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Jaishankar at Jeju Forum: India and Korea from Ships to Chips

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WHY IN NEWS

External Affairs Minister (EAM) Dr. S. Jaishankar delivered the keynote address at the , held on Jeju Island in the Republic of Korea (South Korea), during his visit on **24-25 June 2026**. He urged India and Korea to deepen cooperation “**from ships to chips**” amid global fragmentation, invoked “**Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam**” (the world is one family), and outlined **five steps** to reinvent international cooperation.

The keynote arrives as the two countries fast-track an upgrade of their decade-old trade pact, positioning Seoul as a frontline partner in India’s Act East Policy (<https://ujjyari.com/terms/act-east-policy/>) and Indo-Pacific strategy.

THE KEYNOTE: “SHIPS TO CHIPS” IN A FRAGMENTED WORLD

Speaking at one of Asia’s premier multilateral (<https://ujjyari.com/vocab/multilateral/>) dialogue platforms, Jaishankar argued that the post-Cold-War assumptions of seamless globalisation have given way to a world defined by supply-chain weaponisation, technology gatekeeping and great-power rivalry. In this setting, India and the Republic of Korea, he said, hold **complementarities** “**from ships to chips**”, and also across health, infrastructure and defence, that are “just waiting to be exploited.”

The phrase is **deliberate** (<https://ujjyari.com/vocab/deliberate/>). It captures the two anchors of the modern Korean economy and of India’s own ambitions:

- **Ships**, South Korea is among the world’s top shipbuilding nations (HD Hyundai Heavy Industries, Hanwha Ocean, Samsung Heavy Industries). India, under its **Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047** and shipbuilding ambitions, seeks Korean capital and know-how to build commercial and naval tonnage at home.

- **Chips**, Korean firms **Samsung Electronics** and **SK Hynix** are global leaders in memory semiconductors. **India's Semicon India Programme** and the push for fabrication and ATMP (assembly, testing, marking, packaging) units make Korea a natural technology partner for supply-chain de-risking.

Five Steps to Reinvent Cooperation

Jaishankar framed the **bilateral** (<https://ujijari.com/vocab/bilateral/>) case within a broader prescription for how influential nations should cooperate in a fragmented order. He outlined **five steps**:

#	STEP	WHAT IT MEANS
1	De-risk the global economy	Diversify production and supply chains away from single-source dependence (the “China+1” logic).
2	Build new understandings among major powers	Forge fresh, pragmatic (https://ujijari.com/vocab/pragmatic/) alignments and closer cooperation among influential nations.
3	Raise awareness of the cost of confrontation	Make the economic and human price of conflict visible so restraint becomes the rational choice.
4	Build capacity for the Global South	Empower (https://ujijari.com/vocab/empower/) developing nations with greater opportunities, technology and finance.
5	Provide global public goods	Deliver shared benefits (connectivity, climate action, health security, digital infrastructure) that no single nation supplies alone.

He added that these five factors together make a “powerful case” for why India and South Korea, two democracies with deep economic complementarities, must cooperate far more closely.

THE INDIA-KOREA RELATIONSHIP

Diplomatic ties were established in 1973. The partnership has been upgraded in successive steps, with the economic spine provided by the **CEPA**.

MILESTONE	YEAR	SIGNIFICANCE
Diplomatic relations established	1973	Foundation of bilateral ties
Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)	In force 1 Jan 2010	India's first CEPA-style FTA in East Asia; phased tariff cuts on goods and services
Strategic Partnership	2010	Elevated political and security engagement
Special Strategic Partnership	2015	Highest tier; agreed during PM's Seoul visit, with a mandate (https://ujijari.com/vocab/mandate/) to upgrade CEPA
CEPA upgrade negotiations resumed	2026	12th round held in New Delhi, 25-27 May 2026 ; focus on non-tariff barriers and Indian market access

Trade and economy: Bilateral trade has grown to roughly **USD 26-27 billion (2024-25)**, nearly doubling under CEPA. However, India runs a **significant trade deficit** (imports of about USD 21 billion against exports near USD 6 billion), driven by Korean exports of electronics, machinery, auto components and steel. Correcting this **asymmetry** (<https://ujijari.com/terms/asymmetry/>), lowering non-tariff barriers and widening Indian export access are the core objectives of the CEPA upgrade.

Pillars of cooperation:

PILLAR	SUBSTANCE
Shipbuilding	Korean expertise sought for India's commercial and defence shipbuilding push
Semiconductors	Samsung and SK Hynix as anchors for India's Semicon India fab/ATMP ambitions
Defence	Korean platforms in Indian service (e.g. K9 Vajra-T self-propelled howitzers, built with L&T); defence-industrial co-production interest
Infrastructure and manufacturing	Korean investment in India under "Make in India"; mobility, steel and electronics

WHY KOREA MATTERS FOR INDIA

- 1 Indo-Pacific and Act East Policy.** Korea is a like-minded maritime democracy whose own **Indo-Pacific Strategy (2022)** converges with India's interest in a free, open and rules-based regional order. It strengthens the eastern flank of India's Act East Policy.
- 2 Supply-chain de-risking and China+1.** As firms reduce dependence on a single manufacturing hub, India offers scale and Korea offers technology. Together they can build resilient value chains in electronics, chips and clean energy.

- 3 **Technology and trusted partners.** Semiconductors, batteries and advanced manufacturing are domains where India seeks **trusted, non-adversarial** (<https://ujyari.com/vocab/adversarial/>) partners; Korea fits this profile better than many alternatives.
- 4 **Balancing in East Asia.** Deeper India-Korea ties add a hedge in a region shaped by China's assertiveness and shifting US commitments.

VASUDHAIVA KUTUMBAKAM: THE FRAMING

By invoking **Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam** (“the world is one family”, from the Maha Upanishad), Jaishankar wrapped a hard-nosed supply-chain agenda in India's civilisational diplomacy. The same Sanskrit maxim anchored India's **G20 presidency theme**, “One Earth, One Family, One Future.” It signals that India's pitch to Korea is not narrow transactionalism but a vision of cooperative globalisation and shared global public goods, the language of a rising **middle power** seeking to shape, not merely react to, the international order.

ANALYSIS AND WAY FORWARD

Supply-chain de-risking as strategy. The “ships to chips” call is, at heart, an argument for resilient, plural supply chains. India's value proposition is scale, a large domestic market and a maturing manufacturing base; Korea's is frontier technology and capital. Operationalising this needs a concluded CEPA upgrade, smoother non-tariff regimes and predictable investment protection.

Semiconductor diplomacy. Chips are the new oil of **geopolitics** (<https://ujyari.com/vocab/geopolitics/>). Anchoring Samsung and SK Hynix more deeply into India's Semicon ecosystem, alongside fabrication, ATMP and design, would convert rhetoric into strategic depth. The bottleneck is less ambition than execution: power, water, skilled labour and policy stability at fab scale.

Global South leadership. Steps 4 and 5 (capacity-building and global public goods) let India present itself as the bridge between the developed economies and the developing world, reinforcing the brand it built through the G20 and the Global South Summits.

India as a middle power. The keynote is a template for India's diplomacy: issue-based coalitions, technology partnerships with trusted democracies, and a refusal to be locked into any single bloc (**strategic autonomy** (<https://ujyari.com/terms/strategic-autonomy/>) / **multi-alignment**). The risk is rhetoric outrunning delivery; the test is whether the CEPA upgrade and concrete shipbuilding or chip projects materialise.

Way forward: conclude an upgraded, more balanced CEPA; reduce India's trade deficit through better market access; institutionalise shipbuilding and semiconductor co-production; deepen defence-industrial ties; and align Indo-Pacific positions on maritime security and UNCLOS.

UPSC RELEVANCE

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- **GS Paper 2 (International Relations):** Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India; effect of policies of developed and developing countries on India's interests; India and its neighbourhood / extended neighbourhood.
- **Prelims:** Jeju Forum location and host; CEPA in force since 2010; Special Strategic Partnership (2015); Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam source; Korean shipbuilding and semiconductor majors; K9 Vajra-T.
- **Mains (GS2):** "India and the Republic of Korea share complementarities from ships to chips. Examine the scope and challenges of this partnership in a fragmented global order." / "Discuss supply-chain de-risking (China+1) as a pillar of India's Indo-Pacific strategy."
- **Essay / Ethics angle:** Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam as the ethical basis of cooperative globalisation and provision of global public goods.

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Jeju Forum for Peace and Prosperity: Annual international multilateral dialogue platform held on Jeju Island, Republic of Korea, on peace, prosperity and regional cooperation. EAM S. Jaishankar delivered the 2026 keynote (visit 24-25 June 2026).

"Ships to Chips": Jaishankar's phrase for India-Korea complementarities, spanning shipbuilding (Korea is a global shipbuilding leader) and semiconductors (Samsung, SK Hynix).

Five steps to reinvent cooperation: (1) de-risk the global economy and diversify supply chains; (2) build new understandings among major powers; (3) raise awareness of the cost of confrontation; (4) build capacity for the Global South; (5) provide global public goods.

India-Korea Special Strategic Partnership: Elevated in 2015 (during the Indian PM's Seoul visit), the highest tier of bilateral ties. Diplomatic relations since 1973.

CEPA: India-Korea Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, in force since 1 January 2010; an upgrade is under negotiation (12th round in New Delhi, 25-27 May 2026). Bilateral trade ~USD 26-27 billion (2024-25), with India in deficit.

Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam: "The world is one family" (Maha Upanishad); also India's G20 presidency theme ("One Earth, One Family, One Future").

Act East Policy: India's strategy (rebranded from Look East in 2014) to deepen economic and strategic ties with East and Southeast Asia and the Indo-Pacific.

Sources: Ministry of External Affairs (<https://www.mea.gov.in>), Press Information Bureau (<https://pib.gov.in>), The Hindu (<https://www.thehindu.com>)

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