

**May 23<sup>rd</sup> news:**

**International:**

**US tightens Venezuela sanctions**

Venezuela faced growing international isolation and a deepening economic crisis following President Nicolas Maduro's contested re-election as the United States tightened the screws on his regime over a "sham" vote.

Washington's stern reaction further ratcheted up the pressure on the leftist Maduro, after the Lima Group's 14 mainly Latin American members moved to recall their ambassadors in protest at the opposition-boycotted vote

G20 countries Canada, Australia, Argentina, Mexico, Chile and the US said they would not recognize the result and would evaluate sanctions measures.

Branding the election "illegitimate," the six countries said on the sidelines of a G20 meeting in Buenos Aires that they were "considering possible political, diplomatic and financial sanctions against the authoritarian regime of Maduro."

The fresh mandate installs him in the presidency until 2025. But with Venezuela's long-suffering population enduring an economic crisis marked by food and medicine shortages, violent unrest and a mass exodus by hundreds of thousands, the vote was marred by historic 52 percent abstention, and boycotted by the Democratic Unity Roundtable (MUD) opposition coalition as a "farce."

Washington echoed that assessment, with Vice President Mike Pence denouncing the vote as a "sham" and "illegitimate."

**National:**

**Total income of 32 regional parties Rs 321 crore in 2016-17**

The Samajwadi Party (SP) earned an income of Rs 82.76 crore in 2016-17, the highest among regional parties recognised by the Election Commission and also spent the most that year, incurring an expenditure of Rs 147.1 crore, says a report released by the election watchdog, Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR).

To be sure, the magnitude of that expenditure can be directly correlated with the Uttar Pradesh assembly elections in early 2017.

The ADR report is based on the analyses of the total income and expenditure incurred by 32 of the 48 regional parties in financial year 2016-17, as declared by the parties in their income tax returns submitted to the EC.

Even though a November 2014 order of the EC makes it mandatory for parties to submit details of their audited reports, ADR says 16 regional parties did not comply with the order, the cutoff date for which was October 31, 2017.

Among the 16 parties are Aam Aadmi Party, All India Forward Bloc, Goa Forward Party, Hills State People's Democratic Party, Jammu and Kashmir National Conference, Karnataka Janta Paksha, Rashtriya Janata Dal, and United Democratic Party.

Parties that did not submit audit reports for 2015-16 include Indian National Lok Dal, Maharashtra Gomantak Party, Jammu & Kashmir People's Democratic Party, All India United Democratic Front, and Kerala Congress (M). HT could not reach out to AIUDF president Badruddin Ajmal. An INLD spokesperson said the party had submitted its details for 2014-15. NC didn't respond until the time of press.

As per the report the total income of all 32 regional parties for FY 2016-17, was Rs 321.03 crore. The richest party, the SP, was followed by the Telugu Desam Party (Rs 72.92 crore) and the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (Rs 48.88 crore).

#### **Bilateral:**

#### **Indians to benefit as UAE launches ten-year visa programme for 'exceptional talent'**

In a significant move to attract talent and investment, the United Arab Emirates has announced a slew of radical changes, including 10-year visas for specialists working in medicine, science, research and technical fields.

The UAE will now allow foreign companies to own 100 per cent of their business and students will be able to secure 5-year visas. 'Exceptional' graduates can stay for 10 years.

These are massive changes for the country with potentially far-reaching consequences, at a time when major developed countries like the US are putting up barriers in visas and immigration policy.

If these policies are implemented, Indians and Indian businesses will be key beneficiaries. At 2.8 million individuals, Indians are the largest expatriate community in the UAE. Professionally qualified personnel constitute at least 15 to 20 per cent of the community, followed by 20 per cent white-collar non-professionals (clerical staff, shop assistants, sales men and accountants).

The remaining 65 per cent comprises blue-collar workers.

According to the new rules announced, the UAE will also offer visas of up to 10-years for the families of specialists working in medicine, science, research and technical fields. Many Indian doctors and engineers would become a beneficiary of this move.

The new rules will also let foreign investors establishing a business or putting money in the country secure a visa of up to 10 years. Foreign companies will also be able to own 100 per cent of their business in the UAE. At present, they must offer an Emirati partner a substantial stake — 51 per cent, unless they're based in a free trade zone.

## **United States, India affirm their strategic partnership**

The United States and India affirmed their strategic partnership as Deputy Secretary of State John Sullivan met Minister of State for External Affairs VK Singh in Argentina. The meeting was held on the margins of the G-20 foreign ministers summit.

The State Department Spokesperson Heather Nauert said the two leaders affirmed the strong US-India strategic partnership and India's status as a Major Defense Partner of the United States.

During the meeting, Sullivan and Singh also discussed the agenda for the inaugural 2+2 ministerial dialogue to be hosted in the coming months. They also discussed opportunities to advance stability in Afghanistan and the region.

## **Science and Technology:**

### **BrahMos supersonic missile successfully test-fired**

The BrahMos supersonic cruise missile was successfully test-fired from an integrated test range in Odisha's coastal Balasore district for the second consecutive day on 22<sup>nd</sup> May, validating its strike capability

The missile was launched from a mobile autonomous launcher at 11.45 hours and it successfully flew in its pre-set trajectory "fulfilling its mission objectives"

Brahmos is a joint venture between India's DRDO and NPO Mashinostroyeniya (NPOM) of Russia. It has a maximum speed of Mach 2.8 to 3, and it is believed to be the one of the world's fastest cruise missiles currently in operational use.

It was successfully test-fired on 21<sup>st</sup> May from the integrated test range as part of service life extension programme. The life extension trial of BrahMos was conducted from a static inclined launcher, proving the efficacy and longevity of the system.

During 22<sup>nd</sup> May launch, the major sub-systems manufactured indigenously under the 'Make in India' initiative were tested

BrahMos has emerged as the ultimate weapon of choice in modern warfare with its unmatched speed and precision

DRDO chairman S Christopher congratulated the team involved in successful flight test, calling it a major milestone in the indigenisation of the BrahMos system.

The scientific advisor to the Defence Minister and DG (Missiles & Strategic Systems) G Satheesh Reddy congratulated the scientists for successfully developing the multiple sections of BrahMos and proving them in the mission.

The defence ministry said the missile has established itself as a major force multiplier in modern-day complex battlefields with its "impeccable" land-attack and anti-ship capabilities.

