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## INDIA, VIETNAM LAY STRESS ON DEFENCE TIES

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India and Vietnam committed to enhancing joint co-production in defence, including transfer of technology from India in their ongoing defence cooperation, visiting President Tran Dai Quang and Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced on Saturday after delegation level meetings. The two sides also built on previous statements on maritime security in the Indo-Pacific region, calling for free and open sea lanes.

Our militaries continue to build deep cooperation between all the services, Mr. Modi said after the meeting, We will jointly work for an open, independent & prosperous Indo-Pacific area where the international rules-based order is respected. The Vietnam President said the two countries would together address regional security challenges especially in spheres of maritime security and cyber-security.

### Three agreements

Officials of the two countries exchanged three agreements on enhancing trade and agricultural research and an MoU on Cooperation between the Global Centre for Nuclear Energy Partnership (GCNEP) and the Vietnam Atomic Energy Institute (VINATOM). The two countries had signed a civil nuclear cooperation agreement in 2016 and the MoU will enhance training and research collaboration possibilities.

Both Mr. Modi and Mr. Quang spoke of the importance of joint exploration of oil and gas reserves off the coast of Vietnam in the South China Sea (SCS) by ONGC Videsh Limited (OVL) and PetroVietnam (PVN).

In January this year, the Chinese Foreign Ministry reacted to the Vietnamese Ambassadors invitation to India for more joint exploration projects in areas it claims, by saying that they must not be used as an excuse to infringe upon China's legitimate rights and interests in the South China Sea and impair regional peace and stability.

Going a step further on Saturday, Mr. Modi said that not only would India and Vietnam strengthen their bilateral relations in oil and gas, but will also work along with other nations on trilateral possibilities.

Credit line

The two sides did not sign any agreements in the field of defence cooperation, but are expected to continue to work on fulfilling Indias \$100 million Credit Line commitment to Vietnam, some of which has been used for procuring Offshore Patrol Vehicles (OPVs), while talks continue on Akash Surface to Air Missile systems (SR-SAMS) and Dhruv advanced light helicopters.

Mr. Quan will give a special address at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML) on Sunday. He also met with a delegation of Congress party leaders, including former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Sonia Gandhi and Anand Sharma.

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-vietnam-lay-stress-on-defence-ties/article22920441.ece>

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