

“Make today worth remembering.” Zig Ziglar

INTERNATIONAL AND BILATERAL**2+2 TALKS TO FOCUS ON CHINA**

The first U.S.-India 2+2 dialogues next week in New Delhi will discuss regional and strategic issues of Asia.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Secretary of Defense James Mattis will be travelling to India for the dialogue, which has been postponed twice.

US is mindful of India's legacy ties with Russia, but does not appreciate its continuing defence cooperation with it.

It is not sure of granting a waiver to India from sanctions if it went ahead with the planned purchase of S-400 missile defence system from Russia.

However the dialogue is meant to enhance defence requirements and alternatives for India

US administration is expecting concrete outcomes such as concluding an enabling agreement on communication and expanding the scope of military exercises.

It aims at operationalising India-U.S. partnership in Asia under the agenda.

US reiterated that its Asia Pacific policy is an inclusive strategy.

Considering the OBOR and militarisation of the South China Sea, US emphasizes to have an alternative for economic and strategic partnership under the agenda.

NATIONAL**OCEAN SERVICES, TECHNOLOGY, OBSERVATIONS, RESOURCES MODELLING AND SCIENCE (O-SMART)**

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has given its approval for the umbrella scheme O-SMART at an overall cost of Rs.1623 crore.

The scheme encompasses a total of 16 sub-projects addressing ocean development activities such as Services, Technology, Resources, Observations and Science.

O-SMART Scheme:

The services rendered under the O-SMART will provide economic benefits to a number of user communities in the coastal and ocean sectors, namely, fisheries, offshore industry, coastal states, Defence, Shipping, Ports etc.

Currently, five lakhs fishermen community are receiving this information daily through mobile which includes allocation of fish potential and local weather conditions in the coastal waters.

This will help in reducing the search time for fishermen resulting savings in the fuel cost.

It seeks to address issues relating to SDG-14, which aims to conserve use of oceans, marine resources for sustainable development.

It also provides necessary scientific and technological background required for implementation of various aspects of Blue Economy.

The State of Art Early Warning Systems established Scheme will help in effectively dealing with ocean disasters like Tsunami, storm surges.

The technologies being developed will help in harnessing the vast ocean resources of both living and non-living resources from the seas around India.

A fleet of research vessels viz., Technology Demonstration vessel SagarNidhi, Oceanographic Research Vessel SagarKanya, Fisheries and Oceanographic Research Vessel SagarSampada and Coastal Research Vessel SagarPurvi have been acquired to provide required research support.

Objectives:

- Strengthening of Ocean Observations and Modelling
- Strengthening of Ocean Services for Fishermen
- Setting up Marine Coastal Observatories for monitoring marine pollution in 2018
- Setting up Ocean Thermal Energy Conversion Plant (OTEC) in Kavaratti

- Acquisition of 2 Coastal Research Vessels for Coastal research
- Continuation of Ocean Survey and Exploration of Minerals and Living Resources
- Technology Development for Deep Ocean Mining- Deep Mining System and Manned Submersibles and
- Setting up Six Desalination Plants in Lakshadweep

CABINET APPROVES REVISED COST ESTIMATE FOR SETTING UP OF INDIA POST PAYMENTS BANK

The Union Cabinet has given its approval for revision of the project outlay for setting up of India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) from Rs. 800 crore to Rs. 1,435 crore.

The IPPB is aimed to provide modes of payments/financial services through its technology enabled solutions which will be distributed by the post employees/last mile agents transforming them from mail deliverer to harbinger of financial services.

The IPPB shall pay incentive/commission to the last mile agents (Postal Staff and Gramin Dak Sewaks) directly in their accounts for providing IPPB services so as to motivate them to promote IPPB digital services to the customers.

A part of commission to be paid by IPPB to Department of Posts will be used for increasing the wherewithal of Post office

The project will generate new employment opportunity for about 3500 skilled banking professionals and other entities engaged in propagating financial literacy across the country.

The objective of the project is to build the most accessible, affordable and trusted bank for the common man; spearhead the financial inclusion agenda by removing the barriers for the unbanked and reduce the opportunity cost for the under banked populace through assisted doorstep banking.

The project will supplement Government's vision of "less cash" economy and at the same

time promote both economic growth and financial inclusion.

The robust IT architecture of IPPB has been built taking into consideration bank grade performance, fraud and risk mitigation standards and in line with the best practices from payments & banking domain.

ISSUE OF LYNCHING

A panel headed by Union Home Secretary deliberated on measures to check incidents of lynching, submitted its report.

From May-June, more than 20 people were lynched based on fake posts or rumors floating on various social media platforms.

The panel has come to the conclusion that social media platforms needed to act in a time bound manner.

Most social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube and Twitter would be made accountable for not blocking such malicious posts/videos when brought to their notice.

FIR could be lodged against their country heads" for non-compliance of government orders and they could be prosecuted under law.

Govt have stepped up engagement with social media platforms.

There is a provision in law which enables government to issue orders to remove objectionable content, block websites etc.

Law enforcement agencies are to step up the act and monitor more proactively.

The social media platforms were given a report showing their compliance with the various government orders.

The Ministry has created a portal where people can report such videos and content and that can be forwarded by the NCRB (the nodal body) to States concerned for appropriate action.

Earlier the Home Ministry issued advisories to States and Union Territories following

Supreme Court's directives to check incidents of lynching.

The Centre asked states to appoint an officer in each district at the level of Superintendent of Police, set up a special task force to gather intelligence, and closely monitor social media contents to prevent mob attacks on suspicion of being child-lifters or cattle smugglers.

EU, INDIA TO COLLABORATE ON DEVELOPING NEXT GENERATION INFLUENZA VACCINE

The EU and Department of Biotechnology will collaborate in research and innovation for developing a next generation influenza vaccine to protect people worldwide.

The joint effort aims to develop cost-effective and affordable influenza vaccine rapidly without compromising quality.

In total, 30 million Euros (shared by both members) has been earmarked for research and innovation actions which aim at advancing the efficacy, safety, duration of immunity, and reactivity against an increased breadth of influenza strains.

The projects require minimum three applicants from Europe (three different EU member states) or countries associated to the EU programme Horizon 2020) and minimum three applicants from India.

The projects are also 'Open to the World' and thus applicants from other countries can join the EU-India consortia.

Importance of the Mission:

This joint call is another demonstration of the increased cooperation between the EU and India as committed by the leaders during the Summit in October 2017.

In engaging jointly on this topic, India and the EU are contributing to an important global public health challenge.

Improved influenza vaccines would help the international community to better prepare in the event of an influenza pandemic.

The outcome of the project is expected to contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 3 to ensure health and

well-being for all and boost the Indian National Health Mission.

Seasonal flu vaccination is also high on the EU health agenda with the European Commission urging EU member states to commit to vaccinating 75 per cent of risk groups against seasonal flu each year.

NASA'S SPITZER TELESCOPE COMPLETES 15 YEARS IN SPACE

It was initially scheduled for 2.5-year primary mission has now completed 15 years of space exploration.

With its infrared vision and high sensitivity, Spitzer has contributed to the study of some of the most distant galaxies in the known universe.

Launched into a solar orbit in 2003, Spitzer has explored some of the oldest galaxies in the universe, revealed a new ring around Saturn, and peered through shrouds of dust to study newborn stars and black holes.

Important Discoveries:

It assisted in the discovery of planets beyond our solar system, including the detection of seven Earth-size exo-planets orbiting the star TRAPPIST-1.

Three of its seven planets were located in the "habitable zone," where the temperature might be right for liquid water to exist on the planets' surfaces.

Spitzer has logged over 106,000 hours of observation time.

Thousands of scientists around the world have utilized Spitzer data in their studies, and Spitzer data is cited in more than 8,000 published papers.

Spitzer's primary mission ended up lasting 5.5 years, during which time the spacecraft operated in a "cold phase," with a supply of liquid helium cooling three onboard instruments to just above absolute zero.

The cooling system reduced excess heat from the instruments themselves that could contaminate their observations.

This gave Spitzer very high sensitivity for “cold” objects.

In July 2009, after Spitzer’s helium supply ran out, the spacecraft entered a so-called “warm phase.”

Spitzer’s main instrument, called the Infrared Array Camera (IRAC), has four cameras, two of which continue to operate in the warm phase with the same sensitivity they maintained during the cold phase.

ISRO IN QUEST OF THREE ASTRONAUTS FOR MANNED MISSION

The process for selecting three astronauts for India’s first manned space flight will begin at the earliest. The astronauts would require at least three years for training.

They could be from the air force or ISRO (Indian Space Research Organization), or even a common man.

The initial training will be done at the Institute for Aerospace Medicine in Bangalore.

A seven-tonne orbital module consisting of a crew module with three astronauts and a service module would be sent into space in launch vehicle Mark-3.

Within 16 minutes of its launch from Sriharikota, the module would reach the low-earth orbit at 400km, where it would remain for five to seven days.

The astronauts would conduct micro-gravity experiments, which is the main purpose of the mission.

On seventh day, the crew module would re-orient and separate itself from the service module. It would land on earth within 36 minutes, in the Arabian Sea, close to Ahmedabad.

Both the crew escape system and the environment control of life support system are critical to ensure the safety of our astronauts.

The mission would generate jobs for 15,000 people, of whom 13,000 would be from industries and a thousand from academic institutes.

Gaganyaan is set to be the cheapest human space mission ever the entire cost of the mission is estimated to be less than Rs. 10,000 crore.

ISRO has also lined up 19 other missions till March 2019, including a small satellite launch vehicle, to be assembled in three days instead of the usual 60 days and by six people instead of 600.
