

NSA heads first meet of defence planning panel

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The new Defence Planning Committee (DPC) met for the first time under the chairmanship of national security adviser Ajit Doval on Thursday to chalk out the way ahead for finalising the draft national security strategy (NSS) and other doctrines as well as ushering reforms in the country's higher defence management and planning.

"No major decision was taken since it was the first meeting of the DPC, which is now a permanent body under the NSA. The meeting, which lasted for around two hours, discussed the key challenges ahead and how to address them," said an official.

Another one added, "The members deliberated upon the geo-strategic landscape and agreed to chart a time-bound action plan in keeping with its broad mandate."

There were also some discussions on setting up a few sub-committees to provide "refined inputs" to the DPC, which includes the three Service chiefs, Admiral Sunil Lanba, General Bipin Rawat and Air Chief Marshal B S Dhanoa, foreign secretary Vijay Gokhale, defence secretary Sanjay Mitra and secretary (expenditure) in the finance ministry Ajay Narayan Jha.

The "policy and strategy" sub-committee, for instance, will undertake an external security risk assessment and define national defence and security priorities, as also help in finalising the draft NSS, national military strategy and strategic defence strategy.

NSS drafts have been prepared over the years but without any of them being approved by the Cabinet Committee on Security led by the PM. Another sub-committee under the DPC will be on "defence diplomacy", which will evaluate the foreign policy imperatives and formulate an international defence engagement strategy. This is crucial since it is often felt that while India promises a lot to countries in its neighbourhood and the Indian Ocean Region in terms of military supplies and capacity-building, it fails to deliver effectively.