

US-India '2+2' Delhi talks will focus on China

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The policy towards China is poised to be one of the major subjects of discussion "front and centre" between the United States and India during their coming "2+2" dialogue in New Delhi in a week's time at the foreign and defence ministerial level. There are also indications that the US has not fully reconciled with India's decision to acquire the S-400 missile system from Russia and this issue may also find prominent mention at the talks.

This could also make any future acquisition of weaponry by India from Russia extremely diffi-

cult, despite India being hopeful of an American waiver at least for the S-400 missile acquisition. India's ties with Iran and its strategic implications on the Chabahar port project is also expected to be discussed, with the US

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piling on pressure on countries across the world to stop importing oil from Iran altogether. US secretary of state Mike Pompeo and defence secretary Jim Mattis are travelling to India next week for the dialogue being hosted by external affairs minister Sushma Swaraj and

defence minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

US assistant secretary of defence for Asian and Pacific security affairs Randall G. Schriver was quoted in reports from Washington as saying, at an event organised by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, that "it is a very good combina-

tion of strategic, high-level dialogue and concrete outcomes that will serve as enablers for advancing the relationship well beyond the meeting in Delhi on September 6-7... So the conversation on strategic issues, regional and security issues certainly are our shared interest and understand-

ing on China. How to respond to that will be front and centre, other aspects of promoting the free and open ended dialogue specific to how we approach Southeast Asia." On the S-400 missile issue, Mr Schriver said the waiver authority had created the impression that Washington would insu-

late India "from any fallout from this legislation no matter what they do". "I would say that's a bit misleading... We still have very significant concerns if India pursued major new platforms and systems (from Russia). I can't sit here and tell you that they would be exempt, that we would use that waiver."