

Indo-US 2+2 Meeting

Why in news?

India and the US are preparing for the third 2+2 ministerial meeting.

What is the agenda?

- The meeting will be between External Affairs Minister and Defence Minister of India, and US Secretary of State and Defense Secretary.
- The meeting will happen in New Delhi.
- One of the items on the agenda will be the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA).
- BECA is a pact that would lay the foundation for deeper military cooperation.
- In the last two meetings, agreements known as LEMOA and COMCASA were signed.

What is BECA?

- The BECA largely pertains to geospatial intelligence, and sharing information on maps and satellite images for defence.
- Signing BECA will allow India to use the US's advanced geospatial intelligence.
- This will enhance the accuracy of automated systems and weapons like missiles and armed drones.
- It will give access to topographical and aeronautical data and products that will aid navigation and targeting.
- This could be a key for Air Force-to-Air Force cooperation.

What is LEMOA?

- The Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) was signed between India and the US in August 2016.
- It allows the military of each country to replenish from the other's bases: access supplies, spare parts and services from the other's land facilities, air bases, and ports.
- This can then be reimbursed.
- This is extremely useful for Navy-to-Navy cooperation, since the US and India are cooperating closely in the Indo-Pacific.
- If signing LEMOA needed trust, its application enhances the trust.

What is COMCASA?

- The Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) was signed in September 2018, after the first 2+2 dialogue.
- It allows the US to provide India with its encrypted communications equipment and systems.
- Because of this, Indian and US military commanders, aircraft and ships can communicate through secure networks in peace and war.
- It paved the way for transfer of communication security equipment from the US to India to facilitate “interoperability” between their forces.

What do these three pacts put together mean?

- LEMOA means one partner trusts the other enough to expose its valuable assets.
- COMCASA means one is confident that it can rely on encrypted systems to connect the two militaries.
- BECA means it can share highly classified information in real time without fear of being compromised.
- All this signals the level of trust that has developed between the two countries and their militaries, faced with an aggressive China.

What does this mean in the context of the ongoing border standoff?

- Amidst the longest India-China border in three decades, India and the US have intensified under-the-radar intelligence and military cooperation at an unprecedented level.
- This cooperation has facilitated information-sharing between security, military and intelligence branches of the two countries.
- It includes sharing of high-end satellite images, telephone intercepts, and data sharing of Chinese troops and weapons deployment along the 3,488 km Line of Actual Control (LAC).
- The Indian defence establishment also has enhanced capability with some American equipment.
- The armed forces have used at least five American platforms at the LAC.
- Now, with these key defence pacts in place, cooperation can happen in a more structured and efficient way, rather than episodic.

Is there a catch in all this?

- The US wants India to move away from Russian equipment and platforms.
- It is because the US feels that this may expose its technology and information to Moscow.
- India is wary of Pakistan’s ties with Pentagon, and US’s dependence on

Rawalpindi for access to Afghanistan as well as its exit strategy.

- But, because of Chinese belligerence being the clear and present danger, New Delhi's strategic embrace of Washington is the obvious outcome.

Source: The Indian Express

