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BRICS - A BETTER FUTURE

INTRODUCTION :

The term "BRIC" was coined in 2001 by then-chairman of Goldman Sachs Asset Management, Jim O'Neill, in his publication Building Better Global Economic BRICs. The foreign ministers of the initial four BRIC states (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) met in New York City in September 2006 at the margins of the General Debate of the UN General Assembly, beginning a series of high-level meetings. A full-scale diplomatic meeting was held in Yekaterinburg, Russia, on 16 June 2009.

BRICS is the acronym for an association of five major emerging national economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. Originally the first four were grouped as "BRIC" (or "the BRICs"), before the controversial addition of South Africa in 2010.

The BRICS plays a vital role in the world economy in terms of total production, receiving investment capital, and expanding potential consumer markets. The BRICS economies have been widely regarded as the engines of the global economic recovery, which underscores the changing role of these economies in the world. At the G20 meetings, the BRICS was influential in shaping macroeconomic policies in the aftermath of the recent financial crisis.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN BRICS COUNTRIES :

BRICS Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in Science, Technology and Innovation, we recognize and endorse, as a first step, the establishment of five thematic areas and leadership, namely: (a) climate change and natural disaster mitigation, led by Brazil;(b) water resources and pollution treatment, led by Russia; (c) geospatial technology and its applications, led by India; (d) new and renewal energy, and energy efficiency, led by China; (e) astronomy, led by South Africa. We agree under this BRICS STI framework the main areas of cooperation shall include: exchange of information on policies and programmes and promotion of innovation and technology transfer; food security and sustainable agriculture; climate change and natural disaster preparedness and mitigation; new and

renewable energy, energy efficiency; nanotechnology; high performance computing; basic research; space research and exploration, aeronautics, astronomy and earth observation; medicine and biotechnology; biomedicine and life sciences (biomedical engineering, bioinformatics, biomaterials); water resources and pollution treatment; high tech zones/science parks and incubators; technology transfer; science popularization; information and communication technology; clean coal technologies; natural gas and non-conventional gases; ocean and polar sciences; and geospatial technologies and its applications

IMPORTANCE TO INDIA :

The draft action plan, adopted at the two-day meeting of the Working Group on India , will be submitted for approval of the Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) ministers for energy later this year. Additional Secretary (Power) B P Pandey, who represented India in the Working Group, told reporters here that "broad elements" agreed upon included building capacities, sharing best practices and policies, developing technology, promoting energy efficient and saving methods/tools by business entities as well as financing of such initiatives through BRICS Development Bank.

Russia has launched a programme to build awareness (on energy saving) at the school level. Brazil has come out

with certain regulations on use of energy efficient lighting and appliances. "The South African government is supporting energy efficient lighting programme in the country. In India, we have taken up four programmes in this direction," Pandey said. He added: "Under the Paris Agreement, India is committed to reduce emissions by 30-35 per cent by the year 2030. Accordingly, we have launched a series of programmes aimed at improving energy efficiency".The National Mission on Lighting, star-labelling of appliances, energy saving in the industrial sector through PAT (Perform, Achieve, Trade) and implementation of Energy Conservation Building Code. all are aimed at improving energy efficiency and reducing emissions. Pandey said the Centre has set a target of producing 160 GW of renewable energy by 2022.

"By 2030, 40 per cent of our (electricity) installed capacity will be renewable energy. Solar power is becoming more competitive these days with price being less than Rs 5 per unit. China has gone in a big way in solar energy and we can emulate that." We support the creation of a BRICS Young Scientists Forum proposed by India, which intends to establish a platform for young students of science, engineering and applied disciplines as well as for those pursuing research careers in the age group of 22-35 years to gather for: (a) addressing the needs for advancement of skills, research competencies, career, talent and next generation scientific leadership;

(b) sharing scientific research results and experiences; (c) discussing novel ideas in emerging frontline fields of S&T; (d) analyzing trends and features of globally important scientific issues;

Suggesting measures to enhance trans-continental mobility in their scientific research careers. In order to foster further collaboration and achieve concrete results from the MoU directives, we agree to develop and negotiate a Work Plan 2015-2018, based on the Brazilian proposal, during the Russian presidency of BRICS, to be approved in the next BRICS STI-SOM and signed at the next BRICS STI Ministerial Meeting. The Work Plan will focus on the five priority areas and leadership established previously by each country, namely: (a) prevention and mitigation of natural disasters, to be led by Brazil, (b) water resources and pollution treatment, to be led by Russia, (c) geospatial technology and its applications, to be led by India, (d) new and renewable energy, and energy efficiency, to be led by China, and (e) astronomy, to be led by South Africa. New initiatives agreed by the BRICS countries will also be included in the Work Plan.

TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN CHINA :

China has launched the worlds first quantum satellite, which will help it establish hack-proof communications between space and the ground, state news agency Xinhua reported. The Quantum Experiments at Space Scale, or QUESS, satellite, was launched on top

of a Long March-2D rocket from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre in Chinas remote northwestern province of Gansu. The 600-plus-kilogram satellite will circle the Earth once every 90 minutes after it enters a sun-synchronous orbit at an altitude of 500 kilometers. It is nicknamed Micius, after a fifth century B.C. Chinese philosopher and scientist.

In its two-year mission, QUESS is designed to establish hack-proof quantum communications by transmitting uncrackable keys from space to the ground, it said. Quess also plans to beam entangled photons to two earth stations, 1,200 kilometers apart, in a move to test quantum entanglement over a greater distance, as well as test quantum teleportation between a ground station in Ali, Tibet, and itself. Quantum communication boasts ultra-high security as a quantum photon can neither be separated nor duplicated, it added. It is hence impossible to wiretap, intercept or crack the information transmitted through it. Even as China gains space prowess, the US Defense Department has begun a campaign aiming to highlight its increasing space capabilities, saying Beijing was pursuing activities aimed to prevent adversaries from using space-based assets in a crisis. Chinas improving space capabilities have negative-sum consequences for U.S. military security, a report commissioned by a panel created by the US Congress said last year. Chinas development of space technologies will allow it to more effectively wield

international power, the report added. The newly-launched satellite marks a transition in Chinas role – from a follower in classic information technology development to one of the leaders guiding future achievements, Pan Jianwei, the QUESS projects chief scientist, told.

INVOLVEMENT OF SOUTH AFRICA :

South Africa will convene the 1st Meeting of the BRICS Working Group on Astronomy shortly after this Ministerial; Russia will host International Scientific and Experimental Conference on Water: Technologies, Materials in Industry and Energy Processes in July 2015, in Ufa; China will host the 2nd Meeting of the BRICS SSL Working Group in November 2015; India will host the BRICS Working Group on Geospatial Technology Application for Development in March 2016. We also welcome the Brazilian-Russian proposal, discussed on the occasion of the 4th STI-SOM, to start negotiations among BRICS countries with a view to establishing biomedicine and life sciences as a new priority area for cooperation.

CONCLUSION :

Based on an analysis of the current economic growth rate, expanding market size, increased savings, an increased investment rate, emerging skilled labor and specialists, and innovations in science and technology, this study predicts that the BRICS have the potential to

challenge the G7 in the coming decades. However, this conclusion could be seen as limited and partial. BRICS countries are facing numerous challenges, difficulties, and uncertainties, particularly in the social, political, military, and security sectors, both internally and externally. Those challenges and uncertainties could undermine and jeopardize the current growth rates and economic developments of these countries and limit their competitiveness. Further studies and research are needed to draw a general conclusion as to whether or not the BRICS can pose a real threat to and challenge G7.