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India- USA Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology

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Why in News:

Recently, India and the United States unveiled a roadmap for enhanced collaboration in high-technology areas, with a focus on addressing regulatory barriers and aligning export controls for smoother trade and “deeper cooperation” in critical areas. This was part of the Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET)

About iCET

The Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies is a framework agreed upon by India and the U.S. for cooperation on critical and emerging technologies in areas including artificial intelligence, quantum computing, semiconductors and wireless telecommunication.

It was launched in January this year to strengthen their strategic partnership and drive technology and defence cooperation.

Indian Prime Minister Mr. Modi and US President Mr. Biden first announced the framework on the sidelines of the Quad meeting in Tokyo in May 2022.

The White House said “The United States and India affirm that the ways in which technology is designed, developed, governed, and used should be shaped by our shared democratic values and respect for universal human rights. We are committed to fostering an open, accessible, and secure technology ecosystem, based on mutual trust and confidence, that will reinforce our democratic values and democratic institutions”

Focus Area under the initiative

Primarily, the iCET seeks to position New Delhi and Washington D.C. as “trusted technology partners” to build supply chains and support the co-production and co-development of items.

A White House fact sheet released after the inaugural dialogue gives a **broad outline of areas the two countries intend to explore to expand the depth of tech partnership and cooperation between their governments, businesses, and academic institutions.**

Key takeaways include

setting up a research agency partnership to drive collaboration in areas like AI;

developing a new defence industrial cooperation roadmap to accelerate technological cooperation for joint development and production;

developing common standards in AI;

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developing a roadmap to accelerate defence technological cooperation and ‘innovation bridge’ to connect defence startups;

supporting the development of a semiconductor ecosystem;

strengthening cooperation on human spaceflight;

advancing cooperation on development in 5G and 6G;

adopting OpenRAN network technology in India.

The Progress so far

India and the U.S. have made “significant progress” in several key areas identified for collaboration since the launch of iCET, a likely outcome of multiple high-profile visits and talks between officials and stakeholders over the past year.

As Mr. Doval mentioned in the second round of iCET talks, the two countries have already put in place the **Quantum Coordination Mechanism**, launched a public-private dialogue (PDD) on telecommunication to drive collaboration in OpenRAN, 5G and 6G, and held “important exchanges” on AI and space.

In March, India and the U.S. signed an MoU on establishing a **semiconductor supply chain** that paved the way for creating a semiconductor sub-committee to review recommendations from an industry-led task force launched in connection with the iCET.

On the defence front, the two countries are close to concluding a **mega jet engine deal**, with a final announcement expected during Mr. Modi’s visit.

In addition, a new initiative to advance cutting-edge technology cooperation, known as the **India-U.S. Defence Acceleration Ecosystem (INDUS-X)**, is set to be launched during the visit.

India and the U.S. have also concluded a roadmap for **‘Defence Industrial Cooperation’** to guide the policy direction for the next few years.

The two countries have also established a **Strategic Trade Dialogue** to remove regulatory “barriers” and review existing export control norms to take forward strategic technology and trade collaborations envisaged under iCET.

The Way Ahead

Both the NSAs express optimism that the initiative will achieve more specific and tangible results in the near future.