

Trump may visit India by April, China too on list

Early trips to China and India loom large in the trade-driven foreign policy agenda of Donald Trump. His advisers told Wall Street Journal that besides reaching out directly to China's President Xi Jinping to



discuss a possible trip to Beijing, the US President-elect has expressed interest in visiting India

as early as April, reports **Chidanand Rajghatta**.

Preliminary discussions had been initiated with S Jaishankar during his trip to the US last month, with follow-up action likely in the next week

Will stall TikTok ban in US, says Trump

Donald Trump said Sunday he would issue an executive order Monday to stall a federal ban of TikTok, just hours after major app stores removed the popular Chinese social media site. After Trump's remark, TikTok said it was in the process of restoring service in US. **P 18**

after Trump's inauguration Monday, which the foreign minister will attend. Jaishankar is also likely to discuss the upcoming Quad summit with his counterparts from US, Japan and Australia. **P 18**

Pakistan-occupied Kashmir ~~'crown jewel of India'~~, J&K incomplete without it: Rajnath

JAUNPUR (UP), Jan 19 (PTI)

DEFENCE Minister Rajnath Singh on Sunday described Pakistan-occupied Kashmir as the "crown jewel of India" and asserted that Jammu and Kashmir was incomplete without it.

The senior BJP leader also accused Pakistan of continuing its conspiracy to foster terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir.

Singh was speaking to reporters in the Nizamuddinpur village of Jaunpur district, where he attended a ceremonial event at the home of senior BJP leader Jagat Narayan Dubey.

"It (Pakistan-occupied Kashmir) is the crown jewel of India and Jammu and Kashmir



is incomplete without it," he said.

"For Pakistan, the Kashmir occupied by it is nothing more than a

foreign territory being used to promote terrorism and anti-India propaganda. Terror camps and launch pads there (Pakistan-occupied Kashmir) should be dismantled or it will face an appropriate response," Singh added.

The Defence Minister also hit out at Pakistani leader Anwar-ul-Haq over his alleged anti-India rhetoric.

"Pakistan is trying to provoke people against India on religious grounds while oppressing citizens there," he said.

He also claimed that India had emerged as the world's largest digital economy under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership.

India, which now has the highest number of 5G users, is on track to becoming a developed nation by 2047, Singh asserted.

"Today, when India speaks, the world listens attentively. Our scientists are manufacturing defence equipment on Indian soil and exporting those to other nations. Moreover, 1.30 lakh start-ups are operational in the country," the defence minister said.

Army pushes for desi Pinaka rockets, to ink ₹10,200cr deals within this fiscal

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New Delhi: The Army is now putting its full weight behind the indigenous Pinaka multi-launch artillery rocket systems, with orders worth Rs 10,200 crore for its ammunition to be cleared soon, even as India is also exporting the systems to other countries.

Army chief General Upendra Dwivedi said two Pinaka contracts — Rs 5,700 crore for high-explosive pre-fragmented ammunition and Rs 4,500 crore for area denial munitions — are all set to be inked before the current fiscal ends on March 31.

These orders will cater for the 10 Pinaka regiments already ordered by the over 11-lakh strong Army, which also has three Russian-origin Smerch and five Grad rocket regiments.

While the force has inducted four Pinaka regiments, with some of the launchers also deployed in high-altitude areas along the northern borders with China, the other six are in the process of being inducted to add "more punch and lethality" to its arsenal. "The Pinaka is one of the best rocket systems in the world. Its regiments have been high-altitude enabled," a senior officer said.



DRDO has developed a variety of ammunition for Pinaka, including rockets with 45-km extended range and 75-km guided extended range

The high-explosive pre-fragmented ammunition has a strike range of 45 km, while the aerial denial munitions can be launched to a distance of 37 km. The latter have the capability to saturate a target area with multiple bomblets, including anti-tank and anti-personnel minelets.

DRDO has developed a variety of ammunition for the Pinaka, including rockets with 45-km extended range and 75-km guided extended range. With the plan underway to further enhance the range first to 120 km and then to 300 km, Gen Dwivedi said, "As soon as we get longer ranges, we might drop plans for other alternate long-range weapons we are looking at and concentrate on

it (Pinaka)."

The six new Pinaka regiments, under contracts inked with defence PSU Bharat Earth Movers Ltd and private sector companies Tata Advanced Systems and Larsen & Toubro, comprise 114 launchers with automated gun aiming and positioning systems and 45 command posts, along with 330 vehicles. "They are equipped with electronically and mechanically improved weapon systems capable of firing a variety of ammunition over longer ranges," another officer said.

India is also stepping-up plans to export the Pinaka system, along with other products like BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles and Akash air

India part of naval drill hosted by France

India and eight other countries are taking part in a naval exercise hosted by France around the Malacca, Sunda and Lombok straits between the Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean, demonstrating their commitment to a rules-based international order in the maritime domain.

India has deployed guided-missile destroyer INS Mumbai for the 'La Perouse' exercise, which includes French carrier strike group (CSG) led by nuclear-powered aircraft carrier Charles De Gaulle. TNN

defence missile systems, to 'friendly' countries.

The former Soviet republic of Armenia, for instance, is importing both Pinaka and Akash systems, as earlier reported by TOI. Some Asean, African and European countries have also shown interest in acquiring the Pinaka systems. Another major deal to be inked within this fiscal for the Army's Regiment of Artillery will be the Rs 8,500 crore one for 307 indigenous advanced towed artillery gun systems, which is touted to have a strike range of 48 km.

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Feb talks may skip MSP legal guarantee issue & focus on boosting procurement

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New Delhi: Centre's decision to hold talks with farmer groups may not revolve around giving legal guarantee to MSP — a key demand of protesting farmers — but efforts for further strengthening the procurement mechanism to extend its benefit to maximum farmers across the country.

Besides, an inter-ministerial team will try to bring different farmer groups to the table for discussing pros and cons of the newly proposed national framework on agriculture marketing. Centre's draft framework seeks to establish a "unified national market for agricultural produce" by bringing all states on board, even as the proposal was outrightly rejected by protesting farmers, calling it a reincarnation of the repealed farm laws.



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Sources privy to the development said the immediate task before the central team would be to convince farmers to remove road blockades at Shambhu and Khanauri on Punjab-Haryana border and continue talks in the spirit of what was promised in Dec 2021 to end the farmers' protest. "The letter written by the

then agriculture secretary Sanjay Agarwal to Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) leadership did not promise legal guarantee to procurement of all crops at MSP. It, rather, promised to find a way to ensure MSP for farmers across the country," said an official. He said all future dialogues would, therefore, be to fi-

nd a way to ensure MSP, and it can be done to further strengthen the existing mechanism by expanding its reach and adopting certain reform measures. "We are also waiting for suggestions of the five-member committee, constituted by SC last year to end the deadlock after talking to farmer groups like SKM (non-political) and Kisan Mazdoor Sangh (KMS) who have been protesting at the borders," he said.

SKM, an umbrella outfit of farmer groups that spearheaded the protest against farm laws in 2020-21, meanwhile, Sunday welcomed the decision of fasting farmer representative Jagjit Singh Dallewal to receive medical aid, and called Centre's decision to hold talks a "great victory". The morcha said the growing farmers' unity and their pan-India struggle forced Centre to hold talks on Feb 14.

India seeks fair & equitable trade agenda in EU FTA talks

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: While stating its intent to work on a “meaningful trade agenda” with the European Union, India has underlined the need for it to be “fair and equitable” and made it clear that there was a need to address tariff and non-tariff barriers.

During his first meeting with Maros Sefcovic, the European commissioner for trade and economic security in Brussels over the weekend, commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal also asserted that the cooperation on trade and sustainable development should factor in the respective level of developments of the two trading partners and “the principle of common but differentiated responsibility” should be followed that does not put extra burden on a developing country like India.

The high-level dialogue is a part of attempts by India and EU to work out a foundation for negotiations for a free trade agreement in which the Europe-



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an trading bloc is also seeking dedicated chapters with commitment on issues such as sustainability, gender and labour. India is of the view that European standards cannot be imposed on it given its level of development prompting Goyal to lay down the stand while outlining the six key principles.

During the talks the minis-

ter also made clear that India was a large and growing market with a young and skilled population, which could and could become EU’s “partner in mutual growth and development”. For a large number of European and American companies, India is an attractive market which can be tapped better through the proposed trade agreement, which has been in the pipeline for nearly two decades.

“India would work together with the European Union for developing cutting edge technologies, secure critical raw material supply chains and build resilient supply chains-reducing dependencies on non-market economies and developing closer economic ties between India and the EU,” Goyal was quoted as saying in a press release. He also highlighted the “common values of democracy, rule of law and independent judiciary, as a trusted partner” at a time when several countries are looking to reduce their dependence on China.