

5TH INDIA – SINGAPORE DEFENCE MINISTERS' DIALOGUE, 20 JANUARY 2021

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: South-East Asia, ASEAN and India

The 5th Defence Ministers' Dialogue (DMD) between India and Singapore was successfully held on 20 January 2021 through a video conference and continues the substantial increase in bilateral cooperation and defence partnership over the years. Defence and security engagements between India and Singapore have broadened significantly in scale and scope across all three Services of the Armed Forces as well as in the areas of defence technology and industry. Both countries have also found common ground on multilateral fora and engagements.

At this 5th DMD, both Ministers were pleased to witness the signing of the Implementing Agreement on Submarine Rescue Support and Cooperation between the two Navies. The Ministers also conveyed their full support towards the early conclusion of agreements to facilitate conduct of live firings and to establish reciprocal arrangements for the cross-attendance of military courses.

The Ministers further welcomed initiatives to expand bilateral defence cooperation including the implementing agreement on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) cooperation in August 2020 for the two Armed Forces to have closer operational collaboration in response to disasters and capacity-building activities of mutual interest. The cyber agencies of both armed forces have also stepped up engagements.

During the dialogue, both Ministers exchanged views on the impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic on the defence and security engagements, including the best practices adopted by their Armed Forces. Shri Rajnath Singh conveyed gratitude for the role of the Singapore Armed Forces, in supporting foreign workers, many of whom were Indian Nationals, at the peak of pandemic. Dr Ng also complimented India's successes in bringing down the overall numbers despite challenges of scale in terms of geography and population.

Both Ministers noted the commitment of their senior officials in sustaining the momentum of annual dialogues during the ongoing pandemic through virtual meetings. This has kept bilateral defence cooperation on a positive trajectory and laid the foundations for further cooperation in 2021.

The Ministers were pleased that the Indian Navy and Republic of Singapore Navy successfully conducted the 27th edition of Singapore-India Maritime Bilateral Exercise (SIMBEX) and also participated in the second edition of the Singapore-India-Thailand Maritime Exercise (SITMEX); both held in November 2020. These exercises enhance interoperability amongst the navies and underscore the shared responsibility of the countries to work together to keep sea lines of communications open.

Shri Rajnath Singh reaffirmed ASEAN centrality in the regional security architecture and pledged India's support to all endeavours of the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM)-Plus. Dr Ng expressed support for India's upcoming co-chairmanship of the ADMM-Plus Experts' Working Group on HADR.

Both Ministers were committed to further enhance bilateral defence ties between India and Singapore and supported multilateral initiatives to promote lasting peace and stability in the region.

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