

“If you believe you can, you might. If you know you can, you will.” Steve Maraboli

INTERNATIONAL AND BILATERAL**DELHI DIALOGUE**

10th edition of the Delhi Dialogue (DD X) was held in New Delhi. This is the first major event to be organized after the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit that was held in New Delhi in January 2018.

Theme: “Strengthening India-ASEAN Maritime Cooperation”.

It is a premier annual track 1.5 event to discuss politico-security, economic and socio-cultural engagement between India and ASEAN.

It has been held annually since 2009 and political leaders, policy makers, senior officials, diplomats, think tanks and academicians from both sides participate in the discussions pertaining to ASEAN-India relations.

It is aimed at finding a common ground and expanding the scope of cooperation between India and ASEAN nations.

India’s active participation in the region:

India’s focus on a strengthened and multi-faceted relationship with ASEAN is an outcome of the significant changes in the world’s political and economic scenario since the early 1990s and India’s own march towards economic liberalization.

Apart from ASEAN, India has taken other policy initiatives in the region that involve some members of ASEAN like BIMSTEC, MGC etc. India is also an active participant in several regional forums like the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), East Asia Summit (EAS), ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting + (ADMM+) and Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF).

ASEAN is our fourth largest trading partner and India is their seventh largest trading partner.

The South-East Asian region is economically very vibrant; this is a vibrant economic commercial space for India.

India’s investment in the last two decades has been \$70 billion. So, there is a lot of potential in engaging them further.

Many countries in the region have people of Indian origin among their citizens—most notably Malaysia and Singapore.

NATIONAL**NITI AAYOG NOD TO PANEL FOR DENOTIFIED, SEMI-NOMADIC, NOMADIC TRIBES**

The NITI Aayog has backed a proposal by a panel constituted by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment to set up a permanent commission for Denotified (DNT), Semi-Nomadic (SNT), and Nomadic Tribes (NT)

NITI Aayog has also offered to set up a working group to come up with policy suggestions on many issues of the communities found by the ministry panel to be the “most deprived”

The ministry has set up a panel under Bhiku Ramji Idate on DNT, SNT, and NT communities

The Idate Commission said such a permanent commission should have a prominent community leader as its chairperson, and a senior Union government bureaucrat, an anthropologist, and a sociologist as members

Some of the major recommendations of the panel include granting Constitutional protection to these communities under a separate third schedule after Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, making them eligible for reservation and extending the protective cover of Prevention of Atrocities Act to them.

Denotified, Semi-Nomadic and Nomadic Tribes:

Denotified tribes are those that were labelled as criminals through a legislation by the British government and were denotified post-independence

The Nomadic tribes maintain constant geographical mobility

Semi-nomads are those who are on the move but return to fixed habitation once a year, mainly for occupational reasons

The DNT, NT, SNT communities have been identified as the most marginalised by several commissions set up since Independence.

From these communities 90 percent or more members are landless.

WTO MAY UNMASK INDIA'S SPLIT PERSONALITY

Most countries are melting pots and, therefore, incapable of throwing up a singular, distinctive trait.

The sharp social and income divides—with a handful of global billionaires on one side and millions trapped in abject poverty on the other—or the dialectic between the nation's Constitution-based democratic traditions and an emergent autocracy, are seen as symptoms of the nation's conflicted personality.

The US, the world's trade malcontent, is pointing out India's flawed persona at WTO.

The US has complained to the WTO's dispute settlement body about India's export-related subsidies.

The complaints are about five specific schemes:

- export-oriented units scheme and sector-specific schemes, including the electronics hardware technology parks scheme
- the merchandise exports from India scheme
- the export promotion capital goods scheme
- special economic zones
- the duty-free imports for exporters programme

The US contends that India's export-related subsidies are inconsistent with the WTO's Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures (ASCM), specifically Section 3 that bars export-related subsidies.

Annexure-VII of the same agreement provides a list of developing countries, including India that cannot escape the provisions when their per capita gross national product (GNP) crosses \$1,000

India's per capita GNP crossed \$1,000 sometime ago

According to CEIC Data, India's GNP per capita was \$1,978 in 2017

India is not strategically prepared for the consequences—specifically in terms of alternative mechanisms to boost exports without subsidies

The special economic zone (SEZ) policy, for example, is clearly not WTO compliant, but there is no alternative scheme yet

India wants to achieve “a quantum jump in exports” through procedural stuff like digitization of ports or fewer tariff notifications

There is a need for a massive structural overhaul that can wean exporters off certain subsidies without affecting export performance

Way Forward

There is an intricate skein of moral and legal issues surrounding the dispute

On the moral plane, the US is resorting to what is known in development literature as “kicking away the ladder”—having extensively used similar benefits on its path to development, it now attempts to prevent other developing countries from catching up

On the legal side, India is likely to get some breathing time before dismantling the edifice of export-related subsidies

India's export growth—and hence GDP growth—faces many obstacles and it needs a strategic framework that can look and plan ahead

NEW RS 100 CURRENCY NOTE HIGHLIGHTING CULTURAL HERITAGE OF 'RANI-KI-VAV'

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will soon be releasing a new lavender Rs 100 currency note. The banknote highlights the rich and

diverse cultural heritage of India as it prominently displays a photograph of 'Rani-ki-vav' (The Queen's Stepwell), an 11th century architectural wonder.

'Rani-ki-vav':

Located in Gujarat's Patan, the 900-year-old structure is a major tourist attraction, a UNESCO World Heritage site, and was awarded as the cleanest iconic place in India in 2016. It is located on the banks of Saraswati River.

Rani-ki-Vav was built in the complex Maru-Gurjara architectural style. It highlights the sanctity of water as it is designed as an inverted temple under the earth's surface. The central theme is the Dasavataras, or ten incarnations of Vishnu, including Buddha. The avatars are accompanied by sadhus, brahmins, and apsaras (celestial dancers).

CRYPTOCURRENCIES WILL BOOST ILLEGAL TRANSACTIONS: RBI TO SC

The RBI recently said dealing in cryptocurrency will encourage illegal transactions.

Earlier also, the RBI has issued a circular prohibiting use of these virtual currencies.

Cryptocurrencies are "a stateless digital currency" in which encryption techniques are used for trading.

These currencies operate independently of a central bank like the RBI, "rendering it immune from government interference".

A committee has been set up by the Centre to deal with issues relating to cryptocurrencies.

The apex court had also sought the assistance of Attorney General K.K Venugopal in the matter.

The RBI, through its circular, had directed banks and financial institutions to freeze the bank accounts of those individuals and companies dealing in the illegal trade of virtual currencies.

One of the Petitioners gave directions to the Centre to take steps to restrain sale and purchase of illegal cryptocurrencies like Bitcoins. These currencies were being traded

openly for "illegal activities" like funding terrorism and insurgency.

UNION HOME MINISTER LAUNCHES THE STUDENT POLICE CADET (SPC) PROGRAMME

The Union Home Minister launched the Student Police Cadet (SPC) programme for nationwide implementation at a ceremony in Gurugram, Haryana.

The SPC programme focuses on students of Classes 8 & 9 and special care has been taken to ensure that it does not lead to increase in the workload of the students.

The programme does not have any prescribed textbook nor is any exam envisaged. Only one class in a month is proposed.

The programme seeks to cover broadly two kinds of topics, – crime prevention and control; and values and ethics.

The SPC programme would help in making students responsible citizens by inculcating values of respect to the elderly, discipline, social responsibility and through police-student interaction.

It will provide a healthy interface between schools and police peace and inculcate in the students aspects of public safety, discipline, patience, tolerance, empathy, respect of senior citizens, social harmony, traffic sense and a corruption-free environment.

SPC project will also help the police assess their image in the public eye and strive for improving confidence and winning trust of the people. SPC initially will be launched as pilot programme in all States and Union Territories.

INDIA TO EXPAND POLAR RESEARCH TO ARCTIC AS WELL

Three decades after its first mission to Antarctica, the government is refocusing priorities to the Arctic because of opportunities and challenges posed by climate change.

It has renamed the National Centre for Antarctic and Ocean Research (NCAOR) — since 1998, as the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research.

It's also in talks with Canada and Russia, key countries with presence in the Arctic Circle, to establish new observation systems, according to a source. Presently India only has one Arctic observation station near Norway.

Climate change was a decisive factor in India re-thinking priorities. Sea ice at the Arctic has been melting rapidly — the fastest in this century.

That means several spots, rich in hydrocarbon reserves, will be more accessible through the year via alternative shipping routes.

India is already an observer at the Arctic Council — a forum of countries that decides on managing the region's resources and popular livelihood.

India in 2015 set up an underground observatory, called IndARC, at the Kongsfjorden Fjord, half way between Norway and the North Pole.

Indian mission on the Arctic:

Himadri Station is India's first Arctic research station located at Spitsbergen, Svalbard, Norway. It is located at the International Arctic Research base, Ny-Ålesund.

It was inaugurated on the 1st of July, 2008 by the Minister of Earth Sciences. It is followed by IndARC.

The United States Geological Survey estimates that 22% of the world's oil and natural gas could be located beneath the Arctic.

ONGC Videsh has signed joint-venture with Russia for oil exploration there.

NEW SAFAR SYSTEM WITH AIR QUALITY EARLY WARNING SYSTEM

Union Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan unveiled a state-of-the-art Air Quality and Weather Forecast System— SAFAR (System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting) at Chandni Chowk in Delhi.

The giant true colour LED display gives out real-time air quality index on 24×7 basis with colour coding along with 72-hour advance forecast.

The system will be an integral part of India's first Air Quality Early Warning System operational in Delhi and will strengthen the existing air quality network of SAFAR.

The system, first of its kind in the country, was developed indigenously in record time by Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, Pune and operationalized by India Meteorological Department (IMD).

Based on the Air Quality Index on a particular day, Health advisory and related precaution will be notified to prepare citizens well in advance.

It will also measure the sun's UV-Index and will provide a measurement of online automatic ultrafine particles PM1 and Mercury, both of which have direct relevance to human health.

System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research (SAFAR):

Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES), Govt. of India, has introduced a major national initiative "SAFAR" for greater metropolitan cities of India to provide location-specific information on air quality in near real time and its forecast 1-3 days in advance for the first time in India

It was started under the plan scheme "Metropolitan Advisories for Cities for Sports, Tourism (Metropolitan Air Quality and Weather Services)

The SAFAR system is developed by Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, Pune, along with ESSO partner institutions namely India Meteorological Department (IMD) and National Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasting (NCMRWF)

The implementation of SAFAR is done with an active collaboration with local municipal corporations and various local educational institutions and governmental agencies in that Metro city.

It was started on a Pilot basis in the cities of Pune, Ahmadabad, New Delhi and Mumbai
