

**India, U.K. to firm up defence links**

Sanjay Mitra

India and Britain hope to agree on concrete measures to take forward their defence partnership by next year, ahead of the next meeting of the two Prime Ministers, India's Defence Secretary Sanjay Mitra said during a three-day visit to the U.K. The meeting of the two leaders is widely expected to take place at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in London in April 2018.

Following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to London in 2015, the two countries agreed to hold regular dialogues, as part of the India-U.K. Defence Consultative Group. Since then, a step change in terms of depth had taken place in cooperation and dialogue in the area, Mr. Mitra said.

**Wide-ranging dialogue**

Mr. Mitra has met with Michael Fallon, who heads the Ministry of Defence, and the department's Permanent Secretary during his trip which focussed on meetings of the Defence Consultative Group.

"The military community dialogue has been going well and there have been a wide range of visits that have been taking place at the level of chief of staff, and senior operatives ... we have a road map going and we hope that by the time of the meeting of the Prime Ministers, we will have some meat on this," he said, adding that talks had ranged from capability development, defence equipment and cybersecurity to counter-terrorism.

**'Make in India' push**

India has pegged the defence sector as one of the major areas where the bilateral partnership could be expanded around the "Make in India" campaign. During Mr. Modi's visit in 2015, the two sides agreed to move towards a new Defence and International Security Partnership that would "intensify cooperation on defence and security, including cybersecurity, and maritime security" pushing for joint working in key strategic areas.

"We are very keen that U.K. firms participate in our 'Make in India' process and in our strategic partnership exercise that we've just begun," the Defence Secretary said.

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