

## **Israel offers top-notch defence tech to boost Modi's 'Make in India' policy**

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Israel has offered India all help with top-notch military technologies like the Iron Dome interceptor in tune with PM Narendra Modi's 'Make in India' policy, which includes indigenous defence production as a key thrust area. Visiting Israeli defence minister Moshe Ya'alon on Thursday said he had discussed with Modi the "best way" to implement the 'Make in India' policy as well as further bolster the already robust bilateral defence ties. "The sky is the limit," said Ya'alon, the first-ever Israeli defence minister to visit India since bilateral diplomatic relations were established in 1992. A tiny country which had kept its "hostile" neighbours at bay by developing new warfare technologies to intercept enemy missiles and rockets like the Iron Dome interceptor, Israel can cooperate closely in the defence-security arena with flexible technology transfer, he said.

Delivering the 6th R K Mishra memorial lecture, the Israeli minister, however, specified that bilateral security ties were not directed against any third country. "It's for mutual benefit. India and Israel share common values and interests. We are ready to share our technologies, know-how and experiences with India," he said. Ya'alon also held discussions with defence minister Manohar Parrikar and home minister Rajnath Singh during his visit. Singh, who visited Israel last November, tweeted, "Israel has expressed its desire to share cutting-edge weapons technologies with India. Both the countries are willing to move forward." Singh also asked Israel to take advantage of India raising FDI ceiling in defence sector to 49% and set up ventures enabling manufacturing in India. Observing that non-military bilateral trade crossed \$4 billion during January-November 2014, Singh said India's interest in a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with Israel was particularly in the services sector. "We would need a good offer in services to make the FTA attractive for the Indian industry," he said. Ya'alon's visit is a marked departure from the long-standing policy to keep bilateral military ties under wraps despite Israel being among the top three arms suppliers to India. Having already inked deals and projects worth around \$10 billion with Israel since the 1999 Kargil conflict, India is now close to finalising contracts for two additional Phalcon AWACS (airborne warning and control systems) and four aerostat radars, together worth well over \$1.5 billion, as was first reported by TOI. India already has three Phalcon AWACS in the shape of Israeli early-warning radar suites mounted on Russian IL-76 aircraft, which were inducted under a \$1.1 billion tripartite agreement among India, Israel and Russia in 2004. Similarly, India is going to buy four more aerostats after inducting two such EL/M-2083 radars, which are basically sensors mounted on blimp-like large balloons tethered to the ground, in 2004-2005 under a \$145 million deal.