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**CHINA'S
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China's Communist Party Congress to Confer More Power to President Xi

<https://www.businessday.in/latest/world/story/chinas-communist-party-congress-to-confer-more-power-to-president-xi-346911-2022-09-11>



Source: Reuters

China's ruling Communist Party is all set to amend its constitution at the next month's key once-in-a-five-year Congress to grant more powers to President Xi Jinping, besides endorsing a record third term for him to lead the country for another five years or beyond. The meeting of the 25-member Politburo, the principal policy-making committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC), which met last Friday, dropped clear hints that Xi will continue to lead the party.

COMMENTS

The change of constitution of the CPC set off speculation that Xi, who is the General Secretary of the party and head of the military besides the Presidency, will be bestowed with more power including the possible elevation conferring the title of the Chairman of the party, a position so far held only by Mao in the century-old party.

Xi, 69, who has been conferred the core leader status, a title enjoyed by Mao, is completing his second five-year term this year. His continuation is regarded as a major policy change in the leadership structure as all Xi's predecessors - except founder Mao - retired after two five-year terms.

At the last party congress in 2017, the party charter was amended to include the Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era. The addition made Xi the third leader of the party - after Mao and his successor Deng Xiaoping - to have a body of thoughts bearing his name written in the party canon. Experts believe this latest revision of the party charter in October would put Xi's status beyond challenge.

Except for Xi, the Congress will usher in scores of new officials at the Centre including a new Premier as the incumbent Li Keqiang, the number two leader of the CPC, said he will be retiring.

US Approves \$1.1 Billion Arms Package for Taiwan, Angering China

<https://www.france24.com/en/asia-pacific/20220903-us-approves-1-1-billion-arms-package-for-taiwan-angering-china>

The package -- the largest for Taiwan approved under President Joe Biden's administration -- includes **\$665 million for contractor support to maintain and upgrade a Raytheon early radar warning system in operation since 2013 that would warn Taiwan about an incoming attack.** Taiwan will also spend **\$355 million on 60 Harpoon Block II missiles, which can track and sink incoming vessels if China launches an assault by water.** The deal also includes **\$85.6 million for more than 100 Sidewinder missiles,** a mainstay of Western militaries for their air-to-air firepower.

COMMENTS

The sale comes a month after House Speaker Nancy Pelosi defiantly visited the self-governing democracy, prompting mainland China to launch a show of force that could be a trial run for a future invasion. Taiwanese Presidential Office spokesman Chang Tun-han said, "This arms sale will not only **help our soldiers fight against grey zone coercion, it will also enhance the island's early warning capabilities against long range ballistic missiles.**"

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has raised growing questions on whether China may follow suit in Taiwan and whether the island is equipped to defend itself. In a July appearance, CIA chief Bill Burns said that Chinese President Xi Jinping was still determined to assert control over Taiwan but that Russia's woes in Ukraine may have prompted Beijing to wait and make sure it would have an overwhelming military advantage.

Analysing the capabilities of weapons listed in the \$1.1 billion arms package, it becomes amply clear that the US intends to build up the defensive capability of Taiwan to an extent that it should stop any invasion by PLA or make it so cost prohibitive that China loses its face. What China wanted to do to the US forces through its Anti-access / Area -denial (A2/AD) capabilities, Taiwanese forces would do the same to Chinese PLA through weapons provided by the US - Replay of Ukraine vs. Russia.

China, calling Taiwan an "inalienable" part of its territory, urged the United States to "immediately revoke" the arms sales. A spokesperson for the State Department, which approved the sale, said the package was "essential for Taiwan's security" and stressed that the United States still recognized only Beijing and not Taipei. Biden, on a trip to Tokyo in May, appeared to break with decades of US policy by saying the United States would defend Taiwan directly if it was attacked although his aides later walked back his remarks, insisting that US policy remained deliberately ambiguous. ***The sale needs the approval of the US Congress, which is virtually assured as Taiwan enjoys strong support across party lines.***

India Accepts Three Out Of Four Pillars of US-led IPEF, So Why Has It Stopped Short Of A Total Agreement

<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-economics/us-ipef-india-accepts-three-pillars-stopped-short-total-agreement-8142554/>

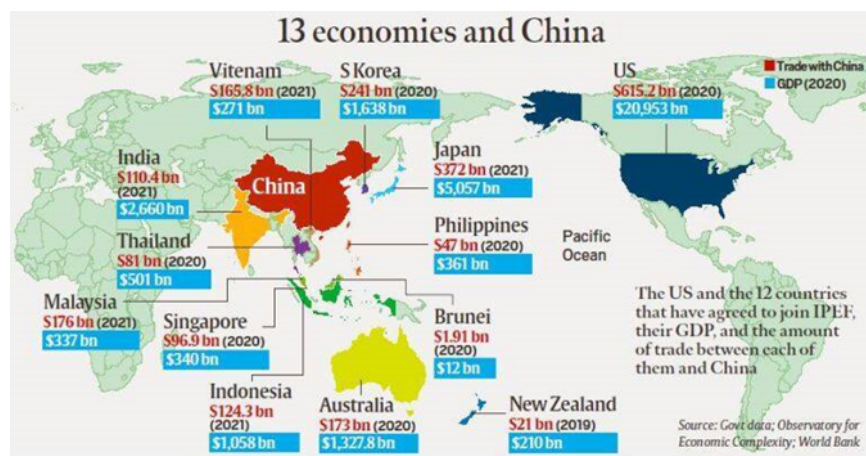
<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1858243>

The first Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) Ministerial meeting was co-hosted at Los Angeles in the US by H.E. Ambassador Katherine Tai, United States Trade Representative, and Gina Raimondo, Secretary of Commerce of the United States of America. It was attended by representatives from Australia, Brunei, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam and Japan. The participants held discussions in four pillars of IPEF viz. supply chain resiliency, fair economy (anti-corruption, anti-money laundering and tax), clean energy transformation (clean energy, decarbonisation, and infrastructure) and connected economy (trade). Four ministerial statements, corresponding to each pillar, were issued after the meeting. A joint statement stated that India had endorsed IPEF's underlying objective to foster "high standard, inclusive, free and fair trade".

Speaking at a press conference after the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) Ministerial meeting, Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, Shri Piyush Goyal said that fruitful discussions had been held over the course of the meeting to bring together a group of likeminded, rules-based, transparent countries with a shared interest in an open Indo-Pacific region and highlighted that India had engaged very exhaustively in all of the various streams of discussion. He further stated that on three out of four pillars related to supply chains, tax and anti-corruption and clean energy, India was comfortable with the outcome and text and have joined the declaration.

On one pillar, which deals primarily with trade, the Minister said, the contours of the framework – particularly on commitments required on environment, labour, digital trade and public procurement – are still emerging. He also said, "We have to see what benefits member countries will derive and whether any conditionalities on aspects like environment may discriminate against developing countries who have the imperative to provide low cost and affordable energy to meet the needs of our growing economy."

Shri Goyal also underscored that India was in the process of firming up its digital framework and laws, particularly regarding privacy and data and said that therefore India, while continuing to engage with the trade track in the IPEF, will wait for the final contours to emerge. In the meantime, officials will be participating in the discussions with an open mind and in the best interest of the people and businesses in India, he added.



Trade Between IPEF Participants and China Source: Indian Express

Responding to a query, the minister said that certain responsibilities of the developed world should also be an integral part of any such agreement and that is a matter that will require deeper engagement. US trade representative Katherine Tai later said, "However, Minister (Piyush) Goyal and I have been talking and we have our bilateral and trade policy forum. I should be meeting him by the end of this year. We would cover the same issues in that bilateral channel."

COMMENTS

Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), is a US led initiative aimed at enhancing its economic presence in the region to counter Chinese dominance that has been underlined by the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and multiple bilateral trade agreements with governments in the region. IPEF was formed on the side-lines of the Quad Summit in Tokyo on the 23 May 2022. The 14 countries comprising IPEF account for 40% of global GDP. US's eagerness with the initiative is evident in the speed with which the framework has progressed to the first ministerial, that lays down the broad contours of future engagements, in just around three months.

While the US is trying to foray into the region through economic initiatives, its domestic compulsions is preventing it from offering substantive incentives or concessions in terms of market access, tariff reduction, and trade liberalization. Thus, IPEF is not a free trade agreement (FTA) and is instead focused on defining shared objectives around trade facilitation, standards for the digital economy and technology, supply chain resiliency, decarbonisation and clean energy, infrastructure, worker standards, and other areas of shared interest. In absence of many tangibles, participation is expected to be driven more by geopolitical considerations than economic ones, especially as most participants are also part of RCEP, which offers better trade and commerce incentives. In its current form, it does little to discourage economic integration of most Asian nations with China, with whom they have a high degree of regional interdependence.

The IPEF allows members to negotiate the parts they want to. This allowed India to commit to only three of the four defined pillars, the only country among the participants to do so. As is evident from Shri Goyal's statements, India is apprehensive of the stringent conditions or benchmarks that are being demanded of the participants and the potential conflict of interests between developed and developing nations on issues such as technology, labour, digital trade and environment. Trade reciprocity is another point of concern.

Cognisant of its growing prominence in the evolving global geoeconomic environment and an opportunity to carve a space for itself in the transforming global value chain, India has in the recent years been more mindful of its national interests and has been following the path of strategic autonomy more vigorously. It had previously pulled out of RCEP in 2019 for fear of cheap goods from competitors flooding the Indian market, that could potentially widen the trade imbalance with these regional partners.



Minister of Commerce and Industry Source: Zee Business

It has shown greater interest in bilateral initiatives and having already signed FTAs with Australia and the UAE this year, has similar agreements with United Kingdom and Canada in advanced stages of negotiations, while that with the European Union is in the pipeline. It has been pursuing bilateral trade agreements with the US too, but this has been hindered by domestic interests that are at variance.

China and the US remain the biggest two trading partners for India, with a large trade deficit with the former and a comfortable trade surplus with the latter. (Last month, China replaced US as the largest trading partner of India.) Even as India has shown its interest in IPEF, decoupling from China is not an option for the near future. However, enhanced global engagements is a must for its own growth. Its willingness to endorse the fourth pillar of the framework in the future would depend much on the ensuing bilateral dialogue with the US.

Shelling at power plants causes fear of nuclear disaster

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/iaea-mission-visit-zaporizhzhia-nuclear-power-plant-this-week-2022-08-29/>

[https://www.scmp.com/news/world/russia-central-asia/article/UN nuclear watchdog resolution-calling-russia](https://www.scmp.com/news/world/russia-central-asia/article/UN-nuclear-watchdog-resolution-calling-russia)

WHAT HAPPENED?

Members attend a United Nations Security Council meeting regarding the shelling of the Russian-held Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant in Southern Ukraine, held in the United Nations Headquarters in Manhattan, New York City, U.S., September 6, 2022. The United Nations Chief Antonio Guterres urged Russia and Ukraine on Tuesday to agree on a demilitarised perimeter around Ukraine's Russian-held Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant.



Overview of Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant and fires, in Enerhodar in Zaporizhzhia region, Ukraine, August 24, 2022 Source: Reuters

"As a first step, Russian and Ukrainian forces must commit not to engage in military activity towards or from the plant site," Guterres told the U.N. Security Council. "As a second step, an agreement on a demilitarised perimeter should be secured. Specifically, that would include a commitment by the Russian forces to withdraw all military personnel and equipment from that perimeter and a commitment by the Ukrainian forces not to move into it," he told the 15-member body. The IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi, who personally led the team of inspectors, told in a statement to CNN that the determination of who is shelling is beyond the mandate of the IAEA and that it would require enormous capabilities to monitor the same.

Ukraine is considering shutting down its Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant for safety reasons and is worried about the reserves of diesel fuel used for backup generators, Kyiv's top nuclear safety expert said. Russia's U.N. Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia told reporters ahead of the council meeting, "if we demilitarise, then the Ukrainians will immediately step in and ruin the whole thing". "Russian soldiers were defending the station," Nebenzia said.

COMMENTS

In future military operations, armed forces will need to adapt to a highly complex operating environment with many operational variables, requiring dynamically adaptive use of various systems to produce both lethal and non-lethal effects. This conflict has created the situation where both warring nations are accusing each other of causing damage to the Nuclear plant, which can affect not only Ukraine but Europe also.

The IAEA's Fundamental Safety Principles clearly state that "[t]he fundamental safety objective is to protect people and the environment from harmful effects of ionising radiation." On Tuesday, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) called for a security zone around Europe's biggest nuclear power station, saying its experts had found extensive damage at the plant.

The ongoing expert mission led by the International Atomic Energy Agency will significantly increase transparency and help assess the situation at the plant more accurately. A long-awaited report did not ascribe blame for the damage, which Russia and Ukraine each accuse the other of causing. Still, it called the situation unsustainable and said there would be a disaster risk unless the shooting stopped. Meanwhile, the UN Nuclear Watchdog's 35-nation Board of Governors passed a resolution on 15 September 2022 demanding that Russia end its occupation of the Nuclear Power Plant.

Armenia And Azerbaijan Are Fighting Again

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/analysis-why-are-armenia-and-azerbaijan-fighting-again-and-why-does-it-matter>.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/world/fresh-clash-erupts-between-kyrgyz-tajik-border-guards-2022-09>.

WHAT HAPPENED?

Around midnight of September 13, Azerbaijan launched a large-scale attack along Armenia's border causing the biggest escalation between the two countries since the 2020 war over Nagorno-Karabakh. Armenia has accused Azerbaijan of attacking its borders using artillery and combat UAVs. Several dozen Armenian soldiers and an undisclosed number of Azeris were killed. In the latest flare-up, several Armenian towns were attacked overnight. Azerbaijan said it was responding to Armenian provocations. Meanwhile, Kyrgyz and Tajik border guards exchanged fire in three separate incidents after a dispute over the border between the two Central Asian nations. The clashes came on the eve of a regional security summit.

A day after, new fighting between Armenia and Azerbaijan raised fears of instability spreading to other parts of the former Soviet Union while Russian forces were fighting in Ukraine.

BACKGROUND

Armenia and Azerbaijan, two former Soviet countries in the South Caucasus, have been fighting for decades over Nagorno-Karabakh, a mountainous enclave internationally recognised as part of Azerbaijan but which, until 2020, was populated and fully controlled by ethnic Armenians. Azerbaijan won significant territorial gains in and around Nagorno-Karabakh in a six-week war that year. A Russian-brokered ceasefire ended the fighting, but skirmishes have erupted periodically since then despite the presence of Russian peacekeepers. Clashes at the border occur regularly, and last year almost triggered an all-out war between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, both allies of Russia that host Russian military bases. The reason for escalation is water and energy.



Source: Al Jazeera

COMMENTS

Moscow has a defence alliance with Armenia and operates a military base there, while Ankara backs its ethnic Turkic kin in Azerbaijan politically and militarily. The timing is significant because Russia has been the most influential mediator between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the past. The war in Ukraine has undermined Moscow's status as a peace guarantor in the region, which may have encouraged Azerbaijan to pursue more claims.

A full-fledged conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan risks dragging in the big regional powers, Russia and Turkey, and destabilising the south Caucasus, an important corridor for pipelines carrying oil and gas, at a time when the Ukraine war is already disrupting energy supplies.

Clashes at the border occur regularly, and last year almost triggered an all-out war between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, both allies of Russia that host Russian military bases. The clashes came on the eve of a regional security summit, and a day after new fighting between Armenia and Azerbaijan raised fears of instability spreading to other parts of the former Soviet Union while Russian forces fight in Ukraine.

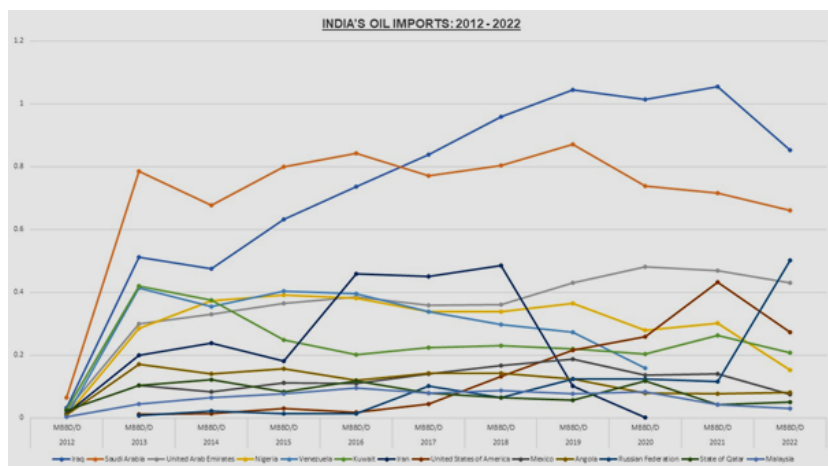
Energy

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/international>

WHAT HAPPENED?

Putin threatened to cut off energy supplies if price caps were imposed on Russia's oil and gas exports, warning the West that it would be "frozen" like a wolf's tail in a famous Russian fairy tale. He also said Russia had agreed to all the key parameters to sell gas to China via Mongolia. The Group of Seven (G7) wealthy democracies announced plans to impose a price cap on Russian oil exports last week in a move that could also restrict Russia's ability to secure tankers and insurance from countries beyond the G7. Speaking at an economic forum in Russia's Pacific city of Vladivostok, Mr Putin said European calls for a price cap on Russian gas were "stupid" and would lead to higher global prices and economic problems in Europe. Russia would walk away from its supply contracts if the West went ahead with its plans, Mr Putin said. We just won't fulfil the contracts. We will not supply anything if it contradicts our interests," Mr Putin said.

Meanwhile, India's oil imports from Russia jumped to 18% in July in value terms - compared to 16.8 per cent in June - as a percentage of total petroleum crude imports of crude purchases, according to the latest commerce ministry data. Wherever there are sanctions, countries find ways to get Russian crude Russian gas. "That also is a part of inflation management," the finance minister had added



Source: Llyod's Intelligence

COMMENTS

Europe usually imports about 40% of its gas and 30% of its oil from Russia. However, since he ordered the Feb. 24 military operation in Ukraine, Mr Putin says the United States and its allies have embarked on an economic war on Russia with the most severe sanctions in modern history, warning that they will face an energy crisis as a result. Since the conflict began, the European Union customers have pledged to reduce their reliance on Russian energy.

In contrast, Russia has cut or shut down supplies on three of its most significant westward gas pipelines while oil supplies have been redirected eastwards. Cutting supplies from Russia, the world's second-largest oil exporter after Saudi Arabia and the world's top natural gas exporter would roil global energy markets, leaving the world economy facing even higher energy prices.

As per the graph, out of the India's 15 top oil import countries, there has been a steady increase of imports from Iraq and Saudi Arabia and sudden dip from Iran after imposition of sanctions by the US with concurrent increase in oil from the US.

Military Exercises Vostok 2022

<https://www.financialexpress.com/defence/exercise-vostok-2022>

WHAT HAPPENED?

On 7 September, the Vostok 2022 military exercise concluded with the participation of 13 countries involving 50,000 troops. According to Russian President Putin, the objective was to conduct various operations along the inter-branches of force divisions from the coalition forces in the interest of "maintaining the security" in Russia's far east. On 9 September, the Russian Deputy Defense Minister said: "The strategic command and staff exercises Vostok 2022 have increased the interoperability of Russian and allied forces." India's official spokesperson at the Ministry of External Affairs clarified that India had regularly participated in multilateral exercises in Russia and other countries.

COMMENTS

The Vostok military drills are a part of an annual series of strategic military training drills conducted by Russia in several regions from east to West. The exercise aims to improve other countries' troop management and interoperability at the tactical and operational levels. The presence of a contingent from India and China, along with other nations from America, former Soviet republics, Southeast Asia, Northern Africa and Eastern Europe, exhibited the strategic partnership of Russia.

Despite the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, India has accepted the invitation from Russia to participate in the Vostok-2022; however, it has decided to keep away from the maritime component. India and Japan are part of the QUAD, and the drills are taking place ahead of the India-Japan 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue held this month.

Visit of Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to India in September 2022

<https://thediplomat.com/2022/09/sheikh-hasinas-visit-to-delhi-disappoints-bangladesh/>.

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to India from September 5 to 8 saw the two sides signing seven MoUs. These envisages cooperation in the areas of river water sharing, space, science and technology, broadcasting, and capacity building among railway and judicial personnel of the two countries. Foremost among the pacts signed following talks between PM Hasina and her Indian counterpart PM Narendra Modi in New Delhi was the MoU to finalise an interim bilateral agreement on the withdrawal of water from the common border river, the Kushiya. The agreement reached on the Kushiya is the first that the two neighbours have signed in 25 years.

Bangladesh has been hoping for a treaty on sharing the waters of River Teesta. The text of a pact relating to this gives India the right to share 42.5 percent of this river's water and Bangladesh the right to 37.5 percent. This has existed for over a decade. An agreement was to be signed in September 2011 during the visit of the then Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to Dhaka, which did not happen.

COMMENTS

Water sharing is an important item on the agenda of India Bangladesh relationship, given that the two countries share 54 trans-boundary rivers. However, there was no headway on treaty for sharing waters of River Teesta during this visit, which appears to have disappointed Bangladesh.



Source: Telegraph India

Some opinions in Bangladesh indicate that Sheikh Hasina had undertaken the visit to Delhi with an eye on general elections to be held in 2023. She had hoped to hold up some achievements from the visit, which did not happen and the kind of MoUs signed during the visit could have been signed by other officials and not necessarily by a Prime Minister.

FATF Team Quietly Completes On-Site Visit To Pakistan, Says Report

https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/fatf-team-quietly-completes-on-site-visit-to-pakistan-says-report-122090400740_1.html

A high-level team of the global money laundering and terrorist financing watchdog Financial Action Task Force (FATF) quietly concluded a five-day visit to Pakistan during which it held meetings with the relevant authorities and verified steps taken by the country to fulfil conditions to exit the grey list. The findings of the 15-member Financial Action Task Force (FATF) team would be discussed and reviewed in the next meeting of the FATF, scheduled in Paris in October.

COMMENTS

The visit was kept under wraps and the team held meetings with the relevant authorities and verified the steps Pakistan had taken to fulfill the condition of the international financial watchdog on money laundering and terror financing. The United States is believed to have played a key role in ensuring the onsite visit for Pakistan as it expressed satisfaction with the country's measures to curb terror financing, particularly prosecuting certain individuals.

The exit from the FATF grey list will restore Pakistan's image and give confidence to foreign investors for doing ventures in the country. The grey-listing makes it hard for countries to do financial transactions and raises the cost of doing business. Pakistan's removal from the grey list will help give impetus to its struggling economy. India has also raised the involvement of elements within Pakistan in several terror cases, including the 26/11 Mumbai and Pulwama attacks. Perpetual containment of Pakistan on the grey list of FATF would further pressurise Pakistan to take adequate measures to prevent such terrorist attacks on India from its soil.

Chinese Firm Abandons Neelum-Jhelum Hydropower Project In Pakistan

<https://theprint.in/world/chinese-firm-abandons-neelum-jhelum-hydropower-project-in-pakistan/1124158/>

The Chinese engineers and staff have abandoned their repair of the mega 969-megawatt Neelum-Jhelum hydropower project in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir which is shut down since early July this year after Pakistan faced a continuous shortage of fuel and electricity.

REGIONAL SCAN: PAKISTAN AND SRI LANKA

The Chinese have given the excuses of local protests over the plant and the failure of the Pakistan police to offer credible security and delayed payments are the main cause of the delays.

COMMENTS

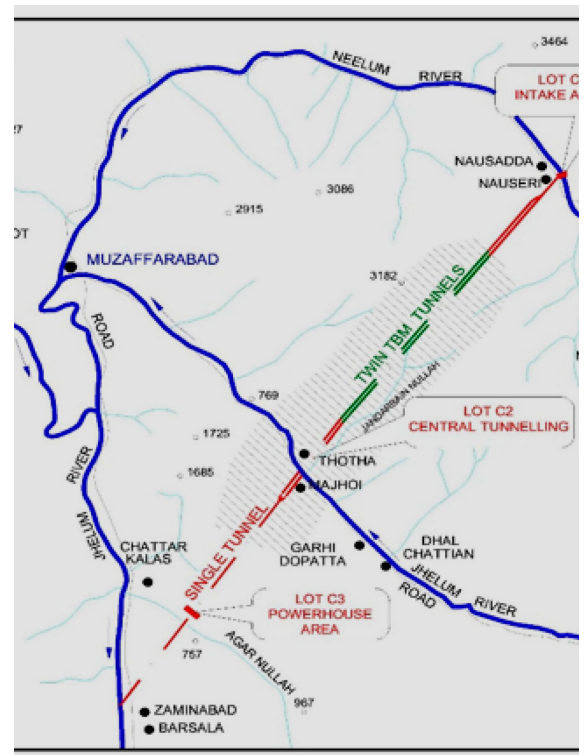
The plant is located near Muzaffarabad in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and the Chinese engineers were working to unblock a crucial tunnel. A 3.5 km long tunnel that diverted water from the plant to the river developed a serious fault and forced a complete shutdown of the plant, at a time when the country was faced with a serious power crisis. The hydropower plant, completed at an estimated approved cost of about Rs 508 bn, became functional in August 2018 and has a capacity of producing around 1,500 MW of electricity.

The Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA), which operates hydropower stations, had told Chinese company about slow progress despite time extensions, substandard construction quality, poor supervision and management and also the inefficiency at the stage of tunnelling which caused a delay in blocking the ingress of river water into the damaged tunnel.

China Gezhouba Group Company (CGGC), agreed to repair and restore the tunnel without an official agreement.

The company said the entire restoration process would take at least six months, during which the plant would remain shut. It sought PKR 120 million from the Neelum Jhelum Hydropower Corporation as interest-free financial support for the job. The Chinese stopped work at the plant fearing threats from local residents. The local residents had been protesting the projects which is based on inequitable share of power, royalty, employment and environmental destruction. Security has been a sore point with the Chinese firms.

India has opposed the initiatives because of infringement of its sovereignty which is illegally under Pakistan's occupation. India also has serious security concerns that arise from strong and rapidly growing China-Pakistan relations. India must ensure keeping China and Pakistan engaged both at bilateral and international forums and we must strengthen our ties with the other nations in the region. We will keep monitoring the situation.



Source: MPDI

Biden Reverses Trump-era Policy, Approves \$450 Million F-16 Fleet Sustainment Programme To Pakistan

<https://www.wionews.com/south-asia/biden-reverses-trump-era-policy-approves-450-million-f-16-fleet-sustainment-programme-to-pakistan-514225>

In the first major security assistance to Pakistan since 2018, the Biden administration approved an F-16 fleet sustainment programme to Lahore, which is worth \$450 million. Arguing that this will sustain Islamabad's capability to meet current and future counterterrorism threats, the State Department has made a determination to approve a possible foreign military sale of the F-16 case for sustainment and related equipment. Pakistan is an important counterterrorism partner, and as part of longstanding policy, the United States provides life cycle maintenance and sustainment packages for US-origin platforms.



Source: Airforce Technology.com

COMMENTS

In 2019, Pakistan had used the F-16 aircraft to target India after the Balakot strike and used American supplied AIM-120 C-5 AMRAAM (Advanced Medium-Range Air-to-Air Missile). These missiles had higher capability than that of the medium range R-77 used by the Su-30 MKI and the MICA used by the Mirages of the Indian Air Force at that time. Alleging that Islamabad was not a partner in its fight against terrorism, former US President Donald Trump halted all defence and security assistance to Pakistan in 2018.

The sustainment programme does not include any new capabilities, weapons, or munitions for the aircraft. The programme includes contractor engineering, technical and logistics services for follow-on support of Pakistan's F-16 fleet.

It also includes modifications and support of aircraft and engine hardware and software as well as repair and return of the jets and engine spares, classified and unclassified software and software support among others. By allowing Pakistan to retain interoperability with the US and without altering the basic military balance in the region, this proposed sale will support the foreign policy and national security objectives of Washington. This will improve Pakistan's ability to support counterterrorism operations through its robust air-to-ground capability.

India has conveyed its grave concern to the US over its decision to provide military assistance to Pakistan. A high-level trade delegation from the US visited India to find ways to resolve the issues. Trade ties between the two sides have come under strain after the US in June announced its decision to end preferential trade status for India. As a retaliatory measure, India also announced raising tariffs on 29 goods imported from the US.

Taliban Denies Presence of Jaish Chief Masood Azhar in Afghanistan

<https://www.outlookindia.com/international/taliban-denies-presence-of-jaish-chief-masood-azhar-in-afghanistan-news-223430>

Afghanistan's Taliban government firmly rejected media reports about the presence of Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) chief Masood Azhar in the war-torn country, saying such terrorist organisations can operate on Pakistan's soil - and even under official patronage. "We reiterate that the IEA (Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan) does not allow any armed opposition in its territory to operate against any other country," said Abdul Qahar Balkhi, the spokesman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Taliban government. They claimed that Pakistan has also sent a letter with demand to hand him over to Islamabad.

COMMENTS

The United Nations Security Council designated Azhar as an international terrorist. Masood Azhar was behind several terrorist incidents in India, including the 2001 attack on the Parliament, the 2016 Pathankot Air Force base attack and the Pulwama car-bomb attack that killed more than 40 paramilitary personnel. Masood Azhar was freed from an Indian jail on 31 Dec 1999, after the hijacking of Indian Airlines flight IC 814. He was designated a global terrorist after the Pulwama attack in February 2019.

Mostly likely the main aim of Pakistan's government is to comply with the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) mandate and get off the intergovernmental organisation's grey list. India believes the current finger-pointing at Afghanistan is a replay of the same script by Pakistan. Indian intelligence agencies believe Azhar is living in an ISI safehouse in Bahawalpur. His frequent visits to a Rawalpindi hospital have also been documented and cited by India.

Sri Lanka And IMF Reach Staff-Level Agreement For \$2.9 Billion Bailout Loan

<https://www.wionews.com/south-asia/imf-announces-agreement-for-29bn-sri-lanka-bailout-511949>



Source: DeccanHerald.com

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) announced a \$2.9 billion bailout for Sri Lanka as the country suffers from its worst economic crisis since gaining independence in 1948. Earlier, Sri Lanka had sought up to \$3 billion from the IMF. The decision was taken after prolonged talks between an IMF team and the Sri Lankan government headed by Ranil Wickremesinghe and treasury secretary Mahinda Siriwardana.

COMMENTS

Sri Lanka, which is currently facing the worst inflation in its history, also went through a lot of political turmoil due to the crisis. For months the population of 22 million has struggled with soaring inflation, economic contraction and a severe shortage of essential items of food, fuel and medicine caused by a record slump in foreign reserves. The bailout loan is aimed at improving Sri Lanka's debt sustainability and unlocking the country's growth potential. The new Extended Fund Facility (EFF) arrangement will support Sri Lanka's programme to restore macroeconomic stability and debt sustainability, while safeguarding financial stability, reducing corruption vulnerabilities and unlocking Sri Lanka's growth potential. Sri Lanka's total foreign debt exceeds \$51 billion of which it must repay \$28 Billion by 2027.

While the world is going through a period of great uncertainty, principally due to the Ukraine war, the international community must help Sri Lanka keep its economy solvent so that the state does not collapse. Emergency funds should be given to Sri Lanka so that there is no stoppage in the supply of essentials such as food and fuel. The path to economic recovery will be a long and hard one, but political stability and transparency on the part of the state are required to help pull the island out of the crisis.

India, Japan Conduct Sixth Edition of Maritime Exercise 'JIMEX'

https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-japan-conduct-sixth-edition-of-maritime-exercise-jimex/articleshow/94178909.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

The sixth edition of Japan-India Maritime Exercise 2022 (JIMEX 22) hosted by the Indian Navy began in the Bay of Bengal on September 11. The Indian Navy is represented by three indigenously designed and built warships, Sahyadri, a multi-purpose stealth frigate and Anti-Submarine Warfare Corvettes Kadmat and Kavaratti. Additionally, Guided Missile Destroyer Ranvijay, Fleet Tanker Jyoti, Offshore Patrol Vessel Sukanya, submarines, MIG 29K fighter aircraft, Long Range Maritime Patrol Aircraft and ship-borne helicopters are also participating in the exercise, read the Indian Navy press release. The Japan Maritime Self Defence Force (JMSDF) ships are being led by R Adm Hirata Toshiyuki, Commander Escort Flotilla Four, and Indian Naval ships by R Adm Sanjay Bhalla, Flag Officer Commanding Eastern Fleet. The Indian Naval ships welcomed JMSDF ships Izumo, a Helicopter Carrier, and Takanami, a Guided Missile Destroyer, on their arrival.

COMMENTS

JIMEX 22 is conducted in two Phases, it involves exercises at sea and a harbour phase at Visakhapatnam. The first JIMEX began in Japan and this year it marks the 10th anniversary. It also coincides with the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Japan. The sole aim of this exercise (JIMEX 22) was to consolidate the high degree of interoperability between the two countries maritime forces through complex exercises in the surface, sub-surface and air domains. The exercises were aimed at enhancing interoperability and streamlining seamanship and communication procedures. This exercise is part of the ongoing efforts between the two Navies toward ensuring safe and secure international shipping and trade in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). The two countries have been carrying out regular exercises in the past in IOR towards reinforcing maritime association.



Source: indiannavy.nic.in

Russian Navy Kilo Class Submarines Retreating From Crimea

<https://www.navalnews.com/naval-news/2022/09/russian-navy-kilo-class-submarines-retreating-from-crimea/>

The changing tide of the Ukraine War appear to have led the Russian Navy to 'regroup' its forces in the Black Sea. Early during the invasion they loitered boldly close to Odessa. Now the Black Sea Fleet barely sails out of sight of Crimea for fear of Harpoon missiles. Its submarines too have recently shifted their base further from the shadow of Ukrainian attack. Since the beginning of the Ukraine Invasion in February, the Russian Navy's four Improved-Kilo Class submarines in the Black Sea have been a regular sight in Sevastopol. The major naval base on Crimea's west coast has been a starting point for many attacks on Ukraine. The Kilos have dedicated berths there, where they rearm with Kalibr land-attack cruise missiles. Until recently it was not unusual to see three Kilos in the port at once, with one at sea. That has changed. For the past few weeks, they have been concentrated at Novorossiysk, another naval base much further from Ukraine.

COMMENTS

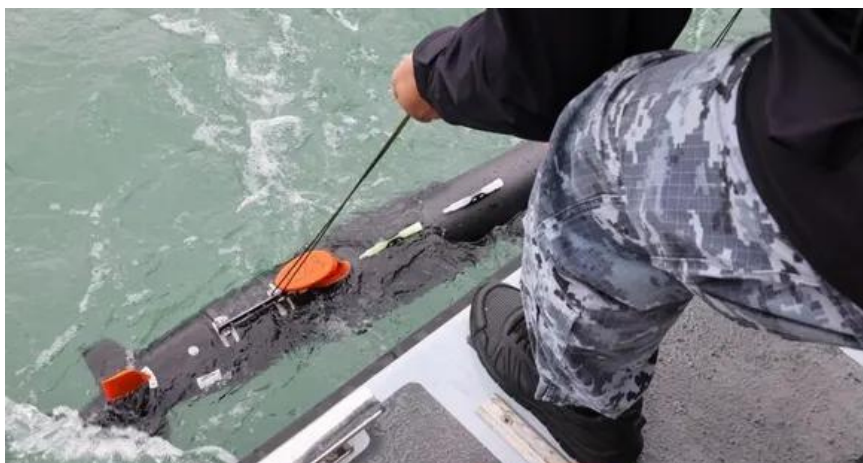
The Project 636.3 improved KILO Class submarine is Russia's most potent Naval asset in the Black Sea. They are inherently more survivable in open water than other warships of the same class especially against the Ukrainian Navy which lacks anti-submarine assets. Russia's surface fleet has already shifted out of range of the Harpoons, without sinking any Ukrainian Navy ship, the submarines, like much of the surface navy, is on cruise missile duty. Unlike surface ships Russian submarines can operate unimpeded throughout the Black Sea. They can launch Kalibr cruise missiles at targets throughout the entire country.

A slight disadvantage of the Kilo class submarines is that they only carry four Kalibrs. Russia's surface ships are equipped with an 8-round vertical launch system. The Kilo's can only launch the cruise missiles through two of their six torpedo tubes. The move has come shortly after Ukraine stepping up the drone attacks on Sevastopol, targeting the Black Sea Fleet's headquarters. Given the war approaching Crimea, and Ukraine's growing ability and confidence to attack Sevastopol, the retreat seems prudent and it is difficult to disassociate it with the war threat.

The submarines do not however have to be based at Sevastopol in order to launch Kalibr missiles, these have enough range to be launched from near Novorossiysk and hit targets inside Ukraine. And the submarines have the ability to sail undetected throughout the northern Black Sea. As Russia moves its Navy around, reacting to Ukraine's military moves, the location and activity levels of the submarines will continue to be of interest.

UK Donating Mine Warfare UUVs To Ukraine

<https://www.navalnews.com/naval-news/2022/08/uk-donating-mine-warfare-uuv-to-ukraine/>



Source: The Guardian

The UK is giving underwater drones to Ukraine and training Ukrainian personnel in Britain to use them to clear their coastline of mines. Six autonomous mine hunting vehicles will be sent to the country to help detect Russian mines in the waters off its coast. Three of these will be provided from UK stocks, with a further three to be purchased from industry.

The lightweight autonomous vehicle is designed for use in shallow coastal environments, operating effectively at depths of up to 100m to detect, locate and identify mines using an array of sensors so the Ukrainian Navy can destroy them. Dozens of Ukrainian Navy personnel will be taught to use the drones over the coming months, with the first tranche having already begun their training. Russia has been weaponising food by destroying Ukrainian agriculture and blockading the country's Black Sea ports to prevent exports, with devastating consequences for the world's poorest people as food prices rise.

A small number of ships carrying grain have left Ukraine since the UN brokered a deal in July to allow food exports, but efforts to get food out of the country continue to be hampered by sea mines left by Russian forces along Ukraine's coast.

COMMENTS

The Royal Navy's Diving & Threat Exploitation Group will conduct the three-week training courses, alongside the US Navy 6th Fleet. Having considerable experience using the equipment already they will conduct training at sea to operate the vessels and interpret the data they send back to identify mock mines.

Through the expert skills being taught here, the Ukrainians will be able to clear their own waters of mines. These mines target shipping indiscriminately and particularly affect civilian traffic and trade and have had a devastating impact on freedom of navigation in the Black Sea. This training can be considered as another powerful demonstration of the UK's ongoing commitment to Ukraine in their fight to defend their country and repel Russian aggression. The Royal Navy is also training Ukrainian sailors to operate Sandown Class Minehunter vessels and practice key skills at sea, such as weapon drills and damage control, whilst learning to operate the machinery on the vessels. The UK is also leading a major international programme to train up to 10,000 Ukrainian volunteer recruits in basic military skills, which Canada, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Norway, New Zealand, Lithuania and the Netherlands have all announced they will support.

Foreign Companies Struggle to Meet Tech Specifications of Submarine Plan

https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/foreign-companies-struggle-to-meet-tech-specifications-of-submarine-plan/articleshow/94161275.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

The Indian Navy's plan to build six conventional submarines in India could get stalled with foreign technology partners finding it difficult to meet critical specifications for underwater endurance and stealth, besides having concerns on technology transfer. The estimated '43,000-crore P75I project is already running several months behind time, with no firm response yet by foreign technology providers (both German, Korean companies) to request for proposals (RFP) floated by shortlisted Indian shipyards.

While Germany's ThyssenKrupp Marine Systems (TKMS) and South Korea's Daewoo Shipbuilding and Marine Engineering (DSME) have been in talks with Indian shipyards on the technical aspects of designing a new submarine for India, it is learnt that critical parameters required by the Navy may be difficult to incorporate.

In a communication with Indian shipyards, the foreign companies are learnt to have requested for a toning down of technical requirements even when in the most critical requirement of underwater endurance.

COMMENTS

The most critical feature desired in the new submarines is the capability of remaining submerged for a longer duration of time and remain at sea for extended durations.

The desired distinguishing feature of the new submarines is a sea-proven Air Independent Propulsion (AIP) system, that will enable these boats to remain submerged for over two weeks, against the 2-3 days of underwater endurance of current submarines. Foreign technology partners are learnt to have requested for an easing in both underwater range and endurance. Probable foreign partners have also raised concerns on the transfer of technology required under the conditions of qualification as it may be a matter of serious concern for the bidding foreign partner to obtain permissions from its government to share critical technology that took years to develop.



The requirement of Indian Navy is for a brand-new submarine design that may present difficulties at the manufacturing stage. The Indian Navy would like to have the latest, state of the art submarine with powerful weapons, an Air Independent System and high stealth and no one in the world has such a submarine ready. The submarine designers have said that difficulties are expected to surface when the first submarine under Project 75i goes under production.

Source: PTI

The key requirement is that the submarines have to be made in India from the beginning and if the timelines are not met, the penalties are very high. It is possible that the Indian Navy's ambitious plan may hit choppy waters in its early stages, with the condition of a functional Air Independent Propulsion (AIP) spelled out in the technical documents ruling out most foreign collaborators from the project. The Indian ship and submarine builders need to step up and take on the responsibility of fulfilling the prospective plans of an Atma-Nirbhar Bharat.

Japan Wants To Join India's Self-Reliance Journey: Offers Expertise for Building Fighters and Subs

<https://www.financialexpress.com/defence/japan-wants-to-join-indias-self-reliance-journey-offers-expertise-for-building-fighters-and-subs/2650695/>

At the first India-Japan Defence Industry Dialogue, to enhance defence equipment and technology cooperation India and Japan have identified projects in various areas. The bilateral relations between India and Japan have witnessed expansion and deepening of 'Special Strategic and Global Partnership' and this means cooperation in Strategic areas have expanded with more Joint military exercises, in Outer Space, R&D cooperation in the defence and security area, and in Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy.

According to Ambassador of Japan to India Satoshi Suzuki, his country through co-development, co-design and co-manufacture under 'Make in India' his country can be part of Atmanirbhar Bharat journey. He highlighted various sectors where the two sides could collaborate – like building naval vessels and submarines, participate in India's Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA) project. And also in parts, components, and materials which are used in making these different platforms. Adding, "we are sure to find items that can match the needs of India". The two countries are already in discussions for various projects including: BEL and M/s Toshiba Corporation of Japan for Li-Ion Battery Technology.

COMMENTS

The external security environment of Japan is changing rapidly. This makes Japan to initiate proactive efforts to deal with the changing security scenario and work in line with international cooperation. In 2014, Japan passed its "Three Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology", since Japan is aware of the fact that it cannot be independent in securing its peace and security. Moreover, the international community including India looks up to Japan as a proactive player. Considering it to be a technologically advanced country, Japan can become the manufacturing hub of defense equipments and technology.

Meanwhile, Japan has constantly been maintaining a cordial strategic relationship with India especial under the Modi and Abe administration. Apart from being members in QUAD and supporting each other in concepts such as 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific', 'Indo-Pacific Ocean Initiative', both the nations are trying to engage in defense procurement activities as well.

In 2015, Japan and India were set to finalise a deal jointly through which India would procure Japanese ShinMaywa US-2i Amphibious Aircraft. However, the deal eventually got cancelled due to various inconvenient reasons.

Despite the cancellation, both the countries looked up to each other in maintaining their sovereignty and integrity against a rising China. Therefore, both the countries encouraged the India-Japan Defence Industry Dialogue which was hosted for two days to establish cooperation in military equipment and technology. Through such a dialogue Japan also wanted to make it clear that it wants to use their “Make in India” services to produce itself in India. Japan promised to help Indian Navy especially to in producing ‘Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA)’, battery technology, naval vessels and submarines.

Japan Wants India’s Help To Combat China; To Hold Air Force Drills With IAF’s Su-30 Fighters That PLAAF Also Operates

<https://eurasianimes.com/japan-to-train-with-indian-sukhois-to-challenge-china-sukhoi/>

The Indian Minister of Defense, Rajnath Singh, and the country’s External Affairs Minister, Dr. S Jaishankar, met with the Minister of Defense of Japan, Hamada Yasukazu, and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, Hayashi Yoshimasa, in Tokyo on September 8, 2022. In a joint statement following the ‘2+2’ meeting, the ministers from both countries noted that the air services of the two countries are working closely for the early conduct of the inaugural India-Japan fighter exercise.



Source: EurAsia Times

Furthermore, the ministers expressed the shared intention of both countries to make continuous efforts toward more complex and sophisticated bilateral exercises. The ministers agreed to “launch the Joint Service Staff Talks between the Japan Joint Staff and the Indian Integrated Defense Staff.”

The decision to hold joint fighter jet drills was taken in 2019, during the first '2+2' meeting between India and Japan. It was postponed due to the COVID pandemic.

The Indian Su-30s were supposed to train with the Japanese F-15s at Komatsu Airbase in June 2020, but that event had to be postponed because of the first wave of coronavirus infections. Indian Air Force Su-30 MKI jets. It was later decided to undertake an exercise at Hyakuri Airbase in July 2021 with Japan's F-2 fighters. Even that event was canceled due to the Delta variant wave of COVID-19.

Meanwhile, Japan has been anxiously waiting to engage in a military exercise with the Indian Air Force's (IAF's) Su-30MKI fighter jets due to the growing threat to its security from China, whose Air Force also operates the Su-30 fighters and a variety of other Russian-origin, re-engineered jets.

COMMENTS

India and Japan has been initiating several joint military exercises between the Indian Navy and Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force and the Indian Army and Japanese Ground Self Defense Force. For example: the annual exercise Dharma Guardian between the Indian Army and the Japanese Ground Self Defence Force happened in February 2022. Indian Navy holds joint exercises such as the Malabar which is an annual naval exercise and the biennial multilateral exercise Milan where the JMSDF participate actively.

However, Japan has been anxiously waiting to engage in a military exercise with the Indian Air Force's (IAF's). Military activities including missile strikes have increased from the Chinese side especially in the Taiwan Strait which is very close to the Japanese waters. This has heightened the tension in the region. Since Japan has reinterpreted its Article 9 which renounces war and expanded the role of Self Defense Force, it wants active involvement of the three services i.e., JMSDF, JGSDF and JASDF. A training exercise with the Indian Su-30s could be a significant experience for the Japan Air Self-Defense Force (JASDF), as it would provide the Japanese fighter pilots with valuable insights into the Su-30's basic capabilities such as maneuverability, cruising range, fuel consumption, as well as the turnaround times for maintenance.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh Meets Mongolia's Top Leadership To Boost Bilateral Ties

<https://indianexpress.com/article/india/defence-minister-rajnath-singh-meets-mongolias-top-leadership-to-boost-bilateral-ties-8134390/>

Rajnath Singh, the first Indian defence minister to visit Mongolia, met the top leadership of the country here on Tuesday, including President UkhnaagiinKhurelsukh, and discussed ways to further deepen the multifaceted strategic partnership between the two countries.

Defence Minister Singh is on a five-day visit to Mongolia and Japan beginning Monday with an aim to expand India's strategic and defence ties with the two countries in the backdrop of evolving regional security matrix and geo-political turmoil.

Singh's visit to Mongolia from September 5 to 7 is the first-ever tour to the East Asian country by an Indian defence minister. "Excellent meeting with the President of Mongolia, H.E.U. Khurelsukh in Ulaanbaatar. Recalled my last meeting with him in 2018, when he was the Prime Minister of the country. We are fully committed to further deepening our multifaceted Strategic Partnership with Mongolia," he said in a tweet.

The bilateral defence engagements with Mongolia have been expanding over a period of time to include wide-ranging contacts between the two countries, including joint working group meetings, military-to-military exchanges and capacity building and training programmes. Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid a visit to Mongolia in May 2015, bringing a renewed vigour to the ties in diverse areas including defence and security.



Source: The Hindu

COMMENTS

Apart from visiting Japan, in his five days trip, the Defense Minister of India Rajnath Singh visited Mongolia as well. He became the first Indian Defence Minister to visit Mongolia and meet the top leadership of the country. The main agenda behind the visit was to extend strategic cooperation with Mongolia.

Considering the external security environment and China's rising military activities in the region India doesn't want to leave any stone unturned while framing its foreign policies and security policies. However, India's bilateral defence engagement with Mongolia developed over a period of time and India wants to expand it further. The leaders of both the countries are aware of the fact that a strategic partnership had the ability to serve India in balancing China and Mongolia in balancing its two neighbours, China and the Russian Federation. Such a strategic partnership is also expected to emphasis on bilateral collaboration at multilateral forums such as the United Nations, ASEAN Regional Forum, the Asia-Europe Summit and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

Islamist Insurgent Group Al-Shabaab Kills At least 19 Somali Civilians

<https://www.wionews.com/world/al-shabaab-kill-at-least-19-somali-civilians-512741>

Fighters from the Islamist insurgent group Al-Shabaab have killed at least 19 civilians in a night-time attack in central Somalia, clan chiefs and local officials said on Saturday. The attack comes two weeks after Al-Shabaab, which has waged a long insurgency against the Somali state, besieged a hotel in the capital Mogadishu for 30 hours, leaving 21 people dead and 117 injured. The sources said at least eight vehicles were travelling on a road between the towns of Beledweyne and Maxaas when the insurgents intercepted and burned them and killed the passengers overnight Friday to Saturday by Afar-Irdood village. "The terrorists massacred innocent civilians who were travelling... last night. We don't have the exact number of victims, but 19 dead bodies have been collected," local clan elder Abdulahi Hared told AFP.

COMMENTS

Al-Shabaab, also known as Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujahideen is an Islamic insurgency group that operates in East Africa and has been active in Somalia since 2006. It is fighting the federal government of Somalia and the African Union mission in Somalia. They refer to their efforts as fighting the "enemies of Islam".

The presence of Al-Shabaab not only threatens neighbouring countries of Somalia like Kenya and Ethiopia, but also the Gulf of Aden to the north and the Indian Ocean to the east. These are the strategically important maritime chokepoints and shipping routes that connect Africa to Asia, Europe, and the rest of the world.

At a recent UN Security Council meeting, India asked the international community to join Somalia and the Horn of Africa in addressing the growing threat of terrorism as well as Africa's hunger and drought crisis.

Countries with interest in the region and in the safety of sea lines of communication alongside, such as the United States, Japan, China, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and India should join together to combat regional terrorism. The construction of military bases in Somalia should also be accompanied by active counter-terrorism operations to ensure the stability and safety of the civilian population. This would benefit them from well-coordinated multilateral efforts.

Ethiopia's Tigray Rebels Say Ready For Ceasefire And AU-led Peace Talks

<https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20220912-ethiopia-s-tigray-rebels-say-ready-for-ceasefire-and-au-led-peace-talks>

Ethiopia's Tigray rebels said Sunday they were ready for a ceasefire and would accept a peace process led by the African Union (AU), removing an obstacle to negotiations with the government to end almost two years of brutal warfare. The announcement was made amid a flurry of international diplomacy after fighting flared last month for the first time in several months in northern Ethiopia, torpedoing a humanitarian truce. The government of Tigray is prepared to participate in a robust peace process under the auspices of the African Union," said a statement by the Tigrayan authorities.



Source: Bbc.com

COMMENTS

Ethiopia has been at civil war since 2020. It has been two years since the people of Ethiopia, particularly Tigrayans, have been subjected to gross human rights violations, sexual violence, and ethnic cleansing in the region. This conflict has had a destabilising impact on the Horn of Africa area. Millions of people have died and have become refugees in their own country.

This positive decision towards peace is a great accomplishment in the Horn of Africa as it will help Ethiopia and the neighbouring countries to establish security and stability in the region at this hour when the region is already facing drought and hunger issues. However, considering the fragile nature of previous ceasefires, more international intervention would be required to ensure that this truce holds out.

India has significant investments in Ethiopia and achievement of long-term peace would be important for strengthening its economic and diplomatic ties, as well as influence in the region.

Attack In Mali By Islamic State Groups Claims Lives Of Nearly 30 People

<https://www.wionews.com/world/attack-in-mali-by-islamic-state-groups-claims-lives-of-nearly-30-people-514998>

An attack this week on a town in a violent region bordering Burkina Faso and Niger by members of an Islamic State offshoot in Mali killed nearly 30 civilians, a coalition of pro-government militia reported on Friday (September 10). The Gao region has been a hotspot for jihadist and militia violence, as per the coalition, also known as Platform, which said that several hundred militants attacked its fighters and forced them to flee on Tuesday, earlier this week.

COMMENTS

Mali has been in turmoil since 2012, when Islamic terrorism spread across the country, killing thousands and displacing more than 2 million people. Mali was a French colony until 1960. The French continued some presence in Mali and surrounding countries, fighting against Al-Qaeda and Islamic State. In 2013, France sent 5,000 troops to Mali at the request of the government due to armed uprisings. Initially, the French forces were warmly welcomed but relations have since turned sour.



Source: The New York Times

The frequency of attacks in Mali has increased and so has the number of Malians joining militant groups. In August 2022, France withdrew its troops from Mali, leaving it in the hands of terrorists just like the US did in Afghanistan. France is an advanced military power that has failed in combating terrorism in Mali. The international community must recognise these countries' concerns, particularly related to terrorism, and stand with them in their struggles.

The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) is carrying out security-related tasks. India is playing an important role by providing soft loans, training programmes, political and military support to Mali through its confidence building measures.

“Russian World”: Putin’s New Foreign Policy To Boost Ties With India And China

<https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/russian-world-whats-in-russia-president-vladimir-putins-new-foreign-policy-doctrine-3318877>

MOSCOW

President Vladimir Putin on Monday approved a new foreign policy doctrine based around the concept of a "Russian World", a notion that conservative ideologues have used to justify intervention abroad in support of Russian-speakers. The 31-page "humanitarian policy", published more than six months into the war in Ukraine, says Russia should "protect, safeguard and advance the traditions and ideals of the Russian World".

While presented as a kind of soft power strategy, it enshrines in official policy ideas around Russian politics and religion that some hardliners have used to justify Moscow's occupation of parts of Ukraine and support for breakaway pro-Russian entities in the east of the country. "The Russian Federation provides support to its compatriots living abroad in the fulfilment of their rights, to ensure the protection of their interests and the preservation of their Russian cultural identity," the policy said.

COMMENTS

Russia realises the significance of maintaining an image in the international community despite fighting a war. The criticism it faced from the Western world shouldn't define its relationship with the other nations of the world. This would mostly mean the economic relations it has with them. Putin has been making efforts to reframe its foreign policies to exhibit a positive image of Russia. This led to the announcement of its new humanitarian foreign policy. This humanitarian policy talks about the safety and security of the Russian-speaking people living outside Russia. It is expected that the humanitarian policy might help Russia to get support from the Russian population living in different parts of the world.

This new policy doesn't restrain itself to the Slavic countries but also focuses on increasing its cooperation with China and India and further strengthen its ties to the Middle East, Latin America and Africa. Since trade remains a significant factor Putin's focus is to look towards the fastest growing economies of the world. China and India are the two Asian countries which hold an important place in the international arena.

RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT

Moreover, when the rest of the Western world was imposing sanctions against Russia, China and India refrained itself from voting against Russia in the United Nations Security Council. Despite the pressure to condemn Russia, India maintained a neutral status. India has several factors to maintain its relationship with Russia intact. India and Russia have remained good friends since the Soviet era. Even after the sanctions from the western nations, India didn't stop its trade with Russia. There is a three-fold jump in India's imports from Russia since the Ukraine war started. The import of crude oil between February and March 2022 from Russia increased by 393% i.e., \$1.86 billion.

From a strategic standpoint today, decision-makers in New Delhi believe that they can't afford to alienate Russia because they count on Moscow to veto any adverse United Nations Security Council resolution in context of the disputed region of Kashmir. India is also hopeful of Russian support or at least neutrality in its long-standing border dispute with the People's Republic of China. Thus, this foreign policy announcement opens up a new opportunity for Russia and India's relationship.

Ukraine Counter-Offensive won't change Russia's Plan-Putin

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-62934875>



Source: Reuters

Ukraine's recent counter-offensive will not change Russia's plans, Vladimir Putin has said in his first public comments on the matter. In a rapid counter-attack, Ukrainian forces say they captured over 8,000 sq km (3,000 sq miles) in six days in the north-eastern Kharkiv region. But Mr Putin said he was not in a hurry, and the offensive in Ukraine's Donbas region remains on track. He also noted that Russia had so far not deployed its full forces.

"Our offensive operation in the Donbas is not stopping. They're moving forward - not at a very fast pace - but they are gradually taking more and more territory," he said after a summit in Uzbekistan. The industrial Donbas region in east Ukraine is the focus of Russia's invasion, which Mr Putin falsely claims is necessary to save Russian-speakers from genocide.

RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT

Parts of the Donbas have been occupied by Russian-backed separatists since 2014. The Kharkiv region, where Ukraine's recent counter-attack was launched, is not part of the Donbas. In Friday's comments, Mr Putin threatened a "more serious" response if Ukrainian attacks continue.

"I remind you that the Russian army isn't fighting in its entirety... Only the professional army is fighting." Russia initially denied sending conscript soldiers to Ukraine, but several officers were disciplined after cases came to light of conscripts being forced to sign contracts and in some instances being taken prisoner.

COMMENTS

Ukraine has started recapturing the annexed territory in the Kharkiv region. Putin warned that the attacks from Ukraine might bring serious repercussions. He is still of the opinion that Russia has not so far used its full force and has not officially declared war on Ukraine. It only refers to its invasion as a "special military operation". In this process, Russia might have won the war but lost the battle. It has destabilised its political and economic relations.

Such statements from Putin have also enhanced the war related tension. The US President Joe Biden said that if Russia initiated any chemical warfare in Ukraine, the changes will be the worse than the World War II scenario.

Despite maintaining a neutral stand during the war the Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi requests Putin to discourage a war like situation further. India's concern remains here two-folded. Although India is dependent on Russia for import of energy and weapons to an extent but remains apprehensive regarding Russia's closeness towards China.