

'India a stakeholder in Korean peace'

Praising South Korean President Moon Jae-in for his role in talks with North Korea, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said India is also a stakeholder and beneficiary of the Korean peninsula peace process.

The two leaders addressed a press after official talks on Tuesday during President Moon's four-day state visit to India, where the two sides signed 11 MoUs and agreements between them.

Proliferation fears

"During our talks, I told President Moon that proliferation linkages between North-East Asia and South Asia is a matter of concern to India," Mr. Modi said, in a veiled reference to China and Pakistan, who had helped build Pyongyang's nuclear programme.

"Therefore, India is also a stakeholder in the peace process. We will do our bit to ensure peace," Mr. Modi added.

Briefing Mr. Modi on the talks between him and North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un as well as the denuclearisation talks with the U.S., Mr. Moon reportedly said there will be "bumps and bruises" along the way, but he was "confident of the outcome," Indian Ambassador to South Korea Vikram Doraiswami told journalists after the meeting.

Boosting trade

Chief on the bilateral agenda was improving business and investment ties, said officials, including taking bilateral trade, that slumped between 2014-2016 to more than double its current levels of \$20 billion to \$50 billion by 2030. India has been worried about its trade deficit with South Korea that stood at \$12 billion last year, while Korean businessmen have complained about problems in the "ease of doing business".

In addition to the agreements on upgrading their economic partnership CEPA, trade remedies, railway safety research, cyber strategy, and cultural exchanges, India and South Korea signed a joint vision statement on strategic ties in the region.

"RoK and India will enhance military exchanges, training and experience-sharing, and research and development including innovative technologies for mutual benefit. We also agreed to encourage our defence industries to intensify cooperation in this regard," the vision statement read, in a reference to discussions on encouraging Korean defence manufacturers to "Make in India", one of whom, Hanwha Techwin, has partnered with Larsen and Toubro to produce K-9 Vajra artillery guns for the Indian Army at a factory near Pune.

The bilateral vision document also committed to building a "peaceful, stable, secure, free, open, inclusive and rules-based region," incorporating President Moon slogan of "3Ps: People, Prosperity and Peace".

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