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India marked its 80th Independence Day on August 15, 2026, with Vande Mataram performed at the Red Fort for the first time in ceremony history, an indigenous 105mm gun salute, and Prime Minister Modi's 13th consecutive address from the ramparts. Separately, Saudi Arabia launched a 14-nation maritime security coalition for the Red Sea.

VANDE MATARAM RENDERED AT RED FORT FOR THE FIRST TIME, MARKING 150 YEARS OF THE NATIONAL SONG

*For the first time in Red Fort Independence Day history, the National Song **Vande Mataram** was performed ahead of the National Anthem on **August 15, 2026**, coinciding with the song's **150th anniversary**.*

Background

Vande Mataram was composed by **Bankim Chandra Chatterjee** in **1875**, later published within his 1882 novel *Anandmath*. The Constituent Assembly gave it status as India's **National Song**, equal in status to but distinct from the National Anthem, via a resolution of **January 24, 1950**. The 2026 rendition was performed by an Army band, with roughly **2,500 NCC cadets and MY Bharat volunteers** forming the song's words on Gyanpath, while two IAF Mi-17 helicopters trooped the national flag and a banner marking the song's 150th year, showering flower petals over the venue.

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VANDE MATARAM AT RED FORT, 2026:

Composed: 1875, by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee; published in *Anandmath* (1882)

National Song status: Constituent Assembly resolution, January 24, 1950

2026 marks its 150th anniversary; first-ever performance ahead of the anthem at a Red Fort Independence Day ceremony

Performance: Army band; ~2,500 NCC cadets/MY Bharat volunteers forming the words on Gyanpath; 2 IAF Mi-17 helicopters

INDIGENOUS 105MM FIELD GUNS FIRE 21-GUN SALUTE AT RED FORT

The **80th Independence Day** flag-hoisting at Red Fort was synchronised with a **21-gun salute** fired using indigenously manufactured **105mm Light Field Guns**, by the **1721 Field Battery (Ceremonial)**.

Background

The salute was commanded by **Major Pawan Singh Shekhawat**, with **Naib Subedar Anuthosh Sarkar** as Gun Position Officer. A combined Inter-Services and Delhi Police Guard presented the ceremonial salute, and **Captain Sonia Singh Chauhan** assisted the Prime Minister in the flag-hoisting.

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80TH INDEPENDENCE DAY CEREMONIAL DETAILS:

21-gun salute, indigenous 105mm Light Field Guns; battery: 1721 Field Battery (Ceremonial)

Salute commander: Major Pawan Singh Shekhawat; Gun Position Officer: Naib Subedar Anuthosh Sarkar

Flag-hoisting assistance: Captain Sonia Singh Chauhan

SAUDI ARABIA LAUNCHES 14-NATION MULTINATIONAL MARITIME DEFENCE COALITION

Saudi Arabia launched the **Multinational Maritime Defence Coalition (MMDC)**, a 14-nation grouping to secure the **Red Sea, Bab al-Mandeb Strait and Gulf of Aden**, with its commander appointed **August 6, 2026**, following a summit on **July 30, 2026**.

Background

The coalition's 14 founding members are **Saudi Arabia, Turkiye, Pakistan, Egypt, Bangladesh, Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar, Yemen, Somalia, Sudan, Djibouti and Comoros**, headquartered in **Riyadh** and commanded by **Saudi Rear Admiral Abdullah bin Salem Al-Shehri**, with **Pakistan holding the Deputy Commander post** for the coalition's first term. **India is not a member**. The coalition responds to threats to commercial shipping, notably Houthi attacks, along these critical chokepoints.

Why It Matters for India

Pakistan's prominent deputy-command role in a Gulf-adjacent maritime security architecture is relevant to India's own Indian Ocean Region strategy, particularly given India's growing energy-import dependence and its own leadership role in the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS).

 FACTS CORNER, KNOWLEDGE PEDIA**MULTINATIONAL MARITIME DEFENCE COALITION (MMDC):**

14 founding members: Saudi Arabia, Turkiye, Pakistan, Egypt, Bangladesh, Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar, Yemen, Somalia, Sudan, Djibouti, Comoros

HQ: Riyadh; Commander: Rear Admiral Abdullah bin Salem Al-Shehri (Saudi Arabia); Deputy Commander: Pakistan (first term)

Covers: Red Sea, Bab al-Mandeb Strait, Gulf of Aden; India is not a member

Sources: *GKToday, PIB, Ministry of Defence*

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