

INDIA SOUTH AFRICA TWO AGREEMENTS FOCUSED ON SUBMARINE COOPERATION: INTERNATIONAL RELATION

NEWS: India, South Africa sign pacts on submarine cooperation

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

India and South Africa signed agreements on submarine cooperation, deepening defence ties and maritime collaboration rooted in shared anti-colonial history and growing strategic partnership.

Context

- India and South Africa signed two agreements focused on submarine cooperation during the 9th Joint Defence Committee (JDC) meeting in Johannesburg, South Africa.
- These agreements represent a milestone in defence ties, expanding naval cooperation between the two countries.

Significance of Cooperation Between the Two Countries

Blue-Water Collaboration:

- India's aspiration to build a strong blue-water navy requires strategic partnerships to expand operational reach and presence across critical ocean spaces.
- Cooperation with South Africa provides India greater access and influence over the Indian and Atlantic Oceans—vital routes for global trade and maritime security.

Shared Security Beyond Submarines:

- The new agreements are not limited to submarine rescue and support but also encompass joint training, surveillance, and research and development (R&D) initiatives.
- These efforts are crucial in addressing challenges like piracy, human trafficking, illegal fishing, and strategic rivalries in the broader Indo-Atlantic region.

Defence Industrial Growth:

- India's growing defence manufacturing ecosystem, particularly in naval systems and platforms, aligns well with South Africa's ongoing naval modernization and indigenous capability-building programs.
- This cooperation fosters opportunities for joint ventures, technology transfer, and supply chain integration in the defence sector.

Regional & Historical Significance:

- The ties are rooted in shared anti-colonial struggles, with both countries championing freedom and self-reliance.

- Defence cooperation builds on this foundation, extending diplomatic and political solidarity into practical, strategic integration of security capabilities.

India–South Africa Relations

History of Friendship:

- India and South Africa share deep historical ties from their fight against colonialism and apartheid.
- India was the first country to cut trade relations with the apartheid regime in 1946 and actively led global campaigns at the UN and Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) to isolate the regime.

Diplomatic Relations:

- Formal diplomatic ties between the two countries resumed in 1993, following the end of apartheid.
- The Red Fort Declaration of 1997 established a Strategic Partnership framework between India and South Africa.
- In 2023, the two countries celebrated 30 years of restored diplomatic relations.

Defence and Maritime Cooperation:

- Defence cooperation was formalized in 1996 and has since expanded significantly.
- India and South Africa regularly conduct naval exercises like IBSAMAR (with Brazil) and MILAN, strengthening interoperability and maritime security.
- South Africa participates in the India-Africa Defence Dialogue and has sent liaison officers to the Indian Navy's Information Fusion Centre–Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR).

Political Engagement:

- Both nations engage actively through platforms like BRICS, G20, and IBSA (India-Brazil-South Africa).
- In 2019, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa was the Chief Guest at India's Republic Day celebrations, highlighting close political ties.

Trade and Investment:

- Bilateral trade reached \$19.25 billion in 2023–24, with balanced trade flows.
- India exports vehicles, pharmaceuticals, rice, and chemicals to South Africa.
- It imports critical minerals such as gold, coal, copper ore, phosphoric acid, and manganese from South Africa.
- India ranks among South Africa's top 10 trading partners.

Skill and Education Cooperation:

- The Gandhi–Mandela Centre of Specialisation was set up in Pretoria in 2021 to develop skilled artisans.
- India offers numerous ITEC training programs, building capacity among South African professionals across technical and governance sectors.

Indian Diaspora:

- South Africa is home to a vibrant Indian-origin population of around 1.7 million people.
- The community primarily resides in KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng, and Cape Town, contributing significantly to South Africa's economic, cultural, and social fabric.

Way Ahead

- India–South Africa relations stand on shared historical struggles, mutual respect, and a commitment to inclusive, sustainable development.
- By deepening cooperation in defence, trade, innovation, and multilateral engagement, both countries can serve as pillars of leadership in shaping an equitable, rules-based global order, and championing the interests of the Global South.

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