

Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh says, Africa is at the top of India's priorities

Says India is an all weather friend of Africa; Partnership with Africa is an open partnership

First India – Africa Defence conclave held in Lucknow coinciding with DefExpo-2020

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Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh today signalled India's readiness to take the defence engagements with the friendly African countries to the next level. Addressing the India-Africa Defence Ministers Conclave in Lucknow today, on the sidelines of DefExpo 2020, Shri Rajnath Singh said "India will continue to intensify and deepen engagement. It will be a partnership guided by your priorities. More specifically on the defence cooperation, these include strengthening cooperation and mutual capabilities in combating terrorism and extremism, keeping our cyberspace safe and secure and supporting the UN in advancing and keeping peace." 12 Defence Ministers & 38 Countries represented the India-Africa Defence Ministers' Conclave, today.

He added that New Delhi looks forward to deeper cooperation in the domain of defence industry including through investment, joint ventures in defence equipment, software, digital defence, research and development, provisioning of defence equipment, spares and their maintenance. He said "rapid strides made by the Indian defence industry - both public and private, and defence R&D has opened up new vistas for cooperation to take our engagement to the next level. Indian defence manufacturing companies are now partnering with some of the leading names in the business and are part of their global supply chains".

He added "India is geared up to provide Offshore Patrol Vessels (OPVs), Fast Interceptor Boats, body and vehicle armour, Night Vision Goggles (NVGs), Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), Dornier aircraft, and arms and ammunition to our African counterparts."

Shri Rajnath Singh also offered to share India's experience in Implementing initiatives like iDEX (Innovations for Defence Excellence) and Make-II Procurement Procedure, for small, innovative solutions to a plethora of defence needs and challenges faced by the African countries.

Shri Rajnath Singh stressed that

"our partnership with Africa is an open partnership with all the possibilities and avenues for collaboration from our side being open to you to choose from and decide as per your priorities"

Reiterating that the guiding principles given by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi for India's engagement with Africa has deepened economic and security cooperation with its maritime neighbours he said Maritime security in the region is a matter of common interest for both India and Africa, which is highlighted by the Government's emphasis on SAGAR (Security and Growth for all in the Region) for the Indo-Pacific region.

Raksha Mantri said India's security relations with Africa have centered on providing training to African Service personnel, participation in United Nations peacekeeping efforts on the continent and maritime

cooperation.

Raksha Mantri stressed the importance of safe secure seas which were a pre-requisite for development of Blue economy in the region. He said that India recognized the common security challenges in the form of transnational crimes of piracy, trafficking of drugs, arms and humans and illegal fishing. In the light of these challenges there was a call for stronger partnerships for capacity building, information sharing and surveillance, he added.

He said India's increased engagement in the region has enabled it to be the first responders in providing humanitarian assistance in times of crisis like cyclone Idai in Mozambique and more recently, cyclone Diane in Madagascar.

The Conclave adopted India -Africa Declaration on Defence Cooperation.

Raksha Rajya Mantri Shri Shripad Naik, Chief of Defence Staff Gen Bipin Rawat, Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Karambir Singh, Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhaduria, Chief of Army Staff Gen M M Naravane, Defence Secretary Dr Ajay Kumar, Senior officials of Ministry of Defence and Ministry of External Affairs were present.

ABB/SW/GP/Rajib

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