

INDIA, UZBEKISTAN INK THREE DEFENCE DEALS

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Uzbek honour: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh inspecting a guard of honour in Tashkent on Saturday. SPECIAL Arrangement

India and Uzbekistan on Sunday signed three memorandums of understanding (MoU) to enhance cooperation in military medicine and military education during the visit of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh.

This was the first visit by an Indian Defence Minister to Uzbekistan in about 15 years, a Defence Ministry statement said.

Line of credit

Mr. Singh held bilateral consultations with his Uzbekistan counterpart, Major General Bakhodir Nizamovich Kurbanov, after which they jointly presided over the curtain raiser of the first India-Uzbekistan Joint Exercise, "Dustlik 2019".

"India has offered a concessional line of credit of \$40 million for procurement of goods and services by Uzbekistan from India. The direct exchanges related to training, capacity building and education between the armed forces on both sides has also witnessed a significant upswing," the statement said.

High-level meetings

The bilateral exercise will be conducted from November 4 to 13 at Chirchiq Training Area near Tashkent and will be focused on counter-terrorism, in which "the two countries share a common concern".

There have been a series of high-level visits and exchanges after the visit of then Defence Minister of Uzbekistan to India in September 2018.

"This enhanced level of engagement is reflected in the first meeting of the Joint Working Group on Defence Cooperation in February 2019, visit of the Defence Secretary of India in March 2019 and the first defence-industry Workshop organised in Tashkent in September 2019," the statement pointed out.

Apart from the MoU on military medicine, two institution-to-institution MoUs on training and capacity building between institutes of higher military learning of the two countries were also signed.

"The MoU is a byproduct of interactions emanating from the MoU on military education signed between the two countries in October 2018," the statement said.

The two Ministers also witnessed the first-ever exchange over a video-link between the College of Defence Management in Secunderabad and the Armed Forces Academy of Uzbekistan in Tashkent, it added.

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