

Headlines:

- **UAE Suspends Discussions with US on F-35 Sale over Sovereignty Concerns**
- **US says Mission in Afghanistan Failed as Pakistan Offered 'Safe Haven' to Taliban**
- **Putin Hails Model Russia-China Relations in Xi Call**

Details:

UAE Suspends Discussions with US on F-35 Sale over Sovereignty Concerns

The UAE is suspending discussions with the US government to acquire F-35 fighter jets over “sovereignty operational restrictions”, an Emirati official said on Tuesday. Speaking on condition of anonymity, the UAE official said discussions over the sale, part of a \$23 billion deal that also includes drones and other advanced munitions, are on hold as the country reassesses requirements. “The UAE has informed the US that it will suspend discussions to acquire the F-35,” the official said. “Technical requirements, sovereign operational restrictions and cost-benefit analysis led to the reassessment.” The official, however, remained cautiously optimistic before a US-UAE defence dialogue on Wednesday that these issues can be resolved at a future date. “The UAE and the US were working towards an understanding that would address mutual defence security conditions for the acquisition. The US remains the UAE’s preferred provider for advanced defence requirements and discussions for the F-35 may be reopened in the future,” the official said. The outstanding issue, a person with knowledge of the deal told The National, is not related to the UAE’s ties with China but rather to sovereignty matters in the deal that the UAE has raised and that the two sides are trying to resolve. A US State Department official said President Joe Biden's administration remains committed to the sale. “The Biden-Harris administration remains committed to the proposed sales of F-35 aircraft, the MQ-9B [drone] and munitions even as we continue consultations to ensure that we have a clear, mutual understanding of Emirati obligations and actions before, during and after delivery,” the official told The National. “We are hopeful that we can work through any outstanding issues and we look forward to the US-UAE Joint Military Dialogue later this week.” Pentagon spokesman John Kirby emphasised the strategic nature of the US-UAE relationship. [Source: The National]

The US quickly created obstacles in the F35 deal after it had achieved peace between the UAE and the Jewish state. It is difficult to see the US sharing such advance technology given UAE’s close technology partnership with China. And even if a deal is hammered out the UAE will receive degraded F-35.

US says Mission in Afghanistan Failed as Pakistan Offered 'Safe Haven' to Taliban

Democrat Senator Robert Menendez on Tuesday accused Pakistan of double-dealing and said that the US mission in Afghanistan failed as Islamabad offered a “safe haven” to the Taliban. Menendez called for a serious conversation with the Imran Khan-led Pakistan government on the path forward in bilateral relations. Menendez welcomed Blome’s nomination as the new US Ambassador to Pakistan amid “challenging moment” in the US-Pakistan bilateral relationship. “Islamabad offered a safe haven to the Taliban even as its militants targetted and killed US troops. We need to have a serious conversation with the Pakistani Government in our path forward,” New Jersey Senator Menendez, who was

chairing the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, said as quoted by ANI. Notably, the tensions between Washington and Islamabad have soared in recent days after Pakistan decided to boycott the 'Democracy Summit' organised by US President Joe Biden. It is believed that Pakistan declined the United States' invitation for the Democracy Summit under pressure from China, which was not invited by Washington. Additionally, following the Taliban takeover of Kabul, the US had also announced that it is going to be looking at its ties with Pakistan in a bid to formulate the role America wants Islamabad to play in the future of the war-ravaged nation. When asked about how Washington sees Islamabad's involvement in Afghanistan, US State Secretary Antony Blinken in September said that Pakistan has a "multiplicity of interests" including some that are in "clear conflict" with that of the US. Blinken added that India's involvement in the war-torn nation has influenced some "detrimental" actions by Pakistan. [Source: Republican.Com].

It is evident that the US is not happy with Pakistan's role in Afghanistan. This also explains why the next IMF tranche is delayed, as the US piles more pressure on Islamabad to change policy.

Putin Hails Model Russia-China Relations in Xi Call

President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday hailed Russia's model relations with China in a call with Chinese leader Xi Jinping and confirmed he would attend Beijing's Olympics, as both countries face increasing criticism from the West. The video call came days after G7 foreign ministers discussed Moscow's sabre-rattling against Ukraine and Beijing's crackdowns in Hong Kong and Xinjiang. "In February we will finally be able to meet in person in Beijing," Putin said in a national television broadcast of the conversation after he said he would attend the Games, calling Xi his "dear friend". The United States, Britain, Canada and Australia are not sending political representatives to the Olympics over China's abuse of Uyghurs and other mostly Muslim minorities in Xinjiang. Beijing and Moscow denounced the diplomatic boycott and Putin on Wednesday said both leaders opposed "any attempt to politicise sport and the Olympic movement", a criticism Russia has repeatedly levelled at the West. Both China and Russia have seen their relationship with Western nations deteriorate in recent years and have sought to project a more unified front. On Wednesday, Putin told Xi that "a new model of cooperation has been formed between our countries" that includes a "determination to turn our common border into a belt of eternal peace and good-neighbourliness". "I consider these relations to be a real model for inter-state cooperation in the 21st century," the Russian leader said. After the call, the Kremlin's top foreign policy adviser Yury Ushakov said that the conversation between "two great friendly states" had lasted 90 minutes and was "very positive". "Both stated that the relationship had reached an unprecedented high level," he told reporters. The talks came after both Russia and China were pointedly left out of US President Joe Biden's democracy summit last week. The US and its allies have for weeks accused Russia of planning an invasion of its ex-Soviet neighbour Ukraine, warning of massive coordinated sanctions should Putin launch an attack. Tens of thousands of Russian troops are stationed near Ukraine, where the West has accused the Kremlin of backing pro-Moscow separatists since 2014. [Source: France24].

America faces a huge dilemma in applying pressure on both Russia and China. Rather than driving a wedge between the two countries, US policy is driving both countries closer together.