

France commits to support India's defence industrialisation

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NEW DELHI: India and France looked to ramp up defence and security in another round of strategic dialogue on Friday, with the latter reiterating its commitment to technology development in India across a wide range of advanced defence capabilities and New Delhi acknowledging Paris as a “premiere global and Indo-Pacific” partner.

The annual dialogue in Paris was chaired by NSA Ajit Doval and Emmanuel Bonne, diplomatic adviser to French President Emmanuel Macron. Doval also held discussions with French foreign minister Jean-Yves Le Drian, who emphasised strengthening the strategic partnership in areas of defence, security, civil nuclear energy and space.

The convergence between the countries was evident with India welcoming EU's Indo-Pacific strategy and looking forward to France's

presidency in early 2022.

“The two sides will pursue these objectives through enhanced bilateral cooperation, deepening engagement in regional institutions and jointly working with and assisting other countries in the Indo-Pacific region,” said the Indian statement.

In another meeting with French defence minister Florence Parly, Doval discussed ways to support India's “defence industrialisation and self reliance”. The two sides discussed global security challenges including terrorism, recent developments in the Indo-Pacific and Afghanistan. France, according to a statement by the Indian embassy in Paris, stressed its continuing commitment to the Indo-Pacific region as a resident power and to partnership with India as a major pillar of its Indo-Pacific strategy.

“France reiterated its commitment to fully support PM Modi's vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat and defence industrialisation, joint research and technology development in India across a wide range of advanced capabilities, based on long-standing cooperation and mutual trust,” said the Indian embassy statement.

In his meeting with Doval, Le Drian also stressed the importance of defending a free and open Indo-Pacific “based on the rule of law”.

Notwithstanding its differences with the US and Australia because of the termination of a defence contract with the latter, following the AUKUS Indo-Pacific pact, France remains an indispensable partner for India in the Indo-Pacific.