

6. India-Australia Relation – International Relations

PM Modi meets Australian counterpart, discusses cooperation in defence & security, critical minerals, trade. India and Australia are deepening their 'Comprehensive Strategic Partnership' through the operational ECTA trade pact and robust defence collaborations like the QUAD, while currently negotiating a broader CECA to address trade imbalances and supply chain resilience.

India-Australia Bilateral Relations – Comprehensive Analysis

1. Context of Recent Meeting

Occasion – Bilateral meeting held between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Australian Prime Minister on the sidelines of the G20 Leaders' Summit in Johannesburg.

Primary Agenda – Reviewing the steady expansion of the existing partnership. Identification of sectors for deeper collaboration.

Three Key Focus Areas

1. Defence and Security.
2. Nuclear Energy.
3. Trade and Commerce.

2. Evolution & Diplomatic Architecture

Strategic Upgrade – The relationship was upgraded from a 'Strategic Partnership' (2009) to a 'Comprehensive Strategic Partnership' (2020).

Institutional Mechanisms – A robust framework exists to sustain engagement, including –

2+2 Dialogue – Involving Defence and Foreign Ministers of both nations.

Joint Ministerial Commissions – Specifically for Trade & Commerce.

Defence Dialogues – Defence Policy Talks and Defence Services Staff Talks.

Other Bodies – Australia-India Education Council, Energy Dialogue, and various Joint Working Groups (JWGs).

3. Economic Cooperation & Trade Dynamics

Current Trade Statistics (FY25) –

Total Bilateral Trade – Reached \$24.1 billion.

India's Exports – Valued at \$8.58 billion.

India's Imports – Valued at \$15.52 billion.

Ranking – India is Australia's 8th largest trading partner; Australia is India's 14th largest.

Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA) –

Implemented in 2022.

Impact – Approximately \$30 billion worth of Australian exports now enter India tariff-free.

Benefit – Australian consumers/businesses save around \$225 million on goods imported from India.

Future Negotiations – Discussions are currently underway for a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) to broaden the scope beyond ECTA and further deepen trade relations.

4. Defence and Security Cooperation

Strategic Alignment

Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) – Both nations are members of this informal strategic forum alongside the USA and Japan, ensuring a free and open Indo-Pacific.

Naval Cooperation – Signed the 'Joint Guidance for the India – Australia Navy to Navy Relationship' in 2021 to streamline naval interactions.

Key Bilateral & Multilateral Exercises

MALABAR (2020) – Australia joined India, the US, and Japan in this major naval exercise.

AUSINDEX – Dedicated bilateral naval exercise between the Royal Australian Navy and the Indian Navy.

Pitch Black (2018) – The Indian Air Force participated in this multinational warfare exercise in Darwin.

Logistics & Support –

Mutual Logistic Support Arrangement (2020) – Allows for complex military engagement and interoperability.

Defence Science & Technology Implementing Arrangement – Facilitates collective response capabilities to regional disasters.

5. Emerging Sectors – Minerals, Mobility & Technology

Critical Minerals –

Partnership – Australia-India Critical Minerals Investment Partnership signed in 2022.

Research Hub – Established the Australia-India Critical Minerals Research Hub in late 2023.

Objective – Drive innovation in sustainable mining/processing with \$5 million in funding for research and scholarships.

Migration and Mobility –

MMPA (2023) – The Migration and Mobility Partnership Arrangement was signed to support legal migration while curbing illegal/irregular movement.

New Roadmap for Economic Engagement (2025) – Identified nearly 50 targeted opportunities across sectors like defence, sports, culture, space, and technology.

Clean Energy Initiatives – Leveraging Australian expertise for India's sustainability goals.

Solar Academy – Establishment of the India-Australia Rooftop Solar Training Academy (2025) to train 2,000 women and youth as solar technicians.

6. Significance of Australia for India

Geostrategic – Crucial partner for maintaining a rules-based Indo-Pacific and balancing China's regional influence via platforms like QUAD, IORA, and EAS.

Energy & Resource Security – A key supplier of lithium, cobalt, rare earths, coal, and LNG, essential for India's industrial and energy security.

Economic Growth – The ECTA (and upcoming CECA) provides reduced tariffs and market access.

Knowledge Economy – Australia is a major education hub for Indian students with growing collaboration in STEM and innovation.

7. Areas of Concern

Economic Imbalance –

Trade Deficit – India's exports are limited compared to Australia's resource-heavy exports.

Diversification – Progress on the broader CECA has been slow.

Diaspora Safety – Occasional attacks on the Indian diaspora and students have raised safety and societal integration concerns.

Mobility Barriers – Challenges persist in the mutual recognition of skills, work visas, and post-study opportunities.

Agricultural Access – India faces hurdles in exporting agri-products due to Australia's strict Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) standards.

Defence Tech Lag – While exercises are frequent, joint R&D, technology transfer, and manufacturing collaboration remain underdeveloped.

8. The Way Ahead

Strategic Deepening – Expand collaboration in maritime security, intelligence sharing, and joint defence production.

Trade Realization – Fast-track the conclusion of CECA to diversify trade in goods, services, and digital sectors.

Supply Chain Resilience – Build long-term value chains for critical minerals (lithium, rare earths) and collaborate on Green Hydrogen and climate resilience projects.

Source – <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/pm-modi-g20-south-africa-australia-anthony-albanese-meeting-november-21-2025/article70309098.ece>