



## Defence Joint Working Group: India- Israel

### Why in News

Recently, at the 15<sup>th</sup> **Joint Working Group (JWG) meeting** on **Bilateral Defence Cooperation** between India and Israel, has agreed to form a **Task Force** to formulate a comprehensive **Ten-Year Roadmap** to identify new areas of cooperation.



## Key Points

- The JWG is the **apex body** of the **defence ministries of both the countries** meant to “comprehensively review and guide all aspects of **Bilateral Defence Cooperation**.”
- At the meeting, it was also decided to form a **Sub Working Groups (SWG)** on Defence Industry Cooperation. The formation of this SWG would enable
  - Efficient utilisation of bilateral resources,
  - Effective flow of technologies and sharing industrial capabilities.
- It was also decided to schedule the **Service level Staff talks** in a specific time frame.

## India-Israel Defence Cooperation

- **Background:** The strategic cooperation between the two countries began during the [Sino-India War of 1962](#).
  - In **1965**, Israel supplied **M-58 160-mm mortar ammunition** to India in the war against Pakistan.
  - It was one of the few countries that chose **not to condemn India's [Pokhran nuclear tests in 1998](#)**.
  - It **continued its arms trade with India even after the sanctions** and international isolation after the nuclear tests.
- **Respective National Interests:** The strong bilateral ties of India and Israel are driven by their respective national interests.
  - India's long-sought goals of military modernisation
  - Israel's comparative advantage in commercialising its arms industries.
- **Scope:** The **ambit of defence cooperation has widened to include other domains like space, counter-terrorism, and cyber security and intelligence** sharing besides Israeli arms sales to India.
  - **India was the largest arms customer of Israel in 2017** with sales worth 715 million USD.
  - According to the [Stockholm International Peace Research Institute \(SIPRI\) report](#), **Israel is the third largest supplier of defence items to India** after Russia and the USA, the first and second respectively.
- **Defence Technologies Imported by India from Israel:**
  - **Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs):**
    - **Searcher:** It is a multi-mission tactical [Unmanned Air Vehicle \(UAV\)](#) for surveillance, target acquisition, artillery adjustment and damage assessment.
    - **Hermes 900:** In December 2018, Adani Defence and Elbit Systems inaugurated the **first India-Israel joint venture in defence at Hyderabad**.
    - **Heron:** It is a **medium-altitude long-endurance UAV** system primarily designed to perform strategic actions .
  - **Air Defence Systems:**
    - **BARAK:** The **surface-to-air missile** can be deployed as a low-range air defence interceptor. In India, the [BARAK](#) version is known as BARAK-8 (for naval vessels).
  - **Missiles:**
    - **Spike:** These are the 4<sup>th</sup> generation [Anti-Tank Missiles](#) with a range of up to 4km, which can be operated in fire-and-forget mode.
      - These are manufactured by the Rafael Advanced Defence Systems, Israel.
    - **Crystal Maze:** It is an Indian variant of the air-to-surface missile AGM-142A Popeye – jointly developed by the Israeli-based Rafael and US-based Lockheed Martin.
  - **Sensors:**

- **Search Track and Guidance Radar (STGR):** India imported the STGR radar to make INS Kolkata, INS Shivalik and Kamorta-class frigates compatible for deploying BARAK-8 SAM missiles.
  - **Phalcon:** This [Airborne Warning and Control System \(AWACS\)](#), is also hailed as Indian Airforce Force's "eyes in the skies".
- **Significance of India-Israel Defence Cooperation:**
- **Patrolling and Surveillance:** The Israeli imports eases the operational ability of armed forces in wartime.
    - For instance, the missile defence systems, and ammunition played a crucial role in controlling the escalation between India and Pakistan [post-Balakot air strikes](#).
  - **Make in India:** The export-oriented Israeli defence industry and its openness to establishing joint ventures complement both '[Make in India](#)' and 'Make with India' in defence.
  - **Trusted Supplier:** Israel has always been a 'no-questions-asked supplier', i.e., it transfers even its most advanced technology without placing limits to its use.
    - Its credibility was reinforced during the [Kargil War of 1999](#).

## Way Forward

- **India-Israel-US Triangle:** As the USA sees a major role for India in maintaining the balance of power in the [Indo-Pacific](#) more technologies are likely to be transferable in the future.
  - With improving strategic understanding between India and the US these technologies can be flexibly deployed to various wings of the military.
- **Upscaling Joint Ventures:** Indo-Israel defence cooperation must be up-scaled in terms of Joint Ventures (JV) and Joint Research and Development (RD) which can be a **force multiplier to realistically achieve India's ambition** to be a major global power.
- **Harnessing the Technological Expertise:** The strategic cooperation between India and Israel carries immense potential and is only set to grow further. The **arms trade will remain the bedrock of this bilateral engagement** as the two nations seek a wider convergence.
  - With the ideological and leadership winds blowing in favour of a burgeoning partnership, the **time is ripe for India to harness the technological expertise from Israel to modernise an ailing indigenous defence industry**.

[Source: IE](#)

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