

INSIGHT SOUTHEAST ASIA

Looking Eastwards From New Delhi



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

CONTENTS

- Myanmar President Min Aung Hlaing's first official visit to India.
- Japanese PM Sanae Takaichi's diplomatic tour to Vietnam and Australia.
- The Philippines' President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s visit to Japan.
- The 2026 IISS Shangri-La Dialogue took place in Singapore.
- India has signed the BrahMos missile deal with Vietnam.
- The Australian Foreign Minister's visit to India.
- The Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting 2026 was held in New Delhi.

Overview

The Southeast Asia and Oceania region witnessed several significant diplomatic and security developments that underscored the region's growing strategic importance and the deepening alignment among like-minded partners. The President of Myanmar, Min Aung Hlaing, visited India on 30 May 2026, and this was his first official visit after assuming the presidency. Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi embarked on a diplomatic tour to Vietnam and Australia, highlighting Tokyo's continued efforts to strengthen security cooperation and economic resilience. Meanwhile, Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s visit to Japan reinforced the rapidly expanding Japan–Philippines partnership, particularly in maritime security, defence cooperation, and economic collaboration.

At the multilateral level, the 2026 IISS Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore served as a key platform for regional leaders and defence officials to discuss pressing security challenges, including tensions in the South China Sea, Taiwan Strait stability, and the future of regional security architecture. The Australian Foreign Minister visited India and held talks with her Indian counterpart, Dr S. Jaishankar. The Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting in New Delhi further reaffirmed the commitment of India, Japan, Australia, and the United States to advancing cooperation in maritime security, critical minerals, emerging technologies, and regional connectivity.

Defence cooperation also gained momentum with India signing the BrahMos Missile deal with Vietnam. These developments highlight a broader trend of strategic convergence among Indo-Pacific democracies and regional stakeholders. The region continues to move toward a more interconnected and resilient security architecture capable of addressing emerging challenges and maintaining a stable balance of power.

Myanmar President Min Aung Hlaing's first official visit to India.

The President of Myanmar, Min Aung Hlaing, concluded his five-day official visit to India on 3 June. The visit, which commenced on 30 May, marked an important engagement in India–Myanmar bilateral relations. It is particularly significant as it was his first foreign visit after assuming the presidency in April 2026. President Hlaing held talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi that focused on trade, connectivity, border security, defence, healthcare, education, combating cyber fraud, and cooperation in advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence and space exploration. He also explored cutting-edge net-zero technologies through engagements with India's energy sector stakeholders.

Min Aung Hlaing's visit is strategically significant in several respects, particularly because of the ongoing civil war in Myanmar since 2021, which has had important implications for India's border

security. Min Aung Hlaing's visit to India began with prayers at the Mahabodhi Temple in Gaya, Bihar, on 30 May. He later travelled to New Delhi for official talks before proceeding to Mumbai, where he met business leaders to explore investment opportunities and strengthen bilateral trade relations.

Japanese PM Sanae Takaichi's diplomatic tour to Vietnam and Australia.

Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi undertook her first major Indo-Pacific diplomatic tour from 1–5 May 2026, visiting Vietnam and Australia. The visit reflected Tokyo's efforts to strengthen strategic partnerships with key regional stakeholders amid growing geopolitical uncertainty, supply-chain vulnerabilities, and evolving security challenges in the Indo-Pacific.

Vietnam was chosen as the first stop of the tour, highlighting its growing importance in Japan's regional strategy. During meetings with Vietnamese leaders, Takaichi focused on advancing the Japan–Vietnam Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, particularly in areas such as economic security, energy cooperation, critical minerals, science and technology, and resilient supply chains. The visit also provided an opportunity for Japan to promote its updated vision of a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" (FOIP), which seeks to uphold a rules-based regional order and strengthen connectivity between Southeast Asia and the wider Indo-Pacific.

Following Vietnam, Takaichi travelled to Australia for the annual Japan–Australia Leaders' Meeting with Prime Minister Anthony Albanese. The visit coincided with the 50th anniversary of the 1976 Basic Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation. In Canberra, the two leaders expanded cooperation in defence, economic security, energy security, critical minerals, and cyber resilience. New agreements aimed at securing resilient supply chains and strengthening cooperation in critical mineral development reflected shared concerns about strategic vulnerabilities in the global economy.

The Philippines' President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s visit to Japan.

The visit of Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to Japan marked a significant step forward in the deepening of bilateral ties between the two countries, set against the backdrop of heightened tensions in the South China Sea and broader Indo-Pacific strategic competition. President Marcos received one of the highest awards in Japan, the Grand Cordon of the Supreme Order of the Chrysanthemum.

The discussions during the visit focused heavily on strengthening defence and security cooperation, particularly maritime security collaboration between the Philippine Navy and the Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to maintaining freedom of navigation and upholding international law in contested waters, reflecting shared

concerns over coercive maritime behaviour in the region.

A key dimension of the visit was Japan's growing role in supporting Philippine defence capabilities through capacity-building assistance, coastal surveillance support, and the expansion of defence equipment cooperation frameworks such as the Official Security Assistance (OSA) Program.

The two countries began negotiations on an intelligence-sharing agreement to allow the exchange of classified security data. Known as a General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA), the pact would help facilitate closer bilateral military ties, as well as cooperation with their mutual ally, the United States. The visit also focused on energy security cooperation between the two countries.

The 2026 IISS Shangri-La Dialogue took place in Singapore.

The 2026 IISS Shangri-La Dialogue, held in Singapore, once again served as the premier multilateral platform for defence ministers, military chiefs, and strategic thinkers from across the Indo-Pacific and beyond to engage on the region's most pressing security challenges.

The Dialogue focused on the intensifying strategic competition in the Indo-Pacific, particularly the implications of maritime disputes, technological rivalry, and shifting power dynamics among major states. A central theme this year was the growing need to preserve a stable balance of power while preventing escalation in flashpoint

regions such as the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait. A significant feature of the 2026 edition was the strong emphasis on defence cooperation networks and minilateral groupings, including the Quad and ASEAN-led mechanisms. The US again called on Asian allies to spend more on defence and invest more in their own security.

The Shangri-La Dialogue reaffirmed its role as a crucial "strategic barometer" for the region. The 2026 edition highlighted both the deepening geopolitical contestation in the Indo-Pacific and the parallel expansion of diplomatic and defence dialogue aimed at managing tensions and sustaining regional stability.

India has signed the BrahMos missile deal with Vietnam.

India's agreement to export the BrahMos missile to Vietnam marks a significant milestone in the deepening defence partnership between the two countries and reflects the expanding role of India as a regional security provider in the Indo-Pacific.

The deal is strategically important for both sides. For Vietnam, it enhances maritime deterrence capabilities at a time of growing security concerns in the South China Sea, strengthening its ability to protect territorial claims and maintain a credible defensive posture. For India, the export underscores its evolving defence-industrial capacity and aligns with its broader policy of defence diplomacy and Atmanirbhar Bharat-driven arms production and export expansion. The

agreement signals the gradual emergence of diversified defence supply networks in the Indo-Pacific, reducing reliance on a single dominant arms supplier and reinforcing the trend of strategic convergence among middle powers.

The Australian Foreign Minister's visit to India.

Australia's Foreign Minister visited India, and Dr S. Jaishankar and Foreign Minister Penny Wong co-chaired the 17th India-Australia Foreign Ministers' Framework Dialogue in New Delhi. At the core of the discussions was the strengthening of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between India and Australia, with a strong focus on defence cooperation, maritime security, and economic resilience. Both sides reiterated their interest in expanding naval interoperability, enhancing maritime domain awareness, and deepening coordination in the Indian Ocean Region, which has become increasingly central to Indo-Pacific security dynamics.

The visit also underscored the importance of multilateral coordination, especially within the Quad framework. The visit reflected the growing strategic convergence between India and Australia as middle powers increasingly aligned in their approach to Indo-Pacific stability.

The Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting 2026 was held in New Delhi.

The 2026 Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting, held in New Delhi, brought together the foreign ministers of India, Japan, Australia, and the United States to

review progress and expand cooperation under the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue framework. This meeting was the first to be held since 2023. The meeting reaffirmed the Quad's central objective of supporting a free, open, and rules-based Indo-Pacific. Discussions focused on strengthening maritime security, enhancing interoperability among member states, and improving coordinated responses to regional contingencies, particularly in the South China Sea and broader maritime commons.

A major emphasis was placed on economic and technological resilience. The Quad partners advanced initiatives related to critical minerals supply chains, semiconductor cooperation, and secure digital infrastructure. These efforts reflect a shared recognition that economic security is now inseparable from traditional defence considerations in an era of strategic competition.

Humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) cooperation also featured prominently, with commitments to improve coordination mechanisms and rapid response capabilities across the region. The New Delhi meeting underscored the Quad's steady institutionalisation and its evolving role as a practical cooperation platform.