

India to import uranium from Australia under nuclear pact

Both nations announce 18 outcomes, to deepen defence and maritime security cooperation

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New Delhi, 9 July

After talks between Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi and his Australian counterpart Anthony Albanese in Melbourne, India and Australia on Thursday announced 18 outcomes, including deepening their defence and maritime security cooperation, which underscored the vital role of the bilateral partnership in ensuring a peaceful Indo-Pacific region.

India and Australia also operationalised a pact to enable supply of uranium from Australia to India. India and Australia signed a civil nuclear cooperation pact in 2014. The agreement with Australia on uranium supply would leverage the Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India (SHANTI) Act.

During their discussions, Albanese raised and expressed concern at China's intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) test in the Pacific on Monday. In response, Modi said that India views the Indo-Pacific as an area where it would like to see peace, security, and stability. He said India and Australia have shared interests and perspectives on the Indo-Pacific, and should intensify cooperation so that peace and security is continued in the region.

Modi and Albanese acknowledged that the bilateral Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA) signed and implemented in 2022 delivered tangible benefits with a 55 per cent increase in bilateral trade. The two leaders instructed their respective set of officials to conclude the negotiations for the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) at the earliest "to unlock the full potential of the bilateral economic ties", and firm up a bilateral investment protection framework.

On defence and maritime security



PHOTO: PTI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi described as "unparalleled" the outcomes from his talks with Australian PM Anthony Albanese in Melbourne

cooperation, the two sides agreed to consult on defence-related developments in the Indo-Pacific that affect shared interests, increasing the complexity of joint defence exercises, including with partners. Australia and India along with the US and Japan are part of the Quad grouping.

The two sides said they will accelerate efforts to build interoperability and information-sharing between defence forces, and "expand aircraft deployments from each other's territories". "We will expand our cooperation with the United States of America and Japan, to build capability and cooperation towards our positive vision for an open, stable, peaceful, and prosperous Indo-Pacific region," the two sides said in their joint statement. The two leaders agreed that India and Australia, which reside on the edges of the Indian Ocean, have enormous amount of strategic convergence on the key issues of the

day, and have a shared approach for ensuring a free, open, and prosperous Indian Ocean region.

An agreement was also signed between their respective coast guards, the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) and the Maritime Border Command (MBC) of Australia. The two sides also committed to work closely in shipbuilding, and ship repair & maintenance. In the defence sector, the two sides said they will promote connections between Australian and Indian defence industries, through Australia's first defence trade mission to India and the Australia-India Defence Industry Roundtable.

The two sides instituted an annual bilateral defence ministers' dialogue, and also annual dialogues on supply chain resilience, critical technology, cyber security, digital resilience, and defence research and collaboration. Both sides resolved to cooperate in critical minerals and energy security

domains. They committed to maintaining a stable, secure, and reliable supply of energy products — such as coal, diesel, other liquid fuels, and natural gas — with New Delhi recognising Australia's role as an important supplier of liquefied natural gas (LNG) and coal to India.

Modi described as "unparalleled" the outcomes from his talks with Albanese, especially in areas of renewable energy, climate action, nuclear energy, critical minerals, technology, and education. An announcement was also made on the deployment of an Indian military instructor in the Australian Defence College for 2028-29.

"Today, we have issued an important Joint Declaration to enhance cooperation in defence and security. Through the India-Australia Defence Innovation Corridor, we will work to connect defence startups and industries," Modi said.

Drawing on the popularity of cricket in the two countries, Modi said, "As we are here in Melbourne — the sports capital of the world — not talking about sports would be like not starting a cricket match after the toss. Cricket is the diplomatic language of India-Australia relations. That is why our meetings, too, resemble cricket: The agenda — focused like a one-day match... Decisions — swift like a T20 game, and the partnership — long and deep, like a Test match."

Agreements were also signed in the education sector with Australia's Victoria University receiving an approval to set up and operate its campus in Gurugram. And, Flinders University joined seven other Australian universities endorsed to have campuses across India. Western Australian TAFE will support a Centre of Excellence for Skilling in Mining and Mining Equipment, Technology and Services in Bhuaneswar.