



MILAN 2026: Raksha Mantri interacts with visiting Navy Chiefs and Naval delegations from nine ASEAN member states

ASEAN is a central pillar of India's Indo-Pacific strategy, shared security is the foundation of regional prosperity: Shri Rajnath Singh

RM invites ASEAN partners to benefit from India's defence technology ecosystem matured due to self-reliance efforts

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On the sidelines of the MILAN 2026 Naval exercise, Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh held an interaction with visiting Navy Chiefs and Naval delegations from nine ASEAN member states in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh on February 19, 2026. The meeting underscored India's commitment to its 'Act East Policy' and the vision of Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions (MAHASAGAR).

Raksha Mantri welcomed the significant participation of ASEAN navies in MILAN 2026, noting that the exercise has grown from its modest 1995 beginnings with four foreign navies to its largest-ever edition in February 2026, involving 74 nations. He emphasised the importance of the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) - Conclave of Chiefs and the International Fleet Review 2026 in fostering trust and operational familiarity among Indo-Pacific partners. The discussions also covered the ongoing Sea Phase of MILAN 2026, focusing on complex maritime drills including anti-submarine warfare (ASW), air defence, and search-and-rescue operations.

Shri Rajnath Singh described ASEAN as a central pillar of India's Indo-Pacific strategy, stating that shared security is the foundation of regional prosperity. He invited ASEAN partners to benefit from India's defence technology ecosystem which has matured due to the 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' efforts of the Government, led by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi. He highlighted the INS Vikrant and Visakhapatnam-class destroyers as symbols of India's transformation into a 'Builder's Navy'.

Reiterating sentiments from India-ASEAN informal meeting in late 2025, the ASEAN delegates lauded India's role as a first responder in the region. Raksha Mantri proposed expanding joint activities, specifically through the ASEAN-India Defence Think-Tank Interaction and initiatives involving younger generations of naval officers to ensure long-term maritime stability.

The interaction concluded with a shared commitment to a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific, anchored by the spirit of 'Camaraderie, Cooperation, and Collaboration' - the official theme of MILAN 2026.



VK/Savvy

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