

US names India as 'major defence partner'

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Washington: The US has recognised India as a "major defence partner", a significant development which paves the way for the country to be treated at par with America's closest allies for defence related trade and technology transfer.

"Noting that the US-India defence relationship can be an anchor of stability and given the increasingly strengthened cooperation in defence, the United States hereby recognises India as a Major Defence Partner," said a joint statement issued after Prime Minister Narendra Modi held talks with US President Barack Obama yesterday.

According to the statement, under the 'Major Defence Partner' recognition, the US will continue to work toward facilitating technology sharing with India to a level commensurate with that of its closest allies and partners.

Meanwhile, the White House also said that the meeting between President Obama and Prime Minister Modi resulted in progress on finalising some key defence agreements between India and the US.

"I can tell you that there was important progress on finalising agreements relating to defence logistics, sharing of maritime information, and even the movement of US aircraft carriers in the region," White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest told reporters at his daily news conference.

The joint statement said, "the leaders reached an understanding under which India would receive license-free access to a wide range of dual-use technologies in conjunction with steps that India has committed to take to advance its export control objectives."

In support of India's 'Make In India' initiative and to support the development of robust defence industries and their integration into the global supply chain, the statement said the US will continue to facilitate the export of goods and technologies, consistent with US law, for projects, programmes and joint ventures in support of official US-India defence cooperation.

Applauding the enhanced military to military cooperation between the two countries especially in joint exercises, training and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief, Obama and Modi expressed their desire to explore agreements which would facilitate further expansion of bilateral defence cooperation in practical ways.

Officials from two sides said India and the US have finalised of the text of the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA).

It is likely to be signed soon, a senior administration official told reporters during a conference call.

The decision was welcomed by Obama and Modi. India and the US also finalised text of an Information Exchange Annex under the Joint Working Group on Aircraft Carrier Technology Cooperation.

Foreign Secretary S Jaishankar said India and the US have reached an understanding to finalise the Framework for the US-India Cyber Relationship.

According to the statement, the two leaders committed to enhance cyber collaboration on critical infrastructure, cybercrime and malicious cyber activity by state and non-state actors, capacity building and cybersecurity research and development and to continue discussions on all aspects of trade in technology and related services, including market

access.

In an apparent reference to the countries which are indulging in large scale cyber hacking, the statement said no country should conduct or knowingly support online activity that intentionally damages critical infrastructure or otherwise impairs the use of it to provide services to the public.

No country should conduct or knowingly support activity intended to prevent national computer security incident response teams from responding to cyber incidents, or use its own teams to enable online activity that is intended to do harm, the statement said.

The two leaders insisted that every country should cooperate, consistent with its domestic law and international obligations, with requests for assistance from other states in mitigating malicious cyber activity emanating from its territory.

No country should conduct or knowingly support ICT-enabled theft of intellectual property, including trade secrets or other confidential business information, with the intent of providing competitive advantages to its companies or commercial sectors, the statement said.

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