

India to host U.S. for 2+2 talks

Sushma Swaraj, left, and Mike Pompeo.

India will host the inaugural round of the two-plus-two dialogue with the United States on September 6. The ministerial-level meeting will cover bilateral, regional and global issues, the Ministry of External Affairs said in a statement on Friday.

The dialogue will be led by External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman from the Indian side and the Secretary of State Mike R. Pompeo and Secretary of Defence James Mattis from the U.S.

Broad range of issues

"This new dialogue format is in pursuit of agreement reached between India and the U.S. during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Washington D.C. on June 25-26 2017. The 2+2 meeting will cover a broad range of bilateral, regional and global issues of shared interest, with a view to strengthening strategic and security ties between the two countries," said the Ministry of External Affairs announcing the dialogue.

The announcement of the meeting which was postponed twice before comes in the midst of growing concern that anti-Iran sanctions from the U.S. might impact the energy scenario of India. The dialogue which was scheduled for July 6 was postponed after Mr. Pompeo called up Ms. Swaraj seeking a "mutually convenient time."

The talks were cancelled earlier in March due to uncertainties that prevailed over Mr. Pompeo's confirmation in his post.

The context for the September 6 talks will be set by the sanctions against Iran some of which are likely to be activated on August 6.

Sanctions against Iran

"Persons engaging in activity undertaken pursuant to the U.S. sanctions relief provided for in the JCPOA should take the steps necessary to wind down those activities by either August 6, 2018, or November 4, 2018, as applicable, to avoid exposure to sanctions or an enforcement action under U.S. law," the U.S. Treasury has declared in its official documents.

This will also be the first round of high-level interaction between the two sides following the elections in Pakistan that will conclude in the last week of July.

Will cover a broad range of bilateral, regional and global issues of shared interest

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