

The Indo-Pacific Bulletin

The latest weekly developments in and around the region

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First India-ASEAN Defence Minister's Meet & ADMM Plus

On 22nd November 2022, commemorating the 30th anniversary of India-ASEAN relations in 2022, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh co-chaired the first India-ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting along with the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence of Cambodia, General Tea Banh, in Siem Reap, Cambodia. Speaking of giving a booster shot to the existing ties shared between the two, while affirming New Delhi's commitment to various initiatives strengthening ties, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said, "India shares a historic, robust, and Comprehensive Strategic Partnership with ASEAN. India deeply values the engagement with the ASEAN multilateral platforms such as ADMM-Plus and East Asia Summit." He further emphasised that the centrality of ASEAN in the Indo-Pacific region is the cornerstone of India's Act East Policy. The ties between India and the ASEAN saw a significant surge in the last few years, including upgrading of the ties to Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in the ASEAN-India Summit of 2022. Marked with several high level visits followed by a high level dialogue framework, 2022 has been declared the as 'ASEAN-India Friendship Year' to commemorate the 30th Anniversary of the ASEAN-India Dialogue relations. The Defence Minister also attended the 9th ASEAN-Defence Ministers Meeting' (ADMM) Plus on 23rd November at Cambodia. He highlighted India's commitment to nurturing cooperation with the ADMM Plus countries for enhancing the maritime security in the region along with the safety of the global commons.



Indian Minister of State for External Affairs arrives in Dhaka to attend IORA ministerial meeting



On 23 November 2022, Dr Rajkumar Ranjan Singh, Minister of State for External Affairs and Education, India arrived in Dhaka to attend the 22nd meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) Council of Ministers in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The Chair of the IORA is presently held by Bangladesh. During his remarks at the ministerial meeting, Mr Singh reaffirmed India's strong commitment to strengthening IORA to promote peace, security and prosperity in the Indian Ocean Region as well as in the Indo-Pacific. He highlighted India's contributions as coordinator of the IORA priority areas of Disaster Risk Management and Science, Technology and Innovation towards capacity building and strengthening of the IORA Secretariat. On the challenges posed by climate change, the Minister highlighted the initiatives of LiFE – Lifestyle for Environment and International Year of Millet in 2023. The COM of the IORA adopted the 'IORA's Outlook on the Indo-Pacific' (IOIP) which would guide enhancement of IORA's engagement in the Indo-Pacific region. India led the process of the development of the IOIP. The Dhaka Communique was adopted as the Outcome Document of the 22nd COM meeting of the IORA. India's candidature for IORA Vice-Chair for the period 2023-25 was endorsed at the meeting by consensus.

US Space Forces 1st ever Component Command in the Indo-Pacific to Counter China

On 21 November 2022, The United States Space Force (USSF) announced to establish its first-ever component command in the Indo-Pacific region citing the increasing threats from regional rivals such as China and North Korea. The announcement was made by the US Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) on Monday, noting that the command would undertake the responsibility of the new Space Force unit after it launches later this week. The announcement comes amid a recent flare-up of tensions between Washington and multiple regional rivals, namely North Korea and China. Bilateral ties between Washington and Beijing have been sour since the US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited the self-governed island nation of Taiwan in August, following which China conducted large-scale military drills around Taiwan, which included live-fire exercises and a naval blockade. Moreover, US-North Korea relations also took a brunt after a series of joint military drills between the US forces and the South Korean military prompted Pyongyang to launch a series of retaliatory missile tests, including the launch of several Submarine Launched Ballistic Missiles (SBLMs) and Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs).





India-US Joint Military Exercise Yudh Abhyas Begins

On 24 November 2022, The eighteenth edition of India-US joint military exercise Yudh Abhyas underway in Uttarakhand. It aimed to enhance interoperability and share expertise between both the armies in peacekeeping and disaster relief operations. The nearly two week exercise began recently. The 18th Edition of India-US Joint Exercise Yudh Abhyas commenced on Thursday at Foreign Training Node, Auli. The aim of Joint Exercise is to enhance interoperability & share expertise between both the Armies in Peace Keeping & Disaster Relief Operations. The exercise is conducted annually between India and the US with the aim of exchanging best practices, tactics, techniques and procedures between the armies of the two nations. The previous edition of the exercise was conducted at Joint Base Elmendorf Richardson, Alaska. It had said the training schedule focuses on employment of an integrated battle group under Chapter VII of the UN Mandate. The schedule will include all operations related to peacekeeping and peace enforcement. The troops from both nations will work together to achieve common objectives.

US deploys Bombers in response to North Korea's Missile Tests

On 19 November 2022, the United States deployed supersonic bombers and fighter jets in response to recent missile tests carried out by North Korea. The B-1B bombers conducted joint aerial drills on Saturday with other South Korean and US warplanes, according to South Korea's joint chiefs of staff. It said the drills demonstrated an "iron-clad" US security commitment to South Korea and the allies' combined defence posture. North Korea drew widespread international condemnation on Friday after it test-launched an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) capable of carrying multiple nuclear warheads and with a range that could reach anywhere on the US mainland. Friday's launch was part of the North's ongoing barrage of missile tests that are seen as an attempt to expand its weapons arsenal. Some foreign experts said the Hwasong-17 missile is still under development, but is the North's longest-range ballistic weapon designed to carry multiple nuclear warheads to defeat US missile defence systems. Reports suggests that North Korea will continue its weapons testing activities as the US continues to bolster its security commitment to its allies South Korea and Japan. There are concerns that, in coming weeks, North Korea could conduct its first nuclear test for five years.

