

UK TO SEND NAVY SHIPS TO INDIAN OCEAN THIS YEAR: DEFENCE SECY

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Amid Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's two-day visit to London, UK Defence Secretary Grant Shapps Wednesday announced plans to send the country's Littoral Response Group to the Indian Ocean Region later this year and the Carrier Strike Group in 2025 to operate and train with Indian forces.

In a statement, the UK said Shapps welcomed Singh to the UK "to agree unprecedented levels of UK-India defence cooperation". The two nations also discussed cooperation in defence from joint exercises to knowledge sharing and instructor exchanges, building on the comprehensive strategic partnership envisaged in the 2030 India-UK roadmap, announced in 2021.

"In the coming years, the UK and India will also embark on more complex exercises between their respective militaries, building up to a landmark joint exercise to be conducted before the end of 2030, supporting shared goals of protecting critical trade routes and upholding the international rules-based system," it said.

It said collaboration with industry is also key in the strategic defence partnership between the UK and India, with the two nations working together on electric propulsion systems that will power our future fleets, and cooperating on the development of complex weapons.

"There is absolutely no question that the world is becoming increasingly contested, so it's vital that we continue to build on our strategic relationships with key partners like India. Together we share the same security challenges and are steadfast on our commitment to maintaining a free and prosperous Indo-Pacific," Shapps said.

Several new joint initiatives were announced amid Singh's visit to the UK and the bilateral talks he held with Shapps Tuesday. These include launching Defence Partnership-India to boost defence collaboration between the two countries.

On Wednesday, Singh spoke with top UK defence industry leaders and CEOs at an event in Trinity House, London. The defence minister welcomed the investment and technology collaboration from the UK, and stated that India is ready with a skilled human resource base and pro-business ecosystem.

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