

INDIA, U.S. TO REVIEW DEFENCE DEALS

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Nirmala Sitharaman

India and the U.S. will review the progress of their expanding defence cooperation as well as discuss the issue of sanctions waiver for the arms purchases from Russia during Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's six-day visit starting Sunday.

Ms. Sitharaman will hold talks with her counterpart, James Mattis.

Nod for drones

The Ministers are expected to review the progress of several defence deals in the pipeline as well as the developments in the region.

Discussion are in an advanced stage for the purchase of 24 MH-60R multi-role helicopters for the Indian Navy through the Foreign Military Sales route and also Predator armed drones for which the U.S. has already given in-principle approval.

India would also like to get some clarity on the waiver for sanctions under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA).

India has signed or approved several big-ticket defence deals with Russia recently including a \$5.43-bn deal for S-400 long-range air-defence systems.

Co-production projects

According to official sources, Ms. Sitharaman will also visit the recently renamed U.S. Indo-Pacific Command at Hawaii. Further, she will visit the Mountain View headquarters of Pentagon's U.S. Defence Innovation Unit (DIU) to take forward joint development projects.

At the inaugural 2+2 dialogue in New Delhi, a Memorandum of Intent was signed between the DIU and the Indian Defence Innovation Organisation – Innovation for Defence Excellence (DIO-iDEX) which will look into joint projects for co-production and co-development through the Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI).

Ms. Sitharaman was earlier scheduled to visit the U.S. for the 2+2 dialogue and then proceed on a bilateral visit but that was deferred.

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