

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is visiting India in part of his week-long tour of Indo-Pacific nations which includes, India, Sri Lanka, Japan & South Korea.

Pompeo's visit to India is considered as a strategic one especially due to the heightening tensions between US & Iran. Other than Iran, Pompeo before arrival to New Delhi is creating a storm all over, due to his comments on India's secular status.

Pompeo in his State Department's 2019 report on International Freedom, says, "There were reports of religiously motivated killings, assault, riots, discrimination, vandalism, and actions restricting the rights of individuals to practice their religious beliefs and proselytize"

However, New Delhi responded it through a press note saying, India is proud of its secular credentials, he said, "No foreign entity/government has the locus standi to pronounce on the state of our citizens' constitutionally protected rights".

Pompeo will arrive in New Delhi on June 25, for talks that are aimed at laying the ground for an upcoming meeting between President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Modi later in the week at a G20 meeting in Osaka, Japan.

Looking at another aspects of the Pompeo's visit, here's what are on the table for both the parties to discuss:

Iran

Current tensions in the Strait of Hormuz between Iran & the United States tops any other agendas, as this has clearly impacted the aviation front, as Indian airlines are re-routing flights in the area. On Saturday, DGCA (Directorate General of Civil Aviation) announced that Indian carriers will avoid "the affected air space" to ensure safe travel for the passengers. This comes after American civil aviation regulator Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) banned American flights from using the Persian Gulf, Sea of Oman and Strait of Hormuz area.

Other than aviation, Shipping is the major concern for New Delhi. Operation Sankalp, launched by Indian Navy in the region as a measure to re-assure Indian flagged vessels transiting through the region. It also deployed INS Chennai and Sunayna in the region to undertake Maritime Security Operations.

Iranian Sanctions

A major discussion on Iran sanctions is expected to top the table during the visit, along with India's concerns on energy security.

Iranian crude oil and condensate exports, which averaged about 1.7 million b/d in March, fell to about 1 million b/d in April and an estimated 800,000 b/d in May.

New Delhi certainly eyeing to get any relief from sanctions on buying oil from Iran.

Trade

Trade frictions between India and the United States could be seen clearly under Trump Administration. Pompeo's visit to India will have its own weight to the talk on trade.

Last year Trump administration increased 25% tariff on steel and 10% on the aluminium goods. India made a similar retaliatory response but later it took it back. However, this time India slapped more tariffs to the US exporters, hiking the customs duties on as many as 28 US products, including almond, pulses and walnut.

The move will hurt American businesses of these 28 items as they will have to pay higher duties, making those items expensive in the Indian market.

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