

AT MINI 2+2, INDIA, U.S. REVIEW PROGRESS ON PACTS

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India and the U.S. reviewed the progress on finalising two key agreements during the 2+2 intercession meeting last week, apart from taking stock of the overall defence cooperation. The agreements are the Industrial Security Annex (ISA) and the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geo-spatial Cooperation (BECA), a foundational agreement.

“This was to follow up on the 2+2 dialogue and to keep the official-level dialogue going. The two sides reviewed the decisions taken at 2+2 and also exchanged notes on developments in the Indo-Pacific and the region, broadly the countries of interest. Also, the bilateral defence cooperation was reviewed, especially the greater Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) and the first tri-service exercise which will take place later this year,” an official source said.

The inaugural 2+2 dialogue was held last September and was chaired by the Defence and External Affairs Ministers and their U.S. counterparts. The third foundational agreement, Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement, was signed on the sidelines. As the next step in furthering defence cooperation, negotiations are on to conclude the ISA and BECA.

The U.S. has already shared a draft of BECA, the last foundational agreement to be signed. “We have a working draft [BECA] which we are looking at. It came some time before the Defence Minister’s visit to Washington,” the official said.

Greater role

The ISA is particularly essential as the Indian industry looks for a greater role in defence manufacturing. It allows sharing of classified information from the U.S. government and American companies with the Indian private sector, which is so far limited to the Indian government and the defence public sector undertakings. The ISA draft is currently going through the official process in Washington.

meeting was attended by Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Alice Wells and Assistant Secretary of Defence Randall Schriver from the U.S. and Joint Secretary of the External Affairs Ministry Gourangalal Das and Joint Secretary of the Defence Ministry Shambhu Kumaran from India.

The next 2+2 dialogue will take place this summer, by which time India will have a new government.

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