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Jaishankar in Mongolia and South Korea: Act East Outreach

22 June 2026 · **IR** · **GS2**

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22 June 2026 · 3 min read ·

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WHY IN NEWS

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar began a four-day East Asia visit covering Mongolia (June 22-23) and South Korea (June 24-25), 2026. He meets the Mongolian leadership and Foreign Minister B. Battsetseg, then the Republic of Korea's Foreign Minister Cho Hyun, and delivers a keynote at the Jeju Forum for Peace and Prosperity.

The visit is the first high-level Indian engagement with the Republic of Korea (ROK) since ROK President Lee Jae Myung's state visit to India in April 2026. It anchors India's Act East policy (<https://ujyari.com/terms/act-east-policy/>) in the strategically vital regions of Northeast and East Asia.

MONGOLIA: THE "THIRD NEIGHBOUR"

Mongolia is landlocked between Russia and China and pursues a "third neighbour" foreign policy to balance its two giant neighbours by cultivating partners such as India, Japan and the United States. For India, Mongolia is described as a "spiritual neighbour" because of shared Buddhist heritage; the two are linked through Tibetan Buddhism and centuries of cultural exchange.

Pillars of India-Mongolia Ties

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PILLAR	DETAIL
Cultural	Shared Buddhist heritage; India's "spiritual neighbour" framing
Development	A line of credit supported a copper-processing/oil-refinery project
Defence	Joint exercise Nomadic Elephant
Resources	Cooperation on coking coal and rare-earth/critical minerals (https://ujijari.com/terms/critical-minerals/)

Jaishankar's talks in Ulaanbaatar focus on connectivity, mineral cooperation and people-to-people links, deepening a partnership that compensates for the absence of a direct land corridor.

SOUTH KOREA: A SPECIAL STRATEGIC PARTNER

India and the ROK upgraded ties to a Special Strategic Partnership. The economic relationship rests on the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), in force since January 2010, which is now under review and upgrade to reflect a changed trade landscape.

Key Agenda Items

- **Semiconductors:** Korean expertise complements India's Semiconductor Mission and fabrication ambitions.
- **Artificial Intelligence:** Cooperation on AI research, talent and standards.
- **Critical minerals and supply chains:** Reducing dependence on single-source suppliers, a shared "China-plus-one" interest.
- **CEPA review:** Addressing the trade imbalance and non-tariff barriers facing Indian exporters.

Jaishankar's keynote at the Jeju Forum, a leading regional gathering on peace and cooperation, will articulate India's Indo-Pacific vision and its **convergence** (<https://ujijari.com/vocab/convergence/>) with like-minded partners.

WHY THIS VISIT MATTERS

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STRATEGIC LOGIC	OUTCOME SOUGHT
Act East deepening	Move from trade to technology and security
Supply-chain resilience (https://ujjayari.com/vocab/resilience/)	Diversify semiconductors and critical minerals
Indo-Pacific balancing	Coordinate with middle powers wary of coercion (https://ujjayari.com/vocab/coercion/)
Continental reach	Sustain ties with landlocked Mongolia

ANALYSIS AND WAY FORWARD

The twin-stop itinerary captures the breadth of Act East: an emerging continental partner rich in minerals and a developed maritime economy that is a technology powerhouse. The central challenge with South Korea is the persistent goods-trade imbalance, which an upgraded CEPA must address through better market access for Indian pharmaceuticals, services and agricultural products. With Mongolia, the binding constraint is geography and connectivity, which India seeks to overcome through air corridors and value-added cooperation in mining.

The way forward is to convert diplomatic warmth into concrete projects: Korean investment in Indian semiconductor and electronics manufacturing, joint critical-mineral ventures, and a recalibrated CEPA that delivers reciprocal gains.

UPSC RELEVANCE

- **GS2 (International Relations):** India's bilateral (<https://ujjayari.com/vocab/bilateral/>) relations; Act East policy; effect of policies of developed and developing countries on India's interests.
- **Prelims:** CEPA (in force 2010), Jeju Forum, exercise Nomadic Elephant, "third neighbour" policy.
- **Mains:** How does India's Act East policy balance continental and maritime partners in East Asia?

FACTS CORNER

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★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

The India-Korea Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) has been in force since January 2010 and is under review.

Mongolia follows a “third neighbour” policy; India calls it a “spiritual neighbour” due to shared Buddhist heritage.

India-Mongolia hold the joint military exercise Nomadic Elephant.

India and South Korea share a Special Strategic Partnership.

The Jeju Forum for Peace and Prosperity is a major regional dialogue hosted by South Korea.

The visit is the first high-level engagement since ROK President Lee Jae Myung’s April 2026 India visit.

Sources: *Ministry of External Affairs* (<https://www.mea.gov.in>), *The Hindu* (<https://www.thehindu.com>), *Indian Express* (<https://indianexpress.com>)

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