

India And Russia To Sign Four Treaties On Defence And Space

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Taking their strategic partnership to a new high, India and Russia will sign four key agreements on space and defence cooperation during Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's three-day visit beginning on Sunday.

Besides the crucial military Intellectual Property Right (IPR) agreement, an accord is also to be signed to amend the Indo-Russian Military-Technical Programme till 2010 to enhance and expand strategic partnership relations, Indian Ambassador Kanwal Sibal said on Thursday.

Also, space agencies of the two countries will sign a Technology Safeguard Agreement to operationalise the 2004 pact on the joint use of space-based Global Navigational Satellite System (GLONASS) to end the dependency on the US Pentagon controlled Global Positioning System (GPS) in military and civil applications.

ISRO and Russian Space Agency Roskosmos would also ink an agreement on cooperation in Solar Physics.

"The GLONASS agreement is very significant. It is a signal to the whole world to show how far Russia is ready to go with India in its strategic partnership," Sibal said in obvious reference to Moscow's denial of such sensitive partnership with China.

This agreement provides for the joint development of new generation Glonass-K navigational satellites and their launch from India, aided by

Indian launch vehicles.

Moscow could have done it alone but due to a tight schedule to replace ageing Soviet-era satellites and keep it operational, it has taken on India as an equal partner in the project," Sibal said.

The Prime Minister will attend the sixth Indo-Russian annual summit with President Vladimir Putin.

Discussions will include defence cooperation in joint development of new generation platforms, including the fifth generation fighter, multi-role transport aircraft (MTA) and deal on new stealth frigates.

Energy cooperation, including Indian investments in Russia's oil and gas sector and Russian participation in developing India's civilian nuclear energy would be discussed in the summit.

Though ONGC CEO Subir Raha and head of its foreign operations arm OVL had flown into Moscow on Tuesday for a confidential meeting with state-owned oil-major Rosneft's CEO Sergey Bogdanchikov, no immediate agreement in energy sector is expected to be signed during Manmohan Singh's visit.

"India has built a firm foothold and credibility in Russia by investing in Sakhalin-1 offshore oil bloc. However new investments involving huge sums do take some time," Sibal said.

The two leaders will also hold parleys on key global issues including UN reforms and UN Security Council expansion, Iraq, Iran nuclear issue, fight against terrorism and Central Asia including the narco-threat and regrouping of Taliban in Afghanistan.

Manmohan Singh is also likely to brief Putin on the ongoing dialogue

with Pakistan to normalise the situation in the region.

Singh would also be conferred with a honorary Professor degree of the Moscow State University.

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