyo.

Mr. Stoltenberg, secretary-general of the European and North American military alliance, warned that Beijing was keeping a close eye on developments in Ukraine and "learning lessons that may influence its future decisions".

He spoke alongside Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida after the pair held talks as part of a trip to Asia by Stoltenberg aiming to boost ties with democratic allies.

"What is happening in Europe today could happen in East Asia tomorrow. So we must remain united and firm, standing together for freedom and democracy," he said.

Mr. Stoltenberg and Mr. Kishida said they were worried by the increasing cooperation they saw between China and Russia.

"We highlight with concern Russia's growing military cooperation with China, including through joint operations and drills in the vicinity of Japan," they said in a joint statement.

The previous day in Seoul, Mr. Stoltenberg asked South Korea to step up military support for Ukraine, which was invaded by its neighbour Russia nearly a year ago.

But on Tuesday, he praised the "strong position" and "substantial support" offered to Ukraine by Japan.

Tokyo has imposed sanctions on Moscow along with its G-7 partners, and has taken the rare steps of sending defensive equipment and offering refuge to those fleeing the conflict.

Mr. Stoltenberg said he and Mr. Kishida also shared concern over North Korea's "provocative behaviour", from nuclear activity to ballistic missile tests.

He said China was "not our adversary" but warned of its growing military presence in Asia "including nuclear weapons, bullying neighbours and threatening Taiwan", as well as spreading disinformation about NATO and Ukraine.

Mr. Kishida said Japan would establish an independent representative office for its dealings with NATO as part of efforts to deepen ties.

The country will also consider regular participation in high-level meetings held by the alliance, Mr. Kishida added.

In December, Japan announced its largest shake-up to its defence and security strategy in decades.

The new strategy includes plans to raise defence spending to two percent of GDP by fiscal 2027, bringing Japan in line with NATO member guidelines.

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/japan-and-nato-pledge-firm-response-to-china-russia-threats/article66454554.ece/amp/>

Science & Technology News

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Wed, 01 Feb 2022

Indian, US Space Officials Discuss Human Space Exploration

New York, Indian and US space officials have discussed human space exploration at a two-day meeting in Washington, according to the US State Department. At the eighth meeting of the US-India Civil Space Joint Working Group (CSJWG) meeting on Monday and Tuesday, discussions also covered collaboration in earth and space science as well as global navigation satellite systems, spaceflight safety and space situational awareness, and policies for commercial space activities, the Department said.

The meeting was co-chaired by Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Jennifer R. Littlejohn and National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Associate Administrator Karen Feldstein on the US side and by Shantanu Bhatawdekar, the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) Scientific Secretary on the Indian side.

A highlight of the NASA-ISRO cooperation is the Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR) mission, planned for next year. It is expected to systematically map earth, using two different radar frequencies to monitor resources such as water, forests and agriculture. It will provide information about ecosystems, the earth's surface, natural hazards, sea level rise and the

cryosphere, the frozen parts of the earth, with applications in forestry, agriculture and ecology. According to NASA, it will also help with providing prompt responses to natural and human-created disasters. NASA Head Bill Nelson and Executive Secretary of the National Space Council, Chirag Parikh gave the welcoming remarks for the meeting and ISRO Chairman S. Somanath and Taranjit Singh Sandhu spoke at the meeting. Details of the discussion on cooperation on human space exploration were not released.

While astronauts from several countries, including Saudi Arabia, have flown on NASA space missions, but none from India, which has plans for a manned space expedition to be launched as early as next year on board the Gaganyaan spacecraft. Four Air Force fighter pilots have been trained in Russia under an agreement with Glavkosmos for the mission. The only Indian citizen to have been in outer space is Rakesh Sharma, a former Air Force officer who flew on a Soviet Soyuz mission in 1984. But four Indian-Americans have been on space missions. Those who flew on NASA missions are Kalpana Chawla, who died in the Space Shuttle Columbia disaster in 2003, Sunita Williams and Raja Chari. Sirisha Bandla flew on a very brief private sector Virgin Galactic test flight in 2021.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/science/indian-us-space-officials-discuss-human-space-exploration/articleshow/97507582.cms>

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