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India-US '2+2' Talks

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Defense Secretary Jim Mattis held talks with their Indian counterparts External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and Defense Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in New Delhi.

What is the '2+2' talk?

- It is a format of dialogue where the defense and foreign ministers or secretaries meet with their counterparts from another country.
- India holds such talks with Japan and Australia, at the foreign secretary and defense secretary level.
- India holds ministerial-level talks only with the US. Apart from India, the United States holds such ministerial dialogues with Australia and Japan also.
- The talks were announced when Prime Minister Narendra Modi met US President Donald Trump in June 2017. The "2+2" dialogue has replaced the Strategic and Commercial Dialogue between the foreign and commerce ministers of the two countries that were held during the previous Obama administration.

Outcome of the Summit

- COMCASA agreement
 - India and the US have signed Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA).
COMCASA is meant to provide a legal framework for the transfer of communication security equipment from the US to India that would facilitate “interoperability” between their forces — and potentially with other militaries that use US-origin systems for secured data links.
 - Highlights of COMCASA agreement:
 - COMCASA is an India specific agreement.
 - The agreement is for 10 years and it comes into effect immediately.
 - India will have full access to relevant US equipment.
 - There will be no disruption in supply.
 - Indian Navy will have access to real-time classified information from US Navy.
 - Benefits of COMCASA
 - With COMCASA, Indian armed forces will get to fully exploit the capability of the military platforms procured from the US.
 - As a consequence of Communications and Information Security Memorandum of Agreement (CISMOA), India will get access to the Combined Enterprise Regional Information Exchange System or (CENTRIXS) which is the secure communication system network in the US.
 - Navy ships with CENTRIXS systems on board can communicate securely with the U.S. Navy when needed and can benefit from the wider situational picture of the region as the US have a large number of ships and aircrafts deployed.
 - It also means that the armed forces of the two countries will be able to talk to each other during exercises and operations.
 - Concerns regarding COMCASA agreement
 - There are persistent concerns that this would allow U.S. Navy access to India’s own secure communication network and also that the information shared with the U.S. will be accessible by Pakistan.
 - India has tried to quell the fears and stated that data acquired through such systems cannot be disclosed or transferred to any person or entity without India’s consent.
- First Tri-Services Exercise

Both India and the US agreed to conduct a new tri-services exercise and both sides also agreed to further increase personnel exchanges between the two militaries and defense organizations.

- Naval Engagement
 - Both India and US agreed to start naval engagements in the West Asian region and committed to start exchanges between the U.S. Naval Forces Central Command (NAVCENT) and the Indian Navy in the Western Indian Ocean.
- Terrorism
 - India and the US discussed bilateral counter-terrorism cooperation agreed to enhance their ongoing cooperation in multilateral forums such as the UN and Financial Action Task Force.
 - The US also gave its support to the UN Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism.
 - Focus on Pakistan: Both countries called on Pakistan to ensure that the territory under its control is not used to launch terrorist attacks on other countries and they called on Pakistan to bring to justice the perpetrators of the Mumbai, Pathankot, Uri attacks.
- NSG Support
 - The US reiterated its full support for India's membership into the Nuclear Suppliers Group.
- India-Russia S-400 deal
 - The US gave no firm commitment that India will get waivers if it went ahead with the Indo-Russian deal of S-400 missile defense system.
 - India has previously declared that it will go ahead with the \$5 Billion S-400 Triumph Missile Defense System deal with Russia despite US's concerns.
 - US has imposed military sanctions against Russia under the **CAATSA (Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act)** law for its annexation of Crimea as well as alleged meddling in the American presidential election in 2016.
 - CAATSA mandates the US government to punish entities and countries engaging in the significant transaction with the defense or intelligence establishment of Russia. Thus, India is on the radar of US sanctions if it goes ahead with this deal.

- US sanctions on Iran
 - The U.S. has demanded India to “zero out” oil imports from Iran by November. Also, there was no mention of what the U.S. will do on India’s investment in the Chabahar port once its full sanctions kick in on November 4.
 - India is meeting 83% of its crude oil requirements from outside. Of this, close to 25% comes from Iran.
 - The US can impose sanctions on India over its oil imports with Iran and its involvement with Iran’s Chabahar port.
 - Following US diktat could hurt India dearly not only because of costs at a time when the dollar is strengthening and fuel prices are going up but also in terms of its substantial engagement with Iran.
 - India is also unlikely to follow the US stands on Iran as it has clearly mentioned that it abided by sanctions imposed by the United Nations only but not those imposed by any other country.
- US-India Trade relations
 - The US has called for reducing India’s \$23 billion trade surplus.
 - The U.S. said that they expect India to increase imports of American oil and gas as well as aircraft in order to wipe out the trade surplus India enjoys.
 - India did not receive a clear-cut assurance of its **GSP (Generalised System of Preferences)** status being restored, or of waivers on steel and aluminum tariffs imposed by the US.
- China and Indo-Pacific
 - The joint statement mentioned advancing “**a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific region**” and promoting **sustainable “debt-financing” in the region.**
 - These two points are clearly aimed at Beijing’s role in the South China Sea and the Belt and Road Initiative projects, respectively.
- India and US in Afghanistan
 - The US has named India as a “**critical part**” of its South-Asia strategy.
 - India and the US expressed support for an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned peace and reconciliation process.
 - The United States welcomed India’s enhanced role in Afghanistan’s economic development and stabilization.

“Four Foundational Agreements” between the US and its Partners

- **General Security Of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA)**
 - GSOMIA allows militaries to share the intelligence gathered by them.
 - Signed by India in 2002.
- **Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA)**
 - LEMOA allows both countries to have access to each other’s designated military facilities for refueling and replenishment.
 - Signed by India in 2016.

- **Communications and Information Security Memorandum of Agreement (CISMOA)**
 - COMCASA(Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement) is the India specific version of CISMOA.
 - Signed by India in 2018.
- **Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA)**
 - BECA will allow India and US militaries to share geospatial and satellite data with each other.
 - India has not signed BECA yet.

Generalised System of Preference

- GSP is the largest and oldest U.S. trade preference program. Established by the Trade Act of 1974, GSP promotes economic development by eliminating duties on thousands of products when imported from one of 120 designated beneficiary countries and territories.
- The Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) provides opportunities for many of the world's poorest countries to use trade to grow their economies and climb out of poverty.

Mobilise Your City

India and France have signed an implementation agreement on **“MOBILISE YOUR CITY” (MYC)**.

- Mobilise Your City (MYC) is part of an international initiative which is supported by the French and the German Governments and was launched at **21st Conference of Parties (COP21)** meeting in December, 2015.
- The MYC aims at supporting three pilot cities viz. **Nagpur, Kochi and Ahmedabad** in their efforts to reduce their Green House Gas (GHG) emissions related to urban transport by implementing urban mobility plans at local level and to help India at national level to improve their sustainable transport policy.
- The main components of the proposed assistance are:
 - To support planning and implementation of sustainable urban transport projects,
 - Support to strengthening institutional capacity for regulating, steering and planning urban mobility, and
 - Learning and exchange formats with other cities across India for exchanges on best practices.

MOBILISE YOUR CITY

- The MYC Partnership is a global and inclusive network of cities and countries as well as an umbrella brand of European development cooperation particularly related to the field of **sustainable urban transport**.
- Besides contribution to the international climate process, it contributes to the UN's Agenda 2030, specifically **Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11: Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable**.

A Clip on MYC

Other Reasons to act:

- **Better air quality**- 1 million premature deaths occur per year in urban areas around the world, costing between 2 and 5% of a country's annual GDP.
- **Reduce traffic congestion**
- **Reduce road fatalities**- 1.24 million deaths on roads per year worldwide and an estimated cost of around 1 to 3% of a country's annual GDP.
- **More inclusive and liveable cities**- Promoting public transport and non-motorised transport could help save US\$ 100 trillion worldwide between now and 2050 and cut emissions by 40% in 2050.
- **Economic efficiency**- Comprehensive mobility planning facilitates an optimised use of capital in relevant projects, and enhances the economic competitiveness of cities by improving logistics and access to jobs, basic services, education, etc.

21st Conference of Parties (COP21)

- Popularly known as the **Paris Agreement**, it was the 21st yearly session of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the **1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)** and the 11th session of the Meeting of the Parties to the 1997 Kyoto Protocol (CMP 11).
- It aims to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change by keeping a global temperature rise this **century well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels** and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius.
- It can be noted that the International Solar Alliance (ISA), an Indian initiative, was also launched by India and France at the sidelines of the Conference of Parties (COP) 21 Climate Conference in Paris.

Central Water Commission on Kerala Floods

The Central Water Commission (CWC) has found that the congestion in the carrying capacity of the Vembanad Lake made the Kerala floods more severe.

- Despite of being the **largest lake in Kerala, Vembanad Lake** could only absorb a fraction of the water that drained into it from overflowing rivers.
 - The Vembanad Lake was able to absorb only 0.6 billion cubic metres (BCM), of the 1.63 BCM caused due to excessive rainfall and inundated over 480 sq km and **inflated to nearly three times its size**, severely affecting districts such as Kottayam and Allapuzha.
 - The capacity of the lake might be less due to the following reasons-
 - **Siltation** which is a natural process. Since the lake is in eco-sensitive zone, dredging was also not allowed to reduce the siltation.
 - Vembanad is a coastal lake which also **interacts with the backwaters** and there could have been **backflow** because the outlet was unable to discharge as much into the ocean.
- **High rainfall** and **lack of reservoirs** in the **upper reaches of the rivers** that drain into the lake, worsened the flooding.
- While squarely blaming the **two spells of intense rainfall** during the month of August, the commission noted that the dams neither attenuated the floods nor aggravated them.
- However, the Idukki dam acted as a flood cushion by absorbing much of the runoff resulting into lesser outflow from the dam than inflow during the intense spell of rainfall.

Recommendations

- **Increasing the capacity of the spillway** through which rivers such as Pamba, Manimala, Achenkovil and Meenachil drain into the lake and the barrage through which the lake spills into the ocean.
- **Review of rule curves for reservoirs** based on historical data to determine how much water should be released each month over the monsoon period.

Reservoir Regulation Procedure (Rule Curve)- The operating criteria, guidelines, and specifications that govern the storage and release function of a reservoir.

Central Water Commission (CWC)

- The Central Water Commission is the apex technical organisation in the country for development of water resources and is attached organization of the Ministry of Water Resources.
 - The Commission is responsible for initiating, coordinating and furthering, in consultation with the State Governments, the schemes for control, conservation, development and utilization of water resources throughout the country for the purpose of irrigation, flood management, power generation, navigation etc.
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Important Facts for Prelims (8th September 2018)

SLINEX-2018

- Indian Navy is participating in the 6th edition of bilateral naval exercise SLINEX-2018 between India and Sri Lanka.
- SLINEX series of bilateral maritime exercises were initiated in 2005.
- Since then five successful exercises have been conducted.
- Over the years, SLINEX has helped both the Navies in understanding each other's procedures and enhanced interoperability and contribute towards maritime security in the region.

Important Bilateral and Multilateral Defence Exercises

Indra	India-Russia Naval Exercise
Malabar	US-India-Japan Naval Exercise
Varuna	France and India Naval Exercise
Simbex	India and Republic of Singapore Naval Exercise
Ibsamar	India, Brazil and South Africa Naval Exercise
Konkan	India and Britain Naval Exercise
Ausindex	India and Australia Naval Exercise
Naseem Al-Bahr	India-Oman Naval Exercise

Nari Shakti Puraskar

- It is the highest Civilian Honour for Women in India, established in the year 1991.
- Ministry of Women and Child Development announces these national level awards for eminent women, organizations, and institutions who have been working incessantly towards the cause of Women Empowerment.
- President of India confers the Nari Shakti Puraskar on the International Women's Day(March 8), annually.
- Navika Sagar Parikrama - INSV Tarini Team was one among 39 awardees in 2017.

Chabahar Port Hand-over

- Iran has stuck to the agreed timeframe in its plans to hand over the operational responsibility of a part of the Chabahar port to India in October.
 - India and Iran in 2003 had agreed to develop and operate Chabahar on the Gulf of Oman outside the Strait of Hormuz, near Iran's border with Pakistan. It is the only Iranian port with direct access to the ocean.
 - It will cut transport costs/time for Indian goods by a third. The port is likely to boost trade among India, Afghanistan, and Iran after Pakistan's denial of transit access to New Delhi for trade with the two countries.
 - From Chabahar, the Iranian road network can be linked up to Zaranj in Afghanistan. The Zaranj-Delaram road constructed by India in 2009 can give access to Afghanistan's Garland Highway, setting up road access to four major cities in Afghanistan - Herat, Kandahar, Kabul, and Mazar-e-Sharif.
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