

India to host 3 major international maritime events in February 2026

NEW DELHI, Nov 1 (IANS)

INDIA will host three major international maritime events in February 2026 at Visakhapatnam, namely, the International Fleet Review (IFR) 2026, Exercise MILAN 2026, and Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) Conclave of Chiefs, scheduled to be conducted from February 15-25, marking India's maiden conduct of these major maritime events simultaneously.

The event realises Prime Minister Narendra Modi's MAHASAGAR vision (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions), announced in 2023.

According to officials, the February 2026 convergence is a major operational manifestation of this vision, demonstrating India's commitment to being a 'Preferred Security Partner' for all friends and partners.

Notably, invitations have been extended to navies from across the globe to participate in this historic gathering at Visakhapatnam, India's eastern maritime gateway and home to the Eastern Naval Command.

The event will reflect India's commitment to free, open and



Vice Chief of the Naval Staff Vice Admiral Sanjay Vatsayan and others address a press conference for the International Fleet Review (IFR) and MILAN naval exercises to be conducted in Visakhapatnam in February 2026, at Kota House in New Delhi on Friday. (PTI)

inclusive seas, anchored in strategic frameworks including MAHASAGAR, the Act East Policy, Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS), and the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI).

The event will feature a Presidential Fleet Review at Sea by the President of India, Droupadi Murmu, showcasing indigenous platforms including INS Vikrant (India's first domes-

tically built aircraft carrier), Visakhapatnam-class destroyers, Nilgiri-class stealth frigates, and Arnala-class anti-submarine warfare corvettes — reflecting India's transformation into a 'Builder's Navy'. Similarly, the Indian Navy ships would be joined by a diverse congregation of ships from friendly foreign countries, Indian Coast Guard and the Merchant Marines.

South Korea calls for greater Chinese efforts to bring N Korea back to talks

GYEONGJU (South Korea), Nov 1 (AP)

SOUTH Korean President Lee Jae Myung asked Chinese President Xi Jinping to make greater efforts to persuade North Korea to return to talks, as the two leaders on Saturday agreed on a set of agreements to expand their economic and other ties.

Their one-on-one meeting came hours after they and other Asia-Pacific leaders wrapped up their annual summit in South Korea with a joint statement pledging stronger economic cooperation. The two-day Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation in the city of Gyeongju took place a day after Xi and US President Donald Trump agreed to dial back earlier steps and de-escalate their trade war.



South Korean President Lee Jae Myung, right, speaks next to Chinese President Xi Jinping at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Economic Leaders' Meeting in Gyeongju, South Korea, on Saturday. (AP/PTI)

During his meeting with Lee, Xi called for Seoul to work with Beijing to "practice genuine multilateralism," according to Chinese state media, as he continued to position Beijing as the defender of the global trade order upended by Trump's sweeping

tariffs. Xi, Lee discuss North Korea: Chinese state media reports on the Xi-Lee meeting didn't immediately carry any North Korea-related comments by Xi. However, Wi Sung-lac, Lee's national security director, said Lee during the meeting out-

lined his strategy for achieving denuclearisation on the Korean Peninsula and "requested a constructive Chinese role to help realise the resumption of talks with North Korea."

"Xi replied that he would continue his efforts to help resolve issues involving the Korean Peninsula and promote peace and stability here," Wi said.

China is North Korea's traditional ally and economic pipeline, but there are still questions about how much leverage it has on its impoverished neighbour. China has long been suspected of avoiding fully implementing UN sanctions on North Korea and sending clandestine aid shipments to help the North stay afloat and continue to serve as a bulwark against US influence on the Korean Peninsula.

Several States, UTs celebrate their formation day; PM Modi, President extend greetings

NEW DELHI, Nov 1 (PTI)

SEVERAL States and Union Territories, including Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala and Punjab celebrated their formation day on Saturday, with political leaders hailing their contribution in the country's progress.

Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Haryana, Chhattisgarh, Chandigarh, Lakshadweep, Delhi, and Andaman and Nicobar Islands also have their foundation days on November 1. Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala and Lakshadweep came into being on this day in 1956. Punjab and Haryana were formed in 1966, while Chhattisgarh was carved out of Madhya Pradesh in 2000.

Delhi attained Union Territory status on this day 69 years ago,

on November 1, 1956, following the reorganisation of Indian states. In a series of posts on microblogging platform X, Prime Minister Narendra Modi greeted the people of the states celebrating their formation day.

Modi, who is on a visit to Chhattisgarh on the 25th anniversary of its formation, said, "This state, dedicated to nature and culture, is today engaged in setting ever-new benchmarks of progress. Many areas here, once affected by Naxalism, are now competing in development."

On Kannada Rajyotsava, the Prime Minister greeted the spirit of excellence and industrious nature of the people of Karnataka. "We also celebrate the outstanding culture of Karnataka, reflected in its literature, art, music and more. The state embodies the spirit of

progress rooted in wisdom. I pray that people of the state are happy and healthy," he said.

"The state's scenic landscapes and centuries-old heritage reflect India's vibrant cultural grandeur. May the people of Kerala always be blessed with good health and success," Modi said.

President Droupadi Murmu also took to X and greeted people of the states and UTs celebrating their formation day. She wished them success and extended best wishes for the well-being of residents.

"Warm greetings to the people of Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Karnataka, Kerala, Lakshadweep, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, and Puducherry on their Formation Day! Each of these regions has made remarkable contributions to India's progress," she wrote.

Nearly 40,000 Afghan refugees leave Pak's Balochistan province

KARACHI, Nov 1 (PTI)

MORE than two years after Pakistan started a crackdown against Afghan nationals, nearly 40,000 of them have left Balochistan capital Quetta, a top provincial official has said.

Since October 2023, when Pakistan asked all the foreign nationals, including Afghan illegal immigrants, to leave voluntarily or face deportation, the deadline has been extended multiple times.

Pakistan hosts over 1.7 million registered Afghan refugees, with many more living without documentation. The government recently launched yet another repatriation drive, citing security and economic concerns, prompting thousands of Afghans

to return to their home country.

The authorities have fastened the deportation measures by ordering the closure of around 54 Afghan refugee camps across the country.

Quetta Commissioner Mir Ullah Badhani said that most of the Afghans who have returned home were living in the Afghan Basti (town) on the Eastern bypass of Quetta for the last 35-40 years and had constructed quarters and buildings for residence and businesses. Feroze Shah, a resident of Qadirabad, as the basti is known, said it was occupied mostly by poor people who were forced to leave or were leaving for Afghanistan, uncertain of their future and were without any proper belongings.

"Over the past two years, hun-

dreds of thousands of Afghan refugees have been expelled from different parts of Pakistan, some of whom are our relatives or belong to our tribes," he said.

"Now the influx has grown because winter will soon start in Afghanistan, and people want to cross over so that they can settle down and find places to stay before peak cold," he added.

According to the Commissioner, refugees crossing over to Afghanistan via the Chaman border have slowed down due to the recent conflict between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Hundreds of Afghan refugees had been put up in camps near the Chaman border waiting for their turn to cross over, Badhani said. "So far close to 40,000 Afghans had crossed

over via the Chaman border."

Since the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979, Pakistan has hosted millions of refugees, but initiated a crackdown on them since October 2023.

After the Taliban came into power in Kabul in 2021, another 7,00,000 Afghans crossed over to Pakistan. According to the United Nations Refugee Agency, between the start of the expulsion campaign in October 2023 and October 2025, 1.5 million Afghans left Pakistan either voluntarily or were deported.

One of the major crises faced by the Afghan refugees, who did well in Pakistan and built their houses in residential schemes, and set up businesses, is that they are now forced to sell their houses in Quetta at low rates.

ISRO all set for launch of heaviest communication satellite from Indian soil onboard LVM3-M5

SRIHARIKOTA Nov 1 (PTI)

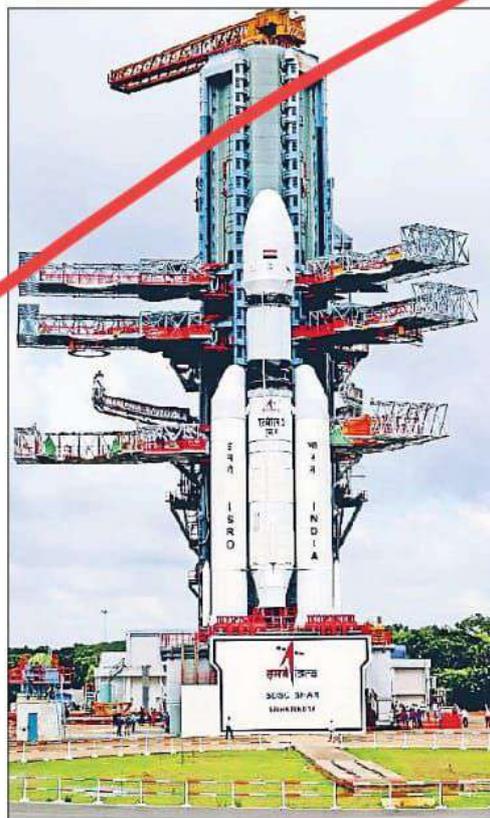
ISRO's over 4,000 kg communication satellite CMS-03 is all set to be launched from this space port on Sunday.

The satellite, weighing about 4,410 kg will be the heaviest to be launched from the Indian soil and into a Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO), the space agency said. The satellite will travel onboard a LVM3-M5 rocket, dubbed as 'Bahubali' for its heavy-lift capability. The launch vehicle has been fully assembled and integrated with the spacecraft and it has been moved to the second launch pad here for taking up pre-launch operations, the Bengaluru-headquartered space agency said on Saturday.

The 43.5 metre tall rocket, dubbed as 'Bahubali' for its ability to carry heavier payloads weighing up to 4,000 kg, is scheduled for a 5.26 pm liftoff on November 2.

LVM3- (Launch Vehicle Mark-3) is the new heavy lift launch vehicle of ISRO and is used for placing 4,000 kg spacecraft in GTO in a cost-effective manner, ISRO said.

This three stage launch vehicle with two solid motor strap-ons (S200), a liquid propellant core stage (L110) and a cryogenic stage



(C25) gives ISRO full self-reliance in launching heavier communication satellites that weigh up to 4,000 kg in GTO.

LVM3- is also termed by ISRO scientists as Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV) MkIII.

The LVM3-M5 is the fifth operational flight, ISRO said.

The space agency had previously launched its heaviest communication satellite GSAT-11 on December 5, 2018 from Kourou launch base, French Guiana by Ariane-5 VA-246 rocket. Weighing about 5,854 kg, GSAT-11 is the heaviest satellite built by ISRO.

Sunday's mission objective is that the CMS-03, a multi-band communication satellite, will provide services over a wide oceanic region including the Indian landmass, ISRO said.

The previous mission of LVM-3 rocket was the successful launch of Chandrayaan-3 mission, wherein, India became the first country to land successfully near the lunar South pole in 2023.

The LVM3- rocket is capable to carry payload to GTO weighing 4,000 kg and for Low Earth Orbit payloads of 8,000 kg with its powerful cryogenic stage.

ASEAN DEFENCE CONCLAVE

COLLECTIVE SECURITY key to sovereignty of every nation: Rajnath



India's Defence Minister Rajnath Singh speaks at the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting in Kuala Lumpur on Saturday. (AP/PTI)

NEW DELHI, Nov 1 (PTI)

INDIA believes Indo-Pacific should remain open, inclusive, and free from any form of coercion, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Saturday against the backdrop of mounting global concerns over China's aggressive military posturing in the region.

In an address at a conclave of Defence Ministers of ASEAN

member States and the bloc's dialogue partners in Kuala Lumpur, Singh pitched for an approach of "collective security" to ensure the sovereignty of every nation in the region.

The Defence Minister said India's emphasis on adherence to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and support for freedom of navigation and overflight is not against

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India needs more decentralisation, some States resistant: EAC-PM chief

NEW DELHI, Nov 1 (PTI)

INDIA needs greater decentralisation but in many States, there is resistance to devolving powers to local councils, according to Mahendra Dev, Chairman of the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM).

At a ceremony to award the fourth Rohini Nayar Prize for Outstanding Contribution to Rural Development, Dev said the level of decentralisation in China and the US is much higher.

“India needs greater decentralisation, which should involve giving more powers to panchayats and local bodies, along with increased use of technology in the agricultural sector to improve rural wages,... There is resistance in many States to devolving powers to local councils,” he said.

Recalling the contribution of former economist and bureaucrat Rohini Nayar, Dev said the implementation of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act

(MGNREGA) through panchayats not only helped improve wages but also helped build trust in grassroots democracy.

He presented the prize to Pune’s social entrepreneur Vidhya Parshuramkar for her contribution to making nutrition more accessible, sustainable and community-driven.

Parshuramkar leads Agrozee Organics and its flagship initiative, Millets Now.

An MTech in Food Technology from IIT Kharagpur, she discovered early in her journey how scientific innovation can transform traditional foods into modern nutritional solutions.

The award, instituted in 2022 in memory of Nayar, comes with a cash prize of Rs 10 lakh, a citation and a trophy.

The Rohini Nayar Prize was instituted by the family of Nayar, an eminent scholar-administrator who spent much of her professional life working on issues related to rural development in India.