

India, UK begin mega wargame in Indian Ocean

NEW DELHI, Oct 5 (PTI)

THE navies of India and the UK kick-started an eight-day mega wargame in the Western Indian Ocean in line with their focus to boost overall military ties.

The UK's Carrier Strike Group (CSG), led by HMS Prince of Wales aircraft carrier, has been deployed for the Exercise Konkan. The exercise is a reaffirmation of the shared commitment to ensuring secure, open and free seas and will exemplify the "comprehensive strategic partnership" outlined in the India-UK Vision 2035, the Indian Navy said. The exercise is aimed at increasing combined maritime and air capabilities between the UK and Indian navies on the high seas.

"The UK and India believe in an Indo-Pacific that is free and

open. We share an ambition for a modern defence and security partnership, a fundamental pillar of UK-India Vision 2035, agreed by our prime ministers this year," Lindy Cameron, the British High Commissioner to India, said. "The engagements between the Carrier Strike Groups of our two navies demonstrate our commitment to maintaining the rules-based international order in the region and lay the groundwork for future cooperation," she said.

Commodore Chris Saunders, who is a defence adviser to the British High Commission, said: "Exercise Konkan provides an excellent opportunity for the Royal Navy to train in the delivery of complex multi-domain operations alongside India as partners in the Indo-Pacific region."

India, Australia to ink 3 pacts during Rajnath's visit to Canberra this week

NEW DELHI, Oct 5 (PTI)

DEFENCE Minister Rajnath Singh will undertake a two-day visit to Australia beginning Thursday to explore "new and meaningful" initiatives to further expand bilateral defence and strategic ties.

The two sides are set to ink three agreements during Singh's visit that will provide for further boosting cooperation in the areas of information sharing, expanding maritime security ties and joint activities.

India and Australia are also expected to carry out a detailed review of the current situation in the Indo-Pacific amid growing global concerns over China's increasing military muscle-flexing in the region.

Singh's trip to Australia will mark the first-ever visit of a Defence Minister to Australia under the Modi Government since 2014.

"The visit comes at a historic moment when India and Australia commemorate five years of establishment of India-Australia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP)," the



Defence Ministry said.

Singh is travelling to the country at the invitation of Australia's Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Richard Marles.

"The visit will provide an important opportunity for both sides to explore new and meaningful initiatives to further strengthen the bilateral relationship and the defence partnership," the Ministry said in a statement.

A key highlight of Singh's visit will be the bilateral discussions with his Australian counterpart.

He will also chair a business roundtable in Sydney, which will be attended by industry leaders

from both sides. Singh will also call on other national leaders of Australia.

The India-Australia defence engagements have expanded in the last few years, including in areas of capacity-building, training, ship visits and bilateral exercises.

India and Australia elevated their bilateral relationship from a strategic partnership to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP) in 2020.

The two nations share a deep bond rooted in common values - pluralistic, Westminster-style democracies, Commonwealth traditions, growing economic engagement and increasing high-level interactions, the Ministry said.

"Long-standing people-to-people connections, the presence of Indian students in Australian universities as well as robust tourism and sporting ties have further strengthened the enduring partnership between the two countries," it said.

Marles last visited India in June 2025 and held talks with Singh, besides calling on Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Rs 60,000 cr scheme to upgrade industrial training institutes

NEW DELHI, Oct 5 (PTI)

SPECIAL purpose vehicles with credible anchor industry partners will be set up under the Rs 60,000-crore PM-SETU scheme to manage clusters and ensure outcome-based training, the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship said.

Under the Pradhan Mantri Skilling and Employability Transformation through Upgraded ITIs (PM-SETU), launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday, new, demand-driven courses will be introduced in a bid to transform 1,000 government ITIs across India into modern, industry-

PM-SETU

aligned training institutions.

Besides existing courses will be revamped in collaboration with industries.

The scheme will also help create pathways for long-term diplomas, short-term courses, and executive programmes.

PM-SETU will follow a hub-and-spoke model, with 200 hub ITIs linked to 800 spoke ITIs. Each hub will be equipped with advanced infrastructure, innovation and incubation centres, production units, training of trainer facilities, and placement services, while the spokes will

extend access and outreach.

The scheme also envisages strengthening of five National Skill Training Institutes in Bhubaneswar, Chennai, Hyderabad, Kanpur, Ludhiana as Centres of Excellence with global partnerships. Under the first phase of PM-SETU, 15 hub-and-spoke ITI clusters have been identified across the country, spanning diverse regions and industrial ecosystems.

These include Sonapat, Visakhapatnam, Bijnor and Meerut, Haridwar, Ujjain, Bengaluru Urban, Bharatpur, Darbhanga and Patna, Hoshiarpur, Hyderabad, Sambalpur, Chennai, and Guwahati.

'Trade deal with US has to respect India's red lines'

NEW DELHI, Oct 5 (PTI)

ANY TRADE deal between India and the US has to respect New Delhi's "red lines" and efforts are underway to find a "landing ground", External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Sunday amid strain in ties between the two countries over Washington's policy on tariff. In an interactive session at an event, Jaishankar acknowledged having issues between India and the US and that many of them are linked to the inability to firm up the proposed trade deal.

The External Affairs Minister said an understanding on trade between the two sides was necessary as the US is the world's largest market but at the same time noted that India's red lines

should be respected.

"We have today issues with the United States. A big part of it is the fact that we have not arrived at a landing ground for our trade discussions, and the inability so far to reach there has led to a certain tariff being levied on India," he said.

Jaishankar was speaking at the discussion on the theme 'Shaping Foreign Policy in Turbulent Times' at the Kautilya Economic Enclave.

"In addition, there is a second tariff which we have publicly said we regard as very unfair, which has picked on us for sourcing energy from Russia when there are other countries that have

done so, including countries that right now have a far more antagonistic relationship with Russia than we do," he said.

The relations between New Delhi and Washington have been reeling under severe stress after Trump doubled tariffs on Indian goods to a whopping 50 per cent including a 25 per cent additional duties for India's purchase of Russian crude oil. India described the US action as "unfair, unjustified and unreasonable".

"Whatever happens at the end of the day, there has got to be a trade understanding with the US... Because it is the world's largest market but also because much of the world has reached

those understandings," Jaishankar said. "But it has to be an understanding where our bottom lines, our red lines are respected. In any agreement, there are things you can negotiate and there are things you can't," he said. Jaishankar said India is pretty clear about its approach.

"I think we are pretty clear about that. We have to find that landing ground and that's been the conversation which has been going on since March," he said.

India and the US have recently resumed negotiations for the proposed trade deal after a brief hiatus of a few weeks.

The External Affairs Minister also suggested that the strain in the relations has not been impacting every dimension of the engagement.



India, Australia to ink 3 defence pacts during Rajnath's visit

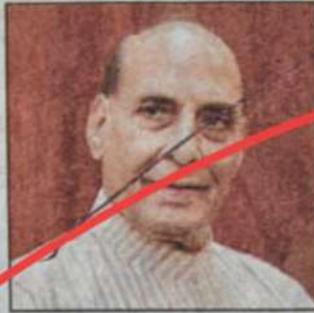
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: India and Australia will ink three agreements to further enhance bilateral defence cooperation in information sharing, maritime security and joint military activities during defence minister Rajnath Singh's visit to the country.

Singh will conduct wide-ranging discussions with Australian deputy PM and defence minister Richard Marles as well as chair a business roundtable in Sydney, with industry leaders from the two sides, during his Oct 9-10 visit.

"The visit comes at a historic moment when India and Australia commemorate five years of establishing their 'comprehensive strategic partnership'. It will also mark the first-ever visit of an Indian defence minister to Australia under this govt since 2014," an official said.

"The visit will provide an important opportunity for both sides to explore new and meaningful initiatives to further strengthen the bilateral relationship and the defence partnership," he added.



Rajnath Singh will conduct wide-ranging discussions with Australian deputy PM and defence minister Richard Marles during his visit on Oct 9-10

The defence engagements have expanded over time to include wide-ranging interactions between the services, military-to-military exchanges, high-level visits, capacity-building and training programmes, cooperation in the maritime domain and combat exercises.

In a meeting between Singh and Marles in June this year, the two sides had decided to intensify and diversify defence-industrial collaboration as well as steadily work together towards their shared commitment for a free and open Indo-Pacific, with an eye firmly on an aggressive and expansionist China.

The Indian and Australian armies are slated to conduct the fourth edition of the "AustraHind" combat exercise at Irwin Barracks in Perth from Oct 13 to 26. It

aims at further strengthening the operational capabilities of the two forces in undertaking joint company-level operations in urban and semi-urban terrains under the UN mandate, reflecting the shared commitment towards global peace and security, another official said.

Australia — along with Japan — is also a regular participant in the top-notch quadrilateral Malabar naval exercise, with the next edition to be conducted off Guam in the Western Pacific next month. Malabar began as a bilateral India-US exercise in 1992 but includes all "Quad" countries now.

India also has a military logistics agreement with Australia, which provides for reciprocal refuelling, repair and berthing facilities for warships and aircraft.

EU FTA talks today will seek to resolve key issues

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Ahead of the 14th round of talks for India-EU FTA in Brussels on Monday, the EU has said that the negotiating teams are working hard to deliver a mutually beneficial deal, even as negotiations are challenging and important issues need to be resolved.

Talking about the significance of India-EU economic partnership, EU ambassador Herve Delphin also said EU companies in India generated a total turnover of 186 billion euros in 2024, around 5% of the Indian economy, and exported goods worth 23.5 billion euros, which accounts for around 6% of total Indian exports of goods.

He said EU and India are also negotiating an Investment Protection Agreement that aims to create a predictable, secure and transparent environment for EU and Indian investors, thus helping to generate the higher levels of FDI needed for the Indian economy.



STRATEGIC TIES

“While certain differences must still be resolved, both EU and India agree on key principles: that the right of states to regulate must be explicitly safeguarded and that there must be clear guidance for tribunals on how to interpret investment protection standards. These shared principles should guide us throughout the negotiating process towards a successful outcome,” he said.

The ambassador said that the 13th round of FTA talks last month did not result in the sort of breakthrough which was expected. “The EU was and is still rea-

dy to conclude on a meaningful package. We look forward to the next round and further negotiations towards a mutually beneficial deal,” he said.

“The FTA can open new opportunities for EU and Indian businesses and create conditions to significantly increase our bilateral trade and investment. While some countries are raising tariffs or otherwise closing their markets, we should use the FTA to diversify trade, hedge against uncertainties and strengthen our supply chains,” said Delphin.

“The EU is India’s top trading partner, with bilateral trade in goods of EUR 120 billion, ahead of the US and China. Adding services, our bilateral trade has reached EUR 180 billion. This is an impressive figure, but there is a huge potential for growth considering that the EU and India are the 2nd and the 4th largest economies in the world. To unlock this untapped potential EU and India are negotiating the FTA,” he added.