

India, Bangladesh hold naval drills despite strained ties

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Even though diplomatic ties between New Delhi and Dhaka have been strained since Sheikh Hasina's removal in August last year, completion of India-Bangladesh naval exercise Bongosagar 2025 and Coordinated Patrol in the Bay of Bengal this week suggest that military cooperation between the two neighbours remains unaffected.

The latest edition of the annual exercise, which began in 2019, featured the Indian Navy's destroyer INS Ranvir and the Bangladesh Navy's frigate BNS Abu Ubaidah.

"At a time when political ties between India and Bangladesh have nosedived, this semblance of normalcy in defence relations is heartening. It underscores the



Indian Navy destroyer INS Ranvir (foreground) and Bangladesh Navy frigate BNS Abu Ubaidah in the Bay of Bengal

PHOTO: PIB

commitment of both defence forces to continue seeing each other as partners for now, especially as the Bay of Bengal becomes a key arena in great power contestation and their role in maintaining stability remains critical," said Harsh

V Pant, vice-president of studies and foreign policy at the Observer Research Foundation.

"The exercise enhanced interoperability between the two navies, facilitating collaborative responses to shared maritime security challenges," said

an Indian officer, adding that the exercise involved a range of complex operations. These included surface firing, tactical manoeuvres, underway replenishment, communication drills, and visit, board, search, and seizure operations.

The officer noted that the exercise allowed both navies to strengthen ties in tactical planning, coordination, and information-sharing for seamless maritime operations. "The exercise has strengthened coordination and confidence between the two navies, thereby improving the ability to undertake coordinated operations and respond swiftly and effectively to emerging threats at sea," the officer added.

He also emphasised that the growing synergy in naval operations between the two navies is a

"testament" to their "shared commitment of countering global security challenges" and promoting India's Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) initiative.

India has been strengthening security and military cooperation, particularly in the maritime domain, with its neighbours in the Indian Ocean, amid China's expanding engagement and increasingly assertive presence in these waters.

For example, the India-Mauritius Joint Vision for an Enhanced Strategic Partnership, issued after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's state visit to Mauritius on Tuesday and Wednesday, reaffirmed commitments to defence and maritime security cooperation.

Modi and his Mauritian counterpart Navinchandra

Ramgoolam reiterated their shared resolve to counter growing regional threats and challenges. The leaders pledged to continue defence and maritime cooperation, including the provision of assets and equipment based on Mauritius' needs and priorities.

They also agreed to expand maritime collaboration through increased deployment of ships and aircraft for joint surveillance and hydrographic surveys, deepen cooperation towards securing Mauritius' exclusive economic zone, including through enhanced utilisation of the newly built runway and jetty at Agalega Island, and assist Mauritius in setting up a National Maritime Information Sharing Centre to enhance maritime domain awareness, among other initiatives.