



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



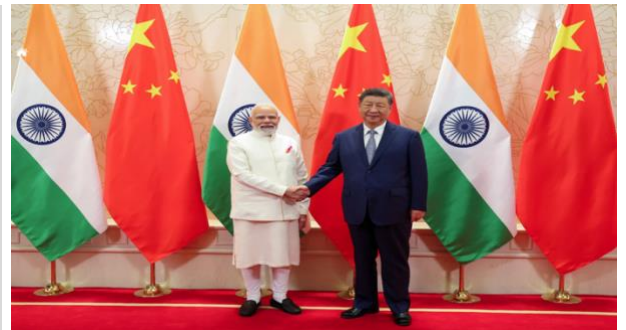
INDO-PACIFIC MONITOR

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ABOUT US

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INDO-PACIFIC MONITOR

This publication is a monthly analytical survey of developments and policy trends that impact India's interests and define its challenges across the extended Indo-Pacific maritime space, which has become the primary theatre of global geopolitical contestation. It is authored by Cmde. Lalit Kapur (Retd.), DPG Senior Fellow for Maritime Strategy, assisted by Ms. Divya Rai, based on open source reports and publications. Your comments and feedback may be addressed to the author at lalit@dpg.org.in. To subscribe, please [click here](#).

Cover Images:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi meets China's President Xi Jinping at the SCO Summit in Tianjin on August 31, 2025. Source: [PIB](#)

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. and Prime Minister Narendra Modi meet at Hyderabad House, New Delhi on August 05, 2025. Source: [MEA photo gallery](#)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Japan's Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba inspect the Guard of Honour in Tokyo on August 29, 2025. Source: [PMO Japan](#)

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INDO-PACIFIC MONITOR

August 2025

Abstract

President of the Philippines Ferdinand Marcos Jr. visited India from August 04-08, upgrading bilateral relations to a strategic partnership and formalising a plan of action to guide it for the next five years. The partnership spans cooperation in the political; defence, security and maritime; economic, trade and investment; science and technology; connectivity; legal, cultural, and regional and multilateral cooperation domains. In parallel, Indian Naval ships carried out their maiden bilateral maritime cooperation activity with the Philippines in the South China Sea.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Tokyo for the 15th annual Leaders' Summit on August 29-30. Among the agreements concluded were an ambitious joint vision for the next decade, a new declaration on security cooperation and an action plan for human resource exchange. An investment target of 10 trillion yen from Japan to India was set for the next decade. Following the visit, Prime Minister Modi headed to Tianjin, China for the 25th SCO Summit commencing August 31.

Fiji's Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka made his first visit to New Delhi in his current capacity from August 24-26. India and Fiji reaffirmed their resolve to build a broad-based, inclusive and forward-looking partnership spanning defence, health, agriculture, trade and investment, culture, sports, education and skill development, among other areas.

South Korea's President Lee Jae Myung made his maiden visits as President to Tokyo and Washington DC on August 23 and 25 respectively. The visits placed South Korea's relations with both countries on the growth path, putting to rest concerns about emerging strains in these relationships.

Thailand's Constitutional Court removed suspended Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra from office on August 29, holding her guilty of ethical misconduct.

The US-India 2+2 Intersessional Dialogue between senior officials took place on August 25, indicating that channels of communication remain open and there is some progress on cooperation notwithstanding the steep tariffs imposed by the US on exports from India.

China continued with its maritime assertions in the Western Pacific, with its Coast Guard pushing Japanese fishing vessels out of the territorial waters of the Senkaku

Islands and unilateral resource development in the East China Sea. China and Russia exercised in the Sea of Japan from August 03-05. This was followed by their annual Pacific Patrol by warships.

Australia expelled the Iranian Ambassador and three diplomats citing credible evidence that Iran had orchestrated attacks against Australia's Jewish community in Sydney and Melbourne in the last quarter of 2024. It also withdrew all its diplomats from Teheran, effectively severing relations between the countries.

Australia announced the selection of Japan's Mogami-class as the preferred platform for its future frigate fleet. The announcement, which marked Japan's most consequential defence hardware export after easing restrictions on military transfers in 2014, signalled improvement in prospects for defence equipment cooperation with India, among others.

Japan's Defense Ministry requested a record budget of 8.8 trillion Yen (about \$ 60 billion, 1.37% of projected GDP) for fiscal 2026 on August 29.

A Chinese Coast Guard vessel collided with a Chinese destroyer in the vicinity of Scarborough Shoal while both were trying to stop a Philippines vessel from entering the region on August 11. The extent of casualties is not known.

USS Higgins conducted the second Freedom of Navigation operation of the current Trump Administration in the South China Sea on August 13.

Pakistan's third Hangor-class submarine, Mangro, was launched at the Wuchang Shipyard in Wuhan, China, on August 15. Four submarines of the class are being built in China, the rest will be built in Pakistan.

The Indian Navy commissioned two stealth frigates, INS *Himgiri* and *Udaygiri*, at Visakhapatnam on August 26.

The India Philippines Strategic Partnership

The visit of Philippines' President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to India from August 04-08 was significant in that the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two countries was commemorated by elevation of their bilateral relations to a strategic partnership¹. The Philippines became India's 40th strategic partner, while India became the fifth strategic partner of the Philippines (after Japan, Australia, South Korea and Vietnam).

Located across the South China Sea from the Straits of Malacca, the Philippines, along with Indonesia, provides India's gateway to the broader Pacific Ocean and its island countries. The country, a treaty ally of the US, forms part of the First Island Chain that inhibits China's access to the Pacific Ocean. It has, over the period since Marcos took over as President, emerged as a vocal critic of China's assertive policies in the region. It flanks India's seaborne and trade connectivity to strategic partners in East Asia, including Russia, Japan, South Korea and Vietnam. It is a founding member of ASEAN and India's country coordinator for the grouping for the period 2024-2027. It will also assume ASEAN's chair in 2026. The Philippines is thus an important factor in India's Act East Policy.

The strategic partnership declared on August 05 is based on a mutual commitment to strengthening bilateral relations for the continuing peace, stability and prosperity of the two countries and the broader region, and serves as the foundation for the two countries to chart a future-oriented mutually-beneficial cooperation. It is guided by a Plan of Action for the period 2025-2029 that was also adopted on August 05. It encompasses cooperation in the political; defence, security and maritime; economic, trade and investment; science and technology; connectivity; consular; legal and judicial; culture, tourism and people to people exchanges; and regional, multilateral and international domains.

In the defence, security and maritime domain, the two countries have agreed to institutionalise military training activities and service-to-service interactions, with increased focus on tri-service cooperation. They have further agreed to institutionalise engagements on maritime issues through an annual India-Philippines Maritime Dialogue that was first held in Manila in December 2024, and will next be held in India. They will exchange views on global and regional maritime challenges, share best practices on deepening maritime cooperation and promote cooperation and

¹ Declaration on the Establishment of a Strategic Partnership Between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of the Republic of the Philippines, August 05, 2025, https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/39939/Declaration_on_the_Establishment_of_a_Strategic_Partnership_between_the_Government_of_the_Republic_of_India_and_the_Government_of_the_Republic_of_the

coordination between maritime authorities and law enforcement agencies, as well as between marine science and research institutions on the peaceful, sustainable and equitable use of the oceans and marine resources. They will pursue collaborative efforts to enhance maritime domain awareness, and cooperate in ship-building, maritime connectivity, coastal surveillance, HADR, pollution control and SAR through their Navies and Coast Guards. They will also collaborate in co-development and co-production of defence equipment, expand hydrographic cooperation, and strive for participation in multilateral exercises including the ASEAN-India Maritime Exercises and Exercise MILAN.

The two will strive for expeditious conclusion of negotiations for a bilateral Preferential Trade Agreement. The Philippines also committed to expediting review of the ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA) to make it more effective, user-friendly, simple and trade facilitative for business. The two countries will work towards enhancing bilateral air connectivity, with a direct flight between the two capitals planned to commence in October 2025. Both sides have agreed to provide tourists from the other country with gratis e-visas in an obvious effort to boost bilateral tourism. These measures are expected to provide a surge in tourist and people-to-people links.

On the regional front, the two countries reaffirmed full respect and adherence to international law including the 1982 UNCLOS and its dispute settlement mechanisms, including on the geographic and substantive limits of maritime entitlements and the duty to protect and preserve and marine environment. They underscored the final and binding 2016 Arbitral Award on the South China Sea as a significant milestone and the basis for peacefully resolving disputes in accordance with international law. They expressed concern for the situation in the South China Sea, particularly with regard to coercive and aggressive actions that impact on regional peace and stability, and called on relevant parties to exercise self-restraint and commit to peaceful and constructive means to resolve and manage disputes.

India-Philippine relations may have been relatively low-key for the first seven decade after their establishment. Today, however, the bilateral relationship is India's fastest growing in South East Asia. The driving factor from the Indian side has been the Act East Policy. The last five years have been marked by an upsurge in India's maritime presence in South East Asia - in fact, India's first maritime exercise with the Philippines coincided with the visit by President Marcos. On the Philippines side, US unreliability and assertion, as well as China's assertion in the region, make it important to hedge. Not that India is in a position to militarily support the Philippines in the short-term future - the relationship is being built on long-term potential, rather

than immediate needs. So long as present trends continue, the India-Philippines relationship has a bright future.

India Philippines Maritime Cooperation Activity in the South China Sea

Following their visit to Manila from July 30 – August 02, ships of India's Eastern Fleet participated in India's maiden "Maritime Cooperation Activity" (MCA) in the South China Sea on August 03-04. India deployed IN Ships Delhi, Kiltan and Shakti, while the Philippines deployed frigates BRP Miguel Alvar and Jose Rizal. The activity was conducted inside the Philippines' EEZ in the South China Sea (called the West Philippines Sea by the Philippines). These waters are claimed by China. The exercise was thus an indicator of India's support for the binding nature of the award by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in July 2016, which ruled that any claims that China may have had in the Philippines EEZ were extinguished when it signed and ratified the UN Convention on Laws of the Sea.

The MCA was actually part of a bilateral exercise that lasted from July 30 till August 04². The harbour phase was conducted during the first four days, during which procedures for conduct of exercises at sea were discussed and subject matter expert exchanges took place. The sea phase on August 03&04 witnessed the conduct of anti-air, anti-surface and anti-submarine drills.

India's defence relations with the Philippines have evolved since February 2006, when a bilateral Memorandum of Agreement on Defence Cooperation was signed. Occasional visits by Indian Naval and Coast Guard ships to Manila commenced in 2014, with a ship or more visiting every year since then. In 2019, India participated in the first multilateral exercise in the South China Sea, along with ships from the US, Japanese and Philippine navies. In August 2021, India exercised with ships from the navies of Vietnam, Philippines, Malaysia, Australia and Indonesia. In January 2022, India and the Philippines concluded the deal for the export of 100 Brahmos missiles at an approximate cost of \$ 375 million. In August 2023, Philippines Coast Guard Admiral Artemio Abu visited India and signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Enhanced Maritime Cooperation, as well as an MoU to operationalize the exchange of White Shipping Information.

India's position on the South China Sea arbitral award has also evolved over time. On July 12, 2016, a day after the award was announced, India 'noted' it while supporting

² Indian Navy's Eastern Fleet Ships on Operational Deployment in South East Asia Conclude the Port Call at Manila, August 05, 2025, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2152499>

freedom of navigation and overflight³. There was no comment on the legitimacy of the award or its binding nature. In June 2023, however, when the Foreign Minister of the Philippines visited India, the position evolved to underlining the need for peaceful settlement of disputes and for adherence to international law, especially the UNCLOS and the 2016 Arbitral Award on the South China Sea⁴. India has since then called for adherence to the Arbitral Award, implicit recognition of its binding nature. This is the position adopted by QUAD countries.

Unlike in the West, India's approach towards the seas is grounded in cooperation and not domination. The expression of this approach is India's MAHASAGAR vision⁵. Media commentary, which is based on the dominance paradigm, has described the MCA as a signal to China of India's support for the Philippines. India is hardly likely to band together with the Philippines and its allies to defend it in the event of conflict over Philippine interests in the South China Sea. To that extent, the MCA is a symbolic manifestation of India's support for UNCLOS and the binding nature of the South China Sea Arbitral Award, rather than a substantive indication of support for the Philippines against China.

The Modi-Ishiba Summit

Though India and Japan share a Special Strategic and Global Partnership (SSGP), bilateral summits between their leaders have of late not been as frequent as desired. Prime Minister Narendra Modi last visited Japan in October 2018, while his Japanese counterpart held his last summit in India in March 2022. There was, therefore, much to look forward to when India's Prime Minister visited Japan on August 29 & 30, 2025 for the 15th Leaders' Summit.

In the event, the broad range of outcomes amply lived up to expectations⁶. Appreciating that India and Japan already have more than 70 dialogue mechanisms and working groups across sectors, the Prime Ministers came to a common understanding that the India-Japan partnership stands at an important juncture and it is imperative to develop a mutually complementary relationship by building on

³ Statement on Award of Arbitral Tribunal on South China Sea Under Annexure VII of UNCLOS, July 12, 2016, <https://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/27019/statement+on+award+of+arbitral+tribunal+on+south+china+sea+under+annexure+vii+of+unclos>

⁴ Joint Statement on the 5th India-Philippines Joint Commission on Bilateral Cooperation, June 29, 2023, <https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/36743/Joint+Statement+on+the+5th+IndiaPhilippines+Joint+Commission+on+Bilateral+Cooperation>

⁵ For an overview, see Lalit Kapur, "Transforming SAGAR into MAHASAGAR – The Modi visit to Mauritius", the Indo-Pacific Monitor, Volume VI Issue 3, March 2025, https://www.delhipolicygroup.org/storage/uploads/publications_file/indo-pacific-monitor-5292.pdf

⁶ List of Outcomes: Prime Minister's Visit to Japan, August 29, 2025, https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/40061/List_of_Outcomes_Prime_Ministers_Visit_to_Japan_August_29_30_2025

accomplishments and leveraging respective strengths to pursue security and prosperity for the next generations⁷. They focused on three priority areas: reinforcing the economic partnership, bolstering defence and security cooperation, and deepening people-to-people exchanges. They reiterated their commitment to advancing cooperation among like-minded countries through multilateral frameworks such as the Quad and looked forward to the Quad Leaders' Summit to be hosted by India later this year. They expressed serious concern over the situation in the East China Sea and the South China Sea, reiterating their strong opposition to any unilateral actions that endanger safety as well as freedom of navigation and overflight, and attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion. They reaffirmed that maritime disputes must be resolved peacefully and in accordance with international law, in particular the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

The leaders exchanged the Joint Vision for the Next Decade⁸, a ten-year roadmap for economic and functional cooperation between the two sides. The vision spells out the direction of cooperation across eight pillars: economic relations, economic security, mobility, ecological sustainability, technology and innovation, health, people-to-people exchanges and partnerships between Indian states and Japanese prefectures. It sets out a new target of 10 trillion Yen (about \$ 67 billion) of Japanese public and private investment in India; the 2022-2026 target of 5 trillion Yen having been achieved. Bilateral trade and investment are to be expanded and diversified through an accelerated review of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA). India - Japan industrial cooperation for the "Make in India" initiative is to be strengthened. The two countries will explore manufacturing of automobiles and aircraft, shipping vessels, utilising sustainable fuel and using environment-friendly fuel storage, and expand transport infrastructure.

The Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation between India and Japan of October 2008 was revised, and a new declaration issued⁹. The new declaration commits both countries to strive to contribute to each other's defence capabilities and readiness, by promoting interoperability and synergy between their defence forces. This encompasses bilateral exercises of increasing complexity and sophistication, reciprocal participation in multilateral exercises hosted by each other, comprehensive

⁷ 15th India-Japan Annual Summit Joint Statement: Partnership for Security and Prosperity of our Next Generation, August 29, 2025, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2161985>

⁸ India - Japan Joint Vision for the Next Decade: Eight Directions to Steer the Special Strategic and Global Partnership, August 29, 2025, https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/40064/India_Japan_Joint_Vision_for_the_Next_Decade_Eight_Directions_to_Ster_the_Special_Strategic_and_Global_Partnership_August_29_2025

⁹ Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation between India and Japan, August 29, 2025, https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/40065/Joint_Declaration_on_Security_Cooperation_between_India_and_Japan_August_29_2025

dialogue between Joint Staffs, collaboration between Special Operations Units, enhanced use of the bilateral Reciprocal Provision of Supplies and Services Agreement, cooperation in counter terrorism and cyber defence, sharing information and assessments regarding emerging security risks, utilisation of each other's facilities for repair and maintenance of defence platforms, and exploring collaboration on NBC defence. The two countries committed to advancing their shared maritime security goals and promote naval and coast guard cooperation for a peaceful maritime environment in the Indo-Pacific region. They further committed to facilitating technological and industrial collaboration between their government entities and private sector stakeholders for resilience in sectors critical to national security. They vowed to find additional opportunities to contemporize their security cooperation against traditional and non-traditional threats and to respond to challenges and opportunities posed by new, critical and emerging technologies. They agreed to promote common regional and global security objectives and coordinate policies and positions in relevant multilateral and plurilateral groups, including deepening cooperation within the Quad and advancing its agenda. Finally, the declaration sets out measures to supplement and reinforce the existing architecture of bilateral consultations and exchanges through the Ministerial 2+2 meeting of their Foreign and Defence Ministers, and institutes a new annual dialogue of the National Security Advisers to take stock of the security situation facing their two countries.

The two sides launched an Economic Security Initiative which identifies five priority sectors for concentrated attention¹⁰: semiconductors, critical minerals, pharmaceuticals, information and communication technology, and clean energy. An action plan for India-Japan human resource exchange and cooperation was also launched, envisaging a two-way exchange of 500,000 personnel in five years, including the movement of 50,000 skilled personnel from India to Japan¹¹. This in effect is a call to double the population of Indians in Japan over the next five years.

Can the Modi-Ishiba Summit develop the kind of synergy in bilateral relations that the Abe-Modi summits did? The desire certainly exists on both sides including in the business community; much will depend on how the vision that has been formulated is executed. Another factor is Ishiba's political future as the leader of a minority party in both of Japan's houses of parliament. Relations between the world's fourth and fifth largest economies will be pivotal for the future of Asia and the Indo-Pacific.

¹⁰ Fact Sheet: India - Japan Economic Security Cooperation, August 29, 2025, https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/40066/Fact_Sheet_IndiaJapan_Economic_Security_Cooperation

¹¹ Action Plan for India - Japan Human Resource Exchange and Cooperation, August 29, 2025, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2161975>

The India-Fiji Summit

Located in Melanesia over 3000 Km East of Australia and 2000 Km North of New Zealand, Fiji is a developing island nation with a population of less than one million, a land area of a little over 18,000 Km² (about 10% larger than Nagaland) and an EEZ of over 1.28 million Km². Although over a third of the population comprises persons of Indian origin, connectivity between India and Fiji is under-developed, with no direct flights. The distance factor, Fiji's domestic politics and India's limited diplomatic outreach meant that political exchanges between India and Fiji were sporadic. This began to change when Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Suva in November 2014, the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister in 33 years. The visit was noteworthy for the creation of the Forum for India Pacific Islands Cooperation (FIPIC) and the launch of India's Pacific Islands partnership. Exchanges have picked up thereafter.

The official visit of Fiji's Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka to New Delhi from August 24-26, accompanied by his Health Minister and senior officials, marks a step forward in the development of bilateral relations. Mr Rabuka has served as the Prime Minister of Fiji from 1992-1999, and again from December 2022 onwards. He has an old connection with India, being a graduate from the Defence Services Staff College in Wellington in 1979. He led two coups that ousted Fiji's elected government in May and September 1987 and ordered the Indian High Commissioner at Suva to leave the country in 1989. The High Commissioner's post was reinstated only in 1999.

During the visit, India and Fiji reaffirmed their resolve to build a broad-based, inclusive and forward-looking partnership in areas such as defence, health, agriculture, agro-processing, trade and investment, development of small and medium enterprises, cooperative, culture, sports, education and skill development¹². The two leaders condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and agreed to work together at the UN and other multilateral fora to combat terrorism. They acknowledged the steady growth in bilateral trade and recognised the substantial untapped potential for trade and investment between India and Fiji. India welcomed the signing of the MoU on recognition of Indian Pharmacopoeia in May 2025. The leaders acknowledged the growing momentum in defence ties. PM Rabuka welcomed India's assurance to extend assistance to meet the security needs of Fiji, as well as the port call by an Indian Naval ship to Fiji in 2025. India gifted two ambulances to Fiji's military forces and announced the establishment of a defence wing at the High Commission of India in Suva, which would also serve the needs of other Pacific Island countries. The leaders underscored the importance of a free, open, secure and

¹² India-Fiji Joint Statement: Partnership in the spirit of Veilomani Dosti, August 25, 2025, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2160503>

inclusive Indo-Pacific region and announced their intent to collaborate on strengthening regional maritime security. India also appreciated the allocation of land by Fiji for the construction of a Chancery-cum-Cultural Centre for the High Commission of India in Suva. PM Rabuka expressed Fiji's interest in joining the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI).

Fiji is a regional hub amongst Southern Pacific Island Countries, providing air and shipping links within the region and serving an important role in the Pacific Island Forum. As such, it is a key part of India's Act East Policy and initiatives in the Pacific Islands region. It provided the venue for the first FIPIC meeting in 2014. India's relations with Fiji have indeed come full circle after the expulsion of its High Commissioner in 1989, and the country will provide the bellwether for India's relations with the region in the years ahead.

The Japan South Korea Summit

In a significant development in East Asia, South Korean President Lee Jae Myung made Tokyo his first bilateral international destination for a summit meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba on August 23. Relations between the two neighbours separated by the Sea of Japan and Korea Straits had been difficult since the 1990s due to Japan's colonial past and the legacy of the comfort women, forced labour of Koreans during WW II, the naming of the Sea of Japan and the Dokdo Islands issue. It is only after 2022, during the presidency of Lee's predecessor Yoon Suk Yeol, that relations thawed and the two countries put aside their differences under a US lead¹³. At the time, Lee had described his predecessor as a "puppet" of Tokyo. There was thus concern when he became the President that the improvement in bilateral relations and trilateral military cooperation with the US might be reversed under his administration. The summit, however, dispelled these fears. It was marked by shared smiles and warm words between the leaders, signalling that the thaw in relations would continue.

Welcoming the South Korean leader, Prime Minister Ishiba appreciated the fact that this was the first time since normalisation of Japan-ROK relations that the ROK president had chosen Japan as his first bilateral visit destination¹⁴. The two leaders welcomed the start of shuttle diplomacy between them. They agreed to develop relations in a future-oriented and stable manner, particularly in the fields of strategic and economic security. They further agreed to establish a framework for consultation between governments to share knowledge and work together to find solutions for

¹³ Trilateral Leaders' Summit of the United States, Japan and the Republic of Korea, August 19, 2023, <https://jp.usembassy.gov/trilateral-leaders-summit-us-japan-south-korea/>

¹⁴ Japan - ROK Summit Meeting (Summary), August 23, 2025, <https://japan.kantei.go.jp/103/diplomatic/202508/23rok.html>

common social and economic issues facing their countries, such as regional revitalisation, declining birth rate and aging population, rapid population decline, agriculture and ensuring resilience against disasters. A particular focal area was enhancing people-to-people links and promoting mutual understanding. The two leaders also agreed to promote bilateral cooperation in areas such as hydrogen, ammonia and AI as new horizons in the economic field.

Exchanging views on the regional situation, the leaders reaffirmed they would closely together, as also with the US, towards the complete denuclearisation of North Korea. Prime Minister Ishiba requested President Lee's cooperation towards immediate resolution of the abductions issue. The leaders also agreed to cooperate with each other toward the successful holding of the APEC Leader's Meeting in the ROK in October this year, as also for the Japan-China-ROK Summit to be hosted by Japan.

A Joint Statement was issued, the first such document in 17 years¹⁵. The statement outlined a commitment to a future-oriented partnership addressing shared security, economic and societal challenges. It highlighted the importance of trilateral collaboration with the US, especially in the midst of shifting US foreign policy. It underscored joint efforts to counteract challenges from China's rising regional influence and US pressure on trade and defence burden-sharing. The leaders acknowledged historical grievances stemming from Japan's colonial past, but emphasised moving beyond these to focus on practical cooperation.

Continued stability and growth in bilateral relations between the two US allies, who between them host about 80,000 US soldiers as also a variety of ships and combat aircraft, is important for East Asian and Indo-Pacific security. Focus now shifts to President Lee's visit to the US, where he is expected to discuss China, North Korea and Seoul's financial contribution for US forces stationed in South Korea.

IN Ships Udaygiri and Himgiri Join the Fleet

by Divya Rai

On August 26, 2025, in the presence of Raksha Mantri Rajnath Singh, the Indian Navy for the first time commissioned two stealth frigates built at different shipyards at Naval Base Visakhapatnam. Both frigates are part of Project 17A, the follow-on to the Shivalik-class of ships. The twin commissioning reflects the significant progress in

¹⁵ At meeting rich in symbolism, Ishiba and South Korea's Lee agree to steadily build ties, August 24, 2025, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2025/08/24/japan/politics/south-korea-japan-ishiba-lee-summit/>

India's ability to design, construct, and deliver sophisticated combat platforms indigenously¹⁶.

INS *Udaygiri* and INS *Himgiri* are the 100th and 101st warships designed in-house and built in India. They have been built employing the philosophy of 'Integrated Construction', which involves extensive pre-outfitting at the Block stages to reduce the overall build periods. INS *Udaygiri* is the second among the seven Project 17A frigates built by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) in Mumbai; it was delivered to the Navy on July 1, 2025. It is a modern avatar of its predecessor, the erstwhile INS *Udaygiri*, which was a steamship decommissioned on August 24, 2007, after rendering 31 years of service to the nation. Notably, *Udaygiri* has been delivered to the Indian Navy in a record time of 37 months from the date of launch. The remaining five ships of the P17A Class are at various stages of construction at MDL, Mumbai, and GRSE, Kolkata, and are expected to be delivered by the end of 2026¹⁷. INS *Himgiri* is the third ship of Nilgiri Class (Project 17A) and the first of the class built at Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE). She is the reincarnation of the erstwhile INS *Himgiri*, a Leander-class frigate that was decommissioned on May 06, 2005. She was delivered to the Indian Navy on July 31, 2025, at GRSE, Kolkata¹⁸.

Each frigate displaces about 6,700 tonnes—approximately 5% larger than the preceding class—while featuring improved stealth characteristics and reduced radar visibility. Both are powered by Combined Diesel or Gas (CODOG) propulsion systems, comprising a diesel engine and gas turbine driving a Controllable Pitch Propeller (CPP). This enables speeds up to 32 knots and an endurance of 5,500 nautical miles. A modern Integrated Platform Management System (IPMS) ensures efficient control of propulsion, power, and auxiliaries. The frigates' combat systems underline their multi-mission roles. The weapon suite comprises a supersonic surface-to-surface missile system and a medium-range surface-to-air missile system. They are also among the first warships to mount the upgraded 76 mm Super Rapid Gun Mount naval gun, capable of anti-missile, anti-aircraft, and anti-surface roles. For undersea warfare, both ships carry advanced torpedoes and rocket launchers, making them highly capable in anti-submarine operations¹⁹. These multi-mission frigates are capable of operating in a 'Blue Water' environment, dealing with both conventional and non-conventional threats in the area of India's maritime interests.

¹⁶ Press Information Bureau, Government of India, "Multi-mission Stealth Frigates - INS *Udaygiri* & INS *Himgiri* - Commissioned into Indian Navy in the Presence of Raksha Mantri in Vizag," August 26, 2025, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2160941>.

¹⁷ Press Information Bureau, Government of India. "Project 17A Indigenous Stealth Frigate *Udaygiri* Delivered to Indian Navy." July 1, 2025. <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2141259>.

¹⁸ Press Information Bureau, Government of India. "Launch of 2nd Project 17A Ship '*Himgiri*'." December 14, 2020. <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1680561>.

¹⁹ Press Information Bureau, Government of India. "Indian Navy Set to Commission Frontline Stealth Frigates *Udaygiri* and *Himgiri*." August 26, 2025. <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2155173>.

Notwithstanding the technological and capability leap, Project 17A frigates have certain limitations. One such limitation is their limited strike capability. Each frigate carries only eight BrahMos cruise/land attack missiles in their vertical launch systems, the same as the much smaller INS Tamal, commissioned last month. Another limitation is the larger complement (over 200) as compared to newly inducted frigates of the same size, necessitating higher operational costs.

The commissioning of *Udaygiri* and *Himgiri* comes amid the Navy's broader drive to expand into a 175-warship force by 2035. In 2025 alone, several major platforms – including INS Surat (destroyer), INS Nilgiri (frigate), INS Tamal (frigate), INS Vaghsheer (submarine), INS Arnala (anti-submarine craft), and INS Nistar (diving support vessel) – have joined the fleet²⁰. The string of inductions reflects growing capacity and underlines the successful momentum of the Make in India and *Aatmanirbhar Bharat* initiatives within the defence sector, where complex platforms can increasingly be designed, manufactured, and inducted both swiftly and in significant numbers. Beyond the symbolism, the commissioning of INS Udaygiri and INS Himgiri reinforces India's credibility as a net security provider in the Indian Ocean Region and signals growing resilience within its defence-industrial ecosystem.

Other Indo-Pacific Developments

South Korea US Summit. South Korean President Lee Jae Mung travelled to Washington DC to meet with US President Donald Trump on August 25. There was considerable trepidation about the visit, particularly when Trump posted on social media “WHAT IS GOING ON IN SOUTH KOREA? Seems like a Purge or Revolution. We can't have that and do business there”²¹. Difficult issues between the two nations included trade and tariffs, the role of US forces in South Korea, how much South Korea should pay for their continued presence, and others. No joint statement appears to have been issued following the meeting. Lee called on his American counterpart to establish peace on the Korean Peninsula, including through meeting North Korean Chairman Kim Jong Un²². The two leaders agreed to bolster bilateral economic cooperation centred on shipbuilding. Both hoped that the bilateral alliance would continue to expand and become future oriented by covering economy and science and technology. The two Presidents also reaffirmed their intent to boost trilateral cooperation with Japan.

²⁰ Press Information Bureau, Government of India. “Indian Navy Set to Commission Frontline Stealth Frigates Udaygiri and Himgiri.” August 26, 2025. <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2155173>.

²¹ Donald J Trump @realDonaldTrump on Truth Social, August 25, 2025, <https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump/posts/115089605510353605>

²² Presidents Lee, Trump talk dialogue with NK leader, shipbuilding, August 26, 2025, <https://www.korea.net/NewsFocus/policies/view?articleId=277794&pageIndex=1>

China Asserts Control Over Senkaku Islands. A Chinese Coast Guard vessel reportedly expelled a Japanese fishing vessel from the territorial waters of the Senkaku Islands on August 04²³. The islands are uninhabited, claimed by China, Taiwan and Japan, and are administered by Japan. By expelling Japanese fishing vessels from the region, China is asserting its claim to the islands and their territorial waters.

China's Unilateral Development of Resources in the East China Sea. Japan protested the unilateral installation of a new structure on the west side of the geographical equidistance line between Japan and China in the East China Sea on August 25²⁴. It urged China to resume negotiations on the implementation of the "June 2008 Agreement", in which the two countries had agreed to cooperate on the development of natural resources in the East China Sea.

Australia Expels Iranian Ambassador. Saying that there was sufficient credible intelligence to prove that Iran had orchestrated attacks against Australia's Jewish community in Sydney and Melbourne in October and December last year, Australia announced the expulsion of the Iranian Ambassador and three other diplomats²⁵. It also evacuated all its diplomats from Tehran effectively severing ties, and announced legislative action to list Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist organisation. This is the first time Australia has expelled an ambassador from any country after WW II.

Thailand's Constitutional Court Removes Shinawatra From Office. Finding her guilty of ethical misconduct over a controversial phone call with Cambodia's former leader Hun Sen, Thailand's Constitutional Court removed suspended Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra from office on August 29²⁶. This makes Shinawatra the fifth prime minister to have been removed from office by Thai courts since 2008.

Australia Selects Japan's Mogami Class as its Future Frigate. Australia announced on August 05 the selection of Mitsubishi Heavy Industries' (MHI) upgraded Mogami-class ship as the preferred platform for the Royal Australian Navy's future fleet of

²³ Japanese vessel expelled after illegally entering territorial waters of China's Diaoyu Dao, August 04, 2025, http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/CHINA_209163/TopStories_209189/16400617.html

²⁴ New Movement by China Concerning Unilateral Development of Natural Resources in the East China Sea, August 25, 2025, https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/pressite_000001_01598.html

²⁵ Response to Iranian Attacks, August 26, 2025, <https://www.pm.gov.au/media/response-iranian-attacks>

²⁶ Youngest Thai PM Paetongtarn Shinawatra removed by court: What's next for Thailand, August 30, 2025, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/youngest-thai-pm-paetongtarn-shinawatra-removed-by-court-whats-next-for-thailand-101756537058189.html>

general-purpose frigates²⁷. The ships will replace existing Anzac-class frigates and will be optimised for undersea warfare and air defence. The next stage of the procurement process will comprise entering into binding commercial contracts with MHI and the government of Japan, to be completed in 2026. 11 ships of the class are to be built, the first three in Japan, the balance by Austal in Australia²⁸. The induction schedule calls for the first ship to be delivered in 2029 and to become operational in 2030. The deal, worth an estimated \$6.5 billion, marks Japan's most consequential defence sale after ending its military export ban in 2014.

Italy-Japan ACSA. Italy and Japan exchanged diplomatic notes for the entry into force of the bilateral agreement on the reciprocal provision of supplies and services (Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement, ACSA) on August 06²⁹. The agreement will enter into force on September 05, 2025.

Japan - Philippines Reciprocal Access Agreement. Japan and the Philippines exchanged diplomatic notes for the entry into force of the Japan-Philippines Reciprocal Access Agreement on August 12³⁰. The agreement will enter into force on September 11, 2025. It is expected to facilitate the conduct of cooperative activities such as joint exercises and improve interoperability between the two countries.

China's Foreign Minister Visits India. China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi visited India on August 18-19³¹. He called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi and met Shri Ajit Doval, his counterpart special representative on the India-China boundary question, as well as External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar. The two sides agreed to set up an expert group, under the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination (WMCC) on the India-China Border Affairs to explore early harvest in boundary delimitation in India-China border areas, as well as to set up a working group under the WMCC to advance effective border management. China welcomed Prime

²⁷ Mogami-class frigate selected for the Navy's new general purpose frigates, August 05, 2025, <https://www.minister.defence.gov.au/media-releases/2025-08-05/mogami-class-frigate-selected-navys-new-general-purpose-frigates>

²⁸ For an overview of Australia's future surface fleet, see Lalit Kapur, "The Future of Australia's Surface Fleet", DPG Policy Brief Volume IX, Issue 8, March 19, 2024, https://www.delhipolicygroup.org/uploads_dpg/publication_file/the-future-of-australias-surface-fleet-5109.pdf

²⁹ Exchange of Diplomatic Notes for the Entry into Force of the agreement between the Government of Japan and the Government of the Italian Republic Concerning Reciprocal Provision of Supplies and Services between the Self-Defense Forces of Japan and the Armed Forces of the Italian Republic, August 06, 2025, https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/pressite_000001_01519.html

³⁰ Exchange of Diplomatic Notes for the Entry into Force of the Japan-Philippines Reciprocal Access Agreement, August 12, 2025, https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/pressite_000001_01536.html

³¹ Visit of China's Foreign Minister and Special Representative on the India-China boundary question, August 19, 2025, https://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/40016/Visit_of_Chinas_Foreign_Minister_and_Special_Representative_on_the_IndiaChina_boundary_question

Minister Modi's attendance at the SCO Summit to be held in Tianjin. Both sides agreed to support each other in hosting successful BRICS summit in 2026 (China) and 2027 (India). Both sides agreed to restore direct flight connectivity between China and India at the earliest. They also agreed to re-open border trade across land borders and to facilitate trade and investment flows through concrete measures.

US India 2+2 Intersessional Dialogue. The US India 2+2 Intersessional Dialogue involving senior officials from both sides took place on August 25 in a virtual format³². Officials discussed trade and investment; energy security, including strengthening civil-nuclear cooperation; critical minerals exploration; counternarcotics and counterterrorism cooperation; and other subjects. Both sides looked forward to increasing defense cooperation, including signing a new ten-year Framework for the India – US Major Defense Partnership, as well as advancing defense industrial, science, and technology cooperation; operational coordination; regional cooperation; and information-sharing. The dialogue indicates that there is still scope for productive discussion between the two nations notwithstanding the imposition of steep tariffs by the US on exports from India.

Vietnam Australia Foreign Ministers' Meeting. The 7th Vietnam Australia Foreign Ministers' Meeting took place at Ha Noi on August 20³³. Welcoming the significant progress in the Plan of Action to implement the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (2024-2027), both sides expressed their shared concern regarding the situation in the South China Sea and reaffirmed their unwavering commitment to peace, security, stability, and the rule of law, including freedom of navigation and overflight, unimpeded lawful commerce, full respect for legal and diplomatic processes, and the settlement of disputes by peaceful means without resorting to the threat or use of force, in accordance with international law, particularly the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

Malaysia Australia High Level Committee Meeting. The 5th Malaysia-Australia High Level Committee Meeting, co-chaired by the Defence Ministers, took place in Kuala Lumpur on August 21³⁴. The ministers reaffirmed the strength of defence cooperation between the two countries and their commitment to pursue a Malaysia-Australia Security of Information Agreement. They agreed on a number of steps to strengthen

³² India – US 2+2 Intersessional Dialogue, August 26, 2025, https://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/40050/India_US_22_Intersessional_Dialogue

³³ Joint press release on the 7th Viet Nam – Australia Foreign Ministers' Meeting, August 21, 2025, <https://www.foreignminister.gov.au/minister/penny-wong/media-release/joint-press-release-7th-viet-nam-australia-foreign-ministers-meeting>

³⁴ Joint Statement on 5th Malaysia-Australia High Level Committee (HKC) Meeting, August 21, 2025, <https://www.minister.defence.gov.au/statements/2025-08-21/joint-statement-5th-malaysia-australia-high-level-committee-hlc-meeting>

defence cooperation between their countries, including Australian support for infrastructure upgrade and runway refurbishment of the Royal Malaysian Air Force's Butterworth Air Base.

Australia – Philippines Defence Ministers' Meeting. Defence Ministers from Australia and Philippines met at Manila on August 22. They signed a Statement of Intent to pursue a Defence Cooperation Agreement, to be signed within a year³⁵. The agreement will formalise annual Defence Ministers' Meetings, improve exercise coordination and pursue infrastructure development for the benefit of the Philippines Armed Forces.

Australia Indonesia Foreign and Defence Ministers' 2+2 Meeting. Foreign and Defence Ministers from Australia and Indonesia met in Canberra on August 28 for the 9th Foreign and Defence Ministers' 2+2 Meeting³⁶. Agreeing to prioritise continued cooperation on defence and security matters and acknowledging the contribution of their bilateral relationships to regional security, prosperity and stability, they looked forward to the entry into force of the Australia-Indonesia Defence Cooperation Agreement in both countries.

India Philippines Exercise in South China Sea. Ships of the Indian Navy's Eastern Fleet engaged in the maiden bilateral maritime exercise with Philippine Navy Ships from August 03-04 as part of their deployment to Southeast Asia³⁷. The exercise included anti-air, anti-surface and anti-submarine drills. India described the exercise as a maritime cooperation activity, while the Philippines described it as a joint patrol in the South China Sea. Chinese experts described the exercise as "gesture politics"³⁸, while the PLA conducted what it described as "routine patrols" in the same region to coincide with the IN-Philippines Navy exercise³⁹. China described the Philippines as a troublemaker colluding with non-regional countries to organise joint patrols that undermined peace and stability in the region.

China Russia Naval Exercise. Three warships each from the PLA (Navy) (Xihu, Shaoqing, Urumqi) and the Russian Navy (Igor Belousov, Admiral Tributz, Rezky)

³⁵ Joint Press Conference with Gilberto Teodoro Jr, Secretary of National Defense, Philippines, August 22, 2025, <https://www.minister.defence.gov.au/transcripts/2025-08-22/joint-press-conference-gilberto-teodoro-jr-secretary-national-defense-philippines>

³⁶ Joint Statement on the Ninth Australia-Indonesia Foreign and Defence Ministers' 2+2 Meeting, August 28, 2025, <https://www.foreignminister.gov.au/minister/penny-wong/media-release/joint-statement-ninth-australia-indonesia-foreign-and-defence-ministers-22-meeting>

³⁷ Indian Navy's Eastern Fleet Ships on Operational Deployment in South East Asia Conclude the Port Call at Manila, August 05, 2025, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2152499>

³⁸ Joint drills of India, Philippines in S. China Sea "more symbolic than substantive, August 04, 2025, http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/OPINIONS_209196/Opinions_209197/16400457.html

³⁹ PLA conducts routine patrols in South China Sea, August 04, 2025, http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/CHINA_209163/TopStories_209189/16400620.html

carried out joint exercises in the Sea of Japan from August 03-05⁴⁰. The Joint Sea-2025 exercise encompassed submarine rescue, anti-submarine operations, air and missile defence and maritime combat⁴¹. Ten editions of Joint Sea exercises have been held so far, and have become an important platform for China-Russia naval cooperation.

Russia – China Pacific Patrol. The annual Russia-China joint patrol of the Pacific commenced on August 06⁴². The patrol, carried out by destroyers RFS Admiral Tributs and CNS Shaoxing, and fleet oiler CNS Qiandaohu, has been an annual feature since 2021.

Chinese Ships Collide in South China Sea. Chinese Coast Guard vessel 3104 and guided missile destroyer Guilin collided while trying to foil Philippine Coast Guard vessels from resupplying fishermen in the vicinity of Scarborough Shoal on August 11⁴³. The Chinese vessels were chasing Philippines vessel Suluan and trying to stop her using water cannon. CCG vessel 3104 was left in an unseaworthy condition after the collision.

China Protests Taiwan's Foreign Minister Visit to Philippines. China protested on August 30 against the visit of Taiwan's Foreign Minister and a high-level delegation of investors to the Philippines⁴⁴. Philippines said the minister visited in an unofficial capacity. Foreign Minister Lin Chia-lung did not have any official engagements with political or security officials while in the Philippines. The Philippines does not recognise Taiwan as a sovereign state.

Multiple Aircraft Carrier Operations in the Philippine Sea. USS George Washington, HMS Prince of Wales and JS Kaga, aircraft carriers from the US, UK and Japan, came together for exercises in the Philippine Sea from August 04-12⁴⁵. The exercises included cross-deck operations by F-35B aircraft. JS Kaga is presently undergoing conversion from a helicopter destroyer to a light aircraft carrier capable of operating F-35 aircraft.

⁴⁰ Joint China-Russia naval exercises begin off Vladivostok, August 03, 2025,

http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/CHINA_209163/TopStories_209189/16400419.html

⁴¹ China, Russia Joint Sea-2025 naval drill enters full maritime exercise phase, August 03, 2025,

http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/CHINA_209163/TopStories_209189/16400424.html

⁴² Russia, China's Annual Pacific Patrol Underway, August 15, 2025, <https://news.usni.org/2025/08/15/russia-chinas-annual-joint-pacific-patrol-underway>

⁴³ Video – Chinese Warship, Cutter Collide in South China Sea, August 11, 2025,

<https://news.usni.org/2025/08/11/chinese-coast-guard-navy-ships-collide-in-south-china-sea-during-blockade-attempt-against-philippine-forces>

⁴⁴ China protests Taiwan foreign minister's visit to the Philippines, August 30, 2025,

<https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/china-protests-taiwan-foreign-ministers-visit-philippines-125125317>

⁴⁵ Japan-UK-Australia-Norway-Spain-US Multilateral Exercise, August 05, 2025,

<https://www.mod.go.jp/msdf/en/release/202508/2025080503en.pdf>

HMS Prince of Wales in Japan. After its participation in Australia's Exercise Talisman Sabre and exercises with Japan and the US in the Northern Philippine Sea, HMS Prince of Wales arrived in Yokosuka for its maiden visit to the port on August 12⁴⁶. The Carrier will use the next two weeks for mid-deployment maintenance and is expected to visit Tokyo thereafter, towards end-August/early September. Meanwhile, other ships of the CSG visited Busan, in South Korea.

DAC Approvals. The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) accorded Acceptance of Necessity (AON) for proposals worth Rs 67,000 crores on August 05⁴⁷. These include procurement of Compact Autonomous Surface Craft, BrahMos Fire Control System & Launchers and upgradation of BARAK-1 Point Defence Missile System for the Indian Navy. Other approvals include procurement of Medium Altitude Long Endurance (MALE) Remotely Piloted Aircraft for the three services, sustenance of the C-17 and C-130J fleets and a comprehensive annual maintenance contract for the S-400 Long Range Air Defence system.

Lombrum Naval Base Officially Opened. HMPNGS Tarangau, the Lombrum Naval Base in Papua New Guinea, was officially opened by Australian Defence Minister Richard Marles on August 12⁴⁸. The base is described as the largest security infrastructure project delivered by Australia in the Pacific and will enable the PNG Defence Force to grow and develop its sovereign capabilities.

Freedom of Navigation Operation. USS Higgins conducted the second Freedom of Navigation operation of the current Trump Administration in the South China Sea near Scarborough Shoal on August 13. China claimed its forces tracked, monitored, issued warnings and expelled the US warship from China's territorial waters in accordance with laws and regulations⁴⁹. The US denied that its ship had been chased out, describing China's statement as false⁵⁰.

ASEAN Multilateral Naval Exercise. The 3rd ASEAN Multilateral Naval Exercise (AMNEX) 2025 was hosted by the Royal Malaysian Navy from August 16 to 22 in

⁴⁶ UK CSG arrives in Japan after major exercise with allies in Philippine Sea, August 13, 2025, <https://www.navalnews.com/naval-news/2025/08/uk-csg-arrives-in-japan-after-major-exercise-with-allies-in-philippine-sea/>

⁴⁷ DAC clears proposals worth Rs. 67,000 crore to enhance operational capability of the Armed Forces, August 05, 2025, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2152742>

⁴⁸ Australia and PNG continue to strengthen defence cooperation, August 12, 2025, <https://www.minister.defence.gov.au/media-releases/2025-08-12/australia-png-continue-strengthen-defence-cooperation>

⁴⁹ China stands firm against maritime intrusions by US, Philippine vessels, August 14, 2025, http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/2025xb/V_251452/16402431.html

⁵⁰ Navy Denies China Chased Off US Warship from Scarborough Shoal, August 13, 2025, <https://news.usni.org/2025/08/13/navy-denies-china-chased-off-u-s-warship-from-scarborough-shoal>

Penang and the Strait of Malacca, Malaysia⁵¹. The exercise featured both shore and sea phases, with the opening ceremony and shore activities on August 16 in Penang, including the ASEAN Navies' City Parade, warship visits, and the Naval Engineering Conference focused on innovation and ship survivability at sea. The sea phase from August 20 to 22 included the ASEAN Fleet Review—a sail-past of participating ASEAN warships—followed by manoeuvres and communication drills in the Malacca Strait. The exercise concluded on August 22. The overall theme of the 19th ASEAN Navy Chiefs' Meeting (ANCM) and AMNEX 3 was “Advancing the ASEAN Navies' Unity - Synergising Innovation and Technology in Strengthening ASEAN Maritime Security”.

SLINEX-25. IN ships Rana and Jyoti were in Colombo for the harbour phase of SLINEX-25 from August 14-16⁵². The ships were joined by SLNS Gajabahu and Vijayabahu for the sea phase on August 17-18⁵³.

Australia Philippines Exercise Alon. Troops from Australia and the Philippines conducted Exercise Alon off Palawan and Luzon in the Philippines from August 15-29⁵⁴. The exercise included live fire drills, battle manoeuvres and a beach assault. Representatives from Canada, the US, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand and Indonesia were observers. Australia has emerged as one of the staunchest supporters of the Philippines following its South China Sea dispute with China.

Philippines Opens New Luzon Strait Base Near Taiwan. The Philippines opened a new military base in Mahatao on Batan Island, in the Luzon Straits South of Taiwan, on August 28⁵⁵. The base will support the country's defence and surveillance requirements in the region.

Fire on Board USS New Orleans. A fire broke out on board USS New Orleans (LPD-18) off Okinawa on August 20 and burned for around 12 hours, causing unspecified

⁵¹ Ministry of Defence Singapore, "Singapore Navy Concludes Third Multilateral Naval Exercise with ASEAN Navies," August 22, 2025, <https://www.mindef.gov.sg/news-and-events/latest-releases/22aug25-nr2>.

⁵² Indian Naval Ships in Sri Lanka for SLINEX-24, August 13, 2025, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2156920>

⁵³ Conclusion of SLINEX-2025, August 21, 2025, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2159316>

⁵⁴ Australian and Philippine forces launch largest military exercise near disputed South China Sea, August 15, 2025, <https://apnews.com/article/australia-philippines-military-exercises-south-china-sea-d91ac59809a3e4c4cd24ec126262dfe6>

⁵⁵ Philippine Military Opens New Luzon Strait Base Near Taiwan, August 29, 2025, <https://news.usni.org/2025/08/29/philippine-military-opens-new-luzon-strait-base-near-taiwan>

damage⁵⁶, albeit limited to the forward portion of the ship⁵⁷. The ship's crew remain on board, with additional accommodation provided by USS San Diego and ashore.

Pakistan Launches Third Hangor Class Submarine. Pakistan's third Hangor-class submarine, Mangro, was launched at the Wuchang Shipbuilding yard in Wuhan, China, on August 15⁵⁸. The first submarine was launched in April 2024, while the second was in March 2025. Four submarines are being built in China, while the balance will be built in Pakistan.

Saudi Arabia Assumes Command of CTF 150. Saudi Arabia assumed command of Combined Task Force (CTF) 150 on August 20, relieving New Zealand. CTF 150 conducts operations outside the Arabian Gulf to combat threats from non-state actors.

Test Firing of Agni-5. The Agni-5 IRBM was successfully test fired from ITR Chandipur on August 20⁵⁹. The road-mobile Agni-5 with MIRV capability has a range of over 5,500 Km, sufficient to cover all parts of China from India.

Exercise Bright Star 2025. Over 700 personnel from the Indian Armed Forces are participating in Exercise Bright Star 2025 in Egypt from August 28 – September 10⁶⁰. This is a biennial multilateral exercise hosted by Egypt in conjunction with the US since 1980, and is among the largest tri-service multilateral exercises in the region. India had participated in the 2023 edition also.

Australian Army Chief Visit to India. Lt Gen Simon Stuart, the Australian Army Chief, visited India from August 11-14⁶¹. His itinerary included courtesy calls on the CDS, Service Chiefs and the Defence Secretary at Delhi, an address to the National Defence College, a visit to Agra and a visit to Pune, including the National Defence Academy at Khadakvasla.

Japan's Defence Budget Request 2026. Japan's Defense Ministry requested a record budget of 8.8 trillion Yen (about \$ 60 billion, 1.37% of projected GDP) for fiscal 2026

⁵⁶ Fire Aboard USS New Orleans Extinguished, August 20, 2025,

<https://www.c7f.navy.mil/Media/News/Display/Article/4281084/fire-aboard-uss-new-orleans-extinguished/>

⁵⁷ Update: USS New Orleans, August 22, 2025,

<https://www.c7f.navy.mil/Media/News/Display/Article/4283057/update-uss-new-orleans/>

⁵⁸ Pakistan Navy floats out third Hangor-class submarine in China, August 18, 2025,

<https://www.navaltoday.com/2025/08/18/pakistan-navy-floats-out-third-hangor-class-submarine-in-china/>

⁵⁹ Successful Test-firing of Agni 5 Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile, August 20, 2025,

<https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2158574>

⁶⁰ Over 700 Armed Forces Personnel Gear Up to Participate in Exercise Bright Star 2025, August 27, 2025,

<https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2161242>

⁶¹ Lieutenant General Simon Stuart, Chief of Australian Army, Commences Four-Day Visit to India, August 11, 2025, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2155075>

on August 29⁶². The request includes establishment of a multi-layered coastal defence system, construction of one upgraded Mogami-class frigate and one Taigei-class submarine, modifications to Izumo-class helicopter carriers, and purchase/development of standoff missiles targeting adversaries from beyond their strike range, hypersonic guided missiles and high-speed glide weapons, Patriot air defence missile systems, and aerial and underwater drones.

IN Deployments Abroad

Dates	Ships	Port Visited	Remarks
Jul 30- Aug 02	Delhi, Shakti, Kiltan	Manila ⁶³	Followed by MCA in SCS
Aug 06-09	Tamal	Casablanca ⁶⁴	
Aug 09-12	Sandhayak	Singapore ⁶⁵	
Aug 11-13	Rana	Trincomalee ⁶⁶	
Aug 13-16	Tamal	Naples ⁶⁷	
Aug 14-16	Rana, Jyoti	Colombo ⁶⁸	For SLINEX-25
Aug 19-22	Tamal	Souda Bay ⁶⁹	
20-23 Aug	Kadmatt	Surabaya ⁷⁰	
27-30 Aug	Tamal, Surat	Jeddah ⁷¹	
30 Aug	Kadmatt	Port Moresby ⁷²	

⁶² Defense Ministry requests record 8.8 trillion Yen for 2026 budget, August 29, 2025, <https://english.kyodonews.net/articles/-/60051>

⁶³ Indian Navy's Eastern Fleet Ships on Operational Deployment in South East Asia Conclude the Port Call at Manila, August 5, 2025, [Press Release: Press Information Bureau](https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2154860)

⁶⁴ INS Tamal concludes Successful Port Visit to Casablanca, Morocco, August 10, 2025, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2154860>

⁶⁵ INS Sandhayak in Changi Naval Base, Singapore, August 09, 2025, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2154707>

⁶⁶ Indian naval ship Rana arrives in Sri Lanka's port city of Trincomalee, August 11, 2025, <https://www.ptinews.com/editor-detail/Indian-naval-ship-INS-Rana-arrives-in-Sri-Lanka-s-port-city-of-Trincomalee/2813251>

⁶⁷ INS Tamal Visits Naples, Italy, August 15, 2025, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2156937>

⁶⁸ Indian Naval Ships in Sri Lanka for SLINEX-25, August 15, 2025, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2156920>

⁶⁹ Indian Naval Ship Tamal Arrived at Souda Bay, Greece, August 21, 2025, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2159339>

⁷⁰ Indian Naval Ship Kadmatt Completes Port Call at Surabaya, August 23, 2025, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2160195>

⁷¹ Indian Naval Ships Tamal and Surat Arrived at Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, August 29, 2025, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2161859>

⁷² Indian Navy Warship Visits Port Moresby to Join Papua New Guinea's 50th Independence Day Celebrations, August 30, 2025, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2162270>



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