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# India-Vietnam: Elevated to Enhanced Comprehensive Strategic Partnership — Trade, Defence, and the Indo-Pacific

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# India-Vietnam: Elevated to Enhanced Comprehensive Strategic Partnership – Trade, Defence, and the Indo-Pacific

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## WHY IN NEWS

During **Vietnamese President To Lam’s** state visit to India on **May 6, 2026**, India and Vietnam elevated their bilateral relationship to an **“Enhanced Comprehensive Strategic Partnership”** – the highest level of diplomatic engagement India extends. The two countries set a new bilateral trade target of **USD 25 billion by 2030** (up from ~USD 16 billion currently) and signed agreements across defence, digital connectivity, and agriculture.

## EVOLUTION OF INDIA-VIETNAM RELATIONS

YEAR	MILESTONE
1972	Diplomatic relations established
1992	Upgraded to “Framework of Comprehensive Cooperation”
2007	Strategic Partnership
2016	<b>Comprehensive Strategic Partnership</b>
<b>2026</b>	<b>Enhanced Comprehensive Strategic Partnership</b> (highest tier)

## KEY AREAS OF COOPERATION

### Trade & Economy

PARAMETER	VALUE
Current bilateral trade (2025–26)	~ <b>USD 16 billion</b>
India's exports to Vietnam	~USD 6.11 billion
Vietnam's exports to India	~USD 10.35 billion
New trade target	<b>USD 25 billion by 2030</b>
Key Indian exports	Machinery, cotton, electronic components, pharma
Key Vietnam exports	Electronics, machinery, garments, seafood

### Defence Cooperation

- India extended a **USD 500 million Line of Credit** for defence procurement (announced in principle)
- Cooperation on maritime security in the **South China Sea**
- Vietnam is in **advanced negotiations to purchase BrahMos** supersonic cruise missiles (~USD 700 million deal) — The Philippines is the only country to have received BrahMos deliveries as of 2026
- Joint naval exercises under **VINBAX** (bilateral army exercise) and naval cooperation framework

### Digital & Technology

- Cooperation on **digital public infrastructure** — sharing India Stack experience (UPI model, Aadhaar-like ID)
- Semiconductor supply chain partnerships — Vietnam is a major electronics manufacturing hub

### Agriculture

- India: grapes, pomegranates, mangoes
- Vietnam: durians, pomelos, tropical fruits
- Both sides agreed to fast-track phytosanitary approvals for agricultural trade

## STRATEGIC CONTEXT — WHY THIS MATTERS

### 1. South China Sea Tensions

Vietnam and China share a **disputed maritime boundary** in the South China Sea (Vietnam claims parts of the Paracel and Spratly Islands). India's enhanced partnership signals **strategic solidarity** with ASEAN claimant states without direct confrontation with China.

### 2. Act East Policy — Deepening India's ASEAN Engagement

Vietnam is one of India's most strategically aligned ASEAN partners. The upgrade is a cornerstone of India's **Act East Policy** (launched 2014), which prioritises defence, connectivity, and trade linkages with Southeast Asia.

### 3. China+1 Supply Chain Strategy

Vietnam is the **largest beneficiary of the China+1 manufacturing shift** — more than India. India-Vietnam cooperation on supply chains and manufacturing helps both countries attract investment away from sole dependence on China.

### 4. Indo-Pacific Architecture

Both India and Vietnam are stakeholders in a **free and open Indo-Pacific**. India is a QUAD member; Vietnam is not, but shares India's interest in **freedom of navigation** and a rules-based maritime order.

## INDIA'S TIERED PARTNERSHIP FRAMEWORK

PARTNERSHIP LEVEL	COUNTRIES
<b>Enhanced Comprehensive Strategic Partnership</b>	USA, Russia, Vietnam (2026 upgrade)
<b>Comprehensive Strategic Partnership</b>	Australia, France, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Japan, South Korea, UK
<b>Strategic Partnership</b>	Germany, Canada, Italy, and many others

## UPSC RELEVANCE

PAPER	ANGLE
GS2 — International Relations	India-Vietnam ties; ASEAN; South China Sea; Act East Policy; BrahMos export
GS3 — Economy	Trade targets; China+1; semiconductor supply chains; agricultural trade
GS2 — Governance	Digital Public Infrastructure export; India Stack diplomacy

**Mains Keywords:** Enhanced Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, India-Vietnam, To Lam visit, Act East Policy, South China Sea, BrahMos export, VINBAX, China+1, USD 25 billion trade target, Indo-Pacific, ASEAN engagement

### Prelims Facts Corner

ITEM	FACT
Vietnamese President	<b>To Lam</b>
Partnership level (2026)	<b>Enhanced Comprehensive Strategic Partnership</b>
Previous level (2016)	Comprehensive Strategic Partnership
Bilateral trade target	<b>USD 25 billion by 2030</b> (current: ~USD 16 billion)
BrahMos export	Vietnam in advanced negotiations (~USD 700M); <b>Philippines</b> is India's first BrahMos export customer (delivered 2022)
Bilateral army exercise	<b>VINBAX</b> (Vietnam India bilateral army exercise)
Act East Policy	Launched by PM Modi at ASEAN Summit 2014, Myanmar
India-Vietnam ties	Since 1972; 50+ years of diplomatic relations

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