

BRAZIL, CANADA, EU

Urge India to submit timely notifications on sugar subsidies in WTO

NEW DELHI, May 25 (PTI)

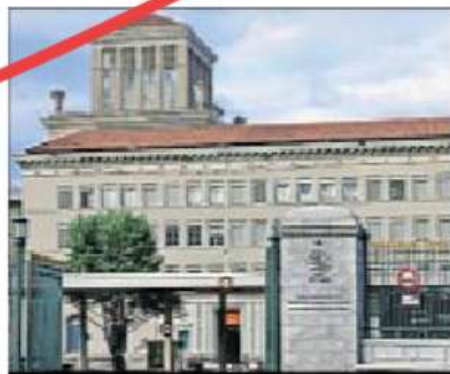
A GROUP of WTO member countries, including Brazil, Canada and the European Union, have urged India to submit timely notifications on sugar subsidies in the World Trade Organisation, an official said.

The issue came up for discussion during the meeting of the WTO's agriculture committee on May 23-24 in Geneva.

These countries are also major sugar exporters like India and they allege that support measures by India distort global sugar trade.

Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, Paraguay, New Zealand, the EU, and Guatemala have "urged India to submit timely notifications on the subsidies", the Geneva-based official said.

India has stated that the



Indian Central and State Governments neither paid for nor procured sugarcane from farmers, as all purchases were made by private sugar mills, hence, this information was not included in its notifications of domestic support.

The discussion assumes significance as in 2022, India has appealed against a ruling of the World Trade Organization's (WTO) trade dispute settlement panel which ruled that the country's domestic sup-

port measures for sugar and sugarcane are inconsistent with global trade norms.

The appeal was filed by India in the WTO's Appellate Body, which is the final authority on such trade disputes and is not functioning.

Brazil, Australia, and Guatemala had filed the cases against India on these support measures.

In its appeal, India has stated that the WTO's dispute panel ruling has made certain "erroneous" findings about domestic schemes to support sugarcane producers and exports and the findings of the panel are completely "unacceptable" to it.

The US and Australia have also presented a joint counter notification regarding India's sugar subsidies.

India, US discuss opportunities to boost space cooperation

WASHINGTON DC, May 25 (ANI)

USACTING Assistant Secretary of Defence for Space Policy Vipin Narang and India's Joint Secretary for International Cooperation, Vishwesh Negi, met for the second annual US-India Advanced Domains Defence Dialogue (AD3) at Pentagon in Washington DC.

During the dialogue, Narang and Negi discussed opportunities to strengthen space cooperation and identified potential areas for collaboration with US industry, according to the statement released by the US Department of Defence Spokesperson Cmdr Jessica Anderson provided the following statement: In a press

release, Anderson stated, "The dialogue executes a commitment by the US Secretary of Defence and Indian Minister of Defence during the 2022+2 Ministerial Dialogue to deepen collaboration on evolving and emerging defence domains, including space."

"During this year's Dialogue, Dr Narang and Mr Negi discussed opportunities to strengthen space cooperation and identified potential areas for collaboration with US industry," he added.

Vipin Narang and Vishwesh Negi agreed to advance AD3 through regular working group discussions. The visiting Indian Government delegation also engaged with the US Space

Command, the Joint Commercial Operations Cell, and artificial intelligence experts from across the US Department of Defence.

In a press release, Jessica Anderson stated, "Among a group of US and Indian defence officials, Dr Narang and Mr Negi co-chaired the first US-India principal-level tabletop discussion that explored areas to enhance cooperation in the space domain."

"They agreed to advance AD3 through regular working group discussions. The visiting Indian Government delegation also engaged with US Space Command, the Joint Commercial Operations Cell, and artificial intelligence

experts from across the US Department of Defence," he added. Earlier in April, the Indo-US joint working group, operating under the Defence Tech and Trade Initiative (DTTI), convened for a two-day meeting in New Delhi to bolster defence collaboration between the two nations, the Indian Air Force said. The meeting was held on April 29-30.

During the meeting, the discussions focused on leveraging the respective strengths of both partner nations to enhance defence cooperation and co-production.

Brig Gen Joel W Safranek and Air Vice Marshal George Thomas, Assistant Chief of the Air Staff (Plans), delved into

strategic plans aimed at deepening bilateral defence ties.

The IA said, "On Apr 29 and 30, the Indo-US joint working group under the Defence Tech & Trade Initiative between #USA & #India held a two-day meet at New Delhi where Brig Gen Joel W Safranek, Director, #AFSAC met Air Marshal Ashutosh

Dixit #DCAS@IAF_MCC." "The co-chairs of the group, Brig Gen Joel W Safranek, Director and Air Vice Marshal George Thomas, Assistant Chief of the Air Staff (Plans) discussed innovative plans to leverage the strengths of both partner nations to enhance defence collaboration and co-production."

Cyclone Remal heads for WB coast

KOLKATA, May 25 (PTI)

A DEEP depression over the Bay of Bengal intensified into a cyclonic storm, named Remal, on Saturday evening and is likely to turn severe before making landfall between the coasts of West Bengal and Bangladesh on Sunday midnight, the IMD said. Named by Oman, Remal, meaning sand in Arabic, is the first cyclone over the Bay of Bengal in this pre-monsoon season.

The weather system, moving at a speed of 12 kmph over the east-central Bay of Bengal, was 350 km south-south-east of Sagar Island in West Bengal at 5.30 pm on Saturday, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said.

Moving in a northward direction, it is likely to concentrate further into a severe cyclonic storm by Sunday morning and cross West Bengal and adjoining Bangladesh coasts between

Sagar Island and Khejrapara with a wind speed of 110 to 120 kmph, gusting to 135 kmph, by midnight of Sunday.

The IMD warned of extremely heavy rainfall in the coastal districts of West Bengal and heavy to very heavy rainfall in north Odisha on Sunday and Monday owing to the weather system. Extremely heavy precipitation is also likely in Assam and Meghalaya, and heavy to very heavy rains in the other north-eastern states of Manipur, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Tripura on Monday and Tuesday.

Storm surge of up to 1.5 metre is expected to inundate low-lying areas of coastal West Bengal and Bangladesh at the time of landfall. The IMD warned fishermen not to venture into the sea in the north Bay of Bengal till Monday morning. A red alert was issued for West Bengal's coastal districts of South and North 24

Parganas and Purba Medinipur, and also for adjoining Kolkata, Howrah and Hooghly, where extremely heavy rain is likely on Sunday and Monday.

The South and North 24 Parganas are likely to witness the most impact of the cyclone with wind speeds reaching 110 to 120 kmph, gusting to 130 kmph, while the other districts are likely to experience wind speeds of 70 to 80 kmph, gusting to 90 kmph. The IMD warned of localised flooding and major damage to vulnerable structures, power and communication lines, kutcha roads and crops in South and North 24 Parganas districts of West Bengal. An orange alert will thereafter be in force in these districts till Tuesday morning, except in Purba Medinipur, it said. The rest of the districts in southern West Bengal will experience wind speeds of 40 to 50 kmph, gusting to 60 kmph, it added.

J&K: Anantnag-Rajouri LS seat shatters voter-turnout record

■ With this, the three seats in the Kashmir valley -- Srinagar (38.49 per cent), Baramulla (59.1 per cent) and Anantnag-Rajouri (53 per cent) -- have recorded the highest voter turnouts "in many decades", the poll panel said

SRINAGAR/NEW DELHI, May 25 (PTI)

THE Election Commission (EC) on Saturday said after a record polling percentage in Jammu and Kashmir's Srinagar and Baramulla, the Anantnag-Rajouri Lok Sabha seat too has "shattered" the voter-turnout record with 53 per cent voters exercising their franchise, the highest in 40 years.

With this, the three seats in the Kashmir valley -- Srinagar (38.49 per cent), Baramulla (59.1 per cent) and Anantnag-Rajouri (53 per cent) -- have recorded the highest voter turnouts "in many decades",

the poll panel said.

This was the first major election in the Union Territory following the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution by the Centre in August 2019.

The high voter turnout in the Anantnag-Rajouri seat was in sharp contrast to the poll percentage of 9 registered in the 2019 election.

Even the militancy-infested Zainapora Assembly segment, which registered a turnout of 2 per cent in 2019, recorded a poll percentage of 41.

Addressing reporters in Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir's Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Pandurang Kundbarao Pole said the voter turnout in Anantnag-Rajouri was 53 per cent. He said the overall voter turnout for the five Lok Sabha seats in Jammu and Kashmir stood at 58 per cent.

"It is the highest turnout for these five seats in the last 40 years. The previous high was 49 per cent recorded in 2014, while the turnout in 1996 was 47.99 per cent," Pole added.

He said the Surankote, Rajouri and Budhal Assembly segments recorded the highest turnout of 68 per cent.

The Kulgam Assembly segment recorded the lowest poll percentage of 32.

Pole said the polling was by and large peaceful, with no violence reported from anywhere.

Officials said barring an isolated incident in Bijbehara, polling was smooth across the Lok Sabha constituency that comprises 18 Assembly segments and is spread over the five districts of Anantnag, Kulgam, Shopian, Poonch and Rajouri.

In a delimitation exercise carried out in Jammu and Kashmir in 2022, Pulwama district and the Shopian Assembly segment were removed from the south Kashmir Lok Sabha seat, while seven Assembly segments from Poonch and Rajouri were added to it.

Earlier in the day, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Rajiv Kumar told PTI Videos that encouraged by the voter turnout in Jammu and Kashmir, the EC will "very soon" initiate the process of holding Assembly polls in the Union Territory.

He also said the people of Jammu and Kashmir deserve their own Government.

'NASA to train Indian astronauts for joint mission to ISS'

BENGALURU, May 25 (PTI)

NASA will soon provide advanced training to Indian astronauts to send a joint mission to the International Space Station this year or



Garcetti

shortly thereafter, US envoy to India Eric Garcetti has said.

Garcetti made these remarks while speaking at the 'US-India Commercial Space Conference: Unlocking Opportunities for US & Indian Space Startups', hosted by the US-India Business Council (USIBC) and the US Commercial Service (USCS) in Bengaluru on Friday.

"NASA will soon provide advanced training to Indian astronauts, with the goal of mounting a joint effort to the International Space Station,

Garcetti cheers India's blind cricket team

BENGALURU, May 25 (PTI)

US AMBASSADOR to India Eric Garcetti on Saturday met and cheered India's Blind cricket team as they prepare to promote blind cricket in the US during the T20 Cricket World Cup. Garcetti, who is on an official trip to Bengaluru, took to 'X' and also shared pictures with the team at the Chinnaswamy Stadium here and in one of the pictures, he was also seen batting. "I am truly 'bowled over!' What a joy to meet and cheer India's blind cricket team as they prepare to promote blind cricket in the US. During the T20 Cricket World Cup. Can't wait to welcome them and celebrate the magic of cricket in America! Thank you @GKMahantesh and Cricket Association for the Blind in India (CABI) for hosting this inspiring event at the Chinnaswamy Stadium, the world's first solar-powered cricket venue. #PlayWithUS #USIndiaFWD #SportsBuildBridges #SportsDiplomacy #GoGreen," he posted. On Friday, he visited the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) headquarters and met with Chairman S Somanath and discussed the ongoing cooperation between India and the US in the field of space.

hopefully, this year or shortly thereafter, which was one of the promises of our leaders' visit together," Garcetti said.

"And soon we will launch the NISAR satellite from ISRO's Satish Dhawan Space Centre to monitor all resources, includ-

ing ecosystems, the Earth's surface, natural hazards, sea level rise, and the cryosphere," Garcetti said, according to a USIBC press statement issued here.

NISAR is a joint Earth-observing mission between

NASA and the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).

"You see whether it's the pursuit of peace and the peaceful use of space, things like the Artemis Accord, we are hand in hand, arm in arm. When it comes to prosperity and jobs, which is a big part of this conference today, it can be produced by startups in this sector, good-paying, high-tech jobs for Indians and for Americans. Space is right there," Garcetti said.

The Artemis Accords lay out a framework for collaborating nations' safe exploration of the moon and beyond. The day-long event in Bengaluru saw the participation from senior officials from both the US and Indian governments, including Garcetti, Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) Chairman Dr S Somanath, representatives from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA),

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the Government of India, as well as prominent leaders from the commercial space industry, industry stakeholders, venture capitalists, and market analysts.

"I must salute the visionary leadership that we have in both nations in India and the US for engaging in such an accord which looks at the moon as a sustainable place for all of us to come and work together," Somanath said in his remarks.

"The connection between the Indian partners and also the US partners in critical technologies and specifically in the space sector is really becoming stronger. And I'm very happy about that type of engagement and the options available to the industries and the US business indigenous to connect with India in the emerging space sector as well," he said.

Chinese military ends biggest, closest drills around Taiwan

BEIJING, May 25 (PTI)

THE Chinese military has ended its two-day joint drills surrounding Taiwan, stated to be the biggest and closest exercises held around the prosperous self-ruled island that China claims to be part of its mainland.

The drills on Thursday and Friday were held in retaliation to Taiwan's new President Lai Ching-te's remarks rejecting Beijing's sovereignty claims over the island and tested the Chinese People's Liberation Army's (PLA) ability to seize power.

China views Taiwan as a rebel province that must be reunified with the mainland even by force.



While there was no official announcement that the drills ended, the Chinese social media WeChat account of the PLA's Eastern Theatre Command on Saturday said the exercises lasted two days from Thursday. It said the exercises by land, navy, air force and missile forces were "punish-

ment" for "Taiwan separatists" and a "severe warning" to outside forces intent on interference and provocation.

The drills, called Joint Sword-2024A, involved "advancing", "besieging", "blockading", "attacking", "destroying" and "cutting off", the Hong Kong-based South China Morning

Post quoted the WeChat post.

Observers said the drills were the biggest and closest exercises ever held near Taiwan. Lieutenant Colonel Zhang Chi, an associate professor at the National Defence University of the PLA, told state broadcaster CCTV that such drills could become a new norm for the mainland, the Post reported.

State news agency Xinhua quoted Meng Xiangqing, from the same university, as saying the vessels involved in the exercises were "unprecedentedly close to the coast of Taiwan".

"It was also the first time that the mainland's coastguard vessels had entered waters near the islands of Wuqiu and Dongyin off northern Taiwan," he said.