

ARMS CONTROL

White House issues fact sheets on Obama's India visit

The White House has issued a series of fact sheets about the US-India "strategic relationship (that) encompasses a range of issues, activities, and programmes that reflect the vision of President (Barack) Obama and Prime Minister (Manmohan) Singh".

Extracts from the fact sheets:

Export Controls: Manmohan Singh and Obama agreed to take mutual steps to implement a four-part export control reform programme, including: support for India's membership in the multilateral export control regimes, removing India's defence and space-related entities from the US "Entity List;" export licensing policy realignment, and export control cooperation.

Partnership for an Evergreen Revolution: Manmohan Singh and Obama agreed to work together to develop, test, and replicate transformative technologies to extend food security in India as part of an "Evergreen Revolution". These efforts will benefit farmers and consumers in India, the US, and around the globe, and will extend food security in India, Africa and globally.

Counterterrorism Cooperation: Since the first bilateral discussions on counterterrorism in 2000, counterterrorism cooperation has become a pillar of the US-India relationship. In the aftermath of the Mumbai terrorist attacks, the US and India resolved to deepen collaborative efforts, and intensify exchanges, culminating in the signing of the Counterterrorism Cooperation Initiative (CCI) in July 2010.

Civil Space Cooperation: Obama and Manmohan Singh agreed to scale-up joint

US-India civil space collaboration, including space exploration, earth observation, and scientific education.

Clean Energy and Climate Change: Manmohan Singh and Obama reaffirmed their countries' strong commitment to taking vigorous action to address climate change, ensure mutual energy security, and build a clean energy economy that will drive investment, job creation, and economic growth throughout the 21st century.

Cybersecurity: Recognising the importance of cybersecurity, the US and India are advancing efforts to work together to promote a reliable information and communications infrastructure and the goal of free, fair, and secure access to cyberspace.

CEO Forum: Recognising the vital role bilateral commerce plays in the global strategic partnership, Obama and Manmohan Singh highlighted the importance of the US-India CEO Forum and the progress made in implementing its recommendations.

Defence Cooperation: The US-India defence relationship has grown from solely military-to-military links into a mature partnership that encompasses dialogues, exercises, defence sales, professional military education exchanges, and practical cooperation.

US-India Economic and Financial Partnership: Since the launch of the new US-India Economic and Financial Partnership in April 2010, the two governments have institutionalised deeper bilateral relations on economic and financial sector issues. These efforts include a macroeconomic dialogue and financial sector and infrastructure working groups.

Education: Obama and Manmohan Singh are committed to an expanding, dynamic, and

comprehensive education partnership, including expanding academic exchanges, developing university and school linkages, and holding a US-India Education Summit.

Entrepreneurs Roundtable: This event introduced the president to the next generation of Indian entrepreneurs and showcased innovative partnerships between US and Indian businesses that are creating new markets for US-manufactured technologies.

The National Export Initiative: As part of the National Export Initiative, Obama noted that India-with its tremendous economic growth and its large and growing middle class-is a key market for US exports. On the margins of the president's trip, trade transactions were announced or showcased, exceeding \$14.9 billion in total value with \$9.5 billion in US export content, supporting an estimated 53,670 US jobs.

Indian Investment in the US: As the US-India economic relationship deepens, investment from India contribute to the growth and vibrancy of the American economy and in the creation of jobs in the US. Over the last decade, investment capital from India grew at an annualised rate of 53 percent reaching an estimated \$4.4 billion in 2009.

Nuclear Security: The US and India signed a memorandum of understanding that provides a general framework for cooperative activities in working with India's Global Centre for Nuclear Energy Partnership, which India announced at the 2010 Nuclear Security Summit.

Deepening US-India Strategic Ties: Manmohan Singh and Obama renewed their commitment to expand cooperation on strategic issues facing the US and India and agreed to deepen and broaden strategic consultations on core foreign policy issues of mutual concern.

US-India Development Collaboration in Afghanistan: Obama and Manmohan Singh agreed to collaborate closely to assist the people of Afghanistan by identifying opportunities to leverage the two countries' relative strengths, experience and resources. The collaboration will focus on agricultural development and women's empowerment, where Afghanistan's needs are great.

Securing the Air, Sea, and Space Domains: Obama and Manmohan Singh agreed that in an increasingly interconnected world, it is vital to safeguard areas of the sea, air, and space beyond national jurisdiction to ensure the security and prosperity of nations.

Source: <http://www.hindustantimes.com/White-House-issues-fact-sheets-on-Obama-s-India-visit/Article1-623799.aspx>

DISARMAMENT

Nato's new strategic concept calls for dramatic change in alliance priorities

Nato leaders have backed a new strategic concept for the transatlantic alliance that shifts its priorities from defending Europe against Cold War adversary Russia to focus against new, unconventional threats.

Anders Fogh Rasmussen, Nato's secretary-general, said the alliance would have to "develop modern capabilities to deal with modern threats".

The strategic concept - updated every 10 years and released yesterday - acknowledges that that the threat of a "conventional military attack against Nato territory is low".

Instead terrorism, the use of biological, chemical and radiological weapons, nuclear and ballistic missile proliferation, cyber-attacks, and conflicts that could disrupt

energy and trade routes are at the forefront of Nato fears.

Building on lessons from Afghanistan, the strategic concept calls on Nato to "further develop doctrine and military capabilities for expeditionary operations, including counter-insurgency, stabilisation and reconstruction".

It also gives special priority to efforts to develop a strategic relationship with Russia.

Mr Rasmussen said the Lisbon summit would work to bring about a "fresh start" in relations.

Dmitry Medvedev, Russia's president, is to meet alliance leaders today to discuss Russia's possible participation in a Nato ballistic missile defence shield designed to prevent attacks from potential nuclear adversaries such as Iran.

In return Russia will seek Nato action against Afghan opium fields.

"In light of the reluctance to destroy the poppy fields, you can ask yourself why Nato's troops are there at all," said Viktor Ivanov, the head of Russia's drug control agency.

17,000 munitions in 4 months: Op Saiyam is a test of patience

It was a disaster waiting to happen. For six years, five containers of munition - a mix of ammunition and war material - weighing nearly 50 tonnes lay dangerously unattended at two dry ports in Dhandri Kalan in Ludhiana. Seized by the Customs Department, the war scrap is part of the same consignment that caused a massive blast at Bhushan Steel Industry in Ghaziabad in 2004.

Imported from Gulf countries in the garb of metal scrap by nine firms located in Mandi Gobindgarh and Ludhiana to be recycled into

steel, the war scrap has been found to contain mainly mortar bombs, projectiles, grenades, rockets, detonators and artillery shells with no traces of any chemical weapons. The process of its disposal has finally begun with the Army employing sophisticated remotely operated vehicles (ROVs) to segregate the war scrap, given the potential hazard involved.

Operation Saiyam kick-started on November 10 with 202 Bomb Disposal Company of the Army executing the disposal at a site in Mattiwara Reserve Forest area near Ludhiana. The containers were first transported at night from the Dry Port to the disposal site located 43km away. "It was a daunting task due to the potential danger to population residing enroute," said Maj Gen VK Bhatt, Chief Engineer, Western Command, Chandimandir and overall in-charge of the command and control of the operation.

The disposal of the scrap has been divided into three phases - holding, segregation and demolition. "After the ROV has segregated the scrap, the same is shifted to the demolition area where the bomb disposal unit has made safe and secure sites for detonation," said Lt Col Vinod Bhat, Commanding Officer, 202 Bomb Disposal Company, who is leading the disposal operations on site. Bulldozers and excavator-loaders are also in use.

It has taken the bomb disposal unit a few months to prepare for the operation and the work group comprises two officers, three Junior Commissioned Officers and 35 other ranks.

The villages near the area - Shekonwal, Kalewal and Haider Nagar have had to be evacuated. "The total number of munitions is approximately 17,000. Given the enormity, we don't want to take a chance. The police and the civil administration have

been roped in to cordon off the area every day," said the Commanding Officer.

So far, 875 munitions have been destroyed. "It's a long drawn operation but of immediate importance," said the Chief Engineer. For security and safety aspects, a joint Police and Army Control Centre has been established at the site.

"The villagers have complained of harassment due to the nature of operation resulting in day to day evacuations. Keeping that in mind, we have made alterations in the timings. Also, from November 24 to 28, there will be no demolitions as there are marriages scheduled in these villages," said Lt Col Bhat. The Army is hoping to complete Operation Saiyam in a maximum of four months' time. The estimated cost of the operation is over Rs 1 crore and it will be recovered from the importers of this consignment.

A requisition for the disposal of the munition was first received by the Army from the Punjab Government in June 2004. Since then, the preparations for Operation Saiyam were carried out but it was called off four times. "That was mostly because the civil administration failed to seek clearances from the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Environment. Other requirements, such as grant of battle casualty status delayed it further," said Maj Gen Bhatt. With the Punjab and Haryana High Court issuing directives to speed up the process, the first set of demolitions were carried out on November 16 and will continue till the entire scrap has been safely disposed of.

Source: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstoppers/politics/defence/8148154/Natos-new-strategic-concept-calls-for-dramatic-change-in-alliance-priorities.html>

Global Campaign to Destroy Chemical Weapons Passes 60 Percent Mark

The destruction of chemical weapons that have been declared to the OPCW by States Parties under the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) has surpassed 60 percent of global stockpiles, according to data reported today by the OPCW Technical Secretariat in The Hague.

The Technical Secretariat has now verified the destruction of approximately 41,692 metric tonnes, or 60.05 percent, of all Category 1 chemical weapons that have been declared by seven possessor States since the Convention's entry into force on 29 April 1997.

"Reaching this milestone is surely the OPCW's main achievement to date, bringing us ever closer to realizing the vision of a world free of these horrific weapons," said the OPCW Director-General, Ambassador Rogelio Pfirter. "The strong commitment shown by the possessor States in fulfilling their obligations proves that complete chemical disarmament under the terms of the Convention is indeed an attainable goal, and has made a significant contribution to international peace and security."

Three of the possessor States - Albania, India, and a State Party that requests anonymity - have already completed destruction of their chemical weapons. The two countries with the largest stockpiles, the Russian Federation and United States of America, have met their intermediate destruction deadlines set by the Convention and are accelerating their activities. The Russian Federation has destroyed nearly 48 percent of its stockpiles to date and the United States just over 75 percent; however, both countries have confirmed that they will not complete destruction of their weapons before the 29 April 2012 deadline.

The two most recently declared possessor States – Iraq, which joined the Convention in 2009, and the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, which joined in 2004 – have yet to begin destruction activities.

The Chemical Weapons Convention is the first and only treaty that is designed to eliminate an entire category of weapons of mass destruction under a stringent regime of inspections to verify compliance. Since its entry into force in 1997 the Convention has attracted 188 States Parties representing more than 98% of the world's population and chemical industry. The OPCW Technical Secretariat currently commits 85% of its inspection resources to monitoring and verifying the destruction of chemical weapons stockpiles and their associated production facilities.

Source: <http://www.opcw.org/news/article/global-campaign-to-destroy-chemical-weapons-passes-60-percent-mark/>

Media Update: Third Exercise on the Delivery of Assistance (ASSISTEX 3)

From 11-15 October 2010 the OPCW will conduct its third exercise on the delivery of assistance and protection to States Parties against the use of chemical weapons. The exercise, ASSISTEX 3, is being jointly planned with the Government of Tunisia and will be held at the 7 November Sport Complex at Rades, in Tunis.

Members of the international media are invited to observe the second day of the Live Exercise phase of ASSISTEX 3 on Thursday, 14 October 2010.

The scenario for this multilateral exercise will focus on the OPCW's response to a request for assistance by a State Party that has been threatened and attacked with chemical weapons. Participants will include specialised

teams from Denmark, France, India, Italy, Libya, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, Tunisia, Turkey and the United Kingdom, together with personnel from the OPCW Technical Secretariat in The Hague and UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Media programme

The ASSISTEX 3 media programme on 14 October will take place at the 7 November Sport Complex in Rades, beginning with a pre-briefing on ground rules at 08.30 and concluding at 16:00, with lunch and beverages provided on-site. The two main programme elements will be:

1. Tour of the exercise grounds with access to all activities for audiovisual filming and to technical experts who will explain the content and purpose of each activity.
2. Informal briefing by the OPCW Director-General, Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü of Turkey.

There will also be a VIP demonstration exercise and closing ceremony on Friday 15 October, followed by a concluding press conference at 15:00.

Source: <http://www.opcw.org/news/article/media-update-third-exercise-on-the-delivery-of-assistance-assistex-3/>

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

A first of its Kind for India: National Authority for Chemical Weapons Convention gets ISO 9001 Certification Commended by OPCW

This is part of Prime Minister's efforts to enhance administrative efficiency and

accountability of Government departments. The National Authority for Chemical Weapons Convention (NACWC), a part of Cabinet Secretariat has been commended by the premier world body, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) on getting ISO 9001:2008, Certificate. This is part of Prime Minister's efforts to enhance administrative efficiency and accountability of Government departments. The award is in recognition of the highly successful performance of the National Authority. India's Ambassador to Netherlands Ms. Bhaswati Mukherjee presented a copy of the certificate to the Director General Of the OPCW at a function in Hague on Thursday. The Director General of the OPCW, Mr. Ahmad Uzumen said that the Indian example is a role model for other countries. Australian representative Josey Meyers lauded India's role and said it will ensure high quality outputs from the National Authority. US Ambassador and Permanent Representative to OPCW ,Dr. Robert Mikulak has hailed it as an impressive achievement.

At a function organized on the sidelines of the 15th Conference of the States Parties, the Chairman of National Authority and other members of the Indian delegation made a presentation on the aim, objectives and process for obtaining the ISO 9001 certification by Bureau Veritas, world's leading certification body based in France. It was very well attended by over 70 participants from different Regional Groups including those from Africa . At least 15 Ambassadors including the Ambassadors from Netherlands, United States, Italy, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and several African countries were present. Indian embassy in Netherlands has already received may requests already regarding future technical assistance that can be provided by National Authority.

The ISO 9001 Certificate makes the National Authority for Chemical Weapons Convention (NACWC) the first among all 188 member nations of OPCW to attain this distinction. It is also the first Government of India department to have qualified for ISO 9001:2008 certification. . The Cabinet Secretary, Mr. K. M. Chandrasekhar, who is leading the reform effort in the Government, has asked other government departments to follow the example of his department. It is part of Cabinet Secretariat's integrated policy of performance management in Government. The integrated system for defining, documenting, improving, communicating and auditing of processes has already led to considerable improvements in the operations of the Indian National Authority both in quantitative and qualitative terms. The Indian delegation has been approached by several countries including Japan, Sri Lanka, Italy, Kenya, Uganda, etc. for information and technical assistance for obtaining similar certification for their respective national authorities.

Source: <http://pib.nic.in/release/release.asp?relid=68077>

Russia to Destroy Chemical Arsenal Prior to 2015, Official Says

A high-ranking Russian official on Tuesday said his country would finish disposing of its chemical weapons arsenal before 2015, Interfax reported .

Moscow acknowledged in June it would not be able to meet the Chemical Weapon Convention's April 2012 deadline for the complete destruction of all chemical warfare materials.

"A decision has nearly been made to extend the program until 2015. All commitments will have been fulfilled by this time," said

Valery Kapashin, who leads the Federal Directorate for the Safe Storage and Destruction of Chemical Weapons..

The global recession and technical difficulties have negatively impacted Russia's ability to meet the 2012 deadline, according to published reports.

Most member nations to the convention-monitoring Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons recognize the challenges facing the Russian disarmament effort, the Russian Foreign Ministry said.

Russia at one time possessed the world's largest stockpile of chemical warfare materials — 40,000 metric tons. As of the beginning of September, nearly 50 percent of the arsenal had been eliminated.

Source: http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20101118_5924.php

Vietnam still poisoned by US chemical weapons

The side-effects of the Vietnam War are destroying thousands of lives, with many Vietnamese saying no amount of US compensation can give them back their health.

-Vietnam may be one of only five socialist states in the world, but its economic progress is notable.

Business is booming, high rise offices sprout up everywhere, and the people have opportunities to improve their lives.

However thousands of Vietnamese struggle, and not for financial reasons.

The saying 'all is fair in love and war' has been used to justify many military decisions. But when, during the Vietnam War, the United States began deploying a new chemical weapon they named Agent Orange,

not many could have predicted that those who will suffer from it most will not be soldiers on the battlefields, but their children, most of whom were not even born at the time.

Vu Thi Huong is 34 years old, but you would never guess her age by looking at her. Born blind and with many severe physical difficulties, she is fed and bathed by her parents to this day.

However, her life was taken away from her before she was even born.

"My daughter was born blind, and we didn't know why until we took her to the hospital in 1981 and the doctors did some blood tests. That's when they said she was affected by Agent Orange. It's very difficult, taking care of her — because she is completely helpless, completely dependent on us," says Vu Thang Kim, Thi Huong's father and a war veteran.

For a decade, American jets dispersed 80 million litres of the new herbicide over the territory of Vietnam.

Operation Ranch Hand did not win the war, but did achieve its goal of destroying tens of millions of hectares of agricultural fields, and also exposed nearly 5 million people to its deadly poison.

Half a million children in Vietnam were born with severe physical and mental disabilities — all because of Agent Orange.

Neither the US government nor the chemical companies that made the herbicide have paid a single cent in compensation to those whose lives were destroyed by their work.

Their only relief has come from the Vietnamese Government and various international organizations like the Red Cross, who set up the so-called Peace Villages.

In these settlements, affected children get their chance to live a life with as much normality as their conditions allow.

They study in a school on site, play with friends living in the nearby village and get medical and physical treatment from doctors.

But not many of them will ever grow to be fully independent and self-sufficient adults.

“Even if the United States paid some compensation for what they did...no money can give my daughter her life back. Nothing can pay for this pain,” Vu Thang Kim says.

Source: <http://rt.com/news/vietnam-war-chemical-weapons/>

Head of MI6 warns of biological, chemical weapons

In the first public speech given by the head of the British intelligence services, Secret Intelligence Service chief John Sawers said on October 28 that terrorists may yet hit the West with a devastating blow, but that the real threat remains biological, chemical and nuclear weapons proliferation by states.

“The dangers of proliferation of nuclear weapons and chemical and biological weapons are more far-reaching,” Sawers, whose century-old service is popularly known as MI6, said, according to Reuters. “It can alter the whole balance of power in a region.”

Sawers gave the comments to the Society of Editors media group at the Thomas Reuters London offices. He said the risks of failure in confronting countries like Iran are grim, according to Reuters.

“Terrorism is difficult enough, and despite our collective efforts, an attack may well get

through,” Sawers said, Reuters reports. “The human cost would be huge. But our country, our democratic system, will not be brought down by a typical terrorist attack.”

Sawers defended the secrecy of British intelligence, particularly that of MI-6, and its ties to Muslim countries that have poor human rights records. His comments came in the wake of the Wikileaks website whistleblowing that demonstrated how coalition forces ignored torture by Iraqi security forces.

“We are the secret frontline of our national security,” Sawers said. “Secrecy is not a dirty word. Secrecy is not there as a cover up. Secrecy plays a crucial part in keeping Britain safe.

“We have to deal with the world as it is...We can’t do our job if we work only with friendly democracies. Dangerous threats usually come from dangerous people in dangerous places.”

Source: <http://www.bioprepwatch.com/news/219118-head-of-mi6-warns-of-biological-chemical-weapons>

Powder-Filled Envelopes Sent to Israeli Lawmakers

Four ultra-Orthodox lawmakers in Israel this week received hate mailings delivered in envelopes containing a suspicious white powder, Agence France-Presse reported.

The head of the ultra-Orthodox Shas party, Interior Minister Eli Yishai, also received one of the letters, said Israeli police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld.

“A white powder found inside has been sent to the lab and we are awaiting the results of testing,” Rosenfeld said.

A number of Knesset members received suspicious envelopes this week, Knesset spokesman Giora Fordes said.

“Four MPs from the United Torah Judaism party received threatening letters, two today [Monday] and two yesterday,” Fordes said.

“In one of them was powder — sugar, salt, something like that,” he said, adding the letters were critical of the divisive policy that grants ultra-Orthodox Israelis pursuing religious studies a waiver from mandatory military service.

“We, the enlightened residents of the State of Israel, demand that you people of darkness stop living at our expense, learning all day and not working, not serving in the army or reserve duty,” the *Jerusalem Post* quoted one of the letters as stating.

Source: http://www.globalsecuritynews.wire.org/gsn/nw_20101123_7110.php

Advanced Training Course for Personnel from National Authorities in Asia Held in Singapore

A 4-day Advanced Training Course for Personnel from National Authorities in Asia took place in Singapore from 1 to 4 June 2010. A total of 23 participants from 21 States Parties in the Asia-Pacific region participated in the training.

The course was organised by the OPCW in cooperation with Singapore Customs, which is the National Authority for the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), and was the first of its kind conducted on a regional basis. The course provided training to personnel with experience of working in National

Authorities and dealing in particular with Article VI declarations and inspection-related issues.

The course included a number of practical exercises and scenario discussions for the collection of relevant information in preparing Article VI declarations; the application of thresholds in the Verification Annex of the CWC and subsequent decisions of the policy making organs of the OPCW to make accurate Article VI declarations; the availability of different tools that the National Authorities could use to widen the scope of their efforts to collect relevant data at a national level; and the monitoring and collection of data for the import-export of scheduled chemicals.

An important element of the course was to provide practical training through a mock inspection exercise, including a detailed preparatory session devoted to the conduct of OPCW inspections. The mock inspection was designed to offer more information to the participants on the inspection procedures adopted by the OPCW inspectors during Article VI inspections and the role of national escorts in facilitating the smooth conduct of OPCW inspections.

Participants also shared experiences about the role played by the National Authorities in performing specific tasks, including outreach to industry to create awareness about the requirements of the Chemical Weapons Convention, on-going contact with facilities to be inspected by the OPCW, and other administrative and logistic arrangements to be made for OPCW inspections.

Source: <http://www.opcw.org/news/article/advanced-training-course-for-personnel-from-national-authorities-in-asia-held-in-singapore/>

OPCW Director-General Opens 8th Regional Meeting of CWC National Authorities from Asia in Kuwait

The OPCW Director-General, Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü, opened the 8th Regional Meeting of National Authorities in Asia held in Kuwait City from 1 to 3 November 2010. The meeting was attended by more than 45 participants from 29 States Parties and co-hosted by the National Authority of Kuwait. The meeting was formally opened by the First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister of Kuwait, H.H. Sheikh Jaber Al Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.*

During his visit Director-General Üzümcü also held bilateral discussions with the First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister; with the Under-Secretary of Defense, Mr Jasar Al Jasar; and with the Under-Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Mr Khalid Al Jarallah. The Director-General thanked the officials for Kuwait's firm commitment to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and for its support to the OPCW. He also stressed the importance of full and effective implementation of the Convention and the need for all States Parties, including Kuwait, to adopt comprehensive national legislation to ensure CWC implementation as soon as possible.

In his remarks to the regional meeting, the Director-General stated that close collaboration among States Parties in implementing the CWC is an example of the kind of multilateralism in action that makes the OPCW a unique international organization. The Director-General highlighted universality as another key factor underpinning the Convention's success. He noted that the OPCW currently counts 188 States Parties and that of the seven countries remaining outside the

Convention, three are in the Asia region – the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Myanmar, and Syria. While some States not Party link their adherence to other issues such as regional security, the Director-General said removing this linkage and joining the Convention would enable those countries to demonstrate their commitment to international peace and security.

The regional meeting offered a platform for participating National Authorities and the Technical Secretariat to exchange information and experiences on different aspects relating to industry verification. Participants exchanged views on enhancing regional and sub-regional cooperation and identified areas for possible cooperation. A number of bilateral meetings were held between participating National Authority representatives and the Secretariat staff on national implementation issues.

* Afghanistan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Japan, Republic of Korea, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, Oman, Pakistan, Palau, Qatar, Samoa, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, United States of America, Viet Nam, Yemen.

Source: <http://www.opcw.org/news/article/opcw-director-general-opens-8th-regional-meeting-of-cwc-national-authorities-from-asia-in-kuwait/>

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

New Sensor Could Detect Quickly Viral Bioterror Agents

Scientists at Boston University have developed a biological sensor that could be used to rapidly detect a wide range of viral pathogens including the lethal Ebola and Marburg viruses, the institution announced in mid August.

As with other viruses that produce symptoms not necessarily indicative of viral infection, Marburg and Ebola outbreaks can be challenging to diagnose. The situation could be further complicated by the current reliance on diagnostic systems that need substantial supporting infrastructure and require a lengthy period for biological sample preparation.

The developmental biodetector, however, is capable of sensing active viruses with “little to no” sample preparation, according to a Boston University press release.

“Our platform can be easily adapted for point-of-care diagnostics to detect a broad range of viral pathogens in resource-limited clinical settings at the far corners of the world, in defense and homeland security applications as well as in civilian settings such as airports,” research team leader Hatice Altug said in released comments. “By enabling ultraportable and fast detection, our technology can directly impact the course of our reaction against bioterrorism threats and dramatically improve our capability to confine viral outbreaks.”

The scientists received university funding as well as financing from the U.S. Army Research Laboratory. Through joint research with the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases, they were able to prove the biodetector’s capability to sense in a typical laboratory environment the presence of hemorrhagic fever virus surrogates and pox viruses such as smallpox or monkeypox.

Ebola and Marburg viruses cause hemorrhagic fever in humans and are classified as high-risk agents that could be used in a biological weapons attack. Smallpox has also been identified as a potential bioterror agent.

“The new biosensor is the first to detect intact viruses by exploiting plasmonic nanohole

arrays (PNAs), or arrays of apertures with diameters of about 250 to 350 nanometers on metallic films, that transmit light more strongly at certain wavelengths,” according to the press release.

“When a live virus in a sample solution, such as blood or serum, binds to the sensor surface, the effective refractive index in the close vicinity of the sensor changes, causing a detectable shift in the resonance frequency of the light transmitted through the nanoholes. The magnitude of that shift reveals the presence and the concentration of the virus in the solution,” the release states.

The scientists are developing a miniature version of the detector that is intended for field use. The researchers intend to test the sensor with Marburg and Ebola samples. Additional testing is to follow in African nations where incidents of hemorrhagic fever infection are found.

Source: http://www.globalsecuritynews.wire.org/gsn/nw_20101124_7290.php

Pharmaceutical Industry is facing Biological Warfare

It is a new battle for the drugs industry, and it will be hard-fought. U.S. and European regulators are debating guidelines for approving “biosimilars,” which would allow copies of cancer and multiple-sclerosis treatments to be developed for the first time. That is a big threat for biotech firms and pharmaceutical companies like Roche. It is also a huge opportunity for generics players.

Biological treatments are proteins manufactured in living cells, rather than chemical-based drugs. Biotech firms including Amgen and Biogen, and pharmaceutical companies like Pfizer, Novo Nordisk and Roche are key players in a market worth some \$100 billion in annual sales.

Biologics are complex to manufacture. They command high prices. And although companies face a wave of patent expirations from 2014, there are no mechanisms for approving generic copies for the majority of these products. That means biotech specialists tend to trade at a premium to peers with products more at risk from generic competition. The premium is now under threat.

Guidelines for approving a raft of biosimilars, or copies of biological drugs, are expected in Europe later this month. Sure, the threat has been known for years, but the market may be underestimating the impact. Credit Suisse has forecast a 5%-10% annual decline in sales of biological treatments once patents expire, but that looks conservative.

Patent expirations on conventional drugs have caused sales to fall at rates of up to 80% per year. True, biosimilars have much higher barriers to entry. While generic drugs can typically be developed for under \$5 million, biosimilars can take twice the time and cost as much as \$200 million each. Regulators may require extensive clinical trials to approve them. Doctors may be reluctant to prescribe “copycat” treatments. Patent holders will also fight to protect sales, refining their drugs or making them easier to administer.

But pharmaceutical firms accept that biosimilars will eventually be approved, not least because governments need to facilitate the development of cheaper drugs. Biosimilar sales could rise from \$250 million last year to \$20 billion by 2020, estimates generics manufacturer Sandoz, a division of pharmaceutical firm Novartis. The world’s largest generics firm, Teva Pharmaceuticals, is already testing its version of Roche’s blockbuster cancer and arthritis drug Rituxan. Pfizer, too, is beefing up its generics business.

Roche’s historic 20%-30% premium to peers has all but disappeared as the risks to its drug portfolio have become clearer. And generics firms look like the winners. Teva now trades at 11.5 times this year’s earnings, a fraction above the global pharmaceutical sector. That is still behind biotech specialists like Novo Nordisk. But as opportunities for biosimilars develop, the balance could tip further in generic manufacturers’ favor.

Source: <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703567304575628821644998204.html>

National Authority for Chemical Weapons Convention gets ISO 9001 Certification

In a first of its kind, the National Authority for Chemical Weapons Convention (NACWC), a part of the Cabinet Secretariat, has got ISO 9001:2008 certification.

The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), based in The Hague, has commended the NACWC for this achievement, which is in recognition of its successful performance.

India’s Ambassador to the Netherlands, Ms Bhaswati Mukherjee, presented a copy of the ISO certificate to OPCW Director General Ahmad Uzumen at a function at The Hague on Thursday.

Mr Uzumen said the Indian example was a role model for other countries, while Australian representative Josey Meyers lauded India’s role in this area. US Ambassador and Permanent Representative to OPCW, Dr. Robert Mikulak, has hailed it as an impressive achievement.

At a function organized on the sidelines of the 15th Conference of the States Parties, the Chairman of NACWC and other members of the Indian delegation made a presentation

on the aim, objectives and process for obtaining the ISO 9001 certification by Bureau Veritas, world's leading certification body based in France.

It was attended by over 70 participants from different Regional Groups including those from Africa . At least 15 Ambassadors including the Ambassadors from Netherlands, United States, Italy, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and several African countries were present. Indian embassy in Netherlands has already received many requests regarding future technical assistance that can be provided by NACWC.

The ISO 9001 Certificate makes the NACWC the first among all 188 member nations of OPCW to attain this distinction. It is also the first Government of India department to have qualified for ISO 9001:2008 certification.

This is part of the Prime Minister's efforts to enhance administrative efficiency and accountability of Government departments, an official press release said.

Cabinet Secretary K. M. Chandrasekhar has asked other government departments to follow the example of this department, the release added.

Source: <http://netindian.in/news/2010/12/04/0008948/national-authority-chemical-weapons-convention-gets-iso-9001-certification>

Russia opens new chemical weapons destruction plant

Russia has launched a new facility to destroy its Soviet-era chemical weapons stockpiles, the country's technological watchdog Rostekhnadzor said.

The plant in the town of Pochev, located 250 miles southwest of Moscow, is a sixth facility built in recent years to meet Russia's international obligations to destroy all its chemical weapons by April 2012.

"The technology used at the Pochev facility allows us to completely destroy not only chemical agents and products of detoxification, but also the munitions," head of Rostekhnadzor, Nikolai Kutuyin was quoted by the agency's press service on Saturday.

Rostekhnadzor said four air bombs were dismantled in the first day of the plant's operation.

The Pochev facility is expected to scrap about 19 percent of Russia's stockpiles, which total 40,000 metric tons.

Russia signed the Chemical Weapons Convention banning the development, production, stockpiling, transfer, and use of chemical arms in 1993, and ratified it in 1997. The country has so far destroyed about half of its chemical weapons arsenal.

The country has allocated \$7.18 billion from the federal budget for the implementation of the program, and has previously built five chemical weapon destruction plants — in Gorny (Saratov Region), Kambarka (Republic of Udmurtia), Nizhny Novgorod, the Maradykovo complex (Kirov Region), and Siberia's Kurgan Region.

By 2016-2017, Russia aims to finish all the remaining work under the project, including decontamination and equipment dismantlement.

Source: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/news/russia/2010/russia-101128-rianovosti03.htm>

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