



P.L.RAJ IAS & IPS ACADEMY

Building Bureaucrats Since 2006

4. India-Australia Defence Dialogue – International Relation

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and his Australian counterpart co-chaired the second edition of India-Australia Defence Ministers' Dialogue in New Delhi, marking a significant step in deepening bilateral defence and strategic cooperation. Both nations agreed to advance collaborative maritime domain awareness using maritime patrol aircraft, explore undersea domain awareness opportunities, and finalize the Joint Maritime Security Collaboration Roadmap. India and Australia also announced development of an MoU regarding Provision of Defence Articles and Defence Services, building upon the 2020 Mutual Logistics Support Arrangement and exploring enhanced procedural interoperability for exercises and operations.

1. Major Highlights of Defence Ministers' Dialogue

Maritime Security

1. Advance collaborative maritime domain awareness activities using maritime patrol aircraft
2. Explore opportunities to enhance undersea domain awareness
3. Finalize Joint Maritime Security Collaboration Roadmap

Defence Interoperability

1. Explore arrangements enhancing procedural interoperability for exercises, operations
2. Building on 2020 Mutual Logistics Support Arrangement

Defence Industrial Collaboration

1. Begin developing MoU regarding Provision of Defence Articles and Defence Services
2. Next step in deepening defence industrial collaboration
3. Technology transfer, joint manufacturing discussions

2. Brief on India-Australia Ties

Evolution of Bilateral Relations

1. 2009- Strategic Partnership established
2. 2020- Upgraded to Comprehensive Strategic Partnership
3. 2+2 Defence and Foreign Ministers' Dialogue mechanism
4. Other mechanisms- Joint Trade & Commerce Ministerial Commission, Defence Policy Talks, Australia-India Education Council, Energy Dialogue, JWG's on different issues

Bilateral Trade

1. Bilateral trade- \$24.1 billion in FY25
2. India's exports- \$8.58 billion; Imports from Australia- \$15.52 billion
3. India- Australia's 8th largest trading partner
4. Australia- India's 14th largest trading partner
5. India-Australia ECTA (Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement, 2022)- Reducing tariffs, expanding trade
6. CECA negotiations underway for more comprehensive agreement

Defence and Security

1. **Quad (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue)**- USA, India, Australia, Japan informal strategic forum
2. **Joint Guidance for India-Australia Navy to Navy Relationship (2021)**

3. **Mutual Logistics Support Arrangement (2020)**- Enables complex military engagement, collective disaster response
4. Defence Science & Technology Implementing Arrangement (2020)

Bilateral Exercises

1. **MALABAR**- Australia joined India-US-Japan naval exercise (2020)
2. **AUSINDEX**- Naval exercise between Royal Australian Navy and Indian Navy
3. **Exercise Pitch Black**- Indian Air Force joined in Darwin (2018)

Critical Minerals and Technology

1. Australia-India Critical Minerals Investment Partnership (2022)
2. Australia-India Critical Minerals Research Hub established (late 2023)
3. Hub driving innovation in sustainable mining, processing
4. Government-approved funding- \$5 million for collaborative research, scholarships

Migration and Mobility

1. **Migration and Mobility Partnership Arrangement (MMPA, 2023)**- Bilateral framework supporting migration-mobility while addressing illegal/irregular migration

New Roadmap (2025)

1. Australia launched New Roadmap for Economic Engagement with India (2025)
2. Identifying nearly 50 targeted opportunities across defence, sports, culture, space, technology
3. **India-Australia Rooftop Solar Training Academy (2025)**- Training 2,000 women and young people as solar technicians

2. Significance of Australia for India

Strategic Partner in Indo-Pacific

1. Crucial for maintaining free, open, rules-based Indo-Pacific
2. Aligning with India's maritime, regional security interests
3. Quad partnership balancing China's regional influence

Key Source of Critical Minerals and Energy

1. Australia supplies- Lithium, cobalt, rare earths, coal, LNG
2. Strengthening India's energy, industrial security
3. Critical minerals essential for EV batteries, renewable energy, defence manufacturing

Trade and Economic Partner

1. ECTA (2022) reducing tariffs, expanding bilateral trade
2. CECA negotiations deepening economic integration
3. \$24.1 billion bilateral trade in FY25

Education and Research Hub

1. Major destination for Indian students
2. Growing collaboration in STEM, innovation
3. Mutual recognition of qualifications progressing

Geopolitical Convergence

1. Cooperation in QUAD, Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), East Asia Summit (EAS)
2. Multilateral forums helping India diversify partnerships
3. Balancing China's regional influence through coordinated approach

3. Areas of Concern

Trade Imbalance and Limited Diversification

1. India's exports limited compared to Australia's resource-heavy exports
2. Persistent trade deficit (~\$6.94 billion in FY25)
3. Slow progress on CECA despite ECTA foundation

Indian Diaspora and Safety Concerns

1. Occasional incidents involving Indian students
2. Community tensions raising safety, societal integration concerns

Visa, Mobility, Skill Recognition Issues

1. Challenges in mutual recognition of skills, work visas
2. Post-study opportunities for Indian students limited

Agricultural Market Access

1. India facing barriers exporting agricultural products
2. Australia's stringent sanitary, phytosanitary (SPS) standards creating hurdles

Slow Progress in Defence Technology Collaboration

1. Exercises strong but defence manufacturing, technology transfer, joint R&D underdeveloped
2. MoU on Defence Articles-Services addressing this gap

4. Way Forward

Deepen Strategic and Defence Cooperation

1. Expand maritime security, intelligence sharing, joint defence production
2. Strengthen QUAD-driven Indo-Pacific initiatives
3. Finalize Joint Maritime Security Collaboration Roadmap

Fast-Track CECA and Diversify Trade

1. Conclude Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement
2. Promote diversification in goods, services, critical minerals, digital trade
3. Address trade imbalance through enhanced Indian export promotion

Strengthen Critical Minerals and Clean Energy Ties

1. Build long-term supply chains for lithium, rare earths
2. Collaborate on green hydrogen, renewable energy, climate resilience
3. Expand Critical Minerals Research Hub activities

People-to-People and Educational Ties

1. Expand student mobility, scholarship programs
2. Address safety concerns of Indian diaspora
3. Mutual qualification recognition acceleration

5. Conclusion

India-Australia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership is deepening across defence, trade, critical minerals, clean energy, and people-to-people dimensions, with the 2nd Defence Ministers' Dialogue advancing maritime domain awareness and defence industrial collaboration.

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