India–Sri Lanka joint military exercise 'Mitra Shakti 2026'

Topics: Defence & Security · UPSC Prelims · TNPSC · SSC · Current Affairs



News

A 170-member Indian Defence Forces contingent left New Delhi for Sri Lanka on 13 November 2026 to take part in the 12th edition of the India–Sri Lanka joint military exercise 'Mitra Shakti 2026'. The exercise runs from 13 to 26 November (14 days) at the Army Training School, Maduru Oya, Sri Lanka. The Indian contingent is drawn mainly from a battalion of the Rajputana Rifles, with troops from other arms and services and personnel of the Indian Air Force. The aim is to build joint capability for counter-terrorism operations in a semi-urban setting under a United Nations mandate and to strengthen interoperability between the two armies. Drills include road-block operations, urban patrolling, vehicle-convoy protection, area ambush, crowd dispersal and combined-arms operations against fortified positions, ending with a validation exercise. The exercise is held every year, alternately in India and Sri Lanka; the 10th edition was also held at Maduru Oya (Aug 2024), and in the 11th (10–23 Nov 2025, Foreign Training Node, Belagavi, Karnataka) India sent 170 (mainly Rajput Regiment) + 20 IAF and Sri Lanka 135 (mainly Gajaba Regiment) + 10 SLAF.

Key facts for the exam

Point	Details
Exercise	Mitra Shakti 2026 – 12th edition
Countries	India – Sri Lanka (Army)

Point	Details
Venue	Army Training School, Maduru Oya, Sri Lanka
Dates	13–26 Nov 2026 (14 days)
Indian contingent	170; mainly a Rajputana Rifles battalion + IAF
Focus	Semi-urban counter-terrorism under a UN mandate
Previous edition	11th – Belagavi, Karnataka (Nov 2025)
Naval exercise	SLINEX (Sri Lanka–India Naval Exercise)

Background

- India–Sri Lanka defence ties: the armies hold 'Mitra Shakti' and the navies 'SLINEX'; SLINEX-25 was held off Colombo in August 2025. Under the India–Sri Lanka Accord signed on 29 July 1987 by PM Rajiv Gandhi and Sri Lankan President J.R. Jayewardene, the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) went to Sri Lanka; it withdrew in 1990. Sri Lanka's 13th Constitutional Amendment (provincial councils) came out of this accord.
- Geography: the Palk Strait and the Gulf of Mannar separate India and Sri Lanka, with the chain of shoals called Rama Setu (Adam's Bridge) between them. Maduru Oya is a river and national-park area in eastern Sri Lanka. The exercise is shaped for UN peacekeeping-style operations – both countries contribute troops to UN missions.
- Format: after physical fitness, tactical drills, joint planning and rehearsals, the exercise ends with a validation exercise in which both contingents apply what they practised. The Rajputana Rifles is one of the Indian Army's infantry regiments.

Tamil Nadu link: Tamil Nadu is the Indian State closest to Sri Lanka; the Palk Strait lies between the Ramanathapuram coast and Sri Lanka. Katchatheevu in the Palk Strait was accepted as Sri Lankan under the 1974 maritime boundary agreement between PM Indira Gandhi and Sri Lankan PM Sirimavo Bandaranaike; a 1976 agreement fixed the Gulf of Mannar boundary. Arrests of Tamil Nadu fishermen and the demand to retrieve Katchatheevu remain key issues in State politics; in the IPKF years Tamil Nadu sheltered Sri Lankan Tamil refugees.

Frequently asked questions

What is this news about?

A 170-member Indian Defence Forces contingent left New Delhi for Sri Lanka on 13 November 2026 to take part in the 12th edition of the India–Sri Lanka joint military exercise 'Mitra Shakti 2026'.

What are the key facts to remember for the exam?

Exercise: Mitra Shakti 2026 – 12th edition; Countries: India – Sri Lanka (Army); Venue: Army Training School, Maduru Oya, Sri Lanka; Dates: 13–26 Nov 2026 (14 days).

What is the background to this news?

India–Sri Lanka defence ties: the armies hold 'Mitra Shakti' and the navies 'SLINEX'; SLINEX-25 was held off Colombo in August 2025.

Practice questions (with answers)

1. Where is the 12th edition of the India–Sri Lanka joint military exercise 'Mitra Shakti' (13–26 Nov 2026) being held?

A) Belagavi, Karnataka

B) Umroi, Meghalaya

C) Trincomalee

D) Maduru Oya

Answer: D – Explanation: The Army Training School, Maduru Oya, Sri Lanka. The 11th edition was held at Belagavi in Nov 2025.

2. The 170-member Indian contingent for Mitra Shakti 2026 is drawn mainly from a battalion of which regiment?

A) Madras Regiment

B) Gorkha Rifles

C) Rajputana Rifles

D) Sikh Regiment

Answer: C – Explanation: The Rajputana Rifles, with other arms and IAF personnel. The theme is semi-urban counter-terrorism.

3. Under the 1974 India–Sri Lanka maritime boundary agreement, which Palk Strait island was accepted as Sri Lankan?

A) Pamban

B) Katchatheevu

C) Kurusadai

D) Musal Island

Answer: B – Explanation: Katchatheevu – the Indira Gandhi–Sirimavo Bandaranaike pact. Pamban, Kurusadai and Musal are Tamil Nadu islands.

4. Which Sri Lankan President signed the 1987 accord with Rajiv Gandhi that led to the IPKF being sent to Sri Lanka?

A) Ranasinghe Premadasa

B) Sirimavo Bandaranaike

C) J.R. Jayewardene

D) Chandrika Kumaratunga

Answer: C – Explanation: J.R. Jayewardene (29 July 1987, Colombo). The IPKF withdrew in 1990, under President Premadasa.

5. What is the name of the bilateral naval exercise held by the Indian Navy and the Sri Lanka Navy?

A) SLINEX

B) SIMBEX

C) JIMEX

D) Varuna

Answer: A – Explanation: SLINEX – the 2025 edition was off Colombo in August. SIMBEX is with Singapore, JIMEX with Japan, Varuna with France.

Sources: UNI (13 Nov 2026); Ada Derana (13 Nov 2026); Sri Lanka Army – army.lk; PIB (10 Nov 2025, Mitra Shakti XI); News On AIR (SLINEX-25); MEA – mea.gov.in (1974/1976 agreements). © Shanmugam IAS Academy.