

India, Italy vow to fight terror

Looking ahead:Narendra Modi, right, with Italian PM Paolo Gentiloni in New Delhi on Monday.Sandeep Saxena

Reviving bilateral ties, India and Italy on Monday agreed to coordinate efforts at the multilateral level to counter global terrorism.

Describing India as an “Asian superpower”, visiting Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni said Italy was in favour of a EU-India free trade agreement. He inked six agreements with India, covering energy cooperation, diplomatic training and railways.

Strategic ties

At a joint press conference with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Mr. Gentiloni said Italy was keen on deepening cooperation in the strategic sectors and focussed on cybersecurity and anti-terrorism as common areas of cooperation.

“India can play a big role in the global coalition against terrorism. Today, all countries can face the same terrorist threat from groups that may be different, but have a common link in the use of religious extremism for common goals. A multireligious country like India is itself a contribution to fighting terror. The very existence of a democracy with these characteristics is strategic,” Mr. Gentiloni said in a special address at the Observer Research Foundation.

Marines issue

Sources indicated that during the bilateral talks at Hyderabad House, both sides expressed a desire to leave difficult issues such as the Italian marines case behind and initiate steps in the interest of the larger relationship. In this direction, Italy supported India’s quest to bring Pakistan-based terror masterminds Masood Azhar, Dawood Ibrahim and others to justice.

“The leaders agreed to strengthen cooperation to take decisive and concerted actions against Al Qaeda, ISIS (Da’esh) and their affiliates and all other UN-designated globally proscribed terrorists and terror entities...,” a joint statement said.

Officials said the statement was proof of Italy’s support to India’s concerns on terrorism.

Mr. Modi said, “India and Italy are two large economies, and the respective strengths of our economies provide us ample opportunities to strengthen our commercial cooperation. There is a lot of potential for our bilateral trade of about \$8.8 billion to grow much further.”

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