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**by Prashant Mavani**

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**12 Feb 2020**



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# Trump's visit

- US President **Donald Trump** will make his **first official visit** to India later this month.
- The trip will further **strengthen the US-India strategic partnership** and highlight the **strong and enduring bonds** between the American and Indian **people**.
- New Delhi, on its part, said Trump's **two-day, two-city visit** would further bolster the strategic partnership between the two democracies.
- Trump will be the **fourth consecutive US president** to visit India since Bill Clinton's trip in 2000.



- Clinton's successor, **George H.W. Bush**, visited in **2006** and Trump's predecessor, **Barack Obama**, came twice—in **2010** and **2015**.
- The visits are illustrative of how far ties between the two countries—once dubbed “**estranged democracies**” for the evident lack of warmth in ties—have progressed.
- India was once seen on the side of the erstwhile Soviet Union during the **Cold War years** and the US as an ally of Pakistan.
- “***Trump's decision shows continuity in US policy and that he himself attaches importance***” to ties with India, said Arun K. Singh, a former Indian ambassador to the US.

- Trump's visit has raised hopes that both countries will work out a **limited trade deal** to lessen India's trade surplus with the US.
- Once at **\$30 billion**, the **surplus** in India's favour has now **narrowed** to **\$16 billion**, said Indian government officials.
- **Bilateral trade** in 2018 stood at an estimated **\$142.1 billion**.
- Ahead of the visit, New Delhi is expected to approve a **\$2.6 billion** deal for **military helicopters** from US defence contractor Lockheed Martin Corp., an Indian official said.



# 24 MH-60R Seahawk helicopters







# Strategic Convergence on the Cards

Defence cooperation will be at the top of the agenda during President Donald Trump visit. The partnership has moved ahead in the past few years to include key pacts on secure communication and sharing of military logistics that open the possibility of joint operations in the near future. The Navy-Navy cooperation in particular has taken the front seat. On the acquisition side, India has procured the C 17 'Globemaster' and C 139J Hercules transporters, the Apache and Chinook helicopters among other equipment from the US. The following are in an advanced stage of discussion in the near future, reports **Manu Pubby**

**Naval Guns:** The Indian side is moving towards signing a deal to acquire 127 mm calibre ship mounted guns from the US under a government deal. The US Congress has approved the procurement of 13 of these for an estimated \$ 1 billion. The project is being seen as a priority for the Navy that needs these for under construction destroyers. This deal, to be signed with BAE Systems, could be inked in the coming financial year.

**Apache** In addition to the air force, which is inducting 22 of the Apache attack helicopters, the Army too is in line to acquire at least six, under a deal that is estimated at close to \$ 930 million. The contract can be inked when budgetary provision are made available to the Army.

## Naval Multi Role Helicopters (NMRH)

The proposal to purchase 24 of the advanced MH 60 'Romeo' choppers, which can be deployed from warships, is in the final stages of signing. The Navy considers these choppers extremely essential as their absence poses serious operational risks to warships at sea. The deal is valued at **\$ 2.6 billion**

## The Fighters' Pitch

US may pitch its combat jets for two major upcoming Indian acquisitions.

**Indian Air Force:** The US will be pitching its F 21 (a variant of the F 16) as well as the F/A 18 Super Hornet for an upcoming contest to supply 114 fighters under a Make in India deal.

**Indian Navy:** The requirement for 57 of modern aircraft carrier borne jets has seen a keen interest from the US that has its F/A 18 Super Hornet on offer.

## NASAMS II

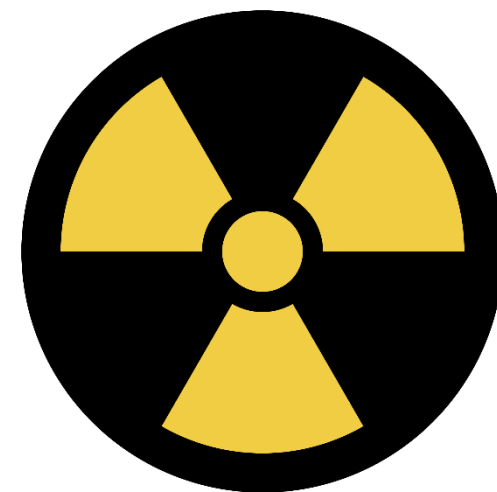
The National Advanced Surface to Air Missile System (NASAMS) is designed to protect the national capital from all incoming air threats. The US State Department has this week notified its Congress of a possible sale to India, valued at **\$ 1.8 billion**. The only hitch will be the price as the Indian side expected it to be below the **\$ 1 billion** mark



**P 8Is** The Navy has got permission to go ahead with a multi-billion dollar acquisition of six additional Boeing P 8 I maritime patrol aircraft that will add to its surveillance capabilities in the Indian Ocean Region.

- The helicopters are expected to be bought under a **government-to-government deal** through the US foreign military sales route.
- On Monday, the US State Department said it had approved an Indian request for an **Integrated Air Defence Weapon System** for an estimated \$1.87 billion.
- “The global strategic partnership between India and the US is based on **trust, shared values, mutual respect and understanding**, and marked by warmth and friendship between the peoples of the two countries,” the statement added.

- Coinciding with the announcement of Trump's trip was a visit by a delegation from the **US Nuclear Energy Institute** to India starting Monday.
- The mission will **hold meetings** with Indian officials to **discuss policy support for US nuclear exports to India**, besides promoting US products and services to Nuclear Power Corp. of India Ltd and other potential customers, the Nuclear Energy Institute said in a statement.





# FM: seven signs show 'green shoots'

- India's economic growth is estimated by the **National Statistical Office** to hit an **11-year low** of **5%** in 2019-20.
- The **International Monetary Fund** has projected growth to recover to **5.8%** in **2020-21**.
- FM Nirmala Sitharaman: claimed the **economy is on the mend**.



1. *Rising foreign direct investments (FDIs)*
2. *Foreign portfolio investments (FPIs)*
3. *Rebound in industrial activity*
4. *Rising Purchasing Managers' Index*
5. *Increasing forex reserves*
6. *Robust collections of the goods and services tax*
7. *Rising Sensex*

- Net **FDI inflow** in April-November was **\$24.4 billion**, higher than **\$21.2 billion** in the same period a year ago.
- Net **FPI inflows** during April-November jumped to **\$12.6 billion** from **\$8.7 billion** in the same period of the previous year.
- “The announcement of the national infrastructure pipeline will **increase FDI inflow** into the country even for brownfield projects.”
- **Factory output** made a modest recovery in November, growing at **1.8%** against a **contraction of 3.4%** in October.

- The manufacturing PMI also hit a near **eight-year high** of **55.3** in January, up from **52.7** in December.
- “The **forex reserves**, which have been built up from **\$413 billion by end of March 2019** to **\$466.69 billion by 24 January 2020**, reflect an increasing confidence in the Indian economy,” Sitharaman said.
- She said that between **April 2019** and **January 2020**, gross **GST** revenue **crossed ₹1 trillion six times**, pointing to increased economic activity.
- The finance minister also said the **Sensex** “**remained upbeat**”, rising 5.6% till 31 January from March-end 2019.



# Medical devices as Drugs

- Government issued a **final notification** to consider all **medical devices as drugs**.
- Bringing them under the **purview** of the drugs regulator and tightening regulations for them to improve safety and quality.
- All medical devices, including implants and contraceptives, will be brought under the lens of the **Central Drugs and Standard Control Organization (CDSCO)** in a phased manner starting **1 April**.
- Under medical devices rules, **low risk-devices** are inspected by **private notified bodies** while licenses were given by CDSCO.



- For **high-risk devices**, inspection and licensing are both done by **CDSCO**.
- “That structure will remain, but this notification will make enforcement of norms for medical devices more stringent and bring them on a par with drugs,” a senior government official said
- Currently, medical devices are classified under **four categories**.
  - Class A and B medical devices are low-risk ones like surgical dressing, alcohol swabs, thermometers, blood pressure monitoring devices among others.
  - Class C and D are high-risk devices like implants, hemodialysis catheters, angiographic guide wire and heart valve.

# Tourism

- Arrivals of **overseas** tourists in India and the country's foreign exchange earnings from them grew at the slowest pace in a decade in 2019.
- Tourism industry **experts** and **airline executives** attributed the **slowdown** to **multiple factors**, including **street protests** over the new citizenship law and elevated levels of **pollution** in northern India, including Delhi.
- Several countries had issued **travel advisories** to their citizens over both issues.
- About **10.89 million foreign** tourists visited India in **2019**, an increase of **3.1%** from the year before.





- The year before, arrivals grew **5.2%**, while in **2017, the expansion was 14%**.
- Foreign exchange earnings from inbound tourists increased **8.2% to ₹2.2 lakh crore** in the past year, compared with growth of **9.6% in 2018** and **15% in 2017**.
- In December, at least seven countries, including the **US, UK, Israel, Canada** and **Singapore** issued **travel advisories** cautioning their citizens planning to travel to India, especially to the north-eastern region which saw widespread protests against the CAA.

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