

Headlines:

- **America, not Russia, is and will be India's Reliable Partner Post-Ukrainian War**
- **Breakthrough in Pak-IMF Bailout Talks, Loan Amount to be \$8bn**
- **US to Respond if China Puts Military Base on Solomon Islands: White House**

Details:

America, not Russia, is and will be India's Reliable Partner Post-Ukrainian War

It is the United States, and not Russia, which is and will be India's "reliable" partner post the war in Ukraine, the Biden Administration pitched on Thursday, asserting that it is ready to go the extra mile to meet New Delhi's defence and national security needs. "I think there are real doubts about Russia's ability to be a reliable partner for the foreseeable future. Because Russia is burning through a tremendous amount of its own military equipment. So, it faces urgent resupply needs of its own," US State Department Counsellor Derek Chollet told PTI in an interview. Of the rank of Under Secretary of State and a senior policy advisor to US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Chollet said the Biden administration is very much eager to work with India as it diversifies its defence capabilities and defence suppliers. "We very much want to be part of that. We're doing much more than we've ever done in the history of our relationship together in terms of defence. And so, as India's seeking to acquire new capabilities, the United States very much wants to be a partner with India in that effort," he said. Chollet argued that the military equipment being supplied by Russia has shown it is lacking in capability. "The difficulty of doing business with Russia is only going to grow over time. It's become much harder given all the sanctions placed on Russia in the last 12 weeks," he said. "Also, the export control against Russia... Russia's inability to import key technologies to be able to make certain products, including some of its military hardware, are going to mean that it's going to have a hard time even getting the capability to replace or to produce this kind of material. So, any way you look at it in terms of actual capability, in terms of the difficulty of doing business with Russia, in terms of the reputation costs associated, Russia is just a far less attractive partner," he said. However, Chollet evaded a direct answer to the question on the US deploying its Seventh Fleet to the Bay of Bengal in December 1971 during the India-Pakistan War, which many in India say is a symbol of the US also not being a reliable partner when needed. "The US has shown throughout the course of this conflict, something we believe deeply, that we are a very reliable partner. If you think back...The United States made the decision to start sharing some of the most sensitive intelligence that we had about Russia's planning and intentions when it came to Ukraine, our effort to share as much information as we possibly could with our friends and allies around the world in the spirit of being a reliable partner and in trying to bring the world and make them together and to make them aware of what we were seeing and try to create a unified effort," he said. Chollet asserted that the India-US relationship has not been impacted by the Ukrainian war. "Russia's invasion of Ukraine has not impacted the relationship between the US and India. The US-India relationship is deep, it's strong," he said, adding that it has bipartisan support in Washington. "Obviously, we have talked with our Indian friends about everything from votes in the UN to the defence relationship with Russia. It was a topic of conversation at 2+2 (ministerial meeting) recently, but we fully understand the position that India is in given its long-standing defence relationship with Russia," he said. [Source: Zee News]

In America's quest to retain supremacy in Eurasia, India is quickly becoming an important pillar in Biden's geostrategic ambitions. America wants a protracted war in Ukraine to sap Russia's strength and weaken it economically and militarily. At the same time, America wants to strengthen India to counter China's ascendancy, especially as Washington increases pressure on China to change its behaviour in the Asian Pacific.

What a US wants is a new balance of power arrangement, that sees the US retain its position in Europe and the Asian Pacific as the default power controlling security.

Breakthrough in Pak-IMF Bailout talks, Loan Amount to be \$8bn

Pakistan and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have agreed, in principle, to extend the stalled bailout programme by up to one year and increase the loan size to \$8 billion, giving markets the much-needed stability and a breathing space to the new government. The understanding has been reached between Finance Minister Dr Miftah Ismail and IMF Deputy Managing Director Antoinette Sayeh in Washington, sources told The Express Tribune on Sunday. Subject to the final modalities, the IMF has agreed that the programme will be extended by another nine months to one year as against the original end-period of September 2022, the sources added. The size of the loan would be increased from the existing \$6 billion to \$8 billion – a net addition of \$2 billion, a senior government functionary requesting anonymity said. The IMF is expected to issue a statement on Monday (today) in this regard. The previous PTI-led government and the IMF had signed a 39-month Extended Fund Facility (July 2019 to September 2022) with a total value of \$6 billion. However, the previous government failed to fulfil its commitments and the programme remained stalled for most of the time as \$3 billion remained undisbursed. [Express Tribune]

The extension of the bailout programme will come at a huge price. Khan's subsidy programme will be rolled back by the new government, energy and petrol prices will reach new heights. In sum, IMF will continue to erode Pakistan's economic sovereignty, which will be used by Washington to reshape the country's domestic and foreign policy.

US to Respond if China Puts Military Base on Solomon Islands: White House

The United States warned Friday it would “respond accordingly” if China installs a military base on the strategic Solomon Islands after the tiny Pacific state signed a security pact with Beijing. The White House said a high-level US delegation had told the leadership of the Solomon Islands that the recently signed pact has “potential regional security implications” for Washington and its allies. “If steps are taken to establish a de facto permanent military presence, power-projection capabilities, or a military installation, the delegation noted that the United States would then have significant concerns and respond accordingly,” the White House said. National Security Council Indo-Pacific Coordinator Kurt Campbell and Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Daniel Kritenbrink led the delegation, also including Pentagon officials, to the US state of Hawaii, then Fiji, Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands this week. The Solomons stop came right after China confirmed sealing a wide-ranging security pact seen in Washington as part of a battle for diplomatic influence and strategic positioning across the Pacific and its trade routes. Solomons Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare has sought to reassure Washington and close ally Australia that the China deal does not include establishing any military base. According to the White House statement, “Sogavare reiterated his specific assurances that there would be no military base, no long-term presence, and no power projection capability, as he has said publicly.” “The United States emphasized that it will follow developments closely in consultation with regional partners,” the statement said. During a 90-minute meeting with Sogavare and two dozen members of his cabinet and senior staff, the US officials discussed expedited opening of a US embassy, healthcare assistance, vaccine deliveries and increased “people-to-people ties,” the White House said. [Source: News Al-Arabiya].

With Russia preoccupied with Ukraine and China unable to pick sides, Washington is proceeding full steam ahead to make China its next target.