India- Vietnam Defence Ties

Why in news?

The maritime domain has taken centre stage in the bilateral talks between the two countries.

What are the key elements that have made India and Vietnam natural partners?

- Vietnam is an important partner in India's Act East policy and the Indo-Pacific vision and the two countries share a rich history of civilisational and cultural linkages spanning over 2,000 years.
- Both the countries share a **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership** since 2016 and defence cooperation is a key pillar of this partnership.
- Bilateral defence engagements have expanded over a period of time to include Defence policy dialogues, military to military exchanges, high-level visits, cooperation in UN Peace Keeping, ship visits and bilateral exercises.
- India and Vietnam are equally uncompromising partners when it comes to the question of violations of freedom of navigation and threats to sovereign maritime territorial rights as enshrined under international maritime law.
- New Delhi has supported Vietnam's position in the South China Sea regarding Beijing's destabilising actions backing the verdict of the Permanent Court of Arbitration in 2016.
- New Delhi and Hanoi have become natural partners due to the furtherance of
    - India's Act East Policy
    - Maritime multilateralism
    - Maritime security outreach
    - Building stronger networks across the Indo-Pacific

What are the recent developments regarding defence cooperation?

- **Joint Vision Statement**- India and Vietnam Wednesday signed a Joint Vision Statement on India-Vietnam Defence Partnership towards 2030 to enhance the scope and scale of existing defence cooperation.
- **Defence Line of Credit**- Both the countries also agreed on the early finalisation of the $500 million Defence Line of Credit extended to Vietnam.
- **Mutual Logistics Support**- India and Vietnam also inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Mutual Logistics Support.
- **Capacity building**- India is about to gift two simulators and a monetary grant towards setting up of Language and IT Lab at the Air Force Officers Training School for capacity building of the Vietnamese Armed Forces.

VINBAX is the joint military exercise between the military of India and Vietnam. The

naval exercise PASSEX 2020 had the participation of India, Russia, USA, Australia and Vietnam.

What is the significance of India- Vietnam defence ties?

- **Maritime trade**- Because of the volume of maritime trade that passes through sea lanes of communication in the Indo-Pacific maritime cooperation between countries is essential.
- **China's role**- The signing of the vision document came amid growing congruence between the two countries in the maritime security domain amid China's increasing muscle-flexing in the region.
- **Mutual interests**- The implementation of the projects under the LoC will add substantially to Vietnam's defence capabilities and further India's vision of 'Make in India, Make for the World'.
- **Stability of Indo-Pacific**- The close defence and security cooperation between India and Vietnam is an important factor for stability in the Indo-Pacific region.
- **Energy reserves**- It is significant to protect common interests since India has oil exploration projects in the Vietnamese waters (Vietnam has territorial disputes with China) in the South China Sea.

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