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Digest

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Japan's defence minister visits Australia, India

Shinjiro Koizumi, Defence Minister of Japan, [visited](#) Australia and India as part of regular bilateral engagements with his counterparts in Canberra and New Delhi. Starting his tour in Canberra on 18 August, Koizumi [met](#) Richard Marles, Defence Minister of Australia, for a Defence Ministers' Meeting. Welcoming the 'continued evolution of our bilateral defence partnership, marked by growing sophistication and interoperability across all domains', the two sides noted that their collaboration was designed to 'meet the challenges of the deteriorating global strategic environment'. They remarked on the vitality of the 'strategic depth' each provided the other country and reaffirmed their 'unprecedented strategic alignment' in the Indo-Pacific.

Five areas of tangible cooperation were identified: increased information and intelligence cooperation; collaboration on the delivery of upgraded *Mogami*-class frigates to the Royal Australian Navy; co-development and co-production of defence equipment; sharing facilities for testing of new equipment, advanced weapons and emerging technologies and enhanced training and exercises at the bilateral and multilateral levels. In summation, the two leaders agreed to collaborate deeply with allies and partners across the region.

Landing in India on 19 August, Koizumi [headed](#) to Mumbai to visit the Western Naval Command of the Indian Navy, where he received a Guard of Honour, followed by interactions with the Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Krishna Swaminathan and Flag Officer Commanding in Chief, Western Naval Command Vice Admiral

Sanjay Vatsayan. He also toured the INS *Chennai*, India's indigenously-built *Kolkata*-class stealth guided missile destroyer.

On 20 August, Koizumi [met](#) Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh in New Delhi for the annual Defence Ministers' Meeting. The two ministers 'welcomed the steady strengthening of defence cooperation, including cooperation among the respective Ministries and the Services of the two countries that share strategic perspectives, under the "Japan-India Special Strategic and Global Partnership"' and concurred that sharing regional maritime assessments is critical to advancing cooperation in the Indo-Pacific. They sought to advance practical India-Japan maritime collaboration further through the signing of a Memorandum of Arrangement on Maritime Security Cooperation between the two defence ministries. This would serve to boost collaboration between the naval forces of both countries across a range of sectors.

The two sides 'shared the view that both sides should leverage each other's strengths in the field of defence shipbuilding and related areas, and deepen discussions on Japan's use of India's production capabilities under the framework of "Make in India"', with reciprocal arrangement of ship repair and maintenance on the anvil in the near future. The ministers also welcomed progress in inter-services dialogues and exercises, with deeper collaboration between their Special Operations Forces and theatre commands envisaged in future. Koizumi ended his tour with a courtesy [call](#) on Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi.

Japan-Russia ties worsen after Putin's Iturup visit

Russian President Vladimir Putin triggered a fresh downturn in bilateral relations with Japan after he [visited](#) Iturup island on 13 August, one of the four disputed islands controlled by Russia referred to by the Japanese as the 'Northern Territories'. During his visit, Putin toured a tuna processing factory and interacted with residents. In a press conference on the island, he stated that Russia's control of the islands it calls the Southern Kurils is undisputed and accepted by international law, though he did not specify which portions of international law justify Russia's control.

The visit drew an exceptionally strong response from Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi, who told reporters the visit 'hurts the feelings of the Japanese people and is absolutely unacceptable,' warning the Russian side to 'take the seriousness of this matter fully to heart'. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs too [termed](#) the visit as 'extremely regrettable' and 'utterly unacceptable'. This resulted in the reciprocal [summoning](#) of ambassadors to the foreign ministries in Tokyo and Moscow, where both diplomats received strong protests from their host governments. Meanwhile, the United States of America in a statement issued the day of the visit [expressed](#) support for Japan's claim on the islands and opposed 'any action that seeks to undermine peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific'.

Japan's response to US sanctions on ICC president

On 19 August, the United States of America [announced](#) that it would impose sanctions

on the International Criminal Court, an UN-mandated body, and 13 of its chief representatives, including its president, Justice Tomoko Akane of Japan. The US alleged that the ICC was 'maliciously abusing its authority' as a 'corrupt, politically-motivated supranational court' to investigate and issue arrest warrants for 'countries and regions that do not recognise the ICC's mandate', an apparent reference to its past investigations into US armed forces' activities in West Asia and the arrest warrant against Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu issued in 2024. Later on the same day, a US State Department spokesperson [expressed](#) Washington's expectation that 'our allies [will] end their support for the ICC, which represents a threat to US sovereignty'. The decision created a new speed-bump in US-Japan relations, as Japan is a signatory to the ICC's founding charter, its biggest funder and the country to which Justice Akane belongs.

Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs initially [issued](#) a response to the US' action which termed Washington's decision as 'very unfortunate'. The language led to much [criticism](#) in mainstream media outlets leading Prime Minister Takaichi to later [state](#) that Washington's stance was 'incompatible with Japan's position' and that her government would take the matter 'very seriously'. For her part, Justice Akane expressed her determination to resist US pressure, calling on ICC member states, including Japan, to continue supporting the court.