

India to be on ~~high-stake global stage~~ of chip makers in 5 years: IT Minister

■ **By Moumita Bakshi Chatterjee**

NEW DELHI, Mar 3 (PTI)

INDIA will, in next five years, join the high-stake global stage of semiconductor manufacturing as it combines unparalleled design capabilities with USD 10 billion of incentives to draw manufacturers to set up new fabs and units that will cut dominance of Taiwan, South Korea and China, said IT and Telecom Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw.



Ashwini Vaishnaw

In an interview to PTI, he said India's well-crafted policies are tempting manufacturers to set up new fabs (semiconductor fabrication plants) and pouring investment in related sectors.

Semiconductors are an essential component of electronic devices, and are used in automobiles to computers, mobile phones and even washing machines.

India already has factories of best known automobile companies -- from Renault-Nissan to Hyundai,

computer makers such as Dell, Apple suppliers and electronic makers like Samsung which produce TVs, washing machines and fridges, among others.

Now, India is eyeing to step up the manufacturing value chain with a high-stake semiconductor manufacturing.

The Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led Government's Rs 76,000 crore of incentives have got four players including Micron and Tatas.

Vaishnaw said the country already has roughly one-third of global design talent.

Clear political will in Berlin now to boost defence ties with India: German envoy

Eye On China, Pushes For Strong Indo-Pacific Presence To Ensure Freedom Of Navigation

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New Delhi: Shedding hesitations of the past, Germany now wants to strongly boost strategic-defence cooperation with India in areas ranging from arms sales and joint production of advanced military hardware like submarines to military interoperability in the Indo-Pacific in the backdrop of China's aggressive muscle-flexing in the region.

"We have earlier been very hesitant. Now, there is clear political will in Germany to increase defence cooperation with India through military visits, exercises, co-production and other areas, including new ones like cyber," German ambassador Philipp Ackermann said, in an exclusive interview with TOI.

The "huge paradigm shift" in Germany's strategic thinking is primarily due to the "wake-up call" following Russia's invasion of Ukraine as well as China's expansionist behaviour in violation of the

international rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific.

"We want to boost cooperation with our strategic partners outside the Nato area. Germany feels India is a very good partner in this region for strategic cooperation because we have so many common interests and values. In our military and strategic thinking, we think in terms of alliances, never alone," Ackermann said.

"We feel it's important to have a very strong presence in the Indo-Pacific to guarantee freedom of navigation. We have seen activities in the South China Sea and Indo-Pacific where one country (read China) is showing teeth. There is a lot of global and German concern about this," he added.

As part of the Indo-Pacific deployments, a huge contingent of 32 German aircraft, including eight Eurofighter and 12 Tornado jets as well as Airbus-300 MRTT tankers and Airbus-400M military transport planes, along with 15 French and Spanish aircraft,



German envoy Philipp Ackermann said his country was keen to enhance cooperation with India in areas ranging from arms sales to joint production of advanced military hardware like submarines

will take part in IAF's largest multi-nation 'Tarang Shakti' exercise (Phase-1) in Coimbatore in Aug. Then, a frontline German frigate and combat support ship will also be visiting Goa in Oct.

"Our aim is to increase interoperability with India and other like-minded countries in the Indo-Pacific like the US, Japan, Europe and Australia.

We never go alone. There is a clear commitment from our side that we should increase our military visits and exercises with India," the ambassador said.

On the defence production front, Germany is one of the two main contenders in India's long-delayed over Rs 42,000 crore project to build six advanced stealth diesel-electric submarines with foreign collaboration.

Towards this, an MoU to cooperate in submarine production was inked between defence shipyard Mazagon Docks (MDL) and German company ThyssenKrupp Marine Systems (TKMS) in the presence of visiting German defence minister Boris Pistorius in June last year. Spanish firm Navantia is the other foreign contender in this mega 'Project-75 India' project.

"The (selection) process is still ongoing. The decision is for India to take. But there is clear willingness and preparedness from the German side

to support this Indian project," Ackermann said.

"The first group of Indian naval officers will be visiting Germany to evaluate the boats, which offer AIP (air-independent propulsion for greater underwater endurance), in the next 10 days. We have put a good offer on the table and are ready to fine-tune it further. The German government is very supportive of the TKMS proposal with MDL," he said.

Germany is also ready to supply A400M transport aircraft, A330 MRTT mid-air refuelling aircraft, heavyweight torpedoes and spare parts for small arms, among other things, to India.

"The next level in the bilateral defence cooperation will be to sit with India and figure out what we can develop together. India does it with countries like the US and France. So, why not with Germany? That will be the next step. The thinking has now started," Ackermann said.

Nirmala to inaugurate GST conference today

NEW DELHI, Mar 3 (PTI)

FINANCE Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will inaugurate on Monday a conference of enforcement chiefs of all State and Central GST officers to tackle tax evasion.

In the conference, Goods and Services Tax (GST) formations will deliberate on combating GST evasion, including examining current challenges and delving into successful methods adopted by Central and State tax enforcement officers.

It would also strategise on effective methods to combat fake invoicing, sharing best

practices, fostering synergy, and leveraging technology and data.

The conference will also balance ease of doing business and discuss striking a crucial equilibrium between facilitating a smooth business environment and implementing effective and deterrent enforcement measures.

Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs Nirmala Sitharaman will inaugurate the one-day conference and also deliver the keynote address on March 4, a Finance Ministry statement said here on Sunday.

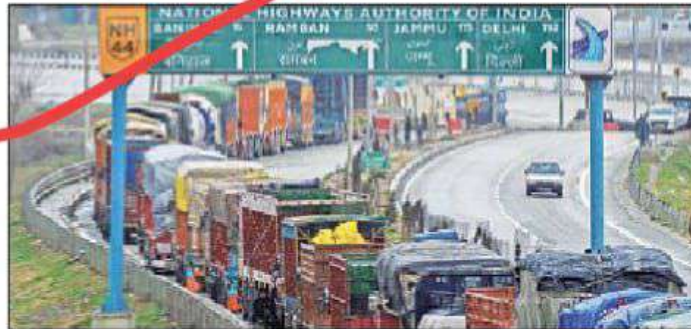
Jammu-Srinagar highway remains blocked

JAMMU, Mar 3 (PTI)

NHAI authorities on Sunday morning stepped up efforts to resume traffic movement on Jammu-Srinagar national highway following improvement in weather, officials said.

As the 270-km highway, the only all weather link connecting Kashmir with the rest of the country, remained shut for a second day, police shifted a large number of stranded passengers, including over 200 tourists to safer places in Ramban district, they said.

The highway was closed early Saturday following landslides, mudslides and shooting stones, triggered by heavy rain-



Vehicles stranded on Jammu-Srinagar national highway after it was closed for traffic early on Saturday. (PTI)

fall at over a dozen places between Nashri and Banihal including Dalwas, Mehad-Cafetia and Hingni in Ramban, the officials said.

A portion of the road near

Panthiyal was also washed away, they said.

The traffic department said the highway continues to remain blocked and advised people to avoid journeys on

the highway, also known as NH44, till the completion of the restoration work.

With the improvement in weather this morning, the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) has stepped up efforts to ensure early opening of the arterial road.

While higher reaches experienced fresh snowfall, moderate to heavy rains lashed wide parts of Jammu and Kashmir on March 1 and 2.

Dozens of residential houses and other structures, including several Government schools, were also damaged by strong winds and hailstorm in different parts of the Union Territory.

'Big bullies don't provide \$4.5 billion in aid to neighbours'

NEW DELHI, Mar 3 (ANI)

RESPONDING sharply to a question whether "India was being a bully in the region" (sub-continent and the Indian Ocean region), at a book launch event in the national capital, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said 'big bullies' don't provide USD 4.5 billion in aid when neighbours are in distress.

"The big change today in this part of the world is what has happened between India and its neighbours. When you say India is perceived as a big bully, you know, big bullies don't provide four and a half billion dollars when the neighbours are in trouble. Big bullies don't supply vaccines to other countries when COVID is on or make exceptions to their own rules to respond to food demands or fuel demands or fertiliser demands because some war in some other part of the world has complicated their lives," EAM Jaishankar at the event on

Sunday.

A video clip of Jaishankar's response to the 'bully' was widely shared across social media platforms.

"You also have to look today at actually what is changed between India and its neighbours. Certainly, with Bangladesh and Nepal, I mean today you have a power grid, you have roads which didn't exist a decade ago, you have railways which didn't exist a decade ago, there's usage of waterways. Indian businesses use ports of Bangladesh on a national treatment basis," Jaishankar added.

Underscoring the work undertaken to enhance and improve connectivity between India and its neighbouring countries, Jaishankar said trade, investments and travel with Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan,



S Jaishankar

Bangladesh and Maldives have seen a sharp uptick.

"Today at the connectivity, just the volume of people moving up and down, the volume of the trade which is there, the investments which are there, it's actually a very, very good story to tell. Not just with Nepal and Bangladesh, with Sri Lanka as well, I would say even with Maldives," the EAM stated further at the book launch event on Saturday.

"And Bhutan...I mean I don't want to miss them out because they have just been consistently strong partners. So our problem in the neighbourhood, very honestly, is in respect to one country. And in diplomacy, you always hold out hopes that, yes, okay, keep at it, and who knows one day what the future holds,"

he added.

Stressing it was essential for an 'average person' to actively engage with foreign policy matters, EAM Jaishankar said, "Certainly, all Indians need to take more interest in foreign policy. It is very common all over the world, there is a belief that foreign policy is something complicated, esoteric, that should be left to certain people to deal with...which is not entirely without some justification." "...But, to me, a number of events happened that showed why it's important for the average person to get involved, pay more attention to foreign policy...and some of those events, if you look, were the Covid," he added.

Invoking India's outreach towards friendly neighbours and global partners during the Covid-19 pandemic, the EAM said the unprecedented events at the time showcased how the world decided to not "leave you alone".

'India's move to block China at WTO promotes multilateralism'

NEW DELHI, Mar 3 (PTI)

INDIA'S move to block a China-led investment facilitation pact in the recently concluded WTO ministerial meeting in Abu Dhabi will help promote multilateral agreements in the 166-member global trade watchdog, according to experts.

The ministerial conference (MC), the highest decision-making body of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), concluded late night on March 1. The talks, which were to end on February 29, got extended by almost two days due to a log-jam among members on key issues like agri, fisheries subsi-

die and the e-commerce moratorium. International trade experts stated that India's principled stand in opposing the addition of IFDA (Investment Facilitation for Development Agreement) into the WTO is based on its long-standing support for multilateralism.

A group of over 120 nations,

led by China, tried to push the IFDA to integrate into the WTO as a plurilateral agreement at the 13th MC meet in Abu Dhabi, UAE. India, South Africa and others opposed it because it was a joint statement initiative and did not have a ministerial mandate. "India, along with other developing countries, was

also cautious about the push for a multilateral framework on investment facilitation, arguing that it could impose binding commitments that limit policy space for development and industrialisation strategies," Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) founder Ajay Srivastava said.