

Ambassador: Russia remains India main arms supplier

By Yuri Lakin



This was stated by the Indian Ambassador to Moscow Bala Venkatesh Varma.

At the upcoming Russian-Indian summit a plan of military-technical cooperation for the next decade - 2021-2031 is to be announced and new agreements in the field of military-technical cooperation will be signed, announced the Ambassador. He proudly confirmed that Russia "has again become India's main partner in the defense industry."

The Ambassador claimed that in 2018, when he entered his post, the total amount of bilateral defense contracts was around \$ 2-3 billion. The current volume of concluded deals achieved the sum of \$ 9-10 billion stressed Mr. Varma.

The latest contract came out in February 2021, when New Delhi decided to upgrade 59 MiG-29 combat aircraft fleet with additional purchase of 21 units. The Government decided to allocate 74.1 billion rupees (about 71 billion rubles) on that deal. To avoid US sanctions both nations agreed to deal in the national currencies.

Moscow-New Delhi defense cooperation has been based on long-term contracts in a view of "Make in India" technology transfer and industrial localization. Currently over 200 joint programs are on the way.

One of the most important is the BrahMos Aerospace joint venture between NPOMash of Russia and DRDO of India. According to Praveen Pathak, BrahMos Marketing director, the company has been working on the new generation missile being titled as BRAHMOS-NG. The company official expects to enter the market with a new project within 3-4 years to increase the scale of missiles within the IAF Su-30MKI, MiG-29 and Tejas fighters' smart weaponry.

According to Mr. Pathak, the new missile weight will be reduced to about 1.5 thousand kg. It is intended to have flight speed of Mach 3 - 5. The missile can also go for export to arm the Russian fifth generation Su-57 aircraft and Tejas of India, concluded Mr. Pathak.

The agreement on 5 regiments of the S-400 Triumph anti-aircraft missile system (SAM) is one of the key stones within the Russian-Indian defense cooperation. The agreement was signed in the end of October 2018 to be fulfilled by 2025. According to Yury Ushakov, the Russian President assistant, the total sum of the contract exceeded 330 billion rubles (over US\$ 5 billion at the time of signature).

The Russian industry started to work on the contract implementation in 2020. During the Army-2021 international forum this August, the Head of the Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation (FSVTS) Dmitry Shugaev announced “the work on the contract is proceeding according to the planned schedule”. According to Rosoboronexport, the national arms trade dealer, the first regiment delivery is expected to take place at the end of 2021.

The multipurpose frigates of 11356 Project have been another long-term project within Russian-Indian cooperation framework. The “iron fist” of the frigate is 8 Club-N (Caliber-NK) supersonic cruise missiles. It also employs Shtil-1(«Calm»), Kashtan(«Chestnut») and Igla («Needle») air defense systems, A-190E 100-mm artillery mount and strong anti-submarine weaponry including DTA-53 and RBU-6000.

On October 28, 2021, the seventh frigate for the Indian Navy was launched at Yantar Baltic Shipyard in Kaliningrad. The ship was named Tushil. The frigate construction program is to continue with two more vessels to be built at the Goa Shipyard Limited. Thus, in total, India will have nine 11356 ships within the Naval Forces, while Russia has three vessels of this class: Admiral Grigoryevich, Admiral Essen and Admiral Makarov.

One of the latest samples of bilateral cooperation is the Russian-Indian joint venture for the Kamov Ka-226 light helicopter production. The agreement unites the Rostec Corporation, the Russian Helicopters holding and HAL of India to manufacture of 200 rotorcraft for the Indian Army aviation and Air Force. The initial production has already started at the Ulan-Ude Aviation Plant near the lake Baykal in Siberia. The plant will be the main partner of HAL to produce the assembly kits for the Indian production line. The Ka-226 enjoys the versatile design to be used in transport, passenger, SAR and medical evacuation variants. The machine has been digitally designed with a use of composite materials, up-to-date engine and avionics, being well adopted for highland operations. This year the machine was on display at MAKS and ARMY near Moscow, as well as at Dubai air show, UAE.

Russian-Indian cooperation also works well in the field of small arms. In March 2019, the production line of the Russian AK-203 assault rifles was launched in the Indian city of Corva with intention to produce over 700 thousand units locally.

