



Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement: USA

Why in News

The USA is looking forward to India signing the **Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geo-Spatial cooperation (BECA)**, at the next **India-USA 2+2 ministerial dialogue** likely to be held in October, 2020.

Key Points

▪ 2+2 talks:

- They are a **dialogue between two appointed ministers from each country**. This meeting aims to discuss issues of strategic and security interests between the two countries.
- Defense and foreign ministers or secretaries meet with their counterparts from another country.
- India **holds such talks with Japan and Australia**, at the foreign secretary and defense secretary level.
- India **holds ministerial-level talks only with the USA**. Apart from India, the United States holds such ministerial dialogues with Australia and Japan also.
- The talks were announced in June 2017. The 2+2 dialogue has replaced the Strategic and Commercial Dialogue between the foreign and commerce ministers of the two countries that were held previously.

▪ BECA:

- BECA will allow India to use the **geospatial maps of the USA** to get pinpoint military accuracy of automated hardware systems and weapons such as cruise and ballistic missiles.
- BECA is an important precursor to India **acquiring armed unmanned aerial vehicles such as the Predator-B** from the USA. Predator-B uses spatial data for accurate strikes on enemy targets.
- BECA is **one of the four foundational military communication agreements** between the two countries. The other three being GSOMIA, LEMOA, CISMOA.
- Initially, India had reservations to **geospatial mapping on the grounds of national security**, but they were later addressed by mutual dialogue and discussion between the two countries.

General Security Of Military Information Agreement

- GSOMIA allows **militaries to share the intelligence** gathered by them.
- Signed by India in 2002.
- An extension to the GSOMIA, the **Industrial Security Annex (ISA)**, was signed at the 2+2 dialogue in 2019.
- ISA provides a framework for exchange and protection of classified military information **between the USA and Indian defence industries**.

Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement

- LEMOA allows both countries to **have access to each other's designated military facilities** for refueling and replenishment.
- Signed by India in 2016.

Communications and Information Security Memorandum of Agreement

- COMCASA (Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement) is the India specific version of CISMOA.
- Valid for 10 years, COMCASA aims to provide a legal framework for the **transfer of highly sensitive communication security equipment from the USA to India** that will streamline and facilitate interoperability between their armed forces.
- Signed by India in 2018.

Other Maritime Developments Between India and the USA

- A **maritime information agreement** is also under active deliberation between India and the USA. Once concluded, India will have such arrangements with all Quad countries.
 - **Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad)** is the informal strategic dialogue between India, USA, Japan and Australia with a shared objective to ensure and support a **free, open and prosperous Indo-Pacific region**.
- In increasing military to military interactions, the USA has also posted a liaison officer at the Navy's **Information Fusion Centre for Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR)** meant to promote **Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA)**.
 - The Information Fusion Centre serves countries that have **White Shipping Information Exchange** (White-shipping refers to commercial shipping information about the movement of cargo ships) agreements with India.
 - **MDA** is defined by the **International Maritime Organization** as the effective understanding of anything associated with the maritime domain that could impact the security, safety, economy, or environment of a country.
- Recently, India posted a liaison officer at the USA Navy Central Command in Bahrain.

Way Forward

- Signing BECA is crucial for India in order to neutralise the Russia-China-Pakistan axis in the maritime domain and for the stability of the Indo-Pacific region. The acquisition of aerial platforms like the USA naval helicopters and multi-role fighters is a key priority for India in the current scenario of increasing **Indo-China conflict**.
- The increase in India's maritime interactions with the Quad countries centred around information sharing for improved MDA in the Indian Ocean Region and **Indo-Pacific** will strengthen India's position internationally.
- **Strategic hedging** is the key to move forward in relationships with powerful countries like the USA. India and the USA must now strive to complete the unfinished agreements and set the course for a **Comprehensive Strategic Global Partnership**.

Source: TH