

Warship deal likely at Modi-Putin meet

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NEW DELHI: India and Russia are expected to hammer out a deal for four more Krivak/Talwar class stealth frigates for the navy in October when Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Vladimir Putin meet in New Delhi for an annual summit between the two countries, two senior officials familiar with the matter, said on Tuesday.

Two of the warships will be constructed at the Yantar Shipyard in Kaliningrad and the remaining two at the Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL).

GSL chairman Shekhar Mital, a retired rear admiral, said the two countries have completed the groundwork for signing the deal.

“After the contract is signed, Russia will take four years to deliver the two warships. We will take six years to build the first warship and one more year to deliver the second,” said Mital, who was part of an Indian delegation that visited the Yantar Shipyard in August.

India inked an Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) with Russia for the four frigates in 2016. The navy currently operates six stealth frigates — three Talwar class and three Teg class

— bought from Russia and inducted between 2003 and 2013.

The new Grigorovich-class ‘Project 1135.6’ frigates will be powered by gas turbine engines to be supplied by Ukrainian firm Ukroboronprom’s Gas Turbine Research & Production Complex Zorya-Mashproekt.

Several Russian delegations have visited GSL and are satisfied with the facilities there.

The two countries are also likely to sign a ₹39,000-crore deal for the supply of the Russian S-400 Triumf air defence missile systems to India during the summit, brushing aside Washington’s concerns about the purchase. The S-400 is capable of destroying jets, missiles and unmanned aerial vehicles at a range of 400km.

Washington has already flagged concerns about the S-400 purchase, saying it complicates interoperability between Indian and American forces, amid US sanctions against Russia.

India is in talks with the US to secure a sanctions waiver as its military is heavily dependent on Russian equipment. “The US understands our concerns. They know there are legacy issues,” said an official on condition of anonymity. India and Russia are also exploring ways to bypass the American sanctions.