Syllabus subtopic: Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India’s interests.

Prelims and Mains focus: about the event: MoUs signed and their significance; about India-Russia ties

News: In a step forward towards addressing the issue of regular spares and support for Russian military equipment with the armed forces, 14 MoUs were signed between Indian and Russian companies for setting up joint ventures covering a range of equipment from modern T-90 tanks to legacy Pechora air defence systems.

About the event

The MoUs were signed during the 5th India Russia military industry conference held during the Defexpo 2020 in Lucknow.

Background

Lack of timely spares and support has been a constant issue faced by the military a major part of which consists of Russian defence hardware. Several such support agreements are in the pipeline and expected to be concluded soon.

About the MoUs signed

- They come under the Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) on joint manufacturing of spares in India signed last September for mutual cooperation in manufacturing of spares, components, aggregates and other material related to Russian or Soviet-origin arms and defence equipment.

- The first ‘Request for Proposal’ for manufacturing of parts in India under the provision of IGA was also handed over by the Navy to the identified Indian industry.
• One MoU was signed between the Spetz-Radio Corporation of Russia and the Ananth Technologies based in Hyderabad for the “development, production and manufacture of small spacecraft for remote sensing”.

• One important MoU was signed between the Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL) and the Almaz Antey of Russia for exploring the feasibility of establishing a joint venture in India for the production of various sub systems of “air defence missile systems like Tunguska, Kavadrat, the OSA-AKA, Pechora air defence system as well as the Shilka self-propelled air defence gun system”. The MoU also covered refurbishment and life extension of the missiles. Most of these air defence systems are now in the process of being phased out and replaced with new ones.

Way forward

India has taken a number of steps to expedite the collaboration with Russian companies. India has called for expeditious implementation from the Russian side as well which has some procedural issues to sort out. There are also agreements on emerging technologies — Artificial Intelligence, Internet of Things, blockchain and robotics based on Russian technologies under the proposed Indo-Russian Joint Venture ICT Center of Excellence.

Arms imports by India

• Arms imports by India increased by 24% between 2008-2012 and 2013-2017.
• India is followed by Saudi Arabia, Egypt, UAE, China, Australia, Algeria, Iraq, Pakistan and Indonesia.
• The largest arms suppliers to India from 2013-2017 were Russia (62%), US (15%) and Israel (11%).