

INDIA, RUSSIA TO CONCLUDE MUTUAL LOGISTICS AGREEMENT

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Rajnath Singh

India and Russia are expected to conclude a mutual logistics agreement and review the setting up of joint ventures for manufacturing spares for Russian defence platforms in India during the visit of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh to Moscow from November 5 to 7, official sources said.

“The Agreement on Reciprocal Logistics Support (ARLS) is expected to be signed,” diplomatic sources said, indicating that all issues have been resolved.

Year-long discussions

Moscow sent a draft ARLS early last year and discussions have been on since. Earlier, it was expected to be signed during the meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Vladimir Putin in September on the sidelines of the Eastern Economic Forum (EEF) in Vladivostok, but was held back.

Mr. Singh will co-chair the 19th India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission on Military and Military Technical Cooperation with his Russian counterpart, General Sergei Shoigu. Another major issue on the agenda will be the purchase of the S-400 air-defence missile systems, over which the U.S. is continuing a tough stance with respect to waiver from sanctions under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act. The deliveries are expected to begin by 2020-end, 24 months after the signing of the contract, and that is when the sanctions are expected to kick in.

A 50-member industry delegation is accompanying Mr. Singh to Russia, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) said in a statement. “The objective of the delegation is to explore ways to jointly manufacture spares and components with Russian original equipment manufacturers (OEM) under ‘Make in India’.”

The delegation to Russia is a follow-up of the Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) signed on September 4 by India and Russia to “operationalize a mechanism for collaboration on joint manufacturing of spare parts, components, aggregates and other products for the maintenance of Russian-origin arms and defence equipment in India under the ‘Make in India’ programme through the transfer of technology and setting up of joint ventures.”

High-level visits

There have been a flurry of high-level visits between the two countries surrounding the EEF in which energy cooperation in Russia's Far East was in focus. As a follow-up of the forum, Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas and Steel Dharmendra Pradhan was in Russia and Japan from October 22 to 26, during which “possible areas of collaboration in other sectors like coking coal, and shipping routes” were discussed.

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