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India, Russia sign defense deals worth \$2.9 billion

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India and Russia Monday inked 10 pacts, including new defense deals worth nearly 2.9 billion US dollars, during Russian President Vladimir Putin's day-long visit to the Indian capital.

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and President Putin held talks on wide-ranging issues such as economic and military ties as well as civil nuclear cooperation in relation to the Kudankulam nuclear power plant jointly built by India and Russia in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu.

"We deeply value Russia's steadfast friendship and support for India, unaffected by global developments. This relationship has a special place in the hearts and minds of Indians, and India remains committed to further deepening it," Singh told media after the talks.

The two leaders also discussed the security situation in the region including Afghanistan.

"We reviewed the developments in Afghanistan and agreed to work together against threats posed by extremist ideologies and drug trafficking. India and Russia share the objective of a stable, united, democratic and prosperous Afghanistan, free from extremism," Singh said.

Under the defense deals signed by the two countries, India will buy 42 Sukhoi Su-30 fighter jets and 71 Mil Mi-17 helicopters from Moscow, sources said, while under the economic pacts, the two countries will promote foreign direct investment, which envisages investment up to two billion US dollars.

India and Russia have maintained close ties since the Cold War. India is Russia's main military

equipment importer, though in the recent years New Delhi has also inked defense deals with the US and Israel.