

## CURRENT AFFAIRS: 07.05.2026

### Between a fatwa and war: how Iran makes sense of its nuclear capability 💎

Iran has 'vowed' to protect its nuclear stockpile against Trump's threats even as its former Ayatollah Ali Khamenei disapproved of using nuclear weapons on religious grounds

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#### Why in News?

The geopolitical tension surrounding Iran's nuclear program highlights a strategic balance under the **Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)**, where Iran maintains the **technical capability** for weaponization while officially adhering to a **civilian-use narrative**.

#### What are the Key Facts Regarding Iran's Nuclear Ambiguity?

- **NPT Paradox:** The NPT recognises an **inalienable right to civilian nuclear technology**, but because enrichment and reprocessing can serve both peaceful and **weapons** purposes, it creates a **blurred line** between energy use and weaponisation that **Iran's nuclear programme** exemplifies.
- **Technical Proximity:** Iran possesses a significant stockpile of **uranium enriched to 60%**; experts note that the path from **60%** to the **90% weapons-grade threshold** is technically **shorter** than the initial enrichment stages.
  - Iran is classified as a **threshold state**—a nation possessing the **breakout capability** (technical knowledge and material) to build a bomb rapidly but refraining from the final assembly to avoid international sanctions.
  - Analysts estimate Iran's **current breakout time**—the period required to produce enough fissile material for a warhead—is now measured in **weeks**, effectively making it a **nuclear-capable state**. **North Korea** was once an example; Iran now is one.
- **Nuclear Cascade Risk:** Iran's status as a threshold state risks a **regional nuclear cascade**, where neighboring countries may feel compelled to seek **nuclear parity** to ensure their own security.
- **JCPOA Factor:** The **Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)** 2015, or the **2015 Iran Deal**, successfully curtailed enrichment until the US unilaterally exited in 2018, leading Tehran to **resume high-level enrichment**.
- **Covert Actions Against Iran:** Includes **Stuxnet virus** in late 2000s (highly sophisticated **computer worm** discovered designed to sabotage **Iran's nuclear program** by physically damaging centrifuges), assassination of nuclear scientists, **Twelve-Day War (2025)**, and ongoing conflict – aimed at eliminating even threshold state status.

#### What is Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)?

- **About:** NPT is a landmark international agreement aimed at **preventing the spread of nuclear weapons and technology**, promoting cooperation in the **peaceful uses** of nuclear energy, and furthering the goal of achieving nuclear disarmament.
  - Opened for **signature** in **1968** and entered into **force in 1970**, it is the most **widely adhered-to** arms control treaty in history.
- **Three Pillars:** The NPT is often described as a "**grand bargain**" based on three central pillars:

- **Non-Proliferation:** Non-Nuclear Weapon States (NNWS) agree **not to acquire** or manufacture nuclear weapons. Nuclear Weapon States (NWS) agree **not to assist NNWS** in acquiring them.
- **Disarmament:** All parties—specifically the NWS—commit to pursuing negotiations in good faith to **halt the nuclear arms race** and achieve complete disarmament.
- **Peaceful Use of Nuclear Energy:** All parties have the **"inalienable right" to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes** (such as power generation or medicine) under international supervision.
- **Nuclear "Have" vs. "Have-Nots":** The treaty creates a legal distinction between two groups of states:
  - **Nuclear Weapon States (NWS):** Defined as those that manufactured and exploded a nuclear weapon or other nuclear explosive device prior to **1st January, 1967**. This includes only five countries: the **United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, and China** (the P5).
  - **Non-Nuclear Weapon States (NNWS):** All other signatories, who agree to forgo the nuclear path.
- **Verification and the IAEA:** To ensure that NNWS are not diverting nuclear material from peaceful power plants to secret weapons programs, the treaty relies on the **International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)**. Signatories must accept IAEA "safeguards," which involve regular inspections of their nuclear facilities.
- **Criticisms:**
  - **Discriminatory Nature:** Many argue the treaty is inherently unfair because it "freezes" the world into nuclear **"haves" and "have-nots,"** with no strict deadline for the P5 to disarm.
  - **Non-Signatories:** Four UN member states have never joined the NPT namely **India, Pakistan, Israel, and South Sudan**. **North Korea** acceded in **1985**, announced its **withdrawal in 2003** (the only state to do so), and subsequently developed nuclear weapons. **Iran** joined NPT in **1970** but recently **expressed doubts** about continued participation.
  - **Withdrawal Clause:** Article X allows a state to withdraw if **"extraordinary events"** jeopardize its supreme interests, which some see as a loophole for "breakout" capabilities.

## CINBAX-II 2026

# India Dispatches Army Contingent for Indo-Cambodia Joint Exercise CINBAX-II 2026

The Indian Army is participating in the 2nd edition of the India-Cambodia Joint Military Exercise, **CINBAX-II 2026**, held in Kampong Speu Province, Cambodia. The inaugural edition of CINBAX was held in **Pune**, India, in December 2024.

- **Contingent Details:** 120 personnel from India, primarily from a Battalion of the **Maratha Light Infantry Regiment**, joined **160 personnel** from the Royal **Cambodian Army** for the exercise.
- **Objective:** To achieve **operational synergy**, share best practices, and enhance coordination during **joint missions** focused on countering hostile forces.
- **Focus Area:** The exercise focuses on **Counter-Terrorism (CT) operations** within sub-conventional environments, specifically in semi-urban and jungle settings.
  - The 2026 edition includes training in modern combat skills such as **drone operations**, sniper tactics, and mortar handling.
- **Mandate:** It is conducted under the framework of **Chapter VII** of the **UN Charter**, aligning with the dynamics of modern **UN peacekeeping** operations.
  - Chapter VII of the UN Charter authorizes the **UN Security Council** to take decisive action, including binding **economic sanctions** and **military force**, to maintain or restore international peace and security.
- **Strategic Significance:** CINBAX is aimed at strengthening **defence cooperation** between India and Cambodia under India's broader military diplomacy and **Act East Policy, 2014**.



## List of Joint Military Exercises of India 2026

| Exercise Name                                                                         | Participants Country                  | Place Held                                                 | Duration                 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 11th Joint Defence Committee                                                          | India & Egypt                         | Cairo                                                      | April 20 to 22, 2026     |
| India Uzbekistan Joint Exercise DUSTLIK 2026                                          | India and Uzbekistan                  | Foreign Training Node, Aundh (Pune)                        | 12 to 25 April 2026      |
| Freedom Shield 2026                                                                   | United States and South Korea         | South Korea                                                | March 11-19, 2026        |
| EXERCISE LAMITIYE 2026                                                                | Indian Navy and Indian Air Force      | Seychelles Defence Academy                                 | March 09-20, 2026        |
| Exercise MILAN 2026                                                                   | 72 countries, including US and Russia | Coast of Visakhapatnam.                                    | February 17-26, 2026     |
| India-U.S. 'Vajra Prahar'- 16th edition of the India-US Joint Special Forces Exercise | India – USA                           | Special Forces Training School in Bakloh, Himachal Pradesh | February 24 to March 16  |
| 7th edition of annual Joint Military Exercise DHARMA GUARDIAN                         | India & Japan                         | Uttarakhand                                                | February 24 to 9th March |

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|                                                         |                                                                                                                |                                            |                          |
|---------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| India-Kyrgyzstan Joint Special Forces Exercise 'KHANJAR | Indian Army Special Forces and Kyrgyz Armed Forces Special Forces contingents.                                 | Misamari, Sonitpur district, Assam         | February 04 to 17, 2026  |
| Military Civil Fusion Exercise Sanjha Shakti 2026       | Indian Army and 16 key civilian agencies including Maharashtra Police, Force One and Fire Fighting Departments | Diggi Range, Khadki Military Station, Pune | 08 to 09 January 2026    |
| SURYA KIRAN                                             | India-Nepal                                                                                                    | Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand                   | 25th Nov – 8th Dec 2025  |
| Exercise CYCLONE                                        | India- Egypt                                                                                                   | Mahajan Field Firing Ranges, Rajasthan     | 10th – 23rd Feb 2025     |
| DHARMA GUARDIAN                                         | India-Japan                                                                                                    | East Fuji Manoeuvre Training area, Japan   | 24th Feb – 9th Mar 2025  |
| KHANJAR-XII                                             | India-Kyrgyzstan                                                                                               | Kyrgyzstan                                 | 10th Mar – 23rd Mar 2025 |
| Exercise DUSTLIK-6                                      | India-Uzbekistan Joint Military                                                                                | Aundh, Pune, Maharashtra                   | 16th Apr – 28th Apr 2025 |

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|                                |                                                                                                   |                                   |                          |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Exercise Desert Flag-10        | Australia, Bahrain, France, Germany, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Republic of Korea, Turkey, UAE, UK, USA | UAE                               | 20th Apr – 8th May 2025  |
| NOMADIC ELEPHANT               | India- Mongolia                                                                                   | Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia             | 31st May – 13th Jun 2025 |
| Exercise SHAKTI-VIII           | India and France                                                                                  | Camp Larzac, La Cavalerie, France | 18th Jun – 1st Jul 2025  |
| Khaan Quest Exercise 2025      | USA and Mongolia                                                                                  | Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia             |                          |
| Passage Exercise (passex) 2025 | India and the UK                                                                                  | North Arabian Sea                 |                          |
| Simbex Exercise 2025           | RSN and Indian Navy                                                                               | RSS Singapura-Changi Naval Base   | 28th Jul – 1st Aug 2025  |
| Exercise Divya Drishti 2025    |                                                                                                   | East Sikkim                       |                          |
| Exercise Slinex 2025           | India – Sri Lanka                                                                                 | Port of Colombo                   | 14-18 Aug 2025           |
| Exercise Bright Star 2025      | USA, Egypt, India, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Greece, Cyprus, Italy                                     | Alexandria, Egypt                 | 01-10 Sep 2025           |

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|                        |                                             |                                             |                        |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| EXERCISE MAITREE – XIV | India and Thailand                          | Joint Training Node (JTN), Umroi, Meghalaya | 1st – 14th Sep 2025    |
| YUDH ABHYAS 2025       | India and USA                               | Fort Wainwright, Alaska, USA                | 1st – 14th Sep 2025    |
| Exercise KONKAN 2025   | India and UK                                | Western Indian Ocean                        | 5th – 12th Oct 2025    |
| Ajeya Warrior-25       | India and UK                                | Rajasthan, India                            | 17th – 27th Nov 2025   |
| Exercise Trishul 2025  | India (Tri-services: Army, Navy, Air Force) | Andaman and Nicobar Command, India          | 3rd Nov 2025 onward    |
| MITRA SHAKTI-2025      | India-Sri Lanka                             | Foreign Training Node, Belagavi, Karnataka  | 10th – 23rd Nov 2025   |
| DESERT CYCLONE-II 2025 | India-UAE                                   | Abu Dhabi, UAE                              | 18 to 30 December 2025 |
| Harimau Shakti 202     | India-Malaysia                              | Mahajan Field Firing Range in Rajasthan     | 5 to 18 December 2025  |

# Sixth Nilgiri-class frigate joins fleet, boosting naval firepower

*Mahendragiri* is equipped with advanced sensors, and a comprehensive weapons suite capable of anti-surface, anti-air, and anti-submarine warfare operations

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The **Indian Navy** recently took delivery of INS Mahendragiri, the **sixth ship in the Nilgiri-class (Project 17A)**, marking a significant milestone in India's push for self-reliance in warship design and construction.

- It is the latest addition to a series of multi-role stealth frigates, including **INS Dunagiri** and **INS Taragiri**, that represent a significant leap in the Navy's modernization.

## INS Mahendragiri

- Design and Features:** Designed by the **Warship Design Bureau**, the frigate is equipped with a **CODOG (Combined Diesel or Gas)** propulsion system, advanced sensors, and a versatile weapons suite for anti-surface, anti-air, and anti-submarine operations.
  - The frigate has 75% indigenous content, showcasing India's growing capability in indigenous warship manufacturing.
- Stealth:** The ship is designed with a low **radar cross-section (RCS)**, reducing its visibility to enemy sensors and radars.
  - Key features include **radar-absorbing coatings, flush-mounted weapons, and specialized exhaust systems** for infrared signature reduction.
- Firepower:** Equipped with **BrahMos missiles, MFSTAR radar, and MRSAM air defense systems**, INS Mahendragiri enhances India's combat capability in both offensive and defensive operations.
- Significance:** The growing fleet of indigenous warships reflects India's broader effort to enhance its **blue-water operational capabilities** and maintain a sustained presence in the **Indian Ocean Region**.

## Project 17A

- About:** Project 17A, also known as the **Nilgiri-class**, comprises the development and deployment of seven stealth guided-missile frigates developed as a follow-on to the Shivalik-class (**Project 17**).
  - Of the seven frigates, **four (Nilgiri, Udaygiri, Taragiri, Mahendragiri)** are being built by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd (MDL), and **three (Himgiri, Dunagiri, Vindhyagiri)** by Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers Ltd.
- Significance:** Project 17A frigates are designed for **blue-water operations**, enabling the Navy to project power across vast distances and protect maritime trade routes.