India - UK Carrier Strike Group (CSG) – Exercise Konkan

Mains: *GS-II - Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests*

Why in news?

Recently, U.K. and India launches historic first ever Carrier Strike Group Exercise Konkan, a maritime drill off the Western coast of India.

What needs to be known about Exercise Konkan?

- **First held in –** 2004, Exercise Konkan is a biennial (every 2 years) engagement.
- **Duration & location –** The exercise took place from October 5–12, 2025, off India's western coast.
- **Aim –** To enhance combined maritime and air capabilities between the UK and Indian navies on the high seas.
- **First ever exercise –** The 2025 edition of Exercise Konkan, marks the first-ever exercise involving the ***Carrier Strike Group (CSG)*** of both nations - the U.K.'s HMS Prince of Wales and India's INS Vikrant.

  Carriers *in naval context, are warships that can serve as airbases, too.*

- Exercise Konkan 2025 will serve as a platform to consolidate strategic ties, enhance interoperability and contribute to regional maritime stability.

  The Indian Navy's ***1st aircraft carrier*** *was HMS Hercules, acquired from the United Kingdom in 1961 and renamed INS Vikrant. It was decommissioned in 1997.*

- **Post-exercise integration –** After Exercise Konkan concluded, UK CSG

25 participated in a joint exercise with the Indian Air Force on October 14, further integrating naval and air capabilities.

What are the phases of the exercise?

- **2 phases** – The exercise is being conducted in two phases – Sea phase and Harbour phase.
- **Sea phase –** Includes maritime operational drills focusing on anti-air, anti-surface, and anti-submarine exercises, flying operations and other seamanship evolutions.
- Both participating nations deployed frontline assets, including aircraft carriers, destroyers, frigates (a type of warship), submarines, and integral and shore-based air assets.
- **Harbour phase –** Includes professional interactions between naval personnel, cross-deck visits, sports fixtures, and cultural engagements.
- Additionally, Joint Working Group meetings and Subject Matter Expert Exchanges are also scheduled.

What is the significance of Exercise Konkan?

- **Indo-Pacific as focus –** This exercise underlines the growing strategic alignment between the two countries in safeguarding the crucial Indo-Pacific region.
- **Enhances interoperability –** The drills help the navies operate more effectively together and improve combined maritime and air capabilities.
- **Boosts maritime security –** The exercise showcases combined naval strength and contributes to regional maritime stability.
- **Deepening defence ties –** This exercise highlights by deepening defence ties while showcasing British trade and industry and the strong “living bridge” of people and culture between the U.K. and India.
- **Strengthens ties –** It reaffirms the two nations' commitment to a free, open, and free sea, in line with the "India-UK Vision 2035" comprehensive strategic partnership.

*The **India-UK Vision 2035** is a comprehensive strategic roadmap launched in July 2025 to elevate bilateral ties across 5 key pillars - Growth, Technology, Defence, Climate, and Education.*

- **Focal role of CSG –** This CSG operation play a focal role in projecting power, ensuring sea control, and addressing evolving blue-water (open sea) security challenges such as maritime domain awareness, deterrence,

and freedom of navigation.

- The two navies operating together point to not just operational synergy, but also commitment to a rules-based maritime order amid rising geopolitical tensions in the region.
- **Global deployment –** The UK CSG's participation was part of its wider, eight-month-long "Operation Highmast" deployment.

Operation Highmast *– An 8-month multinational deployment led by the UK CSG to the Indo-Pacific region in 2025; to strengthen alliances, promote maritime security in the region.*

Quick Fact

Other Joint Exercises Between India and the UK	
Ajeya Warrior	• It is the joint army-level training with an emphasis on counter-terrorism operations and sharing expertise in various military operations.
Indradhanush	• It is the joint Air force exercise to build interoperability.
Cobra Warrior	• A multinational air exercise in which the Indian Air Force has participated

Reference

The Indian Express | Exercise Konkan 2025

