India-Philippines Strategic Partnership Plan of Action (2025–29) Signed During Philippines President's Visit to India

The strategic partnership **marks 75 years of diplomatic ties (Established in 1949),** further **strengthened by India's Look East (1992) and Act East (2014) Policies.**

Key Highlights of the Visit

- Agreements signed on **Mutual Legal Assistance, Transfer of Sentenced Persons, and Cooperation in Science, Space, and Tourism** among others.
- India announced to support a pilot project for the **Philippines' Sovereign Data Cloud Infrastructure.**
- The Philippines invited to join the **Information Fusion Centre–Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR).**

Key Dimensions of India-Philippines relation

- **Defence Cooperation**: Philippines is the **first foreign buyer** of BrahMos Missile. First **Track-1 Maritime Dialogue** held in **Manila in 2024.**
- **Economic Engagement:** Bilateral trade reached **$3.5 billion in 2023–24,** supported by the **ASEAN–India Free Trade Agreement**, with ongoing talks for a **Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA).**
- **Capacity Building:** Philippines is one of the major beneficiaries of **Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC).**
- **People-to-People Ties:** **Cultural Exchange Programme** renewed for **2019–2023**. **Indian diaspora** of over **70,000** lives in Philippines.

Significance of India- Philippines' Deepening Strategic Relations

- **Shared Indo-Pacific Vision:** Both countries support a **free, open, rules-based region**, with the Philippines playing a key role in **India's MAHASAGAR Vision.**
- **Countering China's Assertiveness:** The **2016** arbitration ruling affirmed **Philippines' Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)** in South China Sea and rejected China's **"Historic rights"** under **UNCLOS.**
  - Strategic ties with India offer the Philippines a **Credible Balancing Partner**.
- **Reshaping Multilateral Institutions:** Both countries seek **Reforms in Global Governance** to address 21st-century challenges like **Climate Change, Technology, and Inequality.**

As **Indian Prime Minister** says, "India and the Philippines are friends by choice and partners by destiny. From the Indian Ocean to the Pacific, they are united by shared values."

Russia officially Ends Commitment to 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty

As key reason for this, Russia cited **recent US military actions** including the US order of repositioning two nuclear submarines closer to Russian Shores and Deployment of Typhon missile system in Philippines.

About INF Treaty

- Signed between the United States and the Soviet Union in 1987, the treaty required **destruction of all ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles with ranges of 500–5,500 km**.
- It was the **first major agreement to reduce nuclear arsenals**, remove an entire class of weapons, and allow on-site inspections for verification.
- **INF Treaty** had **already weakened after the US withdrew in 2019**.

Implications on Nuclear Arms Control

- **Breakdown of Arms Control Frameworks**: Eroding trust and Hindering efforts towards future nuclear disarmament movements.
- **Negative Impact on Nuclear Disarmament:** Major powers accelerating nuclear modernization, while non-nuclear states are reconsidering their **non-proliferation commitments, Heightening global instability.**
- **Return to Cold War Politics:** Collapse of treaty has stoked fears of a replay of **Cold War-era European missile crisis.**
- **Increasing Security Risk:** Such weapons take less time to reach targets, raising the likelihood of a global nuclear conflict over a false launch warning.

Key Nuclear Arms Control Agreements

- **Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT):** Entered into force in **1970,** it aims at preventing spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology.
- **Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT):** 2002 US-Russia Bilateral Agreement **limiting strategic nuclear warheads.**
- **New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START):** 2010 Bilateral Agreement between US and Russia, significantly **limiting strategic arms.**
- **Treaty on Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW):** Adopted at UN in 2017 and prohibits participating in any nuclear weapon activities.

International Seabed Authority (ISA) concluded landmark 30th session of ISA Assembly

The session coincided with the **30th Commemoration of ISA's Establishment** under the **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)** and its **1994 Part XI Implementing Agreement**.

Key Decisions at 30th Session

- **Progress on development of Common Heritage Fund**, a financial toolbox support **sustainability, capacity-building & equitable benefit-sharing**.
- **Operationalization of Economic Planning Commission** to assess **economic impacts** of seabed mining and recommend **mitigation measures**.
- **Adopted** November 1 as the **International Deep Seabed Day**.

About International Seabed Authority (ISA)

- ISA manages the **mineral resources of the seabed beyond national jurisdiction**, which covers **54%** of the world's oceans.
  - It is the **World's only International Body** that focuses on **deep-sea area** beyond national borders.
- ISA aims to ensure that **all economic activities** in the deep seabed, including mining, are **regulated and responsibly managed**.
- **Headquarters:** Kingston, Jamaica.
- **Membership:** 170 (169 States + EU); all UNCLOS parties are members.

Some Recent Initiatives of ISA

- **Deep-Sea Biobank Initiative (DBI) 2025**
  - **Aim:** Enhance **global access** to deep-sea biological samples & genetic data from the **international seabed area beyond national jurisdiction**.
  - It will establish a **global repository of deep-sea biological samples** accessible for research and capacity-development activities.
- **AREA 2030:** For facilitating high resolution mapping of the international seabed area by 2030.
- **Sustainable Seabed Knowledge Initiative (SSKI):** Strengthen the scientific foundation for effective **protection and management** of the deep sea.

Dharali, Uttarakhand Hit by Cloudburst-Triggered Flash Floods

A cloudburst over the **Kheer Ganga River (A Tributary of Alaknanda River)** led to flash floods in Uttarkashi District.

- Such events are becoming more frequent in Uttarakhand, with the **2013 Kedarnath Disaster** being a significant example.

What is a Cloudburst?

- If **10 cm rainfall is received at a station in one hour**, the rain event is termed as cloud burst.
- They are **difficult to predict** due to their **small scale and short duration.**
- Monitoring requires **dense radar networks** or **high-resolution weather models**.
- Though possible in plains, they are **more common in hilly areas** due to the terrain.
- **National Disaster Management Plan, 2019,** provides for Cloudburst **Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)** strategy.

Reasons for vulnerability of Himalayan states

- **Geographical:**
  - The **steep slopes force warm, moisture-laden air from the Arabian Sea to rise rapidly,** a process called **Orographic Lift**.
  - These forms **towering cumulonimbus clouds** that can sustain **large rain droplets.**
  - As this moist airflow is **being lifted, and the cloud gets bigger and bigger,** and with no chance of having rainfall, it becomes so heavy that at a point, it starts bursting.
- **Anthropogenic:** Overall, **extreme rainfall events** have increased in India as **global temperatures rise**.
  - A study on the **Kedarnath floods** found that **over half the rain was likely due to greenhouse gases and aerosols.**

India's External Affairs Minister calls for a Fair and Representative Global order at the First BIMSTEC Traditional Music Festival

He emphasized that a collective desire is to see a fair and representative global order, **not one dominated by a few**.

- The statement comes in the backdrop of the **US Announcement of 25% of Reciprocal Tariff on India.**

Non-Representative Global Order

- **U.S. Hegemony:** Concept of U.S. hegemony has been **central to shaping the global liberal order post World War II**.
  - However, in recent decades, there is **relative decline in US dominance** due to economic competition from rising powers like China, strategic overreach, withdrawal from multilateral institutions etc.
- **Trade as Instrument of Geopolitical Power:** Such instruments include tariff policies of developed countries such as EU's carbon tax and economic sanctions as part of trade policy.
- **Unequal Representation in Global Institutions:** Global South has unequal representation in institutions such as UN Security Council, World Bank, etc.
- **Ineffective Multilateralism:** Powerful nations bypass multilateral forums undermining truly global cooperation leading to fragmented and interest-driven global responses.
- **Deglobalization and Regional Integration:** Power is becoming more diffused and concentrated across regional blocs like **ASEAN, QUAD, BRICS,** etc.

Way Forward

- **Reform in Multilateral Institutions:** Expansion of UNSC, restructuring of Bretton Woods Institutions etc and greater participation of global south.
- **Inclusive Multilateralism:** Strengthen groupings like **G20, BRICS, IBSA,** etc. and allow consensus-based decision making.
- **Enhance Issue-based Cooperation:** Addressing global issues such as **peace, climate change, human rights,** etc. through consensus.

WHO has Classified Hepatitis D as Cancer-Causing, like Hepatitis B and C

Hepatitis D is an Incompetent Virus that requires **Hepatitis B Virus (HBV)** for replication.
» This means hepatitis D **only affects people who already have hepatitis B** either simultaneously or sequentially.

About Hepatitis Virus
» Viral hepatitis (**types A, B, C, D, and E**) are major **causes of acute liver infection.**
» However, **only Hepatitis B, C, and D can lead to chronic infections with a higher risk of liver cirrhosis,** failure or cancer.
   ⊙ **Hepatocellular Carcinoma** is one of the **top 10 cancers globally.**
» **Vaccine Availability**
   ⊙ There is **no vaccine for Hepatitis C virus.**
   ⊙ **Hepatitis B vaccines** provides **protection from HDV Infection.**
» **Global Impact**
   ⊙ Hepatitis **types B, C, and D** affect over **300 million people** worldwide and cause **1.3 million deaths.**
   ⊙ Most people with these infections remain **undiagnosed**.
» **Key Initiatives**
   ⊙ **India: National Viral Hepatitis Control Program (2018)** aims to **eliminate Hepatitis C by 2030** and reduce deaths from other types, in line with **SDG 3.3**.
   ⊙ **Global**: WHO's **Global Health Sector Strategy on HIV, Viral Hepatitis and Sexually Transmitted Infections (2022–2030)** aims to eliminate viral hepatitis as a public health problem.

Key Challenges in Tackling Hepatitis
» **Low Diagnosis**: Only **13% of Hepatitis B** and **36% of Hepatitis C** cases were diagnosed in 2022.
» **Poor Vaccine Coverage**: In India, despite being in the immunisation program, **Hepatitis B vaccine coverage is just 50%**.
» **Limited Treatment**: Few approved therapies, though **new drugs like Bulevirtide offer hope**.

Hepatitis Types and Transmission Routes

◠ Water/Food   ⓧ Blood/Fluids   — Needles   ♥ Sexual   Ⓜ→ⓒ Mother–Child

A	**Hepatitis A (HAV)** Contaminated water/food, poor sanitation *Some sexual practices*	◠
B	**Hepatitis B (HBV)** Blood, semen, body fluids; mother-to-child Contaminated injections, transfusions, needle injuries	Ⓜ→ⓒ ♥ ⓧ
C	**Hepatitis C (HCV)** Primarily blood; contaminated injections, transfusions *Rarely sexual transmission*	ⓧ
D	**Hepatitis D (HDV)** Only infects HBV carriers; blood and body fluid exposure *Requires HBV infection*	ⓧ
E	**Hepatitis E (HEV)** Contaminated water/food, poor sanitation	◠

Also in News

Sea Buckthorn

Seeds of **Sea Buckthorn and Buckwheat** grown in the cold desert of Ladakh are part of experiments on board the International Space Station flown by **NASA's Crew-11 Mission.**

Sea Buckthorn
» Deciduous shrub/tree; pioneer species for **soil improvement, wind & sand control,** and **soil & water conservation**.
» Well adapted to live in **cold areas of high altitude.**
» **High nutritional value**: Rich in vitamins, carotenoids, polyphenols, fatty acids, phytosterols.
» **Health Benefits**: High medicinal & therapeutic potential due to its antioxidant, anticancer, anti-inflammatory properties.

Reservation of Seats for Scheduled Tribes

The Lok Sabha passed a bill to provide **Scheduled Tribe (ST) reservation** in the **Goa Legislative Assembly.**

Reservation of Seats for Scheduled Tribes
» **Reservation for SCs/STs**: Article 332 mandates seat reservation for **Scheduled Castes (SCs)** and **Scheduled Tribes (STs)** in the legislative assemblies of all states (except STs in Assam's autonomous districts).
» **Special Provision for Assam**: Seats shall be reserved for the autonomous districts in the Legislative Assembly.
» **Proportional Representation**: Reserved seats must reflect the **proportion of SC/ST population** in the state.

UN World Food Programme

India launched a new collaborative initiative with the support of the **UN World Food Programme (WFP)** to strengthen **Rice Fortification and Supply Chain Management** in **Nepal.**

About UN WFP
» World's **largest humanitarian organization** providing food aid to save lives and help people recover from conflict, disasters, and climate impacts.
» **Headquarters**: Rome, Italy.
» **Genesis**: Established in 1961 by joint efforts of UN General Assembly & Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).
» **Funding:** Voluntary contributions from governments, corporates, and private donors.
» **Recognition**: Awarded the **Nobel Peace Prize** in **2020.**

Krill

Krill, a **species crucial to marine food chains**, is under **increasing pressure** due to fishing, climate change, and growing demand for its **omega-3 oil** used in fishmeal, pet food, and human supplements.

About Krill
» **Species**: Small, pelagic crustaceans found mainly in the **Antarctic Ocean, North Atlantic, and North Pacific.**
» **Ecological Role**: **Keystone species** in the Antarctic ecosystem, feeding on plankton and serving as the **primary food source** for whales, seals, squid, and seabirds.
» **Behaviour:** Travel in large swarms.
» A study found that krill **removes 20 million tons of carbon** from the **atmosphere each year.**

President's Rule

Parliament **extended President's Rule in Manipur by Six months.**

About President's Rule (Article 356)

- Imposed when the **President believes the state government cannot function as per the Constitution** (based on Governor's report or otherwise).
- **Effects**: President can
  - **Take over state government functions, powers exercisable by Governor or authority in the State** other than the Legislature of the State (except High Court powers).
  - **Declare that Parliament will exercise** the powers of the **State Legislature.**
- **Duration**:
  - Can be **revoked or varied by a subsequent proclamation.**
  - Can last up to **3 years**, but must be **approved every 6 months** by **Parliament.**
- **Checks**: The Constitution includes **safeguards to prevent misuse.**

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

In **Vanashakti v. Union of India,** the **Supreme Court struck down the Centre's exemption** that allowed **industrial sheds, schools, colleges, and hostels to bypass environmental clearance,** if they followed eco-friendly measures.

- The Court held that **all large construction projects (over 20,000 sq. m) affect the environment** and must follow clearance process under the **EIA Notification, 2006.**

About EIA Notification, 2006

- Prior **Environmental Clearance (EC)** is mandatory for construction **projects ≥20,000 sq. m.**
- **Projects are classified into:**
  - **Category A:** cleared by the Central Government.
  - **Category B:** cleared by State Environmental Impact Assessment Authorities (SEIAAs).

Nilgiri Tahr

A joint census in Kerala and Tamil Nadu reports a population of 2,668 Nilgiri Tahrs.

About Nilgiri Tahrs

- Nilgiri Tahr is the **only mountain ungulate in southern India** amongst the 12 species present in India.
- **State animal of Tamil Nadu**.
- **Endemic** to the Western Ghats (Tamil Nadu & Kerala).
  - **Eravikulam National Park** holds their largest contiguous population.
- **Conservation Status:**
  - Listed as **Endangered** – IUCN Red List.
  - Protected under **Schedule I** – Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
- **Conservation Efforts: Project Nilgiri Tahr** (Tamil Nadu, 2023) and **Nilgiri Tahr Day** (7 October).
- **Threats:** Habitat loss due to plantations, infrastructure development and land-use change.

Acceptance of Necessity (AoN)

Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) granted AoN for procurement proposals worth nearly ₹67,000 crore.

- DAC, headed by Minister of Defence, is the **highest decision-making body** in the **Defence Ministry** for deciding on new policies and capital acquisitions.

About the AoN

- **AoN** is the first step toward the procurement of military equipment under **Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP), 2020.**
- **Key Technologies Granted AoN**
  - **Thermal Imager-based Driver Night Sights** for BMP to improve night mobility and combat readiness.
  - **Compact Autonomous Surface Craft** for detecting and neutralising undersea threats.
  - Upgrade of **Saksham/Spyder Air Defence Systems** for better integration with the **Integrated Air Command and Control System.**

Place in News 📰 **New Zealand (Capital: Wellington)**

Inaugural India-New Zealand Defence Strategic Dialogue held in **New Delhi** to discuss security perspectives and further bolster bilateral cooperation.

Political Features

- Island country located in **Southwestern Pacific Ocean**.
- **Bordering Water Bodies:** Tasman Sea, Pacific Ocean.
- New Zealand's two main islands, **North and South Islands**, are separated by the **Cook Strait.**

Geographical Features

- **Relief**: Part of Pacific Ring of Fire, houses alluvial Canterbury Plains etc.
- **Active Volcanoes**: Mount Ruapehu, White Island, etc.
- **Highest Peak**: Mount Cook (Southern Alps).
- **Major Rivers**: Waikato, Clutha, Whanganui, etc.
- Part of **Zealandia**, a microcontinent.