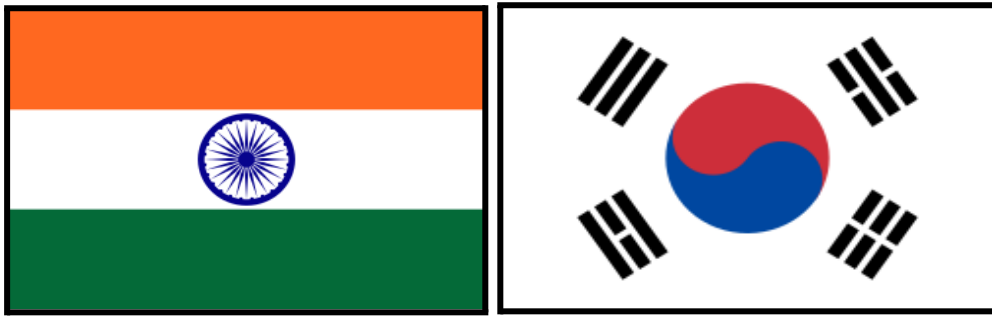




**INDIA - REPUBLIC OF KOREA BILATERAL
COOPERATION FRAMEWORK**

YOUTH PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT FORUM

**NEW DELHI
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TABLE OF CONTENT

Foreword

Message from the Chairman, Youth Peace and Development Forum.....	Pg No. 5
Message from the Vice Chairman, Youth Peace and Development Forum.....	Pg No. 7
Message from the In-charge, International Cooperation Framework.....	Pg No. 9

Executive Summary.....	Pg No. 11
-------------------------------	------------------

Acknowledgement.....	Pg No. 14
-----------------------------	------------------

Vision for the Two Nations.....	Pg No. 15
--	------------------

Guiding Principles of Bilateral Cooperation.....	Pg No. 19
---	------------------

31 Pillars of Cooperation

1. Political Cooperation.....	Pg No. 23
2. Diplomatic Cooperation.....	Pg No. 26
3. Economic and Trade Cooperation.....	Pg No. 29
4. Financial Cooperation.....	Pg No. 32
5. Investment Cooperation.....	Pg No. 34
6. Energy Cooperation.....	Pg No. 36
7. Defence and Security Cooperation.....	Pg No. 38
8. Maritime and Blue Economy Cooperation	Pg No. 41
9. Water Resources Cooperation.....	Pg No. 44
10. Agriculture and Food Security Cooperation.....	Pg No. 47
11. Science, Technology and Innovation Cooperation.....	Pg No. 50
12. Artificial Intelligence and Emerging Technologies Cooperation.....	Pg No. 52
13. Digital and Cyber Security Cooperation.....	Pg No. 54
14. Space Cooperation.....	Pg No. 56
15. Environmental and Climate Cooperation.....	Pg No. 58
16. Disaster Management and Humanitarian Cooperation.....	Pg No. 60
17. Infrastructure and Connectivity Cooperation.....	Pg No. 62
18. Industrial and Manufacturing Cooperation.....	Pg No. 64
19. Academic and Educational Cooperation.....	Pg No. 66
20. Healthcare and Public Health Cooperation.....	Pg No. 68
21. Youth Cooperation.....	Pg No. 70
22. Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Cooperation.....	Pg No. 72
23. Labour, Employment and Migration Cooperation.....	Pg No. 74
24. Tourism Cooperation.....	Pg No. 76
25. Sports Cooperation.....	Pg No. 78
26. Culture and Heritage Cooperation.....	Pg No. 80
27. Parliamentary and Governance Cooperation.....	Pg No. 82
28. Legal and Judicial Cooperation.....	Pg No. 84
29. Multilateral and Regional Cooperation.....	Pg No. 86

30. Sustainable Development Cooperation.....	Pg No. 88
31. Innovation and Entrepreneurship Cooperation.....	Pg No. 90

Implementation Framework

Institutional Mechanisms.....	Pg No. 92
Joint Working Groups.....	Pg No. 94
Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.....	Pg No. 96
Periodic Review Mechanism.....	Pg No. 98

Roadmap for Future Cooperation

Strategic Vision 2050	Pg No.100
Short-Term Priorities (1–5 Years).....	Pg No.101
Medium-Term Priorities (5–15 Years).....	PgNo. 103
Long-Term Strategic Goals (15–30 Years).....	Pg No.104

End Note	PgNo.106
-----------------------	----------

References	Pg No.108
-------------------------	-----------

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

It gives me immense pleasure to extend my warm greetings to all distinguished dignitaries, policymakers, diplomats, scholars, youth leaders, and friends associated with the Youth Peace and Development Forum. This publication commemorates and reflects upon the growing relationship between the **Republic of India and the Republic of Korea**, a partnership that has evolved into an important pillar of cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region.

India and the Republic of Korea share a relationship founded upon mutual respect, democratic values, economic complementarities, cultural understanding, and a common commitment to peace and stability. Over the years, our bilateral engagement has expanded beyond traditional diplomatic relations to encompass trade and investment, science and technology, education, innovation, defence and security, culture, people-to-people relations, and emerging areas of cooperation. This broadening partnership demonstrates the strength and resilience of the relationship between our two nations.

The India–Republic of Korea Bilateral Cooperation Framework provides an important avenue for deepening this partnership and creating new opportunities for meaningful engagement. In an increasingly interconnected world, bilateral cooperation cannot remain confined to governments alone. It must also involve civil society, academic institutions, young professionals, entrepreneurs, researchers, cultural organisations, and, most importantly, the youth of both countries.

The Youth Peace and Development Forum strongly believes that **young people are not merely the leaders of tomorrow; they are important partners in building peace and development today**. The demographic strength, creativity, technological ability, and entrepreneurial spirit of the younger generations in India and Korea provide enormous opportunities for cooperation. Greater youth-to-youth interaction can contribute to mutual understanding, reduce cultural barriers, and create lasting foundations for friendship between our societies.

India and Korea have much to learn from each other. India's experience in democratic governance, digital public infrastructure, entrepreneurship, education, space technology, and its diverse cultural traditions can contribute to greater bilateral understanding. Similarly, Korea's achievements in technological innovation, industrial development, research and development, education, creative industries, and economic transformation offer valuable opportunities for exchange and collaboration.

In this context, strategic cooperation should not be understood only in terms of economic or security interests. A truly strategic partnership must also possess a strong **human dimension**. Cooperation in education, youth development, culture, research, climate action, sustainable development, and social innovation can strengthen the foundations upon which diplomatic relations are built.

The Youth Peace and Development Forum seeks to contribute to this process by encouraging dialogue, knowledge-sharing, youth participation, and constructive engagement between India and Korea. We believe that platforms bringing together young people from both countries can generate new ideas and practical initiatives in areas such as peacebuilding, sustainable development, technology, entrepreneurship, education, cultural exchange, and community development.

The world today faces complex challenges, including geopolitical tensions, economic uncertainties, climate change, technological disruption, misinformation, and threats to social cohesion. No country can effectively address these challenges in isolation. Strong bilateral and multilateral partnerships are therefore essential. India and Korea, as two vibrant democracies with significant economic and technological capabilities, can make a meaningful contribution to a peaceful, prosperous, and rules-based international order.

Our cooperation must therefore look towards the future. We should encourage greater interaction among universities and research institutions, expand opportunities for student and professional exchanges, facilitate innovation partnerships, promote cultural diplomacy, and create platforms where young people can participate in discussions concerning international affairs and sustainable development.

The India–Korea relationship has already demonstrated considerable potential. The responsibility before us is to transform this potential into sustained and inclusive cooperation. Diplomatic relations become truly meaningful when they positively influence the lives of ordinary people and create opportunities for future generations.

As Chairman of the Youth Peace and Development Forum, I reaffirm our commitment to strengthening friendship and cooperation between India and the Republic of Korea. We look forward to supporting initiatives that bring our peoples closer, promote mutual understanding, and encourage young citizens to become ambassadors of peace, cooperation, and development.

May the India–Republic of Korea partnership continue to grow from strength to strength and emerge as a model of constructive bilateral engagement in the Indo-Pacific and beyond.

With best wishes for a stronger, deeper, and future-oriented India–Korea partnership.

Dheeraj G N
Chairman
Youth Peace and Development Forum

MESSAGE FROM THE VICE CHAIRMAN

It is a privilege to contribute this message to a publication dedicated to the **India–Republic of Korea Bilateral Cooperation Framework**. The evolving partnership between India and the Republic of Korea represents a relationship of considerable strategic importance, built upon shared democratic values, mutual respect, economic cooperation, technological advancement, and a growing understanding between our peoples.

The relationship between India and Korea has developed significantly over the decades. What began as diplomatic engagement has progressively expanded into a comprehensive partnership covering diverse areas of mutual interest. Today, both countries recognise the importance of working together to address emerging regional and global challenges while creating new opportunities for economic and social progress.

The strategic significance of India–Korea relations is particularly evident in the changing international environment. The Indo-Pacific is becoming increasingly important to global economic activity, technological development, maritime connectivity, and international security. In such an environment, cooperation between India and Korea can contribute significantly to regional stability, resilience, and prosperity.

However, strategic diplomacy must extend beyond government-to-government relations. The strength of any bilateral partnership ultimately depends upon the connections established between its people. This is why **people-to-people diplomacy and youth engagement** deserve particular attention.

The youth of India and Korea represent a powerful bridge between our societies. Young people are increasingly connected through technology, education, entrepreneurship, cultural interests, and shared global concerns. Creating more opportunities for interaction can transform these connections into meaningful partnerships.

The Youth Peace and Development Forum believes that youth cooperation can become one of the most dynamic dimensions of India–Korea relations. Academic exchanges, youth conferences, cultural programmes, leadership initiatives, research collaborations, innovation networks, and social-development projects can encourage young Indians and Koreans to understand one another beyond geographical and cultural boundaries.

Such engagement is particularly important for promoting peace. Peace is not simply the absence of conflict; it is also the presence of dialogue, mutual respect, social justice, cooperation, and shared opportunities. Young people who understand different cultures and perspectives are better equipped to challenge stereotypes, resist intolerance, and contribute to peaceful societies.

Economic and technological cooperation also offers enormous possibilities. India and Korea possess complementary strengths in areas such as manufacturing, digital technologies, innovation, research, education, infrastructure, green development, and entrepreneurship.

Encouraging collaboration among young entrepreneurs, researchers, technology professionals, and educational institutions can create new avenues for inclusive and sustainable growth.

At the same time, cultural diplomacy should remain an essential component of the bilateral relationship. India's rich civilisational heritage and Korea's distinctive cultural traditions provide a strong foundation for mutual appreciation. Cultural exchanges, academic programmes, artistic collaborations, and youth initiatives can deepen the understanding that forms the human foundation of diplomatic relations.

We must also recognise that development and peace are closely connected. Sustainable development requires cooperation across borders, particularly in addressing climate change, environmental challenges, inequality, energy security, and technological transformation. India and Korea can share experiences, expertise, and innovative solutions while working towards a more sustainable future.

The Bilateral Cooperation Framework should therefore be viewed not merely as an instrument of diplomatic engagement but as an opportunity to develop a **long-term vision for partnership**. Such a vision should involve governments, institutions, businesses, universities, civil society organisations, and citizens.

The Youth Peace and Development Forum remains committed to encouraging dialogue and cooperation in this direction. We seek to create platforms where young people can exchange ideas, understand contemporary international issues, develop leadership skills, and participate constructively in peace and development initiatives.

The future of India–Korea relations will ultimately be shaped not only by agreements signed today but also by the relationships and institutions that we build for tomorrow. By investing in young people, strengthening educational and cultural exchanges, and promoting cooperation based on mutual respect, our two countries can build a partnership capable of responding to the challenges of the twenty-first century.

As Vice Chairman of the Youth Peace and Development Forum, I extend my sincere appreciation to all those working towards stronger India–Korea relations. I hope this publication contributes to greater awareness, dialogue, and cooperation and encourages readers to recognise the immense possibilities that exist between our two nations.

May the India–Republic of Korea partnership continue to flourish and inspire future generations through friendship, innovation, mutual respect, and shared commitment to peace and prosperity.

Aravind Saj
Chairman
Youth Peace and Development Forum

MESSAGE FROM THE IN-CHARGE

It is a matter of great honour and privilege to be associated with this publication highlighting the India–Republic of Korea Bilateral Cooperation Framework and the growing strategic partnership between our two nations.

India and the Republic of Korea have established a relationship that extends well beyond conventional diplomatic engagement. Over the years, our cooperation has expanded across economic development, trade and investment, science and technology, education, innovation, culture, defence, and people-to-people relations. This growing partnership reflects the shared aspiration of both countries to contribute to peace, stability, prosperity, and sustainable development.

The present international environment makes such partnerships more important than ever. Rapid technological change, geopolitical uncertainties, climate challenges, economic transformations, and emerging security concerns require countries to strengthen dialogue and cooperation. India and Korea, with their respective strengths and experiences, have significant potential to work together in addressing these challenges.

The Youth Peace and Development Forum recognises that young people have a vital role in strengthening international cooperation. The youth constitute a dynamic force capable of generating new ideas, encouraging innovation, promoting cultural understanding, and creating solutions to contemporary challenges. Consequently, youth participation should be an integral part of any long-term bilateral cooperation framework.

There is considerable scope for expanding youth-oriented cooperation between India and Korea. Educational exchanges, student interactions, research programmes, leadership initiatives, cultural programmes, entrepreneurship networks, technology partnerships, and community-development projects can provide young people with opportunities to learn from one another and build lasting relationships.

Such initiatives can also contribute to what may be described as people-to-people diplomacy. Government-to-government relations provide the institutional foundation for bilateral cooperation, but relationships between citizens provide its human foundation. When young Indians and Koreans interact, exchange ideas, understand one another's societies, and work together towards common objectives, they create bonds that can strengthen bilateral relations for generations.

The Forum also believes that peace and development must be approached together. Economic growth without social inclusion cannot produce lasting peace, while peace without opportunities for development cannot create sustainable prosperity. Cooperation between

India and Korea should therefore encourage initiatives that promote inclusive growth, education, employment, entrepreneurship, environmental sustainability, technological advancement, and social responsibility.

Technology presents another important area of opportunity. India and Korea have developed significant capabilities in digital innovation, research, manufacturing, and emerging technologies. Greater interaction between young researchers, innovators, entrepreneurs, and technology professionals can generate new partnerships and contribute to shared economic development.

Cultural understanding is equally important. India and Korea possess rich and distinctive cultural traditions, and the growing international interest in both countries provides a strong foundation for cultural diplomacy. Youth-led cultural exchanges can encourage mutual appreciation and help overcome misconceptions that may arise from limited understanding of different societies.

As In-Charge of the Youth Peace and Development Forum, I consider it our responsibility to facilitate meaningful platforms for dialogue and engagement. Our objective is not simply to discuss bilateral relations but to encourage young people to become active participants in building them. We seek to promote an environment in which ideas can be exchanged freely, partnerships can be developed, and constructive initiatives can emerge.

I am confident that this publication will contribute to a better understanding of the opportunities presented by India–Korea cooperation. More importantly, I hope it encourages young readers to recognise their own role in strengthening international friendship and promoting peace and development.

The future of bilateral relations belongs not only to diplomats and policymakers but also to students, researchers, entrepreneurs, professionals, civil-society organisations, and young citizens. By connecting these communities, we can transform diplomatic friendship into meaningful cooperation at the grassroots level.

On behalf of the Youth Peace and Development Forum, I extend my sincere appreciation to all individuals and institutions contributing to the strengthening of India–Korea relations. I also express my best wishes for continued cooperation, mutual understanding, and shared prosperity between the peoples of India and the Republic of Korea.

Akhish S
In Charge, International Cooperation Framework
Youth Peace and Development Forum

Executive Summary

The India-South Korea Cooperative Framework sets out a structured, long-term architecture for deepening the Special Strategic Partnership between the Republic of India and the Republic of Korea. Built on diplomatic relations established on 10 December 1973, the relationship progressed through the operationalization of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement in 2010 and its elevation to a Special Strategic Partnership in 2015 (Plutus IAS, 2026). The year 2025 marked the completion of a decade under that elevated partnership (Prime Minister's Office, 2026), and this milestone fed directly into the State Visit of President Lee Jae Myung of the Republic of Korea to India from 19 to 21 April 2026, at the invitation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the fastest such visit undertaken by a Korean president after assuming office (Prime Minister's Office, 2026). During this visit, the two leaders adopted a Joint Strategic Vision for 2026 to 2030, announced in New Delhi on 20 April 2026 (Prime Minister's Office, 2026), organized around the thematic pairings of chips to ships, talent to technology, and environment to energy and encompassing 25 separate agreements and memoranda spanning political, industrial, financial, technological, and cultural domains (Convergence Now, 2026).

This framework is organized around 31 pillars of cooperation, spanning political, diplomatic, economic, financial, investment, energy, defence and security, maritime, water resources, agricultural, scientific, technological, digital, spatial, environmental, humanitarian, infrastructural, industrial, educational, healthcare, youth, gender, labour, tourism, sporting, cultural, parliamentary, legal, multilateral, sustainable development, and entrepreneurial domains. Each pillar is treated as a discrete but interconnected stream of cooperation, with its own current status and forward looking priority actions, supported by an implementation framework of institutional mechanisms and a roadmap extending to 2050.

The economic foundation of the partnership remains modest relative to its strategic ambition. Bilateral trade between India and the Republic of Korea reached approximately 25.6 billion United States dollars in calendar year 2025, according to data compiled by the Korea International Trade Association (Embassy of India, Seoul, n.d.). Measured on India's fiscal year basis, bilateral trade surpassed 27 billion dollars in the 2024 to 2025 fiscal year (Drishti IAS, 2026), while a separate analysis by Rubix Data Sciences found that trade had remained range bound at between 25 and 28 billion dollars across fiscal years 2022 through 2025 (Tribune India, 2026). Both governments have set a formal target of doubling bilateral trade to 50 billion dollars by 2030 (Drishti IAS, 2026), a target the two leaders reaffirmed during the April 2026 summit alongside their decision to resume and expedite negotiations to upgrade the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (Prime Minister's Office, 2026), with conclusion targeted for 2027 (Drishti IAS, 2026).

Trade composition remains structurally imbalanced. India's exports to the Republic of Korea are dominated by naphtha and other mineral fuel distillates, which alone account for roughly one fifth of Korea's total imports from India, alongside unwrought aluminium, iron and steel

products, and refined lead (Embassy of India, Seoul, n.d.). Korean exports to India are considerably more diversified and technologically advanced, led by electrical machinery and equipment, iron and steel, nuclear reactors and mechanical machinery, and plastics (IBEF, 2026). This asymmetry, in which India's exports remain concentrated in primary and semi-processed goods while Korean exports span higher value manufactured products, underscores the rebalancing objective that both governments have attached to the CEPA upgrade process.

Investment ties, while expanding, remain well below the scale of the trade relationship. South Korea's cumulative foreign direct investment into India reached approximately 6.90 billion dollars between April 2000 and September 2025, positioning it as India's thirteenth largest source of FDI (IBEF, 2026), with a further 824 million dollars invested during calendar year 2025 alone (Embassy of India, Seoul, n.d.). Reflecting this momentum, Prime Minister Modi announced the establishment of a Korean Industrial Township intended to ease market entry for Korean small and medium enterprises (IMPRI India, 2026), and the two governments welcomed a memorandum of understanding between POSCO and JSW to establish a 6 million tonne integrated steel plant in Odisha (Prime Minister's Office, 2026).

Defence and security cooperation has moved from procurement toward co-production. The two leaders used the April 2026 summit to reinvigorate a 2020 memorandum of understanding on a roadmap for defence industry cooperation, expressing satisfaction with the progress of the second production batch of K9 Vajra self-propelled howitzers, and announcing a new innovation platform, styled the Korea-India Defence Accelerator or KIND-X, to connect start-ups, incubators, and universities on both sides (Prime Minister's Office, 2026). The two sides also agreed to hold an inaugural Defence and Foreign Affairs 2+2 Dialogue at the Vice Minister level, and India's Defence Minister is scheduled to visit the Republic of Korea in May 2026 for the joint inauguration of a war memorial commemorating India's participation in the Korean War (Prime Minister's Office, 2026).

Technology cooperation has emerged as a defining feature of the relationship's next phase. The two leaders launched a framework for an India-Korea Digital Bridge focused on artificial intelligence, data governance, and digital business, alongside efforts to connect India's semiconductor incentive programme with Korean industry (Prime Minister's Office, 2026). In space, the Indian Space Research Organisation and the Korea Aerospace Administration agreed to form a joint working group, marked by the holding of an inaugural India-ROK Space Day in Bengaluru on 20 April 2026 (Prime Minister's Office, 2026). Both sides further agreed to cooperate on mapping and processing critical minerals with the aid of artificial intelligence, and on recovering critical minerals from unconventional sources such as electronic waste and mine tailings (Prime Minister's Office, 2026).

Beyond government to government mechanisms, the human capital and cultural dimensions of the relationship have also been formally deepened. The Cultural Exchange Programme was extended for the 2026 to 2030 period, the two countries designated 2028 and 2029 as the Year of India-Republic of Korea Friendship, and sister city relationships between Busan and

Mumbai, Incheon and Kolkata, and Ulsan and Chennai continue to anchor sub-national engagement (Prime Minister's Office, 2026). Academic cooperation has scaled through the twenty three Indian Institutes of Technology and the ten Korean National Universities of the KNU10 Consortium, alongside the opening of India's first Korea Education Centre in January 2026 and reciprocal scholarship schemes including the Global Korea Scholarship and the Indian Council for Cultural Relations Atal Bihari Vajpayee General Scholarship (Prime Minister's Office, 2026).

These sectoral gains sit within a broader geopolitical convergence. India regards the Republic of Korea as central to its Act East policy, while the Republic of Korea views India as a pillar of its own outward regional diplomacy (Prime Minister's Office, 2026), and both governments have repeatedly affirmed shared commitments to a free and open Indo-Pacific, reform of multilateral institutions including the United Nations Security Council, and support for a phased and peaceful denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula (Prime Minister's Office, 2026). Both sides have also condemned cross-border terrorism in the strongest terms, a position reaffirmed following the Pahalgam attack of April 2025 (Prime Minister's Office, 2026).

This framework proceeds from the premise that the India-Republic of Korea relationship, having consolidated a decade of Special Strategic Partnership and entered a new five year planning cycle under the 2026 to 2030 Joint Strategic Vision, is positioned to move from a narrow, electronics and automobile led trade relationship toward a more diversified architecture encompassing defence co-production, semiconductors, shipbuilding, space, critical minerals, and human capital. The chapters that follow examine each of the 31 pillars in turn, before setting out the institutional mechanisms, monitoring arrangements, and phased roadmap through 2050 required to convert this momentum into a durable and balanced partnership.

Acknowledgement

The Youth Peace and Development (YPD) Forum expresses its deepest gratitude to all individuals, institutions, and domain experts whose dedication, geopolitical insight, and intellectual contributions made the preparation of *The India–Republic of Korea Bilateral Cooperation Framework* possible.

We extend our profound gratitude to the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of the Republic of Korea. The enduring diplomatic, economic, and strategic initiatives undertaken by both governments provided the foundational context and historical bedrock for this comprehensive framework.

The Forum places on record its sincere appreciation to **Dheeraj GN, Chairman of the Youth Peace and Development Forum**, for his visionary leadership and initiative in conceptualizing this vital geopolitical project. Heartfelt thanks are also extended to **Aravind Saj, Vice Chairman of the Youth Peace and Development Forum**, for his continuous encouragement and strategic guidance throughout the execution of this comprehensive initiative.

The Forum also wishes to express its special thanks to the **Embassy of the Republic of Korea in New Delhi** for its continuous efforts in fostering public diplomacy, cultural ties, and educational exchanges. Its work has significantly enriched the bilateral discourse and inspired the younger generation to engage deeply with India–Republic of Korea relations.

Special appreciation is due to **Aman Chauhan** and the core research coordination team for their valuable support in streamlining the research process. The Forum further acknowledges the vital contributions of **Monish Krishna, Secretary General of the Youth Peace and Development Forum**, whose administrative leadership and organizational commitment have been instrumental in successfully navigating the complexities of bilateral policy research.

The Forum further extends its appreciation to all well-wishers, advisors, and stakeholders who encouraged this initiative. Whether through expert consultations, peer reviews, or moral support, their contributions helped strengthen the relevance and strategic accuracy of this work.

This report is a reflection of a shared commitment to building a stable, multipolar world anchored in mutual trust and cooperation. While the recommendations contained herein aim to explore new and dynamic avenues for India–Republic of Korea cooperation in the twenty-first century, they also serve as a proud testament to the time-tested and enduring friendship between the two great nations.

Vision for the Two Nations

The India-Republic of Korea relationship stands at an inflection point of a different character than most of India's other major bilateral partnerships. For most of the post-Cold War period, the relationship was defined narrowly, by consumer electronics and automobile trade, by a modest but steady flow of Korean manufacturing investment into Indian states such as Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh, and by diplomatic cordiality that rarely extended into the strategic domains of defence, technology, or regional security architecture. This framework's central vision is that the relationship can be deliberately and rapidly broadened from that narrow base into a comprehensive strategic partnership spanning thirty one pillars, without abandoning the electronics and automobile trade that remains its commercial backbone.

The decade that followed the 2015 upgrade to Special Strategic Partnership status illustrates both the ceiling and the promise of the relationship in its earlier form. Bilateral trade grew in absolute terms but, as an analysis by Rubix Data Sciences documented, remained range bound at between 25 and 28 billion dollars across fiscal years 2022 through 2025, never breaking decisively higher despite the relationship's elevated diplomatic status (Tribune India, 2026). Korean investment into India followed a similar pattern of steady but unspectacular growth, reaching a cumulative 6.90 billion dollars by September 2025, a figure that left the Republic of Korea as only India's thirteenth largest source of foreign direct investment after a full decade of Special Strategic Partnership status (IBEF, 2026). This framework treats that decade not as a failure but as evidence that diplomatic upgrades alone, absent the kind of sector specific institutional architecture set out in the pillars that follow, are insufficient on their own to transform a trade relationship. The Joint Strategic Vision adopted in April 2026 represents, in this reading, a second and more structurally ambitious attempt at the same transformation the 2015 upgrade initiated but did not complete.

India's vision for this partnership is shaped by its own long term development objectives. As India approaches the centenary of its independence in 2047 under the Viksit Bharat, or developed India, framework, it requires reliable partners for semiconductor manufacturing capability, shipbuilding technology, defence co-production, and critical mineral supply chains, precisely the domains in which the Republic of Korea has built world leading industrial capacity within a single generation. India's Act East policy treats the Republic of Korea as a natural partner in this effort, given Korea's position as a fellow Asian democracy with no history of territorial dispute with India and a demonstrated willingness to transfer technology through joint ventures rather than through arm's length trade alone. This ambition sits alongside India's broader Atmanirbhar Bharat, or self reliant India, agenda, which this framework reads not as a turn toward protectionism but as a preference for foreign investment structured around local manufacturing, local design, and local skill formation.

The Republic of Korea's vision for the partnership is shaped by a different but complementary set of imperatives. Facing concentration risk in its major export markets and a manufacturing cost base that has risen steadily relative to emerging Asian competitors,

Korean industry requires new, large, and growing markets for its shipbuilding, semiconductor, automotive, and defence sectors, along with diversified and de-risked supply chains for the critical minerals and rare earths on which its electronics and battery industries depend. India offers scale that few other markets can match, a young workforce, and a policy environment increasingly organized around attracting precisely the kind of capital intensive, technology intensive manufacturing investment that Korean conglomerates are positioned to provide.

Three thematic pairings, formally adopted by the two governments as the organizing structure of the 2026 to 2030 Joint Strategic Vision, operationalize this shared vision throughout the present framework

The first pairing, chips to ships, links semiconductor cooperation to shipbuilding cooperation as twin pillars of industrial partnership. On the chips side, India's semiconductor programme received an additional 1,000 crore rupees in allocation to the India Semiconductor Mission under the Union Budget for 2026 to 2027 , alongside a total outlay of 8,000 crore rupees for the Modified Programme for Development of Semiconductor and Display Manufacturing Ecosystem . As of May 2026, thirteen semiconductor projects had been approved across seven Indian states, including India's first large scale logic fabrication facility at Dholera in Gujarat (India Briefing, 2026), while the mission's Design Linked Incentive scheme supported twenty four domestic design startups that had attracted close to 430 crore rupees in venture capital funding as of January 2026 . This framework treats Korean semiconductor expertise as a natural complement to this expanding Indian manufacturing base, formalized through the India-Korea Digital Bridge and a dedicated semiconductor task force operating under the Industrial Cooperation Committee established at the April 2026 summit (IMPRI India, 2026b).

On the ships side, India's Maritime India Vision 2030 and the longer horizon Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047 together commit close to eighty lakh crore rupees toward making India one of the five leading shipbuilding and maritime nations in the world by the centenary of independence, with the nearer term Maritime India Vision 2030 alone accounting for approximately 3 to 3.5 lakh crore rupees in port, shipping, and inland waterway investment . The two governments explicitly linked this ambition to Korean shipbuilding expertise through a Comprehensive Framework for Partnership on Shipbuilding, Shipping and Maritime Logistics, describing the Republic of Korea in the joint statement as a leading shipbuilding and maritime nation (Prime Minister's Office, 2026). This linkage is already moving from statement to implementation. HD Hyundai, one of the Republic of Korea's largest shipbuilders, signed a strategic partnership with the Tamil Nadu state government in December 2025 to explore a new shipyard (Barchart, 2025), and by April 2026 this had progressed toward a formal joint venture involving Indian central government backed entities, including a dedicated training centre intended to build a localized Korean supplier base within India (Korea Herald, 2026).

The second pairing, talent to technology, links human capital development to defence and digital technology cooperation. On the talent side, academic cooperation has scaled considerably, anchored by a memorandum linking India's twenty three Indian Institutes of Technology with the ten member Korean National University, or KNU10, consortium, reinforced by the opening of India's first Korea Education Centre in January 2026 and by reciprocal scholarship programmes including the Global Korea Scholarship and the Indian Council for Cultural Relations Atal Bihari Vajpayee General Scholarship (Prime Minister's Office, 2026). This framework treats this expanding talent pipeline as the human capital foundation without which deeper technology cooperation cannot be sustained, since semiconductor fabrication, shipbuilding, and defence co-production all depend on a domestic engineering workforce trained to standards Korean partners can integrate directly into shared production lines.

On the technology side, defence cooperation has shifted from the procurement of finished Korean platforms, exemplified by the continuing production of K9 Vajra self propelled howitzers under license in India, toward genuine co-development, formalized through a new Korea-India Defence Accelerator, styled KIND-X, intended to connect start-ups, incubators, and universities in both countries, alongside an inaugural Defence and Foreign Affairs 2+2 Dialogue at the Vice Minister level (Prime Minister's Office, 2026). This framework treats KIND-X and the India-Korea Digital Bridge as the technological expression of a talent relationship that begins in the classroom and is intended to end in jointly designed products.

The third pairing, environment to energy, links critical mineral and climate cooperation to the energy transition. On the environment side, the two governments agreed at the April 2026 summit to cooperate on the use of artificial intelligence to map and process critical minerals and on recovering critical minerals from unconventional sources, including electronic waste and mine tailings (Prime Minister's Office, 2026). On the energy side, the Industrial Cooperation Committee established at the summit was explicitly mandated to strengthen cooperation on the trade of green hydrogen and its derivatives, on nuclear power plant projects, and on overseas resource development (Prime Minister's Office, 2026), positioning India's large scale renewable generation potential alongside Korean conversion technology in what one industry commentary described as a complementary green hydrogen partnership, with India providing renewable production scale and Korea providing conversion technology (Seoul Economic Daily, 2026), though a separate analysis cautioned that the partnership remains constrained by the absence of firm, long term offtake agreements on either side (CSDR, 2026).

The chapters that follow operationalize this vision pillar by pillar, beginning with the political and diplomatic foundations on which the remaining twenty nine pillars depend.

Guiding Principles of Bilateral Cooperation

This framework is organized around eight guiding principles that apply across all 31 pillars of cooperation. These principles function as a common reference point when specific pillars encounter tension, ambiguity, or the need for prioritization, and they are intended to be read together rather than in isolation, since several pillars draw simultaneously on more than one principle.

Democratic and Rules Based Convergence. India and the Republic of Korea are both large, pluralistic democracies operating under constitutional systems that guarantee regular elections, independent judiciaries, and protected civil liberties, a foundation the two governments explicitly reaffirmed as central to the relationship during the April 2026 summit (Prime Minister's Office, 2026). This framework treats that shared democratic character, together with a shared commitment to a rules based international trading system, as a structural asset that distinguishes this partnership from relationships built primarily on transactional convenience. This principle also implies a degree of institutional patience, since democratic governments in both countries must build and sustain domestic political and industry consensus behind major commitments, and this framework treats the resulting pace as a feature of durable cooperation rather than a defect to be engineered around.

Mutual Economic Benefit and Trade Rebalancing. Every pillar of cooperation is expected to generate identifiable value for both economies, not simply for one side. Given the current trade composition, in which India's exports to the Republic of Korea remain concentrated in naphtha and other primary goods while Korean exports to India span electrical machinery, iron and steel, machinery, and plastics, this principle requires explicit attention to rebalancing mechanisms, including the market access and tariff outcomes under negotiation in the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement upgrade, targeted for conclusion in 2027 (Drishti IAS, 2026). Concretely, this principle requires that pillar chapters proposing new Korean investment into India be paired wherever possible with reciprocal commitments that expand Indian goods or services access to the Korean market.

Institutional Continuity through Structured Dialogue. Cooperation should be sustained through standing institutional mechanisms rather than depending solely on leader level summits. The layered architecture reaffirmed at the April 2026 summit, comprising annual leadership summits, the Foreign Policy and Security Dialogue, an inaugural Defence and Foreign Affairs 2+2 Dialogue at the Vice Minister level, the India-ROK Industrial Cooperation Committee, and specialised task forces on semiconductors, artificial intelligence, and supply chains, is treated throughout this framework as the primary coordinating architecture beneath the annual summit (IMPRI India, 2026b). This is reinforced by sector specific bodies beneath it, including a Finance Ministers' level dialogue, a Joint Committee of Science and Technology Ministers, and the long standing Joint Commission mechanism that continues to function as the apex forum for reviewing progress across the relationship.

Technological Co-Development and Supply Chain Resilience. Where earlier phases of cooperation, particularly in defence, were characterized by direct procurement of finished Korean systems, this framework prioritizes joint design, joint production, and technology localization within India, consistent with India's Atmanirbhar Bharat policy. The Korea-India Defence Accelerator, styled KIND-X, and the India-Korea Digital Bridge are treated as the primary vehicles for extending this co-development model into semiconductors, artificial intelligence, and critical mineral processing (Prime Minister's Office, 2026). A relationship built on joint design and joint production is structurally more resistant to disruption from third country export controls or single source dependency than one built on the purchase of finished goods, and this framework accordingly favours initiatives that localize a stage of production within India over those that merely substitute one foreign supplier for another.

Diversification Beyond Electronics and Automobiles. While consumer electronics and automotive trade will remain significant components of the relationship, this framework treats the pillars covering shipbuilding, semiconductors, space, defence, critical minerals, and green energy as equally important to its long term durability, on the reasoning that a relationship overly concentrated in a narrow commercial base is more exposed to sector specific shocks. This principle carries a specific implication for how success is measured: growth in the shipbuilding, semiconductor, space, and critical minerals pillars is treated as at least as important an indicator of the relationship's health as continued growth in electronics and automobile trade, since the latter, however large, does not by itself reduce the relationship's structural concentration.

Measurable Targets and Periodic Review. Each pillar includes specific, time bound targets, consistent with the pattern already established in the trade relationship, where the two governments have set a formal target of doubling bilateral trade to 50 billion dollars by 2030 against a base of approximately 25.6 billion dollars in 2025 (Drishti IAS, 2026; Embassy of India, Seoul, n.d.). This framework formalizes that practice across all 31 pillars through the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework described in the Implementation Framework chapter, and treats the absence of a numerical target in any pillar as a gap to be corrected at the next Joint Commission meeting.

Indo-Pacific and Multilateral Convergence. Beyond the bilateral relationship, India and the Republic of Korea have affirmed shared commitments to a free and open Indo-Pacific, to reform of multilateral institutions including the United Nations Security Council, and to a phased and peaceful denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, alongside a shared condemnation of cross border terrorism reaffirmed following the Pahalgam attack of April 2025 (Prime Minister's Office, 2026). This framework treats convergence on these questions as reinforcing rather than separate from the bilateral pillars, while recognizing that the two countries will not share identical positions on every regional question, and that such divergence is to be managed through the dialogue architecture described above rather than treated as a barrier to cooperation elsewhere.

Inclusive and People Centered Cooperation. Beyond government to government and business to business engagement, this framework treats cultural exchange, sister city partnerships, educational mobility, and tourism as essential to the partnership's long term sustainability. The extension of the Cultural Exchange Programme through 2030, the designation of 2028 and 2029 as the Year of India-Republic of Korea Friendship, and the sister city relationships linking Busan with Mumbai, Incheon with Kolkata, and Ulsan with Chennai are treated as the connective tissue that sustains cooperation through periods when summit level attention is inevitably focused elsewhere (Prime Minister's Office, 2026). This principle also recognizes that the growing presence of Korean professionals in Indian manufacturing hubs, and Indian students and trainees in Korean universities and firms, means the quality of consular services and local support available to both communities will materially affect whether the technology transfer this framework envisions actually takes root.

Together, these eight principles function less as abstract aspirations and more as a working checklist. Where a pillar chapter proposes a new initiative, that proposal has been tested against each applicable principle: whether it generates mutual rather than one sided benefit, whether it is anchored to a specific institutional mechanism, whether it advances diversification, and whether it includes a measurable target subject to periodic review.

31 PILLARS OF COOPERATION

1. Political Cooperation

Overview

Political Cooperation, as distinct from the diplomatic and consular architecture addressed in the following pillar, concerns leader level engagement, the formal upgrades that have periodically redefined the relationship's status, and the domestic political conditions in each country that shape the pace at which cooperation can proceed. Diplomatic relations between India and the Republic of Korea were established on 10 December 1973, and the relationship subsequently progressed through the operationalization of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement in 2010 and its elevation to a Special Strategic Partnership in 2015 (Plutus IAS, 2026).

Current Status

The single most significant political event in the recent history of the relationship is the State Visit of President Lee Jae Myung of the Republic of Korea to India from 19 to 21 April 2026, during which the two leaders adopted the Joint Strategic Vision for the India-ROK Special Strategic Partnership, 2026 to 2030 (Prime Minister's Office, 2026). This visit is politically significant not only for its substantive outcomes but for its timing. President Lee assumed office on 4 June 2025, sworn in immediately without the customary transition period, after winning a snap election triggered by the impeachment and removal of his predecessor, President Yoon Suk Yeol, following Yoon's brief declaration of martial law in December 2024 (Wikipedia, 2026; CNBC, 2025). Lee won the election with 49.42 percent of the vote against 41.15 percent for his closest rival (Chatham House, 2025), and his visit to India came less than eleven months into a presidency that began amid one of the most serious constitutional crises in the Republic of Korea's democratic history. This framework reads the timing of the visit as a deliberate signal of priority, consistent with its description in Indian government sources as the earliest visit to India undertaken by a Korean president after assuming office.

Political Continuity Amid Domestic Transition

The India-Republic of Korea relationship has, over the past decade, demonstrated a pattern in which the institutional architecture of cooperation has proven more durable than the individual political leaderships on either side. India's political leadership has remained continuous under Prime Minister Modi since 2014, providing a stable counterpart across four changes of government in Seoul during the same period, including the impeachment of one Korean president and the compressed transition to another in 2025. This framework treats that asymmetry as a structural feature to be managed deliberately rather than assumed away, since a relationship that depends on personal rapport between specific leaders is more fragile than one embedded in standing institutions capable of maintaining momentum through a

change of government. This is not a purely hypothetical concern. The eleven months separating President Lee's inauguration from his state visit to India represent, by the standards of major bilateral relationships, a relatively short interval, and this framework reads that speed as evidence that the relationship's institutional momentum, built up over the preceding decade of Special Strategic Partnership status, was strong enough to secure early attention from an incoming government that had inherited a demanding domestic agenda, including managing the political and economic aftermath of the martial law crisis and pursuing trade negotiations with the United States.

Political engagement below the head of state level has continued to deepen through this period of transition. India's Minister of External Affairs, Dr S Jaishankar, met the Republic of Korea's Foreign Minister Cho Hyun in New Delhi on 16 August 2025, roughly two months after President Lee's inauguration, an early indication that the new Korean government intended to maintain the relationship's momentum (Embassy of India, Seoul, 2026). Sub-national political engagement has also expanded, illustrated by the visit of Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai to Seoul from 27 to 28 August 2025 (Embassy of India, Seoul, 2026), part of a broader pattern in which Indian state governments increasingly conduct their own outreach to Korean investors and counterparts rather than routing every engagement through New Delhi. On the Korean side, a Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly visited India in January 2026, reflecting parallel efforts to build legislative branch familiarity with India ahead of the April summit.

Embassy WorldWide

Priority Actions

This framework recommends the following priority actions for the Political Cooperation pillar.

First, the two governments should commit to a fixed biennial or triennial rhythm of head of state or head of government visits, formalized in a manner similar to the annual summit tradition India maintains with Russia, so that the frequency of leader level engagement does not depend on the individual political priorities of whichever government holds office at a given moment in either country.

Second, both governments should deliberately expand engagement below the head of state level, including regular ministerial visits, parliamentary friendship group exchanges, and state or provincial level outreach of the kind already demonstrated by Chhattisgarh, so that the relationship's political foundation rests on a broad base of relationships rather than a narrow set of leader to leader ties vulnerable to a single change of government.

Third, given the demonstrated volatility of Korean domestic politics over 2024 and 2025, both foreign ministries should establish a standing communication channel, distinct from the Foreign Policy and Security Dialogue addressed in the following pillar, specifically intended

to maintain continuity of bilateral engagement through periods of domestic political transition in either country.

Fourth, the political leadership of both countries should work to embed the thirty one pillar architecture set out in this framework within standing bureaucratic processes, such as annual budget cycles and ministry work plans, so that the framework's implementation does not depend on renewed political championship at each change of government.

Fifth, both sides should expand political party level and think tank exchanges beyond the ruling parties currently in office, recognizing that opposition parties in both countries may hold office in the future and that a bilateral relationship with cross party support is more resilient than one associated primarily with a single political formation.

Sixth, both governments should establish an annual political cooperation review mechanism to assess progress under the framework, identify implementation gaps, and agree on priorities for the following year. Such a mechanism could bring together senior officials from relevant ministries and agencies and provide a structured opportunity to review commitments across the thirty one pillars.

Seventh, both sides should strengthen coordination between national, state, and provincial institutions. Greater sub-national engagement can complement central government diplomacy by encouraging practical cooperation in areas such as urban development, education, technology, culture, tourism, and local economic development. Regular exchanges between Indian states and Korean provinces or metropolitan governments could therefore create additional channels of bilateral cooperation.

Finally, political cooperation should remain closely connected with the broader objectives of peace, sustainable development, economic prosperity, and people-to-people relations. Institutionalising these mechanisms will help ensure that India–Korea relations remain resilient, predictable, and capable of adapting to changes in domestic politics and the wider international environment.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility for this pillar rests with the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of External Affairs on the Indian side, and the Office of the President and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the Korean side, with the Joint Commission functioning as the apex mechanism for reviewing progress across the political relationship. This pillar should be read in conjunction with the Diplomatic Cooperation pillar that follows and the Parliamentary and Governance Cooperation pillar addressed later in this framework.

2. Diplomatic Cooperation

Overview

Where the Political Cooperation pillar addresses leader level engagement and the domestic political conditions surrounding it, the Diplomatic Cooperation pillar addresses the institutional and consular architecture that sustains the relationship on a day to day basis. This includes the network of embassies and consulates, the specialized dialogue formats that translate political intent into working level coordination, and the consular services extended to citizens of both countries. Diplomatic relations between India and the Republic of Korea were formally established on 10 December 1973, and the relationship's early institutional foundation was built through a series of framework agreements, including an Agreement on Trade Promotion and Economic and Technological Cooperation in 1974, an Agreement on Cooperation in Science and Technology in 1976, a Double Taxation Avoidance Convention in 1985, and a Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement in 1996 (Wikipedia, 2026).

Current Diplomatic Architecture

The two countries maintain a diplomatic mission network of markedly different scale. India maintains an embassy in Seoul and a consulate general in Busan, its two diplomatic representations in the Republic of Korea (Embassy Pages, n.d.-a; n.d.-b). The Republic of Korea, by contrast, maintains seven diplomatic representations in India, comprising its embassy in New Delhi and consulates general in Chandigarh, Chennai, Goa, Hyderabad, Kolkata, and Mumbai (Embassy Pages, n.d.-b).

This asymmetry, in which Korean diplomatic presence in India is more than three times the size of Indian diplomatic presence in Korea, mirrors a pattern this framework observes in India's relationships with several other major Asian and Eurasian partners, and reflects both India's larger population and geographic spread and the scale of Korean commercial interest in regional Indian markets beyond the national capital.

The Embassy of India in Seoul marked a Ceremony of Presentation of Credentials on 17 October 2025, with diplomatic functions in the preceding months having been discharged by the Deputy Chief of Mission and Chargé d'Affaires, Nishi Kant Singh (Embassy of India, Seoul, 2026).

The Republic of Korea's embassy in New Delhi operates under Ambassador Lee Seong-ho, and maintains consular offices as far south as Chennai and as far west as Mumbai, giving Korean citizens and Korean business interests a physical diplomatic presence in most of India's major commercial centres.

Specialized Dialogue Formats

Beyond the standing embassy and consulate network, India-Republic of Korea diplomatic cooperation operates through several dedicated formats that this framework treats as core institutional assets. The Foreign Policy and Security Dialogue, held at the senior official level, convened its sixth round in Seoul in February 2026, providing a working level channel for coordinating positions on regional security, multilateral affairs, and bilateral irritants ahead of the April 2026 summit (Prime Minister's Office, 2026). At the April 2026 summit itself, the two governments agreed to establish an inaugural Defence and Foreign Affairs 2+2 Dialogue at the Vice Minister level, extending the practice, already established in India's relationship with several other strategic partners, of combining foreign policy and defence coordination within a single dialogue format rather than treating them as entirely separate tracks (Prime Minister's Office, 2026).

Ministerial engagement outside these formal dialogue structures has also continued steadily. India's External Affairs Minister and the Republic of Korea's Foreign Minister met in New Delhi in August 2025, within three months of the change of government in Seoul, an early signal of diplomatic continuity addressed further in the Political Cooperation pillar preceding this one.

Consular Services and Citizen Welfare

A growing share of diplomatic cooperation activity involves direct consular services to citizens rather than government to government engagement. Citizens of each country currently require a visa to enter the other, with both embassies processing visa applications for business travellers, students, and tourists in addition to their broader diplomatic functions (Embassy Pages, n.d.-a; n.d.-b). As bilateral trade, investment, tourism, and educational exchange all expand under the priorities set out elsewhere in this framework, consular sections in both countries face rising demand for visa processing, document attestation, and welfare services for a growing resident population of each country's nationals in the other.

Embassies and Consulates

Embassy of India

Priority Actions

This framework recommends the following priority actions for the Diplomatic Cooperation pillar.

First, given the pronounced asymmetry in mission count, India should evaluate the case for at least one additional diplomatic presence in the Republic of Korea beyond Seoul and Busan, with a technology hub such as Daejeon, home to a significant share of Korea's research institutions, representing a plausible candidate given the sectoral priorities set out in the Vision for the Two Nations.

Second, the Ceremony of Presentation of Credentials completed in October 2025 should be followed by sustained ambassadorial continuity, with succession planning initiated well in advance of any future transition to avoid extended periods of chargé d'affaires level representation of the kind that preceded it.

Third, both foreign ministries should establish a joint consular working group, distinct from the Foreign Policy and Security Dialogue and the 2+2 Dialogue, focused specifically on citizen welfare issues, including protections for students and skilled professionals, an issue addressed in greater depth in the Labour, Employment and Migration Cooperation pillar later in this framework.

Fourth, both countries should invest in digitizing and streamlining visa processing, given the rising demand anticipated from the trade, investment, tourism, and educational priorities set out elsewhere in this framework.

Fifth, the Foreign Policy and Security Dialogue and the newly established 2+2 Dialogue should be placed on a fixed annual or biennial calendar with published, if not necessarily public, terms of reference, so that their continuation does not depend on ad hoc scheduling between the two foreign ministries.

Sixth, both countries should strengthen diplomatic coordination within multilateral institutions, particularly on issues where their interests and policy priorities converge. Regular consultations before major international meetings could help identify areas for constructive alignment while respecting each country's independent foreign-policy positions.

Together, these measures would make diplomatic cooperation more institutionalised, responsive, and resilient, ensuring that bilateral engagement remains effective even amid changes in domestic politics and international circumstances.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility for this pillar rests with the Ministry of External Affairs of India and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea, operating through their respective embassies, consulates general, and the Foreign Policy and Security Dialogue and 2+2 Dialogue formats. This pillar should be read in conjunction with the Political Cooperation pillar preceding it and the Multilateral and Regional Cooperation pillar addressed later in this document.

3. Economic and Trade Cooperation

Overview

Economic and Trade Cooperation is the pillar in which the India-Republic of Korea relationship has, historically, been most developed, and it is simultaneously the pillar in which the relationship's central structural problem, a persistent and widening trade deficit weighted heavily in Korea's favour, is most visible. The Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement between the two countries was operationalized in January 2010, and the relationship was elevated to a Special Strategic Partnership in 2015 (Plutus IAS, 2026; Manorama Yearbook, 2026).

Current Status

Bilateral trade reached approximately 25.6 billion United States dollars in calendar year 2025 according to Korea International Trade Association data (Embassy of India, Seoul, n.d.), and surpassed 27 billion dollars in the 2024 to 2025 fiscal year on India's measure (Drishti IAS, 2026), figures that a separate analysis by Rubix Data Sciences found had remained range bound between 25 and 28 billion dollars across fiscal years 2022 through 2025 (Tribune India, 2026). Against this backdrop, the two governments held the twelfth round of negotiations to upgrade the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement in New Delhi from 25 to 27 May 2026, co-chaired by Kapil Chaudhary, Joint Secretary in India's Department of Commerce, and Park Geun-oh, Director General for Trade Agreement Policy at the Republic of Korea's Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy (KNN India, 2026; Press Information Bureau, 2026b). This round followed directly from a Joint Declaration signed on 20 April 2026 by India's Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, Piyush Goyal, and Korea's Trade Minister, Yeo Han-koo, during the State Visit, in which both sides committed to accelerating the upgrade negotiations (Press Information Bureau, 2026b).

Trade Composition and the Widening Deficit

India's exports to the Republic of Korea remain dominated by naphtha and other mineral fuel distillates, alongside unwrought aluminium, iron and steel products, and refined lead, while Korean exports to India are considerably more diversified, led by electrical machinery, iron and steel, nuclear reactors and mechanical machinery, and plastics (Embassy of India, Seoul, n.d.; IBEF, 2026). This composition has produced a trade balance that has moved steadily against India. One recent analysis places India's imports from the Republic of Korea at 21.35 billion dollars against exports of nearly 6 billion dollars in the 2025 to 2026 fiscal year, a deficit of approximately 15.35 billion dollars (TMV, 2026), while a separate estimate places the deficit in the range of 14 to 15 billion dollars, noting that Korea's share of India's total imports grew by 3.79 percent over the preceding year, with import momentum outpacing export gains (IMPRI India, 2026c). The same analysis identifies high onboarding costs and

payment and settlement frictions as constraints that limit the ability of Indian small and medium enterprises to scale their exports to the Korean market (IMPRI India, 2026c).

This imbalance has not deterred Korean industrial investment into India, which has instead accelerated. Investment flows in the post-CEPA period have risen from 523 million dollars to 6.386 billion dollars, concentrated in metallurgy, automobiles, electronics, and manufacturing (Manorama Yearbook, 2026), and Korean entities including Hyundai Motor, LG Electronics, and a range of industrial manufacturers and renewable energy firms continue to broaden their operations across India's electronics, electric vehicle component, chemical, and green energy sectors (Mondaq, 2026). This framework reads that combination, rising Korean investment alongside a widening Korean trade surplus, as evidence that Korean firms increasingly treat India as a production and consumption base in its own right rather than only an export destination, a shift that strengthens the underlying case for the market access concessions India is seeking through the CEPA upgrade.

The CEPA Upgrade Process

Negotiators reviewed progress achieved to date and described the talks as constructive, with the twelfth round covering trade in goods, trade in services, rules of origin and origin procedures, investment, and sanitary and phytosanitary measures (KNN India, 2026). The two sides also agreed to establish dedicated sub-groups on digital trade, supply chain cooperation, and strategic industrial cooperation, reflecting an intent to modernize an agreement concluded in 2010 for a considerably narrower set of economic circumstances (KNN India, 2026). By the time of the twelfth round, eight rounds of substantive discussion had already been completed since the upgrade process began, with both governments indicating a formal commitment to rebalancing the agreement (Mondaq, 2026). This framework treats the pace of negotiation, twelve rounds completed with a 2027 conclusion target, as a meaningful test of whether the political commitments made at the April 2026 summit translate into a legally binding instrument capable of addressing the deficit identified above, rather than a renewed round of memoranda that restate existing intentions without altering market access.

Priority Actions

This framework recommends the following priority actions for the Economic and Trade Cooperation pillar.

First, both governments should hold to the 2027 conclusion target for the CEPA upgrade, treating further slippage as a signal that requires ministerial rather than only official level intervention, given that the original agreement has now been under revision for a period approaching the length of time it took to negotiate the original CEPA itself.

Second, the CEPA upgrade should prioritize reciprocal market access for the Indian sectors most constrained by non-tariff barriers in the Korean market, including steel, agricultural products, and marine exports, so that rebalancing is pursued through negotiated concessions rather than through defensive trade measures on either side.

Third, the newly established digital trade and supply chain sub-groups should develop concrete provisions to reduce the onboarding costs and payment frictions identified as a constraint on Indian small and medium enterprise exports, potentially drawing on the payment infrastructure cooperation described in the Financial Cooperation pillar that follows.

Fourth, India should pursue a deliberate strategy of export diversification away from naphtha and other primary goods, using the sectoral investment pillars of this framework, particularly Industrial and Manufacturing Cooperation, to build the manufactured export capacity needed to narrow the deficit structurally rather than relying on tariff concessions alone.

Fifth, the Joint Committee responsible for annual review of CEPA implementation should publish an annual public accounting of the deficit and the specific measures taken to address it, so that progress can be tracked transparently against the 50 billion dollar trade target set for 2030.

Sixth, both governments should strengthen support for small and medium enterprises seeking to enter each other's markets, including through simplified customs procedures, market information platforms, business-matching programmes, and targeted export assistance. Particular attention should be given to connecting Indian MSMEs with Korean distributors and technology partners.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility for this pillar rests with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry of India and the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy of the Republic of Korea, operating through the Joint Committee that conducts the annual review of CEPA implementation and the dedicated CEPA upgrade negotiating teams. This pillar should be read in conjunction with the Financial Cooperation and Investment Cooperation pillars that follow, and with the Industrial and Manufacturing Cooperation pillar addressed later in this framework.

4. Financial Cooperation

Overview

Financial Cooperation is treated in this framework as distinct from the trade and investment flows addressed in the pillars surrounding it, concerned instead with the institutional architecture connecting the two countries' banking systems, capital markets, payment infrastructure, and financial regulators. This pillar has historically been the least developed of the economic pillars in the India-Republic of Korea relationship, a gap the April 2026 summit began to address directly.

Current Status

The inaugural India-Republic of Korea Financial Cooperation Forum was held on 20 April 2026, on the sidelines of the State Visit, co-hosted by the Republic of Korea's Financial Services Commission and India's Ministry of Finance, with participation from India's Securities and Exchange Board and International Financial Services Centres Authority alongside Korea's Financial Services Commission and Korea Financial Telecommunications and Clearings Institute (Embassy of India, Seoul, 2026a). The two leaders expressed satisfaction with the successful holding of this forum, which brought together financial authorities and institutions from both countries (Prime Minister's Office, 2026).

Two memoranda of understanding anchor this pillar's current status. The first, between the National Payment Corporation of India Limited and the Korea Financial Telecommunications and Clearings Institute, provides for the phased integration of the two countries' digital payment systems to enhance interoperability and strengthen economic and people to people ties (Prime Minister's Office, 2026). The second, between India's International Financial Services Centres Authority and the Republic of Korea's Financial Services Commission and Financial Supervisory Service, establishes cooperation and consultation arrangements for the development and supervision of cross-border financial products (Prime Minister's Office, 2026).

Digital Payments as a Financial Bridge

The National Payment Corporation of India, KFTC payment integration is, of the two financial memoranda signed in April 2026, the more immediately consequential for ordinary citizens of both countries. Commentary on the agreement frames its intended effect as extending the same scan and pay convenience Indian travellers already experience domestically through the Unified Payments Interface to transactions conducted in the Republic of Korea, reducing transaction costs for tourists and small and medium enterprises engaged in cross-border commerce (IMPRI India, 2026c). Indian commentary further frames the arrangement as enabling smooth, swift, and hassle free cross-border financial transactions

for Indian students, tourists, professionals, and the wider diaspora in the Republic of Korea, while reinforcing India's broader digital public infrastructure model internationally (Organiser, 2026). This framework treats the payment integration MOU as the leading edge of a broader ambition, described elsewhere in this document as the India-Korea Digital Bridge, to connect the two countries' financial technology ecosystems rather than merely their trade flows.

Capital Markets and Business Facilitation

The India-Republic of Korea Business Forum was convened on 20 April 2026, and the two governments welcomed the announcements made by companies from both countries regarding new investment and business to business collaboration, agreeing to hold regular interactions among leading industry associations alongside meetings of the Industrial Cooperation Committee and its working groups (Prime Minister's Office, 2026). The two sides also concluded a memorandum of understanding on cooperation in the field of small and medium sized enterprises, directing the relevant departments to operationalize it, recognizing that smaller firms face the financing and market access barriers documented in the Economic and Trade Cooperation pillar preceding this one (Prime Minister's Office, 2026).

Underlying both the payments and capital markets tracks is a standing institutional mechanism that predates the 2026 summit. A Joint Committee at the ministerial level, headed by India's Ministry of Commerce and Industry and Korea's Ministry of Trade, conducts an annual review of CEPA implementation, providing the closest existing analogue to a standing financial and economic oversight body for the relationship, though this framework notes that its mandate is narrower than full financial sector cooperation and does not extend to the banking and capital markets themes newly opened by the Financial Cooperation Forum (Embassy of India, Seoul, 2026b).

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility for this pillar rests with the Ministry of Finance of India and the Financial Services Commission and Financial Supervisory Service of the Republic of Korea, supported by the Securities and Exchange Board of India, the International Financial Services Centres Authority, the National Payment Corporation of India, and the Korea Financial Telecommunications and Clearings Institute. This pillar should be read in conjunction with the Economic and Trade Cooperation pillar preceding it and the Investment Cooperation pillar that follows.

5. Investment Cooperation

Overview

Investment Cooperation is treated in this framework as distinct from the broader trade relationship addressed in the Economic and Trade Cooperation pillar, concerned specifically with capital flows, joint ventures, and the regulatory environment that determines whether commercial goodwill translates into committed capital. This is the pillar in which the gap between the relationship's diplomatic ambition and its commercial reality is most pronounced.

Current Status

Measures of Korean investment into India vary depending on the source and reporting period, and this framework presents each measure with its specific attribution rather than treating them as interchangeable. The India Brand Equity Foundation records cumulative Korean FDI equity inflows of 6.90 billion dollars between April 2000 and September 2025, ranking the Republic of Korea thirteenth among India's FDI sources (IBEF, 2026). The Export-Import Bank of Korea, using its own methodology, records cumulative Korean FDI to India of 7.27 billion dollars up to December 2025, with annual flows that peaked at 1,072 million dollars in 2018 before settling into a range between roughly 340 million and 940 million dollars a year through the following seven years, reaching 824 million dollars in 2025 (Embassy of India, Seoul, 2026c). A separate Indian dataset places cumulative investment at 6.69 billion dollars between April 2000 and March 2025 (Outlook Business, 2026). This framework treats the modest divergence between these figures as a product of differing measurement windows and methodologies rather than a substantive disagreement about the relationship's scale, and that scale remains small by comparison with India's other major investment partners. Singapore, India's second largest source of cumulative FDI, has invested 174.89 billion dollars, and the United States, ranked third, has invested 70.65 billion dollars, figures that dwarf Korea's cumulative total despite a decade of Special Strategic Partnership status (CNBC, 2026).

This gap has attracted direct comment from investment advisers tracking the relationship. One South Asia advisor at Teneo has observed that despite enormous strategic interest on the Korean side, actual merger and acquisition activity by Korean firms in India has remained modest, on the order of 200 to 300 million dollars annually in recent years, constrained in part by regulatory delays and policy unpredictability that Korean investors continue to cite as obstacles (CNBC, 2026). This framework treats that observation as a useful corrective to summit level announcements, which tend to emphasize headline commitments rather than the pace at which capital is actually deployed. The distinction matters because a relationship measured only by the size of announcements at leader level visits risks overstating its own momentum, while a relationship measured by the steady, unglamorous work of resolving specific regulatory friction points is more likely to produce the kind of compounding capital growth that closes the gap with Singapore and the United States over the coming decade.

Investment in the Reverse Direction

Discussion of the investment relationship, both in government statements and in commentary, focuses overwhelmingly on Korean capital flowing into India, but the relationship is not exclusively one directional. Indian investment into the Republic of Korea totals approximately 5.2 billion dollars, led by Tata Daewoo Commercial Vehicle and by Aditya Birla Group's ownership of Novelis, the aluminium products manufacturer (Embassy of India, Seoul, 2026c). This framework treats this reverse flow as underappreciated in public discussion of the relationship and recommends that future accounting of investment cooperation track both directions with comparable rigour, rather than allowing the narrative of Korean investment into India, however justified by its larger absolute scale, to obscure the existence of significant Indian corporate ownership within the Republic of Korea's own industrial base.

Sectoral Priorities Going Forward

Discussions between the two governments around the April 2026 summit pointed toward expanding Korean investment beyond its traditional concentration in automobiles, electronics, and steel into semiconductors, shipbuilding, energy, and advanced mobility, with both sides exploring venture capital and innovation funds to support technology and start-up collaboration (Outlook Business, 2026).

These priorities align directly with the chips to ships and talent to technology pairings described in the Vision for the Two Nations, and with the Korean Industrial Township and the POSCO-JSW steel plant memorandum described earlier in this framework as concrete manifestations of that broader ambition (Prime Minister's Office, 2026).

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility for this pillar rests with the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade and Invest India on the Indian side, and the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy and its associated investment promotion agencies on the Korean side, operating under the oversight of the Industrial Cooperation Committee established at the April 2026 summit. This pillar should be read in conjunction with the Economic and Trade Cooperation and Financial Cooperation pillars preceding it, and the Industrial and Manufacturing Cooperation pillar addressed later in this framework.

6. Energy Cooperation

Overview

Energy Cooperation spans a wider range of technologies and time horizons than most other pillars in this framework, encompassing civil nuclear power, green hydrogen, renewable generation, and the critical mineral and overseas resource development activity that underpins all three. The Industrial Cooperation Committee established at the April 2026 summit was given explicit responsibility for green hydrogen and derivatives trade, nuclear power plant projects, and overseas resource development, consolidating what had previously been a loosely coordinated set of energy conversations into a single institutional mandate (Prime Minister's Office, 2026).

A Longer History Than the 2026 Summit Suggests

Civil nuclear cooperation between India and the Republic of Korea is not a new idea introduced at the April 2026 summit, though this framework notes that its progress over the intervening years has been limited. As early as 2010, the Korea Electric Power Corporation and India's Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited had signed a memorandum of understanding and begun a joint study of the licensibility and constructability of Korea's APR-1400 reactor design in India, with Korean officials at the time expressing interest in offering the design at competitive prices and noting that a formal civil nuclear cooperation agreement would make the Republic of Korea the fifth country, after the United States, France, Russia, and Canada, to conclude such a pact with India following the 2008 waiver granted by the Nuclear Suppliers Group (Deccan Herald, 2010). This framework treats the considerable gap between that early technical engagement and the general, still largely undefined reference to nuclear power plant projects in the April 2026 joint statement as evidence that nuclear cooperation has been the slowest moving component of the broader energy relationship, notwithstanding the Republic of Korea's demonstrated capacity to design, finance, and construct reactors internationally.

Renewable Energy and Green Hydrogen

The renewable and green hydrogen components of the relationship have moved further and faster than the nuclear track. In October 2025, ahead of the April 2026 summit, the two countries announced a technology driven partnership focused on semiconductor collaboration alongside clean energy, specifically covering solar power, wind power, energy storage, and green hydrogen, building on what both governments describe as complementary national priorities and investment potential (IBEF, 2026). This framework reads India's large scale renewable generation capacity and land availability alongside Korea's advanced conversion, storage, and industrial demand technology as a genuinely complementary pairing. One commentator has specifically framed the prospective hydrogen relationship in these terms, describing a structure in which India supplies renewable production scale and feedstock while Korea supplies conversion technology and industrial offtake demand, while cautioning that

the partnership remains constrained by the absence of firm, long term offtake agreements on either side, a gap this framework treats as the single largest barrier between the current memorandum based relationship and a commercially self sustaining one. Green ammonia in particular illustrates this gap clearly, since Indian producers can develop production capacity only once Korean buyers commit to purchase volumes over a horizon long enough to justify the capital investment, and Korean buyers are, in turn, reluctant to commit before Indian production capacity and reliability are demonstrated at scale.

Critical minerals sit at the intersection of the energy and technology pillars of this framework. The commitment made at the April 2026 summit to cooperate on mapping and processing critical minerals using artificial intelligence, and to recover critical minerals from unconventional sources including electronic waste and mine tailings, reflects a shared recognition that neither country currently controls sufficient primary reserves of the minerals its energy transition and electronics industries require, a constraint this framework treats as more binding on the pace of clean energy cooperation than any remaining technological gap (Prime Minister's Office, 2026).

Priority Actions

This framework recommends the following priority actions for the Energy Cooperation pillar.

First, the general reference to nuclear power plant projects within the Industrial Cooperation Committee's mandate should be translated into an updated, formal framework agreement, building on rather than restarting the licensibility and constructability work begun in 2010.

Second, the two governments should prioritize concluding at least one firm, commercially binding green hydrogen or ammonia offtake agreement within the current Joint Strategic Vision period, treating it as a proof of concept capable of unlocking further private investment on both sides.

Third, the October 2025 clean energy technology partnership covering solar, wind, and storage should be developed into specific joint manufacturing or technology transfer commitments, following the same pattern of translating framework level agreement into binding commercial instruments recommended elsewhere in this document.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility for this pillar rests with India's Ministry of Power and Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, and the Republic of Korea's Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy, with the Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited and Korea's nuclear utilities serving as the technical implementing agencies for the nuclear component specifically. This pillar should be read in conjunction with the Investment Cooperation pillar preceding it and the Environmental and Climate Cooperation pillar addressed later in this framework.

7. Defence and Security Cooperation

Overview

Defence and Security Cooperation has progressed further, in concrete terms, than almost any other pillar in this framework, anchored by a single flagship platform, the K9 Vajra-T self propelled howitzer, whose history over the past decade illustrates both the potential and the limits of the co-production model this framework recommends more broadly.

Current Status

The Indian Army first contracted for 100 K9 Vajra-T howitzers under an agreement signed on 21 April 2017, with the first ten units built in the Republic of Korea and the remaining ninety assembled in India by Larsen and Toubro, a program inducted into service between 2018 and 2021 and subsequently demonstrated in the high altitude conditions of Ladakh (Army Recognition, 2025). Hanwha Aerospace and Larsen and Toubro signed a second contract on 3 April 2025, valued at approximately 253 million dollars, for a further 100 units, with the signing ceremony held at the Republic of Korea's embassy in New Delhi and local manufacturing content rising from just over half of the platform's components under the first contract to 60 percent under the second, produced at L&T's Armoured Systems Complex in Hazira, Gujarat (Indian Defence News, 2025; Army Technology, 2025). Deliveries under this second batch were anticipated to commence by the end of 2025 (Defence News India, 2025). This procurement history, spanning eight years and rising domestic content across two successive contracts, is the single clearest example within this entire framework of a defence relationship moving deliberately from imported platforms toward genuine co-production, and this framework treats it as the template against which the Korea-India Defence Accelerator described below should be judged.

Beyond the K9 Vajra programme, the two governments used the April 2026 summit to broaden the institutional architecture surrounding defence cooperation. The two leaders reinvigorated a 2020 memorandum of understanding on a roadmap for defence industry cooperation and announced a new innovation platform, styled the Korea-India Defence Accelerator or KIND-X, intended to connect start-ups, incubators, and universities in both countries, alongside an inaugural Defence and Foreign Affairs 2+2 Dialogue at the Vice Minister level (Prime Minister's Office, 2026). India's Defence Minister is scheduled to visit the Republic of Korea in May 2026 for the joint inauguration of a war memorial commemorating India's participation in the Korean War, a gesture this framework reads as an attempt to root the contemporary defence relationship in a shared historical narrative that predates either country's independent defence industrial base (Prime Minister's Office, 2026). That historical connection, largely dormant for decades, provides this pillar with a foundation narrative comparable to the shared wartime and Cold War era ties that anchor several of India's other major defence partnerships, even though the scale of contemporary cooperation between India and the Republic of Korea remains considerably smaller than those older relationships.

Co-production as the Organizing Principle

India's defence spending is projected to grow from 77.24 billion dollars in 2025 to 89.35 billion dollars in 2029, a compound annual growth rate of 3.7 percent (Army Technology, 2025), a trajectory that gives the Republic of Korea's defence industry a substantial and growing addressable market, provided Korean firms continue to accept the rising local content requirements that have characterized the K9 Vajra programme's two successive contracts. This framework treats that willingness, demonstrated concretely rather than merely promised, as the reason defence cooperation has advanced further than pillars where cooperation remains at the memorandum stage. India's broader artillery modernization strategy aims to standardize its gun systems around the 155 millimetre, 52 calibre specification by 2042, integrating the K9 Vajra alongside indigenously developed systems including the Advanced Towed Artillery Gun System and the Dhanush howitzer (Eurasian Times, 2025), positioning Korean platforms as one component of a broader indigenous artillery ecosystem rather than a standalone import.

Priority Actions

This framework recommends the following priority actions for the Defence and Security Cooperation pillar.

First, the Korea-India Defence Accelerator should adopt the K9 Vajra programme's rising local content trajectory as an explicit, numerical benchmark for future platforms, so that KIND-X projects are judged against the same domestic manufacturing standard the howitzer programme has already achieved.

Second, the two governments should identify at least one additional platform category beyond artillery, such as naval systems or unmanned platforms, for a co-production arrangement structured on the same two contract, rising local content model that has proven successful with the K9 Vajra.

Third, the inaugural Defence and Foreign Affairs 2+2 Dialogue at the Vice Minister level should be tasked explicitly with reviewing KIND-X's project pipeline on a fixed schedule, ensuring the innovation platform produces trackable outputs rather than functioning purely as a networking initiative.

Fourth, the joint inauguration of the Korean War memorial in May 2026 should be paired with a sustained, funded programme of veteran and military history exchange, so that the historical narrative it commemorates translates into ongoing institutional connective tissue rather than a single ceremonial event.

Fifth, both governments should explore expanding co-production beyond the Indian Army's requirements to third country export markets, allowing jointly produced platforms such as the K9 Vajra to be offered elsewhere under arrangements that share both production and export revenue.

Sixth, both countries should establish a dedicated annual defence industrial review to assess progress in co-production, technology transfer, procurement timelines, and indigenous manufacturing targets. The review should include relevant defence ministries, armed forces, industry representatives, and research institutions from both sides, allowing emerging obstacles to be identified and addressed at an early stage.

Seventh, India and Korea should expand cooperation in defence research and development, particularly in areas such as artificial intelligence, autonomous systems, cyber security, maritime surveillance, and advanced materials. Joint research programmes, technology exchanges, and defence innovation fellowships could strengthen institutional links while developing capabilities that serve the long-term strategic interests and security requirements of both countries.

Eighth, India and Korea should strengthen maritime security cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, including through more frequent naval exercises, information-sharing, maritime domain awareness, and coordinated capacity-building initiatives. Particular attention should be given to protecting sea lanes of communication, addressing non-traditional maritime security threats, and improving interoperability between the two navies. Such cooperation would complement existing defence-industrial collaboration while contributing to a stable, secure, and rules-based maritime environment.

Ninth, both governments should establish a structured mechanism for cooperation in cyber security and emerging security domains, bringing together defence agencies, technology institutions, and private-sector experts from both countries. The mechanism should focus on cyber threat intelligence, critical infrastructure protection, secure communications, and emerging technologies with defence applications. Regular exercises and information exchanges would strengthen preparedness against evolving security threats and ensure that the bilateral defence partnership remains responsive to the changing strategic environment.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility for this pillar rests with India's Ministry of Defence and Department of Defence Production, and the Republic of Korea's Ministry of National Defense and Defense Acquisition Program Administration, with Larsen and Toubro and Hanwha Aerospace serving as the principal industrial partners for the pillar's flagship programme. This pillar should be read in conjunction with the Maritime and Blue Economy Cooperation pillar that follows and the Industrial and Manufacturing Cooperation pillar addressed later in this framework.

8. Maritime and Blue Economy Cooperation

Overview

Maritime and Blue Economy Cooperation encompasses both the security dimension of naval engagement between India and the Republic of Korea and the commercial dimension of shipbuilding and port infrastructure addressed briefly in the Vision for the Two Nations. This framework treats the two dimensions as complementary expressions of a single maritime relationship rather than as separate concerns.

Naval Security in the Indo-Pacific

The inaugural India-Republic of Korea Navy Bilateral Exercise was held at Busan Naval Base from 13 October 2025, when INS Sahyadri, an indigenously designed and constructed Shivalik class stealth frigate commissioned in 2012 and based at Visakhapatnam under the Eastern Fleet, made a port call while on operational deployment to the South China Sea and the wider Indo-Pacific (Press Information Bureau, 2025; Embassy of India, Seoul, 2025). The exercise was structured in two phases, a harbour phase comprising cross-deck visits, professional exchanges, and cross-training between the crews of INS Sahyadri and the Republic of Korea Navy's ROKS Gyeongnam, a Daegu class frigate, and a sea phase comprising joint manoeuvres intended to strengthen tactical coordination between the two navies (Drishti IAS, 2025; Edunovations, 2025). This framework treats the exercise's timing, six months before the April 2026 summit, as evidence that navy to navy engagement helped build the operational familiarity that made the summit's broader defence and security announcements credible rather than purely declaratory.

Indian naval officials have described this deployment pattern as consistent with India's positioning as a responsible maritime stakeholder and a preferred security partner within the Indo-Pacific (Press Information Bureau, 2025), language this framework reads as deliberately calibrated to signal reliability to regional partners without explicitly naming the strategic competition, principally involving Chinese maritime activity in the South China Sea and the wider Indo-Pacific, that gives the exercise its underlying rationale. The Republic of Korea's willingness to host an Indian frigate at Busan, one of its principal naval facilities, on an inaugural basis signals a degree of strategic comfort that this framework treats as a foundation for expanding naval cooperation beyond a single annual port call and exercise.

Shipbuilding as Blue Economy Infrastructure

The commercial dimension of this pillar connects directly to the chips to ships pairing described in the Vision for the Two Nations. India's Maritime India Vision 2030 and the longer horizon Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047 together aim to establish India among the world's five leading shipbuilding and maritime nations, an ambition the two governments explicitly linked to Korean shipbuilding expertise through a Comprehensive Framework for Partnership on Shipbuilding, Shipping and Maritime Logistics adopted at the April 2026 summit (Prime Minister's Office, 2026). HD Hyundai's evolving shipyard joint venture in

Tamil Nadu, progressing from an initial state government memorandum in December 2025 toward a formal joint venture involving central government backed entities by April 2026, represents this framework's clearest example of the shipbuilding partnership moving from strategic document to physical investment (Korea Herald, 2026).

This framework treats blue economy cooperation beyond shipbuilding and naval security, including fisheries management, marine biotechnology, and sustainable ocean resource use, as the least developed component of this pillar. Neither the April 2026 joint statement nor the surrounding commentary reviewed for this framework identifies specific bilateral initiatives in these areas, a gap this framework treats honestly as an opportunity rather than obscuring it behind the pillar's more developed shipbuilding and naval components. This asymmetry mirrors a broader pattern observed across this framework, in which sectors with an obvious industrial or security rationale advance more quickly than sectors whose value proposition is primarily environmental or scientific, a pattern the Environmental and Climate Cooperation pillar later in this framework returns to directly.

Priority Actions

This framework recommends the following priority actions for the Maritime and Blue Economy Cooperation pillar.

First, the inaugural naval exercise conducted in October 2025 should be formalized as a recurring annual or biennial engagement, alternating host ports between Busan and an Indian port such as Visakhapatnam.

Second, the two navies should progressively expand exercise complexity beyond the harbour and sea phase structure used in the inaugural exercise, incorporating the kind of multi-domain coordination India already practices in exercises such as Malabar.

Third, the HD Hyundai joint venture process in Tamil Nadu should be treated as a template, with the two governments identifying at least one additional Indian coastal state as a candidate for a comparable shipbuilding partnership within the current Joint Strategic Vision period.

Fourth, the two governments should commission a dedicated feasibility study on fisheries management and marine biotechnology cooperation, given the near total absence of bilateral initiatives in this space relative to the shipbuilding and naval security components of the pillar.

Fifth, India and the Republic of Korea should explore joint participation in regional blue economy initiatives such as the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative, using existing multilateral platforms to build bilateral blue economy cooperation rather than constructing an entirely new bilateral mechanism.

Sixth, both countries should strengthen cooperation in maritime domain awareness and information sharing, including the exchange of information on vessel movements, illegal

fishing, maritime trafficking, and other non-traditional maritime security threats. Greater coordination between relevant maritime agencies would improve situational awareness and support a safer and more secure maritime environment across the Indo-Pacific.

Seventh, India and the Republic of Korea should develop joint programmes for marine environmental protection and climate resilience, focusing on coastal pollution, marine plastic waste, ocean conservation, and sustainable management of marine resources. Collaborative research, technology transfer, and capacity-building programmes could help coastal communities adapt to the environmental challenges associated with climate change and rising maritime activity.

Eighth, the two governments should promote greater participation of private-sector enterprises and start-ups in the blue economy, particularly in areas such as offshore renewable energy, smart ports, maritime logistics, marine biotechnology, and ocean-based technologies. Dedicated business forums and innovation partnerships could help connect Indian and Korean companies and convert technological expertise into commercially viable blue economy projects.

Ninth, India and Korea should establish structured cooperation on port modernization and maritime logistics, including smart-port technologies, digital supply-chain systems, green shipping infrastructure, and efficient cargo-handling practices. Joint pilot projects at selected ports could demonstrate the practical benefits of cooperation while strengthening connectivity, trade efficiency, and the resilience of maritime supply chains between the two countries.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility for this pillar rests with the Indian Navy and the Republic of Korea Navy for the security dimension, and India's Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways and the Republic of Korea's Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries for the commercial and blue economy dimension. This pillar should be read in conjunction with the Defence and Security Cooperation pillar preceding it and the Water Resources Cooperation pillar addressed later in this framework.

9. Water Resources Cooperation

Overview

Water Resources Cooperation occupies an unusual position within this framework. Unlike India's relationships with several neighbouring countries, the India-Republic of Korea relationship involves no shared river system and no transboundary water dispute, and this framework treats the pillar instead as an opportunity for technology and knowledge transfer rather than as a mechanism for managing a shared resource.

Current Status

The Korea Water Resources Corporation, known as K-water, designated 2026 as the first year of what it terms artificial intelligence transformation in water management, developing digital twin water management platforms and AI powered water treatment plants, and using the regional Asia Water Council, which brings together more than 180 member organizations across 27 countries, as its principal cooperation platform for exporting these technologies (Korea Times, 2026). This positions K-water, a public corporation the Republic of Korea established in 1967 and has since built into one of the more internationally recognized water utilities in Asia, as a potential technology partner for India at precisely the moment India's own water management challenges, driven by urbanization and climate stress on freshwater resources, are intensifying.

India's engagement with K-water's model has so far been mediated rather than direct. The Asian Development Bank organized a study visit for Government of India officials to the Republic of Korea to examine K-water's approach to smart water and solid waste management, undertaken in support of India's 100 Smart Cities Mission (Development Asia, n.d.). This framework treats that exposure visit as evidence of Indian government interest in the K-water model, but also as evidence that the relationship has not yet progressed from a donor facilitated learning exercise to a direct bilateral institutional partnership of the kind K-water has established with counterparts in the United States, the Mekong region, and elsewhere.

India's water management challenges give this pillar a scale of relevance that its current institutional thinness does not reflect. India's rapidly urbanizing cities face simultaneous pressure from rising municipal demand, ageing distribution infrastructure with high levels of physical water loss, and increasingly erratic rainfall patterns that complicate reservoir and groundwater management. The Republic of Korea's water sector has confronted comparable pressures over a shorter period of rapid urbanization and has responded by building precisely the kind of integrated, technology intensive management systems, spanning leak detection, real time consumption monitoring, and treatment plant automation, that Indian municipal utilities are only beginning to adopt at scale. This framework treats the mismatch between the scale of the potential technology transfer and the current absence of a formal bilateral

instrument as one of the more clear cut missed opportunities identified across the thirty one pillars of this document.

An Underdeveloped Pillar by the Standards of This Framework

This framework states plainly that Water Resources Cooperation is, at present, the least institutionally developed pillar covered in this document. No dedicated bilateral memorandum of understanding between the two governments on water resources management was identified in the research underlying this framework, and the April 2026 joint statement did not address the subject directly. This framework treats that absence as a genuine gap rather than as evidence that cooperation is unnecessary, given the direct relevance of K-water's Smart Water Cities research, conducted with international partners over the 2020 to 2023 period, to the specific circumstances of rapidly urbanizing Indian cities. This framework also notes that the gap is not for lack of an available Korean partner, K-water has demonstrated a clear and active interest in international partnership through its recent agreements with counterparts in the United States and the Mekong region, but rather appears to reflect the fact that water has simply not yet been prioritized on the bilateral agenda relative to sectors such as semiconductors and shipbuilding that carry more immediate industrial and strategic weight.

Priority Actions

This framework recommends the following priority actions for the Water Resources Cooperation pillar.

First, the Ministry of Jal Shakti and K-water should establish a direct memorandum of understanding, converting the existing pattern of donor mediated exposure visits into a standing bilateral technical partnership.

Second, at least one Indian city participating in the 100 Smart Cities Mission should be selected as a pilot site for K-water's digital twin water management and AI powered treatment technologies, providing a concrete demonstration project analogous to the shipbuilding and semiconductor pilot projects recommended elsewhere in this framework.

Third, India should pursue observer or member status within the Asia Water Council, using that existing regional platform to build the bilateral relationship with K-water incrementally rather than negotiating an entirely new bilateral water framework in isolation.

Fourth, given the absence of any current bilateral instrument, this framework recommends that water resources be added as a formal agenda item for the Joint Commission's next scheduled review, ensuring the pillar receives sustained institutional attention.

Fifth, technical cooperation should extend to wastewater treatment and water reuse technology relevant to India's industrial clusters, particularly those expanding under the semiconductor and shipbuilding partnerships described elsewhere in this framework, given the significant water demands those industries typically generate.

Sixth, both countries should develop a joint programme on climate-resilient water infrastructure, focusing on flood management, drought preparedness, groundwater conservation, and early-warning systems. Cooperation between Indian water authorities and Korean institutions could facilitate the exchange of technical expertise, hydrological data, and advanced forecasting technologies, particularly for cities and regions increasingly exposed to extreme weather events.

Seventh, India and the Republic of Korea should promote cooperation in smart irrigation and agricultural water management, including precision irrigation, sensor-based monitoring, water-efficient technologies, and digital management systems. Pilot projects in water-stressed agricultural regions could demonstrate how Korean technological expertise can support India's efforts to improve agricultural productivity while reducing pressure on freshwater resources.

Eighth, the two sides should establish a regular India–Korea Water Technology and Innovation Forum, bringing together government agencies, research institutions, universities, technology companies, and water-sector investors. The forum could identify commercially viable projects, facilitate technology partnerships, and review the implementation of pilot initiatives, ensuring that cooperation develops beyond technical exchanges into sustained institutional and investment partnerships.

Ninth, both countries should strengthen cooperation in desalination and sustainable coastal water management, particularly through the exchange of Korean expertise in advanced treatment, energy-efficient desalination, and water-reuse technologies. Joint pilot projects in coastal Indian cities could help address growing freshwater demand while developing scalable solutions for urban and industrial water security.

Tenth, India and the Republic of Korea should establish joint research initiatives on water quality monitoring and pollution control, using advanced sensors, artificial intelligence, and real-time data platforms to detect contamination and improve the management of rivers, lakes, and urban water systems. Such cooperation could support evidence-based policymaking while strengthening India's long-term capacity for sustainable water resource management.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility for this pillar rests with India's Ministry of Jal Shakti and the Republic of Korea's Ministry of Environment, with the Korea Water Resources Corporation serving as the principal technical implementing agency on the Korean side. This pillar should be read in conjunction with the Maritime and Blue Economy Cooperation pillar preceding it and the Agriculture and Food Security Cooperation pillar that follows.

10. Agriculture and Food Security Cooperation

Overview

Agriculture and Food Security Cooperation, like Water Resources Cooperation preceding it, is a pillar in which the India-Republic of Korea relationship has more evident potential than realized activity. This framework treats the pillar as centred on technology transfer, food processing investment, and cold chain infrastructure rather than on the traditional commodity trade that dominates India's agricultural relationships with several other partners, for reasons this framework explains directly below.

Current Status

Korean commentary has specifically identified Andhra Pradesh as a promising strategic partner for agricultural cooperation, citing the state's strength in rice production and in chili pepper, mango, banana, and farmed shrimp cultivation, alongside the Republic of Korea's world class competitiveness in smart farming, agricultural internet of things technology, automation systems, cold chain logistics, and food processing (Seoul City, 2026). This commentary specifically envisions Korean companies establishing local production bases and smart farming systems in Andhra Pradesh and investing in processing facilities and cold chain logistics, creating an industrial model that moves beyond raw material import toward local processing and export to third countries (Seoul City, 2026). This framework reads this proposal as a natural extension, into agriculture, of the sub-national engagement pattern already visible in Tamil Nadu's shipbuilding partnership and Chhattisgarh's political outreach to Seoul described in earlier pillars of this framework.

This proposal builds on a Korean export model that is already proven elsewhere. The Republic of Korea's Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs established a first five year master plan for growth of the smart farming industry covering 2025 to 2029, with explicit government support for Korean exporters seeking to open overseas markets and demonstrate smart farm technologies to potential buyers abroad (Korea.net, 2025). This strategy has already placed demonstration smart farm projects in Kazakhstan, Vietnam, Australia, and Saudi Arabia, supported by dedicated government trade offices covering the Middle East, the Commonwealth of Independent States, and Oceania (Seoulz, 2026). India and Andhra Pradesh specifically do not yet appear among these demonstration sites, a gap this framework treats as an immediately actionable opportunity given the sub-national interest already documented above. The absence is notable given that several of Korea's chosen demonstration markets, particularly Vietnam and Kazakhstan, face agricultural conditions considerably less favourable than Andhra Pradesh's combination of coastal access, established seafood and aquaculture industries, and year round growing conditions across multiple crop cycles.

The Structural Limits of Commodity Trade

This framework treats it as important to state clearly that Agriculture and Food Security Cooperation between India and the Republic of Korea is unlikely to develop primarily through large scale commodity trade, notwithstanding India's position as a major global agricultural producer. Korean agricultural policy is explicitly organized around minimizing reliance on imports of staple crops, including rice, barley, and vegetables, through production subsidies, regulatory support, and mechanisms such as a dedicated supply adjustment rice category intended to manage domestic price stability (Farmonaut, 2025; Arab News, 2026). This policy orientation means that India's considerable rice production capacity, which reached a record output approaching 152 million metric tonnes in the 2025 to 2026 marketing year and has already reshaped global rice trade patterns, is unlikely to find a significant outlet in the Korean market regardless of price competitiveness, since Korean policy treats agricultural self sufficiency as a strategic objective rather than a purely economic calculation. This framework recommends that Indian trade negotiators calibrate their expectations for this pillar accordingly, directing effort toward technology and investment cooperation, where genuine complementarity exists, rather than toward market access negotiations for staple commodities.

Priority Actions

This framework recommends the following priority actions for the Agriculture and Food Security Cooperation pillar.

First, the Andhra Pradesh state government should engage directly with the Republic of Korea's Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs to seek inclusion as a demonstration site under Korea's existing smart farming export programme, using the precedent already established in Kazakhstan, Vietnam, Australia, and Saudi Arabia as a template.

Second, cooperation should prioritize food processing and cold chain investment over primary production technology alone, since Andhra Pradesh's identified comparative advantage in perishable products such as mangoes, bananas, and farmed shrimp depends heavily on the post-harvest infrastructure in which Korean firms hold demonstrated expertise.

Third, this framework recommends explicitly excluding rice market access from the primary objectives of this pillar, given the structural constraints described above, and instead directing any rice related cooperation toward technical exchange on cultivation efficiency or processing technology rather than export volume targets.

Fourth, the two governments should establish a joint agricultural technology working group, distinct from the broader Industrial Cooperation Committee, to provide sustained institutional attention to a pillar that has so far developed through sub-national and commentary level interest rather than formal intergovernmental agreement.

Fifth, Indian agricultural research institutions should be connected with Korea's network of Smart Farm Innovation Valleys, established under Korea's own five year plan beginning in 2024, to build researcher and extension worker familiarity with Korean smart farming technology ahead of any specific investment commitment.

Sixth, both countries should promote joint research and pilot projects on climate-resilient agriculture, focusing on drought-resistant crops, efficient irrigation, soil management, weather forecasting, and adaptation to extreme weather events. Such cooperation would help Indian farmers respond to changing climatic conditions while allowing Korean institutions to contribute relevant technological expertise and research capabilities.

Seventh, India and the Republic of Korea should establish dedicated programmes for agricultural skill development and farmer training, including exchange programmes for farmers, agricultural extension officers, researchers, and agri-technology professionals. Practical training in precision agriculture, greenhouse cultivation, smart irrigation, and post-harvest management could accelerate the adoption of modern agricultural practices in India.

Eighth, the two governments should encourage Korean investment in India's agricultural logistics and rural infrastructure, particularly in refrigerated transportation, modern warehouses, pack houses, food testing facilities, and digitally managed supply chains. Improving these systems would reduce post-harvest losses, increase farmer incomes, and strengthen India's capacity to supply high-quality agricultural products to domestic and international markets.

Ninth, India and Korea should develop a dedicated agricultural innovation and start-up exchange programme, connecting Indian agri-tech enterprises with Korean technology companies, research institutions, and investors. The programme could support joint ventures and technology partnerships in areas such as agricultural robotics, artificial intelligence, drones, precision farming, food traceability, and sustainable packaging, creating new opportunities for innovation and commercial cooperation.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility for this pillar rests with India's Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare and the state government of Andhra Pradesh, and the Republic of Korea's Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, supported by the Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency on the Korean side. This pillar should be read in conjunction with the Water Resources Cooperation pillar preceding it and the Science, Technology and Innovation Cooperation pillar that follows.

11. Science, Technology and Innovation Cooperation

Overview

Science, Technology and Innovation Cooperation functions in this framework as the institutional foundation beneath the more specialized technology pillars that follow, covering Artificial Intelligence and Emerging Technologies, Digital and Cyber Security, and Space Cooperation.

Current Status

The Korea-India Joint Programme of Cooperation in Science and Technology, administered by India's Department of Science and Technology and the Republic of Korea's Ministry of Science and ICT, has for many years supported bilateral joint research and development projects and technical missions between Indian and Korean scientists (fundsforNGOs, 2023). Funding decisions rest with a standing India-ROK Joint Science and Technology Committee, with each side responsible for its own researchers' costs, Korea's Ministry of Science and ICT typically committing approximately 40 million won per project per year, and successful projects funded for three year terms subject to annual evaluation (DST, 2023). The most recent published call for proposals identified six priority research areas: green mobility, robotics and manufacturing, renewable energy including green hydrogen, information and communication technology, material science with a specific focus on semiconductors and displays, and quantum technologies, with funding intended for up to twelve projects across these areas (DST, 2023). This framework treats the substantial overlap between these research priorities and the industrial priorities described in the Vision for the Two Nations, particularly semiconductors, green hydrogen, and robotics, as evidence that the scientific and industrial tracks of the relationship are already more closely aligned than the two tracks' separate institutional histories might suggest. This alignment matters because it means the comparatively modest, academically oriented Joint Programme of Cooperation is, in effect, already seeding the same technology areas that the far larger industrial investments described elsewhere in this framework are targeting, even though the two funding streams operate through entirely separate ministries and approval processes on both sides.

A Longer Institutional History Than the 2026 Summit Suggests

The two countries' science and technology relationship traces back to an Agreement on Cooperation in Science and Technology signed in 1976, and progressed through a 2018 joint vision document, adopted during a visit themed around people, prosperity, and the future, that included a dedicated section on science and technology cooperation covering renewable energy, material science, robotics, engineering, and health science (RIS, 2026). That 2018 vision document also established the India-Korea Centre for Research and Innovation Cooperation and, through a quadripartite memorandum of understanding, a Korea-India Future Strategy Group intended to expand cooperation further (RIS, 2026). The relationship's Special Strategic Partnership status itself dates specifically to May 2015, during a state visit by Prime Minister Modi to the Republic of Korea, at which science, technology, and

innovation cooperation was explicitly recognized as a key priority alongside shared democratic values and converging regional vision (RIS, 2026). Analysts tracking the relationship describe a gradual transition over the following decade from joint research concentrated in basic science toward a more structured innovation partnership emphasizing applied research and development, information and communication technology led digital transformation, space collaboration, and cybersecurity, with growing attention to the commercialization of jointly developed technologies (RIS, 2026). This framework reads the April 2026 Joint Strategic Vision not as the beginning of science and technology cooperation but as the latest, more industrially oriented phase of a partnership already a decade into its Special Strategic Partnership designation and considerably older in its formal scientific cooperation.

Priority Actions

This framework recommends the following priority actions for the Science, Technology and Innovation Cooperation pillar.

First, the Joint Programme of Cooperation's per project funding level, unchanged in relative terms for a considerable period, should be reviewed and increased, given the rising cost of research in the priority areas identified, particularly semiconductor and quantum technology research.

Second, the India-Korea Centre for Research and Innovation Cooperation established in 2018 should be evaluated for its actual project throughput since establishment, with its mandate refreshed or consolidated with newer mechanisms such as the Industrial Cooperation Committee if significant overlap or underuse is identified.

Third, the six priority research areas identified in the most recent joint call should be explicitly cross referenced against the pillar specific priority actions set out elsewhere in this framework, ensuring that academic research funding and industrial investment priorities reinforce rather than duplicate one another.

Fourth, the Korea-India Future Strategy Group should be given a public annual reporting requirement, allowing this framework's own periodic review mechanism, described later in this document, to track its activity.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility for this pillar rests with India's Department of Science and Technology and the Republic of Korea's Ministry of Science and ICT, supported by the National Research Foundation of Korea, the India-Korea Centre for Research and Innovation Cooperation, and the Korea-India Future Strategy Group. This pillar should be read in conjunction with the Agriculture and Food Security Cooperation pillar preceding it and the Artificial Intelligence and Emerging Technologies Cooperation pillar that follows.

12. Artificial Intelligence and Emerging Technologies Cooperation

Overview

Artificial Intelligence and Emerging Technologies Cooperation is treated in this framework as distinct from the broader Science, Technology and Innovation Cooperation pillar preceding it, focused specifically on artificial intelligence and the critical mineral and advanced manufacturing technologies most closely linked to it.

Current Status

At the April 2026 summit, the two governments established joint task forces focused on artificial intelligence, data governance, and semiconductor design and fabrication, guided by principles the joint statement describes as AI for All and MANAV (Drishti IAS, 2026), the latter an explicit echo of the human centred framing India has applied to its own domestic artificial intelligence mission. This architecture was launched publicly as the India-Korea Digital Bridge, covered internationally as a dedicated initiative to expand cooperation in artificial intelligence and advanced technologies (CDO Magazine, 2026).

Writing several months after the summit, the Republic of Korea's Ambassador to India, Lee Seong-ho, said Seoul was looking at artificial intelligence collaboration with India more intensely, describing critical minerals and advanced industries as areas of immense partnership potential and noting that the leadership of both countries had expressed keen interest in expanding cooperation in critical and emerging technologies (Tribune India, 2026). The Ambassador specifically described the two countries' cooperation across the critical minerals value chain, including the use of artificial intelligence for geological mapping and exploration, stronger links between the two countries' geological survey organizations, and the recovery of critical minerals from electronic waste and mine tailings as part of circular economy initiatives, framing this work alongside cooperation in semiconductors, secondary batteries, telecommunications equipment, shipbuilding, and defence manufacturing as aimed at reducing shared vulnerabilities and strengthening technological resilience (Tribune India, 2026). This framework treats the Ambassador's remarks, offered well after the initial summit announcements, as meaningful evidence that artificial intelligence cooperation is being actively discussed at the diplomatic level rather than left dormant after the signing ceremony.

AI in Governance: A Distinct Track

Beyond industrial and resource applications, a separate strand of artificial intelligence cooperation has developed around public administration. A Korean delegation held discussions with India's Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions covering the digital transformation of government services, the application of artificial intelligence in public administration, capacity building for civil servants, citizen participation in governance, and public grievance redressal systems (Business Standard, 2026). This framework treats this

governance oriented track as a genuinely distinct strand from the industrial and critical minerals applications of artificial intelligence described above, since the underlying policy problem has a different institutional home and a different measure of success, and recommends that both strands be tracked separately rather than folded into a single undifferentiated artificial intelligence initiative.

Follow up engagement has continued at the ministerial level. The Republic of Korea's Foreign Minister Cho Hyun and India's External Affairs Minister Jaishankar met in Seoul in June 2026 specifically to review the implementation of cooperation projects agreed during the April summit, including artificial intelligence alongside shipbuilding, finance, and defence (Korea Herald, 2026), evidence this framework reads as a meaningful signal that the Joint Strategic Vision's technology commitments are being actively monitored rather than left to the next scheduled summit for their first substantive review.

Priority Actions

This framework recommends the following priority actions for the Artificial Intelligence and Emerging Technologies Cooperation pillar.

First, the AI for All and MANAV task forces should publish a concrete project pipeline with named deliverables within the first year of operation.

Second, the geological survey linkage and AI based critical minerals mapping described by Ambassador Lee should be formalized through a specific data sharing protocol, given the sensitivity of geological and resource data.

Third, the governance oriented artificial intelligence track should be given its own dedicated working group under the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, with specific pilot applications identified in public grievance redressal as an initial, measurable proof of concept.

Fourth, the two countries should establish a joint artificial intelligence safety and standards dialogue, recognizing that shared approaches to AI governance and risk management will become increasingly necessary alongside technical cooperation.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility for this pillar rests with India's Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology and the Republic of Korea's Ministry of Science and ICT for the industrial dimension, and India's Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions for the governance dimension, with the task forces established under the Industrial Cooperation Committee providing overall coordination. This pillar should be read in conjunction with the Science, Technology and Innovation Cooperation pillar preceding it and the Digital and Cyber Security Cooperation pillar that follows.

13. Digital and Cyber Security Cooperation

Overview

Digital and Cyber Security Cooperation combines two related but distinct concerns, the extension of India's digital public infrastructure model into and through the Republic of Korea, and the cyber security cooperation needed to protect that infrastructure and the wider bilateral relationship as digital ties deepen. This framework finds the first concern considerably more developed than the second.

Current Status

The digital payments dimension of this pillar did not begin with the April 2026 summit. NPCI International, the export arm of India's National Payments Corporation, announced agreements in early 2023 enabling QR code based Unified Payments Interface transactions in ten countries, including the Republic of Korea alongside Cambodia, France, Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam (CSIS, 2025). The memorandum of understanding between the National Payments Corporation of India and the Korea Financial Telecommunications and Clearings Institute signed at the April 2026 summit, described in the Financial Cooperation pillar earlier in this framework, is therefore best understood as deepening and formalizing an interoperability arrangement that had already existed in a more limited form for three years, rather than establishing digital payment connectivity between the two countries from nothing.

India's broader digital public infrastructure diplomacy has continued to expand rapidly during this period, with the government reporting digital public infrastructure partnerships with 24 countries by mid-2026, spanning identity systems, payments, and data exchange platforms (Communications Today, 2026). The Unified Payments Interface itself now processes more than 20 billion transactions per month domestically and is integrated with more than seven foreign jurisdictions, with the underlying identity and payment architecture, including the Modular Open Source Identity Platform, shared with more than ten countries globally (Anantam IAS, 2026). This framework treats the Republic of Korea's inclusion among the earliest cohort of UPI linked markets, predating many of the partnerships now described as part of India's broader digital diplomacy, as an underappreciated marker of the relationship's digital maturity relative to its modest position in the investment and trade rankings described in earlier pillars of this framework. It is a pattern worth naming directly: on several of the metrics that receive the most public attention, cumulative investment, total trade volume, the India-Republic of Korea relationship trails several of India's other major Asian partnerships, yet on digital payment interoperability, a less visible but increasingly consequential measure of practical integration, the relationship was an early mover rather than a late one.

Cyber Security as the Less Developed Half

Where the digital public infrastructure dimension of this pillar rests on a demonstrable, multi-year track record, dedicated cyber security cooperation, understood as threat

intelligence sharing, critical infrastructure protection, and coordinated incident response, remains considerably less developed. The April 2026 joint statement's reference to a data governance task force, described in the Artificial Intelligence and Emerging Technologies Cooperation pillar preceding this one, addresses data governance policy rather than operational cyber security cooperation, and this framework did not identify a dedicated bilateral cyber security dialogue or information sharing arrangement comparable to those India maintains with several other major partners. This framework treats that absence as a meaningful gap given the scale of digital and payment interconnection already described above, since expanding interoperability between two countries' payment and identity systems without a corresponding cyber security cooperation framework increases the attack surface available to malicious actors targeting either system. The gap is particularly notable given that both countries individually maintain sophisticated cyber security establishments, India through its Indian Computer Emergency Response Team and the Republic of Korea through the Korea Internet and Security Agency, yet this framework found no evidence that these two well developed national capabilities have been formally connected to each other.

Priority Actions

This framework recommends the following priority actions for the Digital and Cyber Security Cooperation pillar.

First, the two governments should establish a dedicated bilateral cyber security dialogue, distinct from the data governance task force, specifically focused on threat intelligence sharing and critical infrastructure protection.

Second, the NPCI-KFTC payment integration should be accompanied by a joint security audit and incident response protocol prior to full interoperability, given the systemic importance of payment infrastructure to both economies.

Third, India should offer the Republic of Korea, as one of the original 2023 cohort of UPI linked markets, a defined pathway to deeper integration, potentially including merchant Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility for this pillar rests with India's Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology and National Payments Corporation of India, and the Republic of Korea's Ministry of Science and ICT and Korea Financial Telecommunications and Clearings Institute, with India's Indian Computer Emergency Response Team and its Korean counterpart as the natural technical anchors for the cyber security dialogue recommended above. This pillar should be read in conjunction with the Artificial Intelligence and Emerging Technologies Cooperation pillar preceding it and the Space Cooperation pillar that follows.

14. Space Cooperation

Overview

Space Cooperation between India and the Republic of Korea connects one of the world's most established civil space programmes with one of its newest. This asymmetry shapes both the current shape of cooperation and the priority actions this framework recommends for deepening it.

Current Status

The Korea AeroSpace Administration's own account of its 2025 international engagement lists the signing of a space cooperation memorandum of understanding with India among that year's diversification of partnerships, alongside new or expanded arrangements with Europe, Japan, and the Middle East (Korea AeroSpace Administration, 2025). This framework treats this 2025 memorandum, rather than the April 2026 summit, as the actual origin point of formal India-Republic of Korea space cooperation, with the summit's announcement of a joint working group between the Indian Space Research Organisation and the Korea AeroSpace Administration, and the accompanying inaugural India-ROK Space Day held in Bengaluru on 20 April 2026, functioning as the first major public activation of an agreement signed the preceding year rather than as the beginning of the relationship itself (Prime Minister's Office, 2026).

An Asymmetric Partnership: Institutional Maturity Meets Institutional Youth

The Korea AeroSpace Administration was established on 27 May 2024 as the Republic of Korea's first dedicated civil space agency, consolidating space activities previously distributed across multiple research centres and universities under a single control tower for national space policy, research and development, workforce and industry promotion, and international cooperation (SpaceNews, 2024; Wikipedia, 2026). The Indian Space Research Organisation, by contrast, has operated continuously since 1969, giving India's side of this partnership more than five decades of additional institutional experience, programme management history, and operational launch heritage.

Notwithstanding its youth, the Korea AeroSpace Administration has pursued an ambitious international agenda, explicitly targeting recognition among the world's five leading aerospace nations and pursuing simultaneous partnership agreements with the European Space Agency, Germany's national aerospace centre, France, the United States, and India within roughly its first eighteen months of operation (Korea AeroSpace Administration, 2025). This framework reads the sheer number of parallel partnerships the Korea AeroSpace Administration has pursued as a sign of genuine ambition, but also as a reason India should not assume its own bilateral relationship with the agency will automatically receive priority attention amid competition from established space powers such as the United States and the European Space Agency's member states.

Korea's programme ambitions include developing an indigenous Korea Positioning System for regional satellite navigation, continued use of the Nuri launch vehicle following its fourth successful flight, participation in the Square Kilometre Array radio astronomy project, and long term goals of a robotic lunar lander mission in 2032 and a Mars mission in 2045 (SpaceNews, 2024). This framework treats India's own lunar and interplanetary programme, including its own lunar landing and Mars orbiter missions, as offering natural points of technical exchange with these Korean ambitions, particularly given that Korea's programme is still building the institutional experience in deep space mission design that India's programme has already accumulated. The relationship therefore has the potential to be more balanced than it might first appear: India offers operational heritage and mission design experience, while the Republic of Korea offers the kind of dedicated, well funded institutional focus, satellite manufacturing capacity, and advanced electronics and sensor technology that a rapidly maturing space programme can bring to a partnership even without decades of prior launch history.

Priority Actions

This framework recommends the following priority actions for the Space Cooperation pillar.

First, the joint working group between the Indian Space Research Organisation and the Korea AeroSpace Administration should publish a specific project roadmap within its first year of operation, given the Korea AeroSpace Administration's demonstrated pattern of signing memoranda with multiple partners simultaneously.

Second, India should offer specific technical exchange on lunar and interplanetary mission design, drawing on its own programme's operational heritage, as a distinctive contribution few of the Korea AeroSpace Administration's other new partnerships are equally positioned to provide.

Third, the two agencies should explore satellite navigation cooperation, given the Republic of Korea's development of its own Korea Positioning System and India's existing regional navigation satellite system.

Fourth, the annual India-ROK Space Day inaugurated in April 2026 should be institutionalized as a recurring, alternating host event, mirroring the recommendation made for the naval exercise in the Maritime and Blue Economy Cooperation pillar.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility for this pillar rests with the Indian Space Research Organisation and the Korea AeroSpace Administration, operating through the joint working group established in April 2026. This pillar should be read in conjunction with the Digital and Cyber Security Cooperation pillar preceding it and the Environmental and Climate Cooperation pillar addressed later in this framework

15. Environmental and Climate Cooperation

Overview

Environmental and Climate Cooperation is treated in this framework as distinct from the Energy Cooperation pillar addressed earlier, focused specifically on the two countries' cooperation within the international climate finance and carbon market architecture rather than on the underlying energy technologies described in that earlier pillar.

Current Status

India and the Republic of Korea signed a bilateral agreement under Article 6.2 of the Paris Agreement during the April 2026 State Visit, establishing a framework for cross-border carbon markets between the two economies and enabling the exchange of internationally transferred mitigation outcomes, the formal mechanism through which emissions reductions achieved in one country can be counted toward the climate targets of another (Free Press Journal, 2026; Hans India, 2026). This agreement forms part of a broader package described as more than a dozen pacts signed during the visit covering clean energy, trade, and industrial collaboration (Hans India, 2026), and the two governments separately agreed to expand cooperation in low carbon industrial technologies relevant to hard to abate sectors including steel, cement, and heavy transport (Carbon Credits, 2026).

The agreement rests on a genuinely complementary structure. India has pledged to reach net zero emissions by 2070, while the Republic of Korea targets net zero by 2050, a difference in timeline that this framework, following the reporting on the agreement, reads as creating a natural basis for cooperation, since Korea's more compressed decarbonization timeline gives it an incentive to invest in cost effective emissions reduction projects abroad, while India's later target date and large decarbonization investment needs give it an incentive to attract the international climate finance such investment represents (Free Press Journal, 2026).

Comparative Context: Following an Established Template

India's most significant prior Article 6.2 arrangement, a Joint Crediting Mechanism agreed with Japan, was signed in August 2025, roughly eight months before the Korea agreement, and allows Japanese companies to invest in Indian green projects, including green hydrogen initiatives, in exchange for a share of the resulting carbon credits (ForumIAS, 2026). India has built the domestic infrastructure to support this growing portfolio of bilateral carbon market agreements, including a National Carbon Registry that prevents double counting of credits through a corresponding adjustment mechanism, a National Designated Authority for the Implementation of the Paris Agreement, and a finalized list of thirteen eligible project activities that prioritizes capital intensive, emerging technologies such as green hydrogen and green ammonia over conventional offset categories (ForumIAS, 2026). This framework treats the Korea agreement's use of the same Article 6.2 architecture already established with Japan as an efficient choice that allowed the two governments to move quickly by adapting an existing template, but also recommends, in the priority actions below, that Korea specific

terms be developed where India's experience with the Japan agreement reveals gaps. This templated approach also carries a risk this framework thinks worth naming: if India signs functionally similar Article 6.2 agreements with a growing list of partners without differentiating the specific project types and sectors each partner is best positioned to support, the country risks diluting its own scarce supply of high integrity mitigation outcomes across too many bilateral arrangements rather than concentrating them where a given partner's technology and capital genuinely add the most value.

Priority Actions

This framework recommends the following priority actions for the Environmental and Climate Cooperation pillar.

First, the two governments should identify and announce at least one specific pilot project eligible for internationally transferred mitigation outcome trading within the first year of the agreement, following the Japan precedent's early focus on green hydrogen.

Second, given the explicit commitment to cooperate on low carbon industrial technology for hard to abate sectors, this framework recommends connecting that commitment directly to the POSCO-JSW steel plant described in the Investment Cooperation pillar, making that facility an early test case for low carbon steel production methods eligible for credit generation under the new agreement.

Third, India's National Carbon Registry and corresponding adjustment mechanism should be reviewed specifically for interoperability with any parallel registry the Republic of Korea maintains or develops.

Fourth, the two governments should commission a comparative review of the Japan and Korea Article 6.2 agreements after their first full year of operation, extracting lessons that could inform India's approach to further bilateral carbon market agreements currently under negotiation with the European Union, Singapore, and the United Arab Emirates.

Fifth, environmental cooperation should be extended beyond carbon markets to include joint monitoring of air quality and industrial pollution, given both countries' shared experience managing severe urban air pollution episodes.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility for this pillar rests with India's Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change and the Republic of Korea's Ministry of Environment, with India's National Designated Authority for the Implementation of the Paris Agreement serving as the specific technical body responsible for the Article 6.2 agreement's implementation. This pillar should be read in conjunction with the Space Cooperation pillar preceding it and the Disaster Management and Humanitarian Cooperation pillar that follows.

16. Disaster Management and Humanitarian Cooperation

Overview

Disaster Management and Humanitarian Cooperation is, on the evidence available to this framework, the pillar with the clearest gap between institutional capacity on both sides and formal bilateral cooperation between them.

Current Status

India's National Disaster Management Authority maintains a public record of its bilateral disaster management agreements with other countries, listing specific memoranda and joint declarations with, among others, Germany, signed in October 2015 and covering exchange of information, technology, and first responder training, the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management, signed in October 2024, and Uzbekistan, signed in April 2023 (National Disaster Management Authority, n.d.). The Republic of Korea does not appear on this list. This framework treats that absence, from an authoritative primary source maintained by the Indian government agency directly responsible for this pillar, as clear evidence that no dedicated bilateral disaster management or humanitarian assistance agreement between India and the Republic of Korea currently exists, notwithstanding both countries' individually developed disaster response capacity and the extensive cooperation described across the other thirty pillars of this framework.

The clearest documented instance of the two countries operating within the same disaster response framework is multilateral rather than bilateral. Both India and the Republic of Korea participated as dialogue partners, alongside Australia, China, Japan, New Zealand, Russia, and the United States, in the first Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief and Military Medicine Exercise conducted under the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus framework, held in Brunei from 17 to 20 June 2013, involving seven ships, twenty helicopters, and more than two thousand personnel responding to a simulated post typhoon scenario (National Maritime Foundation, 2026). This framework treats that exercise, now more than a decade old and conducted within a multilateral rather than bilateral framework, as insufficient evidence of an active, ongoing disaster management relationship between the two countries specifically.

This absence is notable given the profile of disasters each country regularly manages. India confronts a recurring pattern of monsoon flooding, cyclones along both coastlines, and continuing seismic risk across the Himalayan region, and has built substantial institutional capacity through the National Disaster Response Force and its record of leading regional humanitarian responses, including operations following the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and the 2015 Nepal earthquake. The Republic of Korea, while facing a different disaster profile weighted more toward typhoons and less toward large scale seismic events, has nonetheless developed sophisticated emergency management and urban disaster response systems relevant to India's own rapidly urbanizing risk profile. This framework treats the absence of a

formal channel connecting these two established but differently specialized capacities as a genuine gap rather than a reflection of insufficient underlying capability on either side. It is, in this framework's assessment, one of the more surprising gaps identified across the full thirty one pillars, given that disaster cooperation typically requires less negotiation over sensitive commercial or security terms than pillars such as defence or semiconductors, and could plausibly have been concluded quickly had either government prioritized it.

Priority Actions

This framework recommends the following priority actions for the Disaster Management and Humanitarian Cooperation pillar.

First, India's Ministry of Home Affairs and the Republic of Korea's disaster management authorities should negotiate a bilateral memorandum of understanding comparable in structure to India's existing agreement with Germany, covering information exchange, technology transfer, and first responder training.

Second, given the multilateral precedent established in the 2013 ADMM Plus exercise, the two countries should explore a dedicated bilateral disaster response exercise, potentially modelled on the naval exercise format described in the Maritime and Blue Economy Cooperation pillar.

Third, technical cooperation should be established between India's National Disaster Response Force and the Republic of Korea's emergency management authorities specifically on urban disaster response, given the relevance of Korean urban emergency management systems to India's own rapidly urbanizing risk profile.

Fourth, the two countries should establish a standing rapid communication channel for disaster notification and offers of assistance, so that any future disaster in either country triggers an immediate, pre-agreed process rather than an improvised response negotiated during the crisis itself.

Fifth, humanitarian cooperation should be extended to joint contributions in third countries, drawing on India's existing role as a regional first responder and the Republic of Korea's development assistance capacity.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility for this pillar rests with India's Ministry of Home Affairs and National Disaster Management Authority, and the Republic of Korea's Ministry of the Interior and Safety, with the National Disaster Response Force and its Korean counterpart serving as the operational implementing agencies. This pillar should be read in conjunction with the Environmental and Climate Cooperation pillar preceding it and the Infrastructure and Connectivity Cooperation pillar that follows.

17. Infrastructure and Connectivity Cooperation

Overview

Infrastructure and Connectivity Cooperation in this framework concerns the physical and logistical links, principally aviation, connecting India and the Republic of Korea to each other. This is a pillar in which this framework identifies a specific, well documented, and readily correctable gap.

Current Status

Despite the scale of ambition described throughout this framework, only a single direct air route connects India and the Republic of Korea, between Seoul's Incheon International Airport and Delhi, operated jointly by Air India and Korean Air (Travel And Tour World, 2024). Industry analysis covering the twelve months to September 2024 found that roughly one million passengers travelled between the two countries, with a substantial share relying on connecting flights through third countries rather than travelling nonstop, and explicitly characterized India as significantly underserved relative to the scale of its economy and its population (Travel And Tour World, 2024). That same analysis identified Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Chennai, cities central to the shipbuilding, technology, and manufacturing partnerships described elsewhere in this framework, as the most plausible candidates for new nonstop connections as bilateral air rights are liberalized (Travel And Tour World, 2024).

Some incremental expansion has occurred. Air India increased its Delhi to Seoul service from four to five weekly flights by early 2025 (Travel And Tour World, 2025), and combined scheduling between the two carriers had reached a daily frequency on the single existing route by mid-2026, while the Republic of Korea's Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport announced plans to allocate additional aviation rights to Korean carriers during the second half of 2026 as part of a broader strategy of expanding connectivity to emerging markets (Travel And Tour World, 2026). This framework notes that this broader Korean aviation strategy has so far been described in terms of Southeast Asian secondary cities rather than specifically committing new capacity to India, meaning the opportunity identified above remains unrealized rather than already addressed.

The Single Route Problem

This framework treats the gap between a single air route and the breadth of cooperation described across the other thirty pillars of this document as a genuine constraint on the relationship's practical development, not merely a symbolic shortcoming. Every category of exchange this framework has recommended expanding, business travel supporting the semiconductor and shipbuilding partnerships, academic mobility supporting the talent pipeline described in the Vision for the Two Nations, tourism, and the growing population of each country's professionals resident in the other, depends on affordable, reliable air connectivity that a single daily route between two cities cannot by itself provide at scale. This framework reads the absence of nonstop service to Mumbai, India's principal commercial

centre, Chennai, the centre of Hyundai's automotive manufacturing and HD Hyundai's prospective shipyard, and Bengaluru, the host city of the inaugural Space Day described in the Space Cooperation pillar, as a specific and correctable gap rather than an inevitable feature of the relationship's current scale. It is also, in this framework's assessment, a self reinforcing gap, since the absence of convenient nonstop travel to these specific cities makes it marginally harder for the business travellers, engineers, and officials whose movement this framework's other pillars depend on to justify frequent trips, which in turn slows exactly the kind of sustained, in person relationship building on which co-production programmes such as the K9 Vajra partnership have relied.

Priority Actions

This framework recommends the following priority actions for the Infrastructure and Connectivity Cooperation pillar.

First, India and the Republic of Korea should conclude a revised bilateral air services agreement explicitly allocating new capacity to Chennai and Bengaluru, given those cities' direct relevance to the shipbuilding and space partnerships already described in this framework.

Second, both governments should consider targeted incentives, of the kind the Republic of Korea already offers its own carriers for new emerging market routes, to encourage either flag carrier to launch a second India gateway within the current Joint Strategic Vision period.

Third, connectivity should be treated as an explicit input to the sectoral pillars it supports, with the semiconductor, shipbuilding, and space cooperation described elsewhere in this framework each identifying their own specific connectivity requirements.

Fourth, given the significant share of current travellers relying on connecting itineraries, the two governments should examine whether existing connecting hubs are adequately serving current demand while new nonstop capacity is negotiated.

Fifth, ground infrastructure supporting air travellers, including visa processing facilities addressed in the Diplomatic Cooperation pillar earlier in this framework, should be reviewed jointly with aviation capacity planning.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility for this pillar rests with India's Ministry of Civil Aviation and the Republic of Korea's Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport, with Air India, Korean Air, and any additional carriers that enter the market under an expanded bilateral agreement serving as the operational partners. This pillar should be read in conjunction with the Disaster Management and Humanitarian Cooperation pillar preceding it and the Industrial and Manufacturing Cooperation pillar that follows.

18. Industrial and Manufacturing Cooperation

Overview

Industrial and Manufacturing Cooperation is anchored, more than any other pillar in this framework, by a single, decades old success story whose scale this framework argues has been systematically understated by the aggregate investment statistics discussed in the Investment Cooperation pillar earlier in this document.

Current Status

Hyundai Motor India has operated in the Indian market for more than 26 years, building what has become the second largest automobile manufacturer in India by domestic sales since 2009 and India's largest exporter of passenger vehicles in every year from 2005 through late 2024 (Zerodha, 2024). Its principal manufacturing complex near Chennai operates at approximately 97 percent utilization with 90 percent localization of components, a striking figure that places the plant's supply chain overwhelmingly within India despite the finished product carrying a Korean brand (SPTulsian, 2024). Hyundai's second Indian plant, at Talegaon in Maharashtra, was acquired from General Motors in January 2024, began engine production in June 2025, and had its initial investment commitment increased by 57 percent, from roughly 7,000 to 11,000 crore rupees, in September 2025, with combined Indian capacity across both plants targeted to reach approximately 1.074 million vehicles annually by 2028 (Ackodrive, 2025). Cumulative investment in India across more than two decades now exceeds 30,100 crore rupees, with a further 32,000 crore rupees committed over the coming ten years (Upstox, 2024).

The scale of this commitment was made publicly visible when Hyundai Motor India completed a 27,870 crore rupee initial public offering in October 2024, among the largest listings in Indian stock market history, structured entirely as an offer for sale returning proceeds to Hyundai's Korean parent rather than raising fresh capital for the Indian subsidiary itself (Zerodha, 2024). This framework treats that structuring detail as analytically significant. Because the bulk of Hyundai's Indian expansion has been funded through decades of reinvested local earnings rather than fresh cross border capital inflows, it does not register in the cumulative foreign direct investment statistics discussed in the Investment Cooperation pillar in the way a comparable greenfield investment would. This framework concludes that those aggregate FDI figures, however carefully sourced, likely understate the true scale of Korean industrial commitment already embedded in the Indian economy.

Beyond Automobiles

This framework treats Hyundai as the pillar's most mature case study rather than its only one. The POSCO-JSW steel plant described in the Investment Cooperation pillar, the semiconductor ecosystem partnership described in the Vision for the Two Nations, and the electronics manufacturing presence long maintained by firms such as LG and Samsung together indicate that Korean manufacturing engagement with India spans a considerably

wider industrial base than the automotive sector alone, even though no other single Korean manufacturing investment in India yet approaches Hyundai's scale or history. This framework recommends that the electric vehicle transition now underway at Hyundai's Indian plants, including battery localization through partnerships with Exide Energy Solutions and the leasing of Chennai plant capacity to Hyundai Mobis for battery pack assembly, be read as a template for how other Korean manufacturers might similarly localize increasingly sophisticated stages of production within India.

Priority Actions

This framework recommends the following priority actions for the Industrial and Manufacturing Cooperation pillar.

First, the Investment Cooperation pillar's future reporting on Korean industrial commitment to India should be supplemented with a measure of locally reinvested capital by established Korean manufacturers, not only cross border FDI flows.

Second, Hyundai's 90 percent localization figure at its Chennai plant should be established as an explicit benchmark for new Korean manufacturing investment in India, including the semiconductor and shipbuilding facilities described elsewhere in this framework.

Third, the battery localization model developed through the Exide Energy Solutions and Hyundai Mobis partnerships should be documented and actively shared with other Korean manufacturers considering electric vehicle or battery investment in India.

Fourth, given Hyundai's three decade operating history, the two governments should commission a formal case study of the relationship's evolution, extracting lessons applicable to the newer semiconductor and shipbuilding partnerships.

Fifth, industrial cooperation should be extended deliberately to small and medium Korean manufacturers beyond the large conglomerates that currently dominate the relationship.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility for this pillar rests with India's Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade and Ministry of Heavy Industries, and the Republic of Korea's Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy, with the Industrial Cooperation Committee established at the April 2026 summit providing overall coordination. This pillar should be read in conjunction with the Infrastructure and Connectivity Cooperation pillar preceding it and the Academic and Educational Cooperation pillar that follows.

19. Academic and Educational Cooperation

Overview

Academic and Educational Cooperation is treated in this framework as the pillar most directly responsible for building the long term human capital foundation on which every other pillar, from semiconductor co-development to defence co-production, ultimately depends.

Current Status

Language education offers one of the clearest available measures of grassroots interest between the two countries, and the data available points in a single direction. A total of 2,342 Indian students were learning the Korean language in 2022, a figure that grew to approximately 2,500 by April 2023 across 21 regular classes and 17 hobby classes, with growth accelerating after India's revised National Education Policy designated Korean as an elective second language subject in schools (Wikipedia, 2026). Among Indians between the ages of 17 and 25, Korean now ranks fifth on Duolingo's chart of the platform's most popular languages, a striking position for a language with no colonial or historical teaching tradition in India comparable to French, German, or Spanish (Wikipedia, 2026). This framework treats that ranking as meaningful evidence of organic, youth driven interest in the Republic of Korea that exists independently of, and considerably predates, the government level cooperation described in other pillars of this framework, likely reflecting the broader popularity of Korean popular culture among young Indians.

Institutional cooperation has followed this grassroots interest, though unevenly. Delhi University and Kyungpook National University, one of the ten members of the KNU10 consortium referenced in the Vision for the Two Nations, signed a memorandum of understanding in February 2024 under which the Korean university funds renovation of Delhi University's language laboratory, funds a dedicated Korean language instructor position, and provides ten scholarships annually to students in Delhi University's Department of East Asian Studies, alongside a formal student exchange arrangement (Careers360, 2024). This framework treats this agreement, renewable annually over an initial three year period, as a useful template of the kind of concrete, resourced partnership that the broader IIT to KNU10 consortium relationship and India's Korea Education Centre, opened in January 2026, should aim to replicate at scale. The specific components of the Delhi University arrangement are worth naming individually because each addresses a distinct, common barrier to sustained language education: physical infrastructure such as language laboratories is expensive for a single department to fund from its own budget, qualified instructors in a comparatively rare language are difficult to recruit and retain without a dedicated funded position, and scholarships give students a concrete incentive to persist with a language many might otherwise treat as a casual interest.

This framework also notes that the scale of current university partnerships remains modest relative to the ambitions described elsewhere in this document. A single memorandum covering ten scholarships a year at one Indian university, however well designed, cannot by itself supply the technical talent pipeline that the semiconductor, shipbuilding, and defence co-production partnerships described in earlier pillars will require over the coming decade. This framework treats the Delhi University agreement as a proof of concept whose real value lies in whether it is deliberately scaled to additional institutions, rather than as an endpoint in itself.

Priority Actions

This framework recommends the following priority actions for the Academic and Educational Cooperation pillar.

First, the Delhi University and Kyungpook National University model should be documented as a template and actively offered to additional Indian universities seeking Korean partnerships.

Second, given the National Education Policy's designation of Korean as an elective second language, the two governments should jointly fund teacher training programmes to expand the pool of qualified Korean language instructors in India.

Third, the growth in youth interest in Korean language and culture documented through platforms such as Duolingo should be treated as a strategic asset, with pathways developed connecting casual language learners toward the more structured KNU10 and Global Korea Scholarship pipelines.

Fourth, academic exchange should be explicitly weighted toward the technical fields most relevant to this framework's industrial priorities, including semiconductor engineering, naval architecture, and artificial intelligence.

Fifth, the two governments should establish a joint annual review of academic cooperation, tracking student numbers, university partnership agreements, and language learner figures with the same statistical rigour applied to trade and investment in earlier pillars.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility for this pillar rests with India's Ministry of Education and University Grants Commission, and the Republic of Korea's Ministry of Education, supported by the Korea Education Centre in India. This pillar should be read in conjunction with the Industrial and Manufacturing Cooperation pillar preceding it and the Healthcare and Public Health Cooperation pillar that follows.

20. Healthcare and Public Health Cooperation

Overview

Healthcare and Public Health Cooperation is, on the evidence available to this framework, among the least developed of the thirty one pillars, comparable in that respect to Water Resources Cooperation and Disaster Management and Humanitarian Cooperation described earlier in this document.

Current Status

The clearest identifiable bilateral touchpoint in this pillar is educational rather than clinical or industrial. The reciprocal scholarship schemes described in the Vision for the Two Nations include a dedicated AYUSH scholarship extended through the Indian Council for Cultural Relations, reflecting some Korean interest in India's traditional medicine systems, but this framework did not identify a broader bilateral healthcare cooperation agreement, pharmaceutical trade or regulatory arrangement, or clinical research partnership between the two governments comparable to those India maintains with several other partners.

A Useful Comparison

India's traditional medicine diplomacy with other partners illustrates what a genuinely developed relationship in this space looks like. The Ministry of Ayush and Germany's Health Ministry held the third meeting of their Joint Working Group on Alternative Medicine in Berlin in November 2025, a standing bilateral mechanism specifically dedicated to advancing cooperation in traditional and integrative healthcare between the two countries (News on Air, 2025). The existence of a third meeting of a standing joint working group with Germany, a country with a far shorter history of engagement with Indian traditional medicine than the cultural and civilizational connections between India and several Asian neighbours might suggest, throws into sharper relief the absence of any comparable standing mechanism with the Republic of Korea. India has also positioned itself as an active convener in this space more broadly, hosting the third International AYUSH Conference in Dubai in February 2026, which drew delegates from thirty countries and included explicit calls from Indian officials for partner countries to pursue joint research, academic exchanges, and regulatory cooperation in traditional and integrative medicine (News on Air, 2026). This framework reads that open invitation as still unanswered specifically with respect to the Republic of Korea, notwithstanding Korea's own long tradition of traditional medicine practice, hanbang, which shares historical roots with several Indian and East Asian systems and would seem to offer a natural basis for exactly the kind of cooperation India has extended to Germany. The comparison is instructive precisely because geographic and cultural proximity have not, in this instance, translated into institutional cooperation faster than geographic distance did for Germany, a pattern this framework has now observed across several of the thinner pillars in this document.

Beyond traditional medicine specifically, neither government's public communications around the April 2026 summit addressed pharmaceutical trade, clinical research cooperation, medical device regulation, or health workforce mobility, despite India's position as a major global pharmaceutical exporter and the Republic of Korea's advanced biotechnology and medical device industries. This framework treats the absence of any of these more conventional healthcare cooperation channels as evidence that Healthcare and Public Health Cooperation has simply not yet been prioritized within the broader relationship.

Priority Actions

This framework recommends the following priority actions for the Healthcare and Public Health Cooperation pillar.

First, India's Ministry of Ayush should extend an invitation to the Republic of Korea to establish a joint working group on traditional medicine cooperation comparable to the standing mechanism already in place with Germany.

Second, the two governments should explore a pharmaceutical trade and regulatory cooperation arrangement, building on India's position as a major global generic drug exporter and the Republic of Korea's advanced pharmaceutical manufacturing and regulatory standards.

Third, given the Republic of Korea's advanced biotechnology and medical device industries, this framework recommends a dedicated technology and investment dialogue in medical devices and diagnostics.

Fourth, health workforce mobility should be examined explicitly, given the scale of nursing and allied health training capacity India has developed and the ageing demographic profile the Republic of Korea faces.

Fifth, Healthcare and Public Health Cooperation should be added as a standing agenda item for the Joint Commission's next review.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility for this pillar rests with India's Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and Ministry of Ayush, and the Republic of Korea's Ministry of Health and Welfare, with the Indian Council for Cultural Relations continuing to administer the scholarship channel currently serving as the pillar's primary point of contact. This pillar should be read in conjunction with the Academic and Educational Cooperation pillar preceding it and the Youth Cooperation pillar that follows.

21. Youth Cooperation

Overview

Youth Cooperation is treated in this framework as distinct from the Academic and Educational Cooperation pillar preceding it, concerned with cultural and informal engagement between young people rather than formal schooling or university partnerships. This is a pillar where, unlike several others in this framework, genuine grassroots momentum already exists and the primary task is channelling it rather than creating it from nothing.

Current Status

The Korean Cultural Centre India hosted the K-Dream Stage All India K-Pop Grand Championship in 2026, a grand finals event bringing together the top thirty six winning teams selected across India over the preceding five years, from 2021 to 2025, with twenty five teams ultimately competing in the final round before judges including the Korean record producer Park Jin Young and a representative of HYBE India (Korean Cultural Centre India, 2026). This framework treats the existence of a five year competition history feeding into a single grand championship as evidence of sustained, structured youth cultural engagement rather than a one off promotional event.

At the joint press conference following the April 2026 summit, President Lee Jae Myung announced plans for a Mumbai Korea Center conceived specifically as a dedicated K-pop performance venue, explicitly framed as a potential space where K-pop and Bollywood might intersect, alongside efforts to expand Korean language and cultural studies programmes through the Korea Foundation and the Korea Education Centre in India (Rolling Stone India, 2026). The two leaders also used the occasion to announce an India-South Korea Friendship Festival planned for 2028, giving a concrete public event to the Year of Friendship designation for 2028 and 2029 described in the Vision for the Two Nations earlier in this framework (Rolling Stone India, 2026).

This framework reads this cultural momentum as running substantially ahead of formal government cooperation in other pillars. The Korea Foundation's own reporting places the global Hallyu, or Korean Wave, fan base at more than 156.6 million people, a figure exceeding the entire population of the Republic of Korea by a factor of three (Korea Centre, 2023). This framework treats youth cultural engagement as a genuine strategic asset for the relationship precisely because it did not originate in government policy and has proven durable across multiple changes of government in both countries.

Where several of the pillars addressed earlier in this framework, disaster management, healthcare, water resources, have required this framework to recommend that governments actively construct cooperation that does not yet exist, Youth Cooperation presents the reverse challenge: an abundance of organic public enthusiasm that government policy has only recently begun to catch up to and formally support.

Priority Actions

This framework recommends the following priority actions for the Youth Cooperation pillar.

First, the Mumbai Korea Center should be developed with an explicit mandate to showcase Indian as well as Korean performers, consistent with its stated ambition to intersect K-pop and Bollywood, so that the venue itself models two way cultural exchange.

Second, the 2028 Friendship Festival should be planned with a formal youth delegate programme, giving young Indians and Koreans selected through the K-Dream Stage competition a structured role in the festival itself.

Third, the two governments should establish a dedicated youth entrepreneurship exchange connecting India's start-up ecosystem with Korea's, building on the creative industry investment already visible in HYBE's expansion into India.

Fourth, a structured youth ambassador or fellowship programme should be created, sending small cohorts of young Indians and Koreans for short term placements in the other country's creative, technology, or public sectors.

Fifth, given the K-Dream Stage competition's five year history, this framework recommends formalizing it as an officially recognized bilateral youth exchange programme with government co-sponsorship, securing its long term funding and expanding its reach beyond the cities it currently serves.

Sixth, both governments should establish a bilateral youth leadership and policy dialogue, bringing together university students, young professionals, researchers, entrepreneurs, and civil society representatives from both countries. The dialogue should meet annually and provide young participants with opportunities to discuss issues including peace, sustainable development, technology, entrepreneurship, and regional cooperation.

Seventh, India and the Republic of Korea should expand scholarships, university exchanges, and joint academic programmes for young people, with particular emphasis on technology, international relations, business, cultural studies, and sustainable development.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility for this pillar rests with India's Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports and the Republic of Korea's Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, with the Korean Cultural Centre India and the Korea Foundation serving as the principal implementing bodies. This pillar should be read in conjunction with the Healthcare and Public Health Cooperation pillar preceding it and the Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Cooperation pillar that follows

22. Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Cooperation

Overview

Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Cooperation is, on the evidence available to this framework, another pillar in which direct bilateral engagement remains limited, though this framework identifies a specific, credible institutional pathway through which that could change.

Current Status

This framework did not identify a dedicated bilateral India-Republic of Korea agreement or programme on women's empowerment or gender equality comparable to the sector specific mechanisms described in earlier pillars, such as the Financial Cooperation Forum or the Industrial Cooperation Committee. The clearest connection currently linking the two countries in this space is multilateral rather than bilateral. The Republic of Korea's Ministry of Gender Equality and Family provided financial support for a ministerial dialogue titled Transforming Care Systems for Advancing Women's Economic Empowerment, co-organized by UN Women and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation Secretariat in May 2026, addressing care economy policy across the eight SAARC member states, including India (UN Women Asia-Pacific, 2026). That dialogue noted that closing gender gaps in female labour force participation could increase South Asia's collective gross domestic product by as much as 51 percent (UN Women Asia-Pacific, 2026), a figure this framework treats as indicative of the scale of economic opportunity connected to this pillar, even where the specific cooperation available to capture it remains at an early, indirect stage.

The Republic of Korea has also demonstrated institutional commitment to gender equality cooperation regionally by hosting the UN Women Knowledge and Partnerships Centre in Seoul, established in 2022 in partnership with Korea's Ministry of Gender Equality and Family as the first international organization dedicated specifically to gender equality based in the Republic of Korea (UN Women Asia-Pacific, 2026). This framework treats the existence of this Seoul based centre as evidence that the Republic of Korea already possesses institutional infrastructure in this space that could be engaged bilaterally with India far more directly than the current SAARC level dialogue allows. This framework considers this pillar's current shape somewhat unusual relative to other underdeveloped pillars identified elsewhere in this document. In Water Resources and Healthcare Cooperation, this framework found essentially no institutional starting point on either side. Here, by contrast, the Republic of Korea has already built and funded dedicated regional institutional capacity, it has simply not yet been connected to India through a bilateral rather than multilateral channel, a comparatively low cost gap to close.

Priority Actions

This framework recommends the following priority actions for the Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Cooperation pillar.

First, India's Ministry of Women and Child Development should engage directly with the UN Women Knowledge and Partnerships Centre in Seoul and Korea's Ministry of Gender Equality and Family to explore a dedicated bilateral programme.

Second, given the finding that care economy policy could unlock substantial GDP gains across South Asia, any bilateral programme should prioritize care economy and female labour force participation as its initial focus, building on the May 2026 SAARC dialogue.

Third, women's entrepreneurship should be connected explicitly to the industrial and technology pillars described earlier, with a specific target for female founder participation in any venture capital mechanisms established under the Investment Cooperation pillar.

Fourth, the two governments should explore a women's leadership exchange programme, drawing on Korea's experience integrating gender equality into its development cooperation policy and India's own network of women's leadership programmes.

Fifth, gender responsive design should be applied across the other thirty pillars of this document as a cross cutting requirement, particularly in the semiconductor, shipbuilding, and defence co-production pillars where women's workforce participation has historically lagged.

Eighth, both countries should establish a bilateral youth innovation challenge, inviting young Indian and Korean entrepreneurs, students, and technology professionals to jointly develop solutions to shared challenges in areas such as climate change, digital governance, sustainable cities, healthcare technology, and social development. Winning teams could receive mentorship, seed funding, and opportunities to pilot their solutions in both countries.

Ninth, India and the Republic of Korea should strengthen youth volunteer and community-development exchanges, enabling young people to participate in short-term social development projects in areas such as education, environmental conservation, rural development, and community resilience. Such programmes would allow participants to gain practical experience while building deeper understanding and goodwill between the two societies.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility for this pillar rests with India's Ministry of Women and Child Development and the Republic of Korea's Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, with the UN Women Knowledge and Partnerships Centre in Seoul serving as a potential technical and convening partner. This pillar should be read in conjunction with the Youth Cooperation pillar preceding it and the Labour, Employment and Migration Cooperation pillar that follows.

23. Labour, Employment and Migration Cooperation

Overview

Labour, Employment and Migration Cooperation concerns the legal channels through which citizens of each country may work in the other. This is a pillar in which this framework encountered a genuine, unresolved factual disagreement among its own sources, one this framework treats as itself informative about the pillar's current state of development.

Current Status

The Republic of Korea's Ministry of Employment and Labor confirmed an E-9 visa quota of 80,000 for 2026, marking a second consecutive annual reduction from 165,000 in 2024 and 130,000 in 2025 (Korea Herald, 2025). The E-9 visa, issued under Korea's Employment Permit System, remains the primary legal channel through which citizens of designated partner countries take up manufacturing, agricultural, fishing, construction, and service sector employment in Korea. Separately, India's CEPA with the Republic of Korea, in force since January 2010, provides Indian applicants for the skilled worker E-7 visa category with simplified credential recognition and, for eligible occupations, reduced labour market testing requirements (Y-Axis, 2026).

This framework's research uncovered a direct disagreement among current sources over a more basic question: whether India is among the seventeen countries designated under the Employment Permit System at all. One detailed guide, describing itself as fact checked against primary sources as of June 2026, lists exactly seventeen designated countries by name, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam, a list that does not include India (Seoulstart, 2026). A separate source states plainly that India was added to the Employment Permit System in late 2023 as its seventeenth partner country, with Indian applicants processing through the eMigrate system managed by India's Ministry of External Affairs (MRVisaKorea, 2026). This framework was unable to resolve this discrepancy and treats the disagreement itself as evidence that, whatever India's precise formal status, low skilled labour migration through this specific mechanism has nothing like the visibility or settled documentation of the trade, investment, or defence cooperation described in earlier pillars. This stands in some contrast to India's growing labour migration relationships with several Gulf states and other Asian destinations, where formal corridors are typically well publicized on both sides specifically because they generate significant remittance flows and domestic political attention.

Priority Actions

First, as a precondition for the recommendations that follow, India's Ministry of External Affairs and Korea's Ministry of Employment and Labor should issue a clear, public, joint clarification of India's current EPS status, resolving the factual disagreement identified above.

Second, if India's inclusion is confirmed, the two governments should publish a specific country quota within Korea's overall 80,000 slot allocation for 2026.

Third, given the CEPA linked advantages already available to skilled workers, a dedicated information campaign should target Indian professionals in semiconductor engineering, shipbuilding, and information technology.

Fourth, the two governments should establish a joint labour mobility working group focused on tracking and protecting Indian workers in Korea across all visa categories.

Fifth, given Korea's declining E-9 quota, India should position itself for growth in the E-7 skilled and E-8 seasonal categories rather than concentrating advocacy on a shrinking channel.

Sixth, both governments should establish a transparent grievance-redressal and consular support mechanism for Indian workers in the Republic of Korea, providing accessible channels for reporting workplace disputes, wage issues, contract violations, discrimination, or other employment-related concerns. The mechanism should involve relevant labour authorities and Indian diplomatic missions to ensure timely assistance and protection of workers' rights.

Seventh, India and Korea should develop a bilateral skills-recognition framework, particularly for occupations experiencing shortages in Korea and where Indian workers possess relevant qualifications. Mutual recognition of selected professional certifications and vocational competencies would reduce recruitment barriers, improve labour-market matching, and enable qualified Indian workers to access appropriate employment opportunities more efficiently.

Eighth, both countries should strengthen pre-departure training and post-arrival orientation for Indian workers, including Korean language instruction, workplace safety, employment rights, cultural awareness, and information on Korean labour regulations. Regular skills and welfare assessments could further support worker integration while reducing misunderstandings between employers and employees.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility rests with India's Ministry of External Affairs and Ministry of Labour and Employment, and Korea's Ministry of Employment and Labor and Ministry of Justice. This pillar should be read alongside Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Cooperation preceding it and Tourism Cooperation that follows.

24. Tourism Cooperation

Overview

Tourism Cooperation builds directly on the aviation connectivity gap identified earlier in this framework, and on the cultural momentum documented in Youth Cooperation, positioning tourism as the practical bridge between growing cultural interest and limited physical connectivity.

Current Status

The Korea Tourism Organization partnered with Thomas Cook India and SOTC Travel in February 2025, setting a target of 200,000 tourist arrivals from India and running roadshows in Bengaluru and Mumbai (TravelBiz Monitor, 2025). It extended this outreach in June 2026 by appointing actor Priyanka Mohan as its Honorary Ambassador for India at a Seoul ceremony, following a familiarization tour of Seoul and Gyeongju (Nomad Lawyer, 2026).

India is one of six Asian markets, alongside China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Cambodia, for which Korea has waived the group tourist visa processing fee of roughly twelve US dollars for organized tours, extended again in 2026 (Travel And Tour World, 2026; Gulf News, 2026). Korea recorded 4.76 million total foreign arrivals in Q1 2026 alone (Travel And Tour World, 2026), a volume against which India's contribution, while growing, remains small relative to China, Japan, Taiwan, and the US.

Priority Actions

This framework recommends the following priority actions for the Tourism Cooperation pillar.

First, India's Ministry of Tourism should build a reciprocal promotional campaign matching Korea's effort in ambition.

Second, the 200,000 arrival target should carry a public tracking mechanism.

Third, tourism promotion should be explicitly coordinated with aviation route planning, since targets are unlikely to be met while connectivity remains a single route.

Fourth, the group visa fee waiver should be reviewed for extension to independent travellers, given how many younger Indian tourists travel outside organized groups.

Fifth, both governments should strengthen cooperation on direct and affordable air connectivity, encouraging airlines to explore additional routes between major Indian and Korean cities. Greater frequency, competitive pricing, and improved connections would reduce travel barriers and support the tourism, business, education, and cultural objectives of the broader bilateral partnership.

Sixth, India and the Republic of Korea should develop joint tourism circuits linking cultural, historical, and Buddhist heritage sites, allowing visitors to experience the deeper historical connections between the two countries. Such circuits could be promoted through coordinated digital campaigns, multilingual travel information, and partnerships with tour operators.

Seventh, both sides should promote youth and student tourism through dedicated exchange packages, combining educational visits, cultural experiences, language programmes, and short-term study opportunities. Special attention should be given to affordable travel options that can encourage greater participation by university students and young professionals.

Eighth, tourism authorities should establish a bilateral tourism data-sharing mechanism to track visitor numbers, travel patterns, average length of stay, spending, preferred destinations, and seasonal demand. Reliable data would allow both governments and the private sector to design more targeted tourism policies and measure progress against agreed objectives.

Ninth, both countries should encourage greater private-sector cooperation in hospitality, travel technology, and destination management, including partnerships between hotels, travel platforms, tour operators, and tourism start-ups. Korean investment and expertise could complement India's expanding tourism infrastructure while creating new opportunities for employment and innovation.

Tenth, India and Korea should establish an annual India–Korea Tourism Cooperation Forum bringing together tourism ministries, airlines, hospitality companies, travel agencies, cultural institutions, and youth representatives. The forum should review progress, identify connectivity and regulatory barriers, and develop measurable priorities for expanding two-way tourism.

Together, these measures would help transform tourism from a primarily promotional activity into a broader instrument of economic cooperation, cultural diplomacy, and people-to-people engagement between India and the Republic of Korea.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility rests with India's Ministry of Tourism and Korea's Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, with the Korea Tourism Organization as principal implementer. Read alongside Labour, Employment and Migration Cooperation preceding it and Sports Cooperation that follows.

25. Sports Cooperation

Overview

Sports Cooperation has a longer formal history than several of the pillars dominating the current relationship, though this framework finds that history has not translated into sustained visible activity.

Current Status

The foundation was laid in November 2018, when Korea's then Minister of Culture, Sports and Tourism, Do Jong-whan, signed a memorandum with India covering coach, athlete, and technical expert exchange, signed alongside a separate tourism memorandum during the same visit (Korea Herald, 2018). This framework treats the 2018 memorandum as evidence that a legal basis for cooperation has existed for years, predating by roughly eight years the industrial partnerships now dominating attention.

This framework did not find substantial reporting on specific joint training programmes, athlete exchanges, or coaching placements conducted under that memorandum since signing, nor did the April 2026 Joint Strategic Vision include a dedicated sports component. This framework treats the gap between the memorandum's formal existence and its visible implementation as worth flagging directly; an agreement is not, by itself, evidence that the cooperation it authorizes is occurring at meaningful scale. This echoes, in milder form, the disaster management gap identified earlier, where the absence of an agreement was itself the finding. Here the finding is subtly different: an agreement exists, yet this framework could not locate evidence of sustained activity, annual training camps, exchange numbers, coaching secondments, that would typically accompany a genuinely active relationship. The remedy in this case is activation of an existing framework rather than negotiation of a new one.

Priority Actions

First, the two governments should jointly review actual activity under the 2018 memorandum, establishing a factual baseline before proposing anything new.

Second, given Korea's strength in archery, taekwondo, and short track speed skating, and India's strength in badminton, wrestling, and shooting, specific sport by sport coaching exchanges should be identified as trackable pilots.

Third, sports cooperation should link explicitly to the 2028 Friendship Festival, giving athletic exchange a public platform comparable to cultural exchange.

Fourth, the two countries should explore joint bidding or hosting arrangements for regional multi-sport events.

Fifth, the 2018 memorandum should be formally renewed alongside the newer 2026 mechanisms, rather than left to operate unremarked.

Sixth, both countries should establish a structured annual sports exchange programme, involving athletes, coaches, sports scientists, physiotherapists, and sports administrators. Exchanges should focus on sharing specialised training methods, injury prevention, sports nutrition, performance analysis, and athlete development systems, creating benefits that extend beyond individual competitions.

Seventh, India and the Republic of Korea should develop a joint sports science and technology initiative, particularly in areas such as biomechanics, artificial intelligence-based performance analysis, wearable technology, recovery techniques, and sports medicine. Universities, national sports institutes, and private technology companies could participate in developing and testing innovative solutions.

Eighth, both governments should create dedicated youth sports scholarships and training camps, allowing promising athletes from both countries to spend extended periods training at recognised sporting institutions in the partner country. Such programmes could provide young athletes with international exposure while strengthening long-term sporting relationships.

Ninth, India and Korea should encourage greater participation of women and athletes from underrepresented communities in bilateral sports programmes, ensuring that sports cooperation contributes to inclusive youth development. Joint initiatives could include women's coaching exchanges, inclusive sports camps, and programmes supporting athletes from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Tenth, the two countries should establish an annual India–Korea Sports Cooperation Forum bringing together sporting federations, government officials, athletes, coaches, researchers, and private-sector stakeholders. The forum could review progress under the renewed memorandum, identify new areas of cooperation, and develop measurable targets for future exchanges and joint sporting initiatives.

Eleventh, India and the Republic of Korea should strengthen cooperation in sports diplomacy, using major international sporting events as opportunities to deepen people-to-people relations and mutual understanding.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility rests with India's Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports and Korea's Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, the same ministry responsible for Tourism Cooperation. Read alongside Tourism Cooperation preceding it and Culture and Heritage Cooperation that follows.

26. Culture and Heritage Cooperation

Overview

Culture and Heritage Cooperation is distinguished from the contemporary popular culture engagement in Youth Cooperation by its focus on a specific, centuries old historical narrative both governments have invested in as a foundation for the modern relationship, a choice this framework treats as unusually well developed cultural diplomacy relative to several other pillars.

Current Status

During the same November 2018 visit in which sports and tourism memoranda were signed, Korea's then First Lady, Kim Jung-sook, joined a groundbreaking ceremony for a memorial park commemorating a princess of Indian origin traditionally described as having become the wife of the king of an ancient Korean kingdom (Korea Herald, 2018). Korean officials have specifically identified this figure as Princess Suriratna of Ayodhya, said to have married King Suro, founder of the ancient Gaya confederacy, a legend Indian officials have invoked directly in bilateral discussions as illustrating the historical bond between the two countries (Business Standard, 2026). This framework treats the legend, whatever its precise historical accuracy, as functioning less as verified history and more as a deliberately cultivated origin story both governments have found useful for grounding a recent strategic partnership in ancient connection. The narrative's content, a marriage uniting an Indian royal line with a Korean one, offers both governments a uniquely personal framing for a relationship otherwise described in the abstract language of committees and industrial targets.

This legend connects to ongoing sub-national cooperation. Gimhae, the city traditionally associated with the Gaya confederacy, anchors a cultural link with India alongside the sister city relationships noted earlier, Busan-Mumbai, Incheon-Kolkata, Ulsan-Chennai. This framework treats the Ayodhya-Gaya narrative as the most historically elaborated of these connections, carrying a physical memorial and an active constituency, in contrast to sister city pairings that in several cases rest primarily on administrative twinning without comparable narrative depth.

Priority Actions

First, the memorial park's completion status and public accessibility should be reviewed given the time elapsed since 2018, with outstanding work prioritized ahead of the 2028 Friendship Festival.

Second, the legend should be developed into a structured joint research initiative, connected to the university partnerships described earlier, separating academic inquiry from its promotional diplomatic use.

Third, the Gimhae sister city model should be benchmarked against its comparative success, with lessons applied to strengthen the less narratively developed Busan-Mumbai, Incheon-Kolkata, and Ulsan-Chennai relationships.

Fourth, a joint travelling museum exhibition built around the legend offers a lower cost, faster deliverable than permanent memorial infrastructure.

Fifth, heritage cooperation should extend to India's and Korea's shared Buddhist heritage, a connection with considerably deeper documented history than the Ayodhya-Gaya legend.

Sixth, both countries should establish a dedicated India–Korea Heritage and Cultural Exchange Programme, bringing together historians, archaeologists, museum professionals, artists, and cultural institutions to identify shared heritage themes and develop joint exhibitions, publications, and educational programmes. This would give heritage cooperation a permanent institutional foundation rather than relying primarily on individual commemorative projects.

Seventh, India and the Republic of Korea should promote greater cooperation between museums, archives, and libraries, including digitization projects, scholarly exchanges, conservation training, and the sharing of historical collections. Digital access to cultural materials could allow researchers and the wider public in both countries to explore shared historical connections without the limitations imposed by geography.

Eighth, heritage cooperation should include structured educational programmes for young people, particularly through schools and universities. Student exchanges, heritage workshops, essay competitions, documentary projects, and cultural immersion programmes could help younger generations understand the historical and cultural connections between India and Korea while strengthening people-to-people relations.

Ninth, the two governments should encourage responsible cultural tourism linked to shared heritage sites, developing coordinated tourism circuits, multilingual informational materials, and cultural interpretation programmes. Such initiatives could generate economic benefits for local communities while increasing public awareness of the historical links between the two countries.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility rests with India's Ministry of Culture and Korea's Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, supported by Gimhae and its Indian sister cities. Read alongside Sports Cooperation preceding it and Parliamentary and Governance Cooperation that follows.

27. Parliamentary and Governance Cooperation

Overview

Parliamentary and Governance Cooperation is the legislative branch counterpart to the executive level engagement described in Political Cooperation earlier in this document.

Current Status

A standing Korea-India Parliamentary Friendship Group exists within Korea's National Assembly, and India's Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting, Dr L. Murugan, met its vice chairs and members in September 2025 (Ministry of External Affairs, 2025; Embassy of India, Seoul, 2026). A delegation of Special Envoys of President Lee, led by Kim Boo-kyum, met the Speaker of India's Lok Sabha on 17 July 2025, roughly six weeks after Lee's inauguration, an early legislative counterpart to the Foreign Minister meeting described in the Political Cooperation pillar. India's MP Bhubhaneswar Kalita, chairman of the parliamentary committee on science, technology, environment, and climate change, participated in the Asia Pacific Parliamentarian Conference on Environment and Development, while Korea's Jaewon Kim, a National Assembly Culture, Sports and Tourism Committee member, visited Delhi and Goa in November 2025 as guest of honour at the International Film Festival of India's Waves Film Bazaar (Ministry of External Affairs, 2025).

This framework treats the standing friendship group, combined with concrete, dated legislative travel in both directions during 2025, as evidence this pillar already has functioning institutional infrastructure rather than needing one built from scratch. The task here is ensuring existing infrastructure is used with the consistency this framework has recommended elsewhere. The pattern visible in 2025, environment committee participation, a special envoy delegation, a cultural committee member's visit, suggests a friendship group that responds actively to opportunities as they arise rather than one operating from a deliberately planned annual calendar, a distinction worth noting given the more structured planning cycles recommended for the industrial task forces in earlier pillars.

Priority Actions

First, the Friendship Group should adopt a published annual work plan rather than relying on individually arranged visits.

Second, thematic sub-tracks should be formalized within the group, each aligned with a specific pillar of this framework, so parliamentary exchange reinforces executive branch cooperation.

Third, the two parliaments should explore a structured committee staff exchange programme, not just member level exchange.

Fourth, governance cooperation should extend to public administration reform and digital governance, building on the AI in public administration discussions described earlier.

Fifth, the Joint Commission should receive a standing annual briefing from the Friendship Group, keeping legislative cooperation visible to and coordinated with the broader institutional architecture.

Sixth, the two parliaments should establish regular exchanges between relevant standing committees, particularly those dealing with foreign affairs, defence, commerce, technology, environment, and social development. Such exchanges would enable legislators to compare policy approaches and develop greater understanding of each country's legislative priorities.

Seventh, India and the Republic of Korea should introduce structured parliamentary capacity-building programmes, including workshops on legislative research, committee procedures, public consultation, and evidence-based policymaking. Parliamentary research staff and legislative officials should be included alongside elected representatives to strengthen institutional knowledge and continuity.

Eighth, the Friendship Group should establish a mechanism for engaging opposition parties and independent legislators, ensuring that parliamentary cooperation remains broad-based and resilient to changes in government. Cross-party engagement would help build sustained political support for the bilateral relationship and prevent parliamentary diplomacy from becoming dependent on a single political formation.

Ninth, both parliaments should encourage greater interaction between younger legislators and emerging political leaders, including dedicated youth parliamentary dialogues and leadership exchanges. Such initiatives would create long-term institutional relationships and ensure that future generations of political leaders possess a deeper understanding of India–Korea relations and their strategic importance.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility rests with the Speaker of India's Lok Sabha and Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, and the Speaker of Korea's National Assembly, with the Korea-India Parliamentary Friendship Group as the standing mechanism. Read alongside Culture and Heritage Cooperation preceding it and Legal and Judicial Cooperation that follows.

28. Legal and Judicial Cooperation

Overview

Legal and Judicial Cooperation is, relative to several pillars addressed immediately before it, an area with a comparatively long and settled institutional history, anchored by a bilateral treaty considerably older than the Special Strategic Partnership itself.

Current Status

Negotiations between India and the Republic of Korea toward an extradition treaty and a treaty on mutual legal assistance in criminal matters were held in Seoul from 1 to 3 July 2002 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea, 2002). Those negotiations concluded in a bilateral extradition treaty between the two countries in 2004, a treaty that remains in force today and appears consistently on India's official list of extradition partners maintained by the Ministry of Home Affairs (Ministry of Home Affairs, India, 2024; Wikipedia, 2026). This framework treats the 2004 treaty's consistent appearance across multiple independent government and reference listings as reliable confirmation of its currency, in contrast to the disputed status this framework encountered when researching labour migration channels in an earlier pillar. This contrast is itself instructive: Legal and Judicial Cooperation, precisely because it operates through formal treaty instruments subject to parliamentary ratification and public gazetting, tends to leave a clearer documentary trail than administrative arrangements such as labour permit quotas, which can change by ministerial notification with considerably less public record keeping.

Judicial cooperation beyond extradition has continued at the institutional level. India's Justice K. Vinod Chandran participated as a panelist at the fifth International Symposium of the Association of Asian Constitutional Courts in August 2025, appearing alongside justices from the Republic of Korea's Supreme Court and Constitutional Court. This framework notes that this contact occurred within a multilateral judicial forum rather than through a dedicated bilateral exchange mechanism, echoing the multilateral rather than bilateral character of the disaster response cooperation identified earlier, a further instance of cooperation riding on shared multilateral membership rather than standing on a dedicated bilateral foundation.

Priority Actions

First, the 2004 extradition treaty should be reviewed jointly for modernization to address cybercrime and financial fraud connected to the digital payment interoperability described earlier in this framework.

Second, the two governments should conclude a dedicated mutual legal assistance treaty in criminal matters if one does not already exist alongside the extradition treaty.

Third, judicial exchange at the level demonstrated by the AACC symposium should be formalized into a regular bilateral judicial dialogue.

Fourth, legal cooperation should extend to commercial and investment dispute resolution mechanisms, given the scale of industrial investment described in earlier pillars.

Fifth, a joint legal training exchange for prosecutors and investigating officers, focused on financial crime and cyber security, would build practical relationships that treaty level cooperation alone does not guarantee.

Sixth, both countries should establish a dedicated India–Korea working group on cybercrime and digital evidence, bringing together law-enforcement agencies, prosecutors, forensic experts, and relevant technology authorities. The group should develop protocols for the preservation, authentication, and cross-border sharing of electronic evidence while ensuring that cooperation remains consistent with each country's legal and privacy frameworks.

Seventh, the two governments should strengthen cooperation against money laundering, terrorist financing, and other forms of transnational financial crime, including through information-sharing between relevant financial intelligence and enforcement authorities. Regular joint training and case-based workshops could improve the ability of both countries to identify complex financial networks and respond effectively to emerging risks.

Eighth, India and the Republic of Korea should develop a structured programme for cooperation on intellectual property rights and technology-related legal issues, particularly in sectors such as semiconductors, artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and advanced manufacturing. Exchange programmes involving patent authorities, legal professionals, and technology regulators could help create greater predictability for businesses and encourage cross-border innovation.

Ninth, both sides should establish a regular dialogue on emerging legal challenges arising from artificial intelligence and digital technologies, including data governance, algorithmic accountability, online fraud, and the legal status of emerging technologies. Cooperation in these areas would help both countries develop compatible approaches while ensuring that technological innovation remains supported by effective legal safeguards.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility rests with India's Ministry of Law and Justice and Ministry of Home Affairs, and Korea's Ministry of Justice. Read alongside Parliamentary and Governance Cooperation preceding it and Multilateral and Regional Cooperation that follows.

29. Multilateral and Regional Cooperation

Overview

Multilateral and Regional Cooperation addresses the positions India and the Republic of Korea take toward each other within global and regional institutions, distinct from the strictly bilateral mechanisms described throughout the rest of this framework.

Current Status

The two governments have used the April 2026 Joint Strategic Vision to reaffirm shared multilateral positions established over the preceding decade: support for UN Security Council reform, support for phased and peaceful Korean Peninsula denuclearization, commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific, and joint condemnation of cross border terrorism reaffirmed following the Pahalgam attack of April 2025. The Republic of Korea has also indicated support for India's eventual Nuclear Suppliers Group membership, a position of particular significance given the emerging civil nuclear discussions described in the Energy Cooperation pillar.

Beyond these standing positions, the two countries' leaders maintained contact at successive multilateral summits, including the G7 summit at Kananaskis in June 2025, where India participated as an invited outreach partner, and the G20 summit in Johannesburg in November 2025, both preceding the April 2026 bilateral summit. This framework reads that sequencing as evidence the April 2026 summit did not emerge from a diplomatic vacuum but was preceded by a full year of accumulating leader level familiarity across shared multilateral settings, familiarity that likely eased negotiation of the more detailed bilateral commitments described throughout the pillars preceding this one.

Priority Actions

First, the two governments should establish a standing pre-summit coordination mechanism ahead of major multilateral gatherings, so shared positions are actively coordinated rather than emerging incidentally.

Second, Korea's stated support for India's NSG membership should become an explicit, trackable advocacy commitment within nonproliferation forums rather than a general statement of sympathy.

Third, the two countries should explore joint positions within Indo-Pacific regional architecture, including the East Asia Summit and ASEAN Regional Forum.

Fourth, UNSC reform cooperation should be paired with concrete mutual support during India's future Security Council candidacies and Korea's own non-permanent terms.

Fifth, Korea should provide India regular bilateral briefings on inter-Korean developments, given India's comparatively limited direct channels on the Korean Peninsula.

Sixth, India and the Republic of Korea should establish an annual strategic dialogue on global governance, bringing together officials, diplomats, academics, and policy experts to examine developments in the United Nations, G20, Indo-Pacific institutions, and other multilateral forums. The dialogue should identify areas where coordinated diplomatic positions can advance shared interests while preserving each country's independent foreign-policy priorities.

Seventh, both countries should strengthen cooperation on emerging global challenges, particularly climate change, energy security, food security, public health, and disaster resilience. Coordinated positions and joint initiatives in relevant multilateral forums could demonstrate the practical value of the India–Korea partnership beyond traditional diplomatic and economic issues.

Eighth, India and Korea should increase coordination on peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance, including the exchange of training, operational experience, and best practices. Joint participation in capacity-building programmes and humanitarian response initiatives could strengthen their contribution to international peace and security while creating greater practical cooperation between their institutions.

Ninth, the two governments should establish a mechanism for coordinating positions on international economic governance, particularly within institutions such as the G20, WTO, IMF, and World Bank. Cooperation should focus on issues including resilient supply chains, digital trade, development financing, sustainable infrastructure, and reforms that better reflect the interests of emerging and advanced economies.

Tenth, both countries should expand diplomatic cooperation on global technology governance, including artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, digital public infrastructure, and emerging technologies. Regular consultations before relevant international negotiations could help India and Korea develop complementary approaches to responsible technology governance and strengthen their collective influence in shaping international norms and standards.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility rests with India's Ministry of External Affairs and Korea's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, coordinated through the Foreign Policy and Security Dialogue. Read alongside Legal and Judicial Cooperation preceding it and Sustainable Development Cooperation that follows.

30. Sustainable Development Cooperation

Overview

Sustainable Development Cooperation concerns development assistance and alignment on the UN Sustainable Development Goals, distinct from the carbon market mechanisms described in the Environmental and Climate Cooperation pillar, with which this pillar necessarily overlaps at the margins.

Current Status

The April 2026 joint statement's financial cooperation provisions referenced continuing engagement between Korea's development finance institutions and India, consistent with the Korea International Cooperation Agency's role as Korea's principal development assistance vehicle. This framework did not identify a dedicated bilateral sustainable development framework or joint SDG implementation plan comparable in specificity to the Article 6.2 carbon agreement described earlier.

This framework treats this pillar's thinness as different in character from the clearer gaps found in Water Resources or Disaster Management Cooperation. Sustainable development cuts across nearly every other pillar, from green hydrogen to smart agriculture, such that much of what could be called sustainable development cooperation is already occurring, simply organized under other pillars' more specific headings rather than a unified banner. This framework considers it a labelling and coordination problem rather than a substantive absence of activity, distinguishing the recommendations below from the more foundational gap closing measures recommended elsewhere.

Priority Actions

First, the two governments should commission a consolidated mapping exercise identifying every SDG relevant activity already underway across the other thirty pillars, producing one coherent account rather than a scattered one.

Second, KOICA's development assistance activities relevant to India should be documented and reported jointly with India's own development cooperation efforts.

Third, given India's role as both recipient and provider of development assistance, trilateral cooperation, Korean financing plus Indian delivery capacity, in third countries should be explored.

Fourth, the sustainable development dimension of the Andhra Pradesh agricultural proposal described earlier should be made explicit and tracked against specific SDG indicators.

Fifth, a single nodal agency on each side should be designated as the coordinating point for SDG related reporting across the relationship.

Sixth, both governments should establish an annual India–Korea Sustainable Development Dialogue bringing together government agencies, development institutions, universities, businesses, and civil society organisations. The dialogue should review progress across relevant SDGs, identify implementation gaps, and develop practical projects in areas such as poverty reduction, clean energy, education, healthcare, and sustainable urban development.

Seventh, India and the Republic of Korea should develop a joint financing mechanism for selected SDG-focused projects, combining Korean development finance, Indian public resources, and where appropriate, private-sector investment. Priority could be given to projects involving renewable energy, water management, sustainable transport, digital inclusion, and climate-resilient infrastructure.

Eighth, both countries should strengthen cooperation on SDG data collection and measurement, including the use of digital technologies, satellite data, artificial intelligence, and geospatial tools to monitor development outcomes. Shared methodologies and technical exchanges could improve the reliability and comparability of progress indicators while supporting evidence-based policymaking.

Ninth, the two governments should expand cooperation on capacity-building for local governments, enabling Indian states and Korean municipalities to exchange practical experience on sustainable urban planning, waste management, public transport, energy efficiency, and climate adaptation. Sub-national cooperation would help translate national SDG commitments into measurable outcomes at the community level.

Tenth, India and Korea should establish a joint annual SDG progress report assessing achievements, financial commitments, ongoing projects, and measurable outcomes across the bilateral relationship. The report should identify areas requiring additional resources or policy attention and provide a transparent mechanism for tracking progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals through 2030.

Eleventh, both countries should strengthen cooperation on youth participation in sustainable development, creating opportunities for Indian and Korean students, researchers, entrepreneurs, and civil society organisations to develop joint SDG-focused projects. Youth-led initiatives in climate action, education, digital inclusion, sustainable agriculture, and community development could generate innovative solutions while building long-term people-to-people partnerships.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility rests with India's Ministry of Finance and NITI Aayog, and Korea's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and KOICA. Read alongside Multilateral and Regional Cooperation preceding it and Innovation and Entrepreneurship Cooperation that follows.

31. Innovation and Entrepreneurship Cooperation

Overview

Innovation and Entrepreneurship Cooperation closes the thirty one pillars of this framework, and this framework finds it fitting that the final pillar is, unlike several immediately preceding it, one of the more concretely active areas of the relationship, driven substantially by private initiative rather than government programming alone.

Current Status

Unicorn Incubator, founded in 2018 and describing itself as the only dedicated Korea-India cross-border accelerator, operates dual India Launchpad and Korea Launchpad programmes helping startups from each country enter the other's market, built on partnerships with the Indian Institutes of Technology at Delhi and Kanpur and Korea's Seoul Business Agency and Korea Venture Business Association (ThePrint, 2025). By April 2026, it had graduated more than sixty five startups across mobility, agricultural technology, and medical technology, and runs a technology exchange initiative named Tech Marwari, an explicit reference to the historical trading networks of India's Marwari merchant community (ThePrint, 2025). Most recently, Unicorn Incubator signed a memorandum with Blockchain For Impact, an eighty billion rupee Indian health impact fund, in April 2026, to channel Korean healthcare technology, including AI diagnostics and robotic medical hardware, into India's healthcare market (The Wire, 2026). This framework treats that healthcare technology memorandum as a direct, private sector response to precisely the gap identified in the Healthcare and Public Health Cooperation pillar earlier in this document, evidence that private innovation cooperation is, in this instance, moving faster than the government to government healthcare cooperation this framework found largely absent.

India's government has formally recognized this relationship through a dedicated India-Korea Startup Hub on the national Startup India portal, and the two governments concluded a memorandum on startup cooperation in 2019. For comparative scale, Korea's own startup ecosystem has grown roughly tenfold over the past decade, with an explicit government target of fifty new unicorns by 2030.

Priority Actions

First, the 2019 government memorandum on startup cooperation should be refreshed alongside the newer 2026 mechanisms.

Second, the Blockchain For Impact partnership should be treated as a template, with government facilitation sought for comparable private partnerships in semiconductors, shipbuilding, and green hydrogen.

Third, India should establish a formal channel connecting Indian startups to Korea's fifty unicorn by 2030 funding programme.

Fourth, Unicorn Incubator's university partnership model should expand beyond IIT Delhi and Kanpur, building on the academic cooperation described earlier.

Fifth, a joint annual innovation summit should track private sector cooperation with the same institutional visibility recommended for government mechanisms throughout this document.

Sixth, both governments should establish a bilateral startup accelerator programme, providing selected Indian and Korean startups with mentorship, market access, regulatory guidance, and opportunities to test their products in the partner country's market. The programme should prioritize sectors aligned with the broader strategic partnership, including artificial intelligence, semiconductors, biotechnology, fintech, climate technology, and advanced manufacturing.

Seventh, India and the Republic of Korea should create a dedicated cross-border venture capital and angel investor network, connecting investors, founders, and technology companies from both countries. Regular investor forums and matchmaking programmes could facilitate access to capital while encouraging joint ventures and technology partnerships between emerging companies.

Eighth, both countries should strengthen cooperation on technology commercialization and intellectual property, enabling universities and research institutions to move promising research from laboratories into commercial applications. Joint technology-transfer programmes, patent cooperation, and industry-academic partnerships could accelerate innovation while creating opportunities for Indian and Korean enterprises.

Ninth, the two governments should establish a mechanism to support the international expansion of successful startups from both countries, including simplified regulatory guidance, market-entry support, business networking, and connections with local investors and distributors. Such a mechanism would help ensure that bilateral startup cooperation produces sustained commercial outcomes rather than remaining limited to conferences, incubators, and individual partnerships.

Institutional Responsibility

Primary responsibility rests with India's Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade and Startup India, and Korea's Ministry of SMEs and Startups, with Unicorn Incubator as the principal operational bridge. This closes the framework's thirty one pillars, feeding back into the Investment and Industrial Cooperation pillars addressed earlier.

Implementation Framework

Institutional Mechanisms

Overview

The thirty one pillars examined in this framework are not held together by a single institution but by a layered architecture operating at three distinct levels: the summit level, the ministerial level, and the working or technical level. This section consolidates the individual mechanisms introduced across the preceding pillars into a single, coherent institutional map, identifies which mechanism is responsible for which pillar, and flags the specific gaps this framework encountered where no institutional home currently exists.

The Summit Level

At the apex sits the relationship between India's Prime Minister and the Republic of Korea's President, most recently expressed through President Lee Jae Myung's State Visit to India from 19 to 21 April 2026 and the resulting Joint Strategic Vision for 2026 to 2030. The Political Cooperation pillar recommended this level be placed on a fixed biennial or triennial rhythm rather than left to leaders' discretion, a recommendation this section treats as foundational, since every mechanism below it ultimately depends on summit level authorization for its mandate.

Beneath the leader relationship sits the Joint Commission, the long standing apex intergovernmental mechanism, referenced at several points in this framework as the body to which under-institutionalized matters should be escalated. This framework's research found the Joint Commission's own meeting cadence less consistently documented than the newer 2026 mechanisms, a gap addressed in the priority actions below.

The Ministerial Level

The April 2026 summit substantially expanded this layer. The Industrial Cooperation Committee now holds responsibility, directly or through subordinate task forces, for Investment, Energy, Artificial Intelligence, and Industrial and Manufacturing Cooperation, making it, alongside the Joint Commission, one of the two most consequential bodies in this framework. The inaugural 2+2 Dialogue at the Vice Minister level holds primary responsibility for Defence and Security Cooperation and shares responsibility for Political and Diplomatic Cooperation. The Financial Cooperation Forum holds responsibility for Financial Cooperation and shares responsibility, through the NPCI-KFTC memorandum, for the digital public infrastructure dimension of Digital and Cyber Security Cooperation.

Several ministerial mechanisms predate 2026. The Joint Committee reviewing CEPA implementation annually holds primary responsibility for Economic and Trade Cooperation. The Joint Committee of Science and Technology Ministers, considerably older, anchors Science, Technology and Innovation Cooperation. This framework found no equivalent

standing ministerial mechanism for Healthcare, Gender Equality, or Disaster Management Cooperation, consistent with the specific gaps identified pillar by pillar.

The Working and Technical Level

Beneath the ministerial mechanisms operates a dense layer of working groups and dialogues. The Foreign Policy and Security Dialogue, sixth round held in Seoul in February 2026, supports Political and Diplomatic Cooperation. The task forces on AI, data governance, and semiconductors provide the working level substance behind the technology pillars. The Korea-India Future Strategy Group and the India-Korea Centre for Research and Innovation Cooperation, both dating to 2018, continue supporting Science, Technology and Innovation Cooperation, though this framework recommended their current activity levels be formally assessed. The Parliamentary Friendship Group provides the institutional home for Parliamentary and Governance Cooperation.

This review also surfaced mechanisms whose actual activity level could not be adequately verified: the 2018 sports and tourism memoranda, the 2020 defence roadmap prior to reinvigoration, and the 2025 ISRO-KASA memorandum. This framework treats the distinction between mechanisms that are absent and mechanisms that exist but appear dormant as analytically important, since the two conditions call for different remedies, negotiation of a new instrument in the first case, activation or review of an existing one in the second.

Resourcing and Staffing Across the Architecture

A related concern cuts across this map: whether each mechanism is adequately staffed. The Industrial Cooperation Committee and its task forces, with direct summit level authorization, appear well positioned to attract secretariat support. Older mechanisms such as the Joint Commission and IKCRI receive considerably less public attention, and this framework could not determine whether either maintains dedicated staff distinct from officials holding the relevant portfolio as one responsibility among many. Adequate secretariat capacity is a precondition for the published work plans and fixed calendars recommended throughout this document, since a mechanism without dedicated staff time tends over time toward the irregular, opportunity driven activity identified in Sports and Parliamentary Cooperation specifically.

Interaction Between Levels

A layered architecture functions poorly if information does not flow between levels. The clearest example of effective vertical integration is the pathway from the Foreign Policy and Security Dialogue, through the 2+2 Dialogue, up to the State Visit itself, a sequence that appears to have functioned as intended ahead of April 2026. The weaker examples are the pillars this framework has flagged as institutionally thin, where the absence of a working or ministerial mechanism means summit level attention has no channel through which to

translate into sustained follow up, leaving even a positive mention, such as the general reference to nuclear power plant projects, without a clear working level owner.

A Consolidated Institutional Map

This framework identifies four categories of coverage. First, pillars with well developed, newly reinforced mechanisms: Investment, Energy, Defence and Security, Financial, and AI Cooperation. Second, pillars with older, established mechanisms still functioning: Economic and Trade, Science and Technology, Space, and Legal and Judicial Cooperation. Third, pillars with a mechanism of uncertain current activity: Sports Cooperation and, to a lesser extent, Academic Cooperation beyond individual university agreements. Fourth, pillars with no identified dedicated mechanism at all: Water Resources, Disaster Management, Healthcare, and Gender Equality Cooperation, the four pillars requiring the most fundamental institution building.

Priority Actions

First, the Joint Commission's meeting cadence should be published and fixed. Second, the four pillars lacking any dedicated mechanism should be treated as a discrete institution building agenda with a fixed proposal timeframe. Third, mechanisms of uncertain activity, the 2018 memoranda in particular, should undergo a formal activity audit. Fourth, a single, publicly accessible institutional directory should be jointly maintained by both foreign ministries. Fifth, newly proposed mechanisms should be reviewed collectively rather than approved piecemeal, avoiding proliferation. Sixth, each mechanism should confirm at least a part time dedicated staff contact as a condition of continued recognition.

Joint Working Groups

Overview

This subsection focuses on the working group and task force layer specifically, the bodies where technical substance is actually negotiated between the ministerial meetings and summits that receive public attention.

Working Groups Established or Reinforced in 2026

The task forces on AI, data governance, and semiconductor design, established under the Industrial Cooperation Committee, translate the AI pillar's priorities into specific projects, guided by the AI for All and MANAV principles. The CEPA upgrade negotiations, organized around sub-groups on goods, services, rules of origin, investment, SPS measures, digital trade, supply chains, and strategic industrial cooperation, constitute the most structurally complex working process this framework examined, twelve rounds completed by May 2026. The ISRO-KASA joint working group, formally activated in April 2026 though resting on a 2025 memorandum, carries responsibility for Space Cooperation.

Working Groups Predating the Current Cycle

The Korea-India Joint Science and Technology Committee, administering the Joint Programme of Cooperation's three year funded projects, has operated for years independently of the newer industrial task forces, a separation this framework recommended be more deliberately connected. The CEPA annual implementation review committee has functioned since shortly after 2010.

Working Groups This Framework Has Recommended Creating

The Energy Working Group would separate nuclear, hydrogen, renewables, and critical minerals into a dedicated track. The cyber security dialogue would connect India's CERT with its Korean counterpart. The joint agricultural technology working group would give sustained attention to a pillar developed so far through sub-national interest rather than formal structure. The joint consular working group would separate citizen welfare from the broader dialogue agendas.

Avoiding Duplication and Mandate Overlap

Several potential overlaps deserve attention. The data governance task force addresses policy frameworks; the cyber security dialogue recommended here would address operational security, a meaningful distinction that requires active management to prevent duplication or, conversely, mutual assumption that the other is covering a given issue. The semiconductor task force and the Joint Programme's material science priority cover overlapping subject matter through entirely separate channels, one industrial and ministerial, the other academic and science-ministry administered. This framework recommends these be formally connected rather than left parallel.

A Working Group Census

This subsection counts at least twelve distinct bodies at this level. A relationship this densely covered by working level mechanisms is not, on the evidence gathered, short of institutional capacity in the aggregate. Its challenge is the uneven distribution of that capacity, concentrated in the industrial and technology pillars found best developed, nearly absent in water resources, disaster management, healthcare, and gender equality. This unevenness is not primarily a resourcing constraint, since both governments evidently found capacity to stand up numerous new task forces within a single summit cycle when the underlying priority commanded sufficient political attention. It is a prioritization pattern, observed consistently enough to describe as a structural feature of this relationship's current phase.

Working Group Membership and Technical Depth

A further consideration concerns not merely how many working groups exist but who sits on them. The best documented task forces, under the Industrial Cooperation Committee, draw on named technical officials from clearly identified agencies. Older mechanisms, including the

Future Strategy Group, were considerably less transparent about current membership, limiting this framework's ability to assess whether they retain the technical depth their founding mandate anticipated or have become primarily ceremonial. Publishing current membership requires no new negotiation, only a decision to make existing information public.

Priority Actions

First, the semiconductor task force and the Joint Programme's material science stream should be formally connected through a shared annual coordination meeting. Second, the four new working groups recommended across this framework's pillars should be established within a single coordinated timeframe rather than negotiated individually. Third, a standing secretariat should maintain a master list of all active working groups, mandates, and meeting dates. Fourth, working groups with potentially overlapping mandates should exchange meeting summaries as standing practice. Fifth, each working group should report at least one measurable output annually to its parent ministerial mechanism. Sixth, every working group should publish the titles and agencies of its current designated members, distinguishing genuinely active bodies from those that retain a name and founding document but have, in practice, become dormant.

Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

Overview

A framework recommending specific numerical targets across thirty one pillars requires an equally specific mechanism for tracking whether those targets are met.

Existing Quantitative Targets Across the Pillars

Several pillars already carry numerical targets drawn directly from government statements: the 50 billion dollar trade target by 2030, the 2027 CEPA conclusion target, the K9 Vajra programme's published local content trajectory from just over 50 to 60 percent, the Korea Tourism Organization's 200,000 arrival target, and KASA's ambition of ranking among the world's five leading aerospace nations. This framework builds its wider architecture on these existing targets rather than proposing to replace them.

Categories of Measurement

This framework proposes four categories: financial and trade flows, including the multiply sourced investment figures and the reverse Indian investment into Korea; institutional activity, meeting frequency for the mechanisms catalogued above; people flows, tourism, student, and language learner figures alongside aviation passenger volumes; and project milestones, discrete events such as fabrication facility completions, howitzer delivery schedules, and the first green hydrogen offtake agreement.

Measurement Gaps Identified Across This Framework

Water Resources, Disaster Management, and Healthcare Cooperation share the characteristic that no single bilateral indicator, financial, institutional, or programmatic, currently exists, as distinct from each country's domestic performance considered independently. Gender Equality Cooperation presents a related case: a relevant indicator exists, the GDP gain from closing labour force participation gaps, but it emerged from a multilateral SAARC process rather than a bilateral metric. The absence of even one bilateral indicator in the first group confirms the institutional thinness identified pillar by pillar.

Data Sources and Reporting Responsibility

Financial data should draw on KITA, India's Commerce Ministry, IBEF, and the Export-Import Bank of Korea, the same sources relied upon throughout this framework's economic pillars, with this framework's own experience reconciling divergent figures suggesting a single jointly agreed methodology would materially help. Institutional activity data should be self-reported by each secretariat. People flow data should draw on immigration and tourism statistics already collected independently, requiring only that the bilateral subset be extracted and jointly reported.

The Risk of Measuring Only What Is Easy

Financial figures are measured well because they exist independent of this relationship; qualitative dimensions this framework has emphasized throughout, the depth of technology transfer in a co-production arrangement, the durability of a cultural narrative, the genuine activity level of an older working group, resist simple quantification and risk systematic underweighting. This framework recommends against letting quantitative scorecards substitute entirely for the qualitative review this document has itself attempted to model.

Priority Actions

First, the two governments should agree on a single, jointly published methodology for headline trade and investment figures. Second, each of the four measurement categories should be assigned a specific lead agency on a fixed annual schedule. Third, pillars lacking any current bilateral indicator should have at least one baseline established within the first year of any new mechanism.

Fourth, a single consolidated scorecard drawing together all thirty one pillars should be prepared for each Joint Commission meeting. Fifth, monitoring data should be made public wherever not commercially or security sensitive.

Sixth, the quantitative scorecard should be paired with a qualitative narrative assessment, so a pillar with few indicators but genuine substance, or impressive figures but shallow activity, can both be identified accurately.

Periodic Review Mechanism

Overview

Where Monitoring and Evaluation specifies what should be measured, this subsection specifies when and by whom it should be reviewed, addressing the risk that data accumulates without anyone specifically tasked with examining it.

A Three Tier Review Calendar

This framework proposes review at three tiers. At the working level, each group reports at least annually to its parent ministerial mechanism. At the ministerial level, an annual review builds on the precedent of CEPA's annual implementation review, extended to the Industrial Cooperation Committee and Financial Cooperation Forum. At the summit level, the Joint Commission convenes a comprehensive review of the full thirty one pillar framework on a fixed biennial cycle, aligned with the leader summit rhythm recommended in Political Cooperation.

The Mid-Term Review in 2028

This framework attaches particular significance to a comprehensive mid-term review scheduled for 2028. This timing is not arbitrary: the Year of Friendship, already designated for 2028 and 2029 and anchored by the Friendship Festival, provides a natural moment of heightened attention a substantive policy review could share, converting what might otherwise be a purely technical exercise into one that benefits from guaranteed visibility. The 2028 review should address, explicitly and by name, each gap identified across this framework's thirty one pillars, reporting concretely on whether the mechanisms recommended for Water Resources, Disaster Management, Healthcare, and Gender Equality Cooperation have actually been established, rather than letting a favourable overall assessment substitute for direct engagement with the weaker pillars.

The 2030 Review and the Next Planning Cycle

A final review should occur in 2030, marking both the end of the current cycle and the point at which the next Joint Strategic Vision would need negotiation. This review should serve explicitly as an input to that negotiation, with the consolidated scorecard as evidentiary basis, rather than treating each five year vision as disconnected from an accounting of the one before it. This framework's own thirty one pillar structure could usefully be revisited at this point, with pillars that have achieved mature institutionalization, such as Investment or Defence and Security Cooperation, potentially consolidated, freeing attention for new priorities.

Escalation Procedures for Underperforming Pillars

A pillar found materially short of its targets at any review, or, for pillars currently lacking any mechanism, showing no progress toward establishing one, should be placed on a formal watch list with a remediation plan due before the next review. A pillar remaining on that list across two consecutive annual reviews should escalate to the biennial Joint Commission review, ensuring persistent underperformance reaches officials with authority to resolve the underlying obstacle. This framework anticipates Water Resources and Healthcare Cooperation would be strong candidates for this procedure if the recommended actions are not substantially underway by the first annual review. The intent is not punitive but a structural guarantee that documented gaps are not simply absorbed into the relationship's general texture and forgotten, a real risk given how much positive activity elsewhere competes for attention at any given review.

Priority Actions

First, the three tier calendar should be formally adopted and published. Second, the 2028 mid-term review should be explicitly scoped in advance to require direct reporting on each identified gap. Third, the escalation procedure should be formalized with specific, published timeframes. Fourth, the 2030 review should be explicitly linked to the next Joint Strategic Vision's negotiation. Fifth, this framework's own pillar structure should be treated as a living document subject to revision in 2030, not a fixed architecture.

Roadmap for Future Cooperation

Strategic Vision 2050

Overview

This subsection sets out a strategic vision for 2050, a horizon chosen deliberately to sit just beyond both India's centenary target of Viksit Bharat in 2047 and the Republic of Korea's stated ambitions of ranking among the world's five leading shipbuilding and aerospace nations by roughly the same period, and its considerably longer horizon goal of a Mars mission in 2045. A relationship whose most ambitious current commitments already reach toward the late 2040s cannot be planned only in five year increments.

From Narrow Trade Relationship to Diversified Strategic Partnership

By 2050, this framework's strategic vision anticipates the transition described in the Vision for the Two Nations substantially complete. Bilateral trade, having reached the 50 billion dollar target set for 2030, should have grown several fold beyond that figure, with naphtha no longer constituting the largest category of India's exports to Korea. Korean cumulative investment, measured with the more complete methodology this framework recommended, one capturing locally reinvested capital alongside cross border flows, should place Korea meaningfully closer to India's largest sources of foreign investment rather than the thirteenth ranked position documented as of 2025.

A Fully Realized Co-Production Architecture

The K9 Vajra programme should by 2050 have been replicated across multiple additional platform categories. This framework's vision anticipates Indian and Korean firms jointly designing, not merely jointly producing, defence and civilian platforms by then. The semiconductor partnership, centred as of 2026 on fabrication and assembly, should extend to joint chip design, Indian and Korean engineering teams collaborating on next generation architectures rather than India functioning primarily as a manufacturing location for designs originating elsewhere.

Closing the Institutional Gaps Identified in This Framework

This framework's vision for 2050 anticipates that its documentation of four pillars, Water Resources, Disaster Management, Healthcare, and Gender Equality Cooperation, lacking any dedicated bilateral mechanism, will read as a historical curiosity rather than a continuing description of the relationship. A relationship that by 2050 still lacked a functioning bilateral disaster response mechanism between two countries this capable of individually managing disasters would represent a clear failure of the institution building programme this document has set out.

Cultural and Human Foundations Matched to Institutional Depth

The youth cultural engagement and language learning momentum documented in this framework, already running ahead of formal government cooperation, should by 2050 have matured into a self sustaining bilingual, bicultural professional class in both countries. The Ayodhya-Gaya legend should by then anchor a mature, well documented cultural exchange programme rather than remaining primarily a diplomatic talking point invoked at set piece events.

A Relationship No Longer Defined by Comparison

This framework anticipates a relationship mature enough that its comparisons to Singapore's or the United States's investment figures become progressively less relevant, not because those partnerships stagnate, but because this relationship will stand on its own terms, defined by what it has itself built.

A Two Way Relationship in Substance, Not Only in Statement

This framework's vision for 2050 anticipates reciprocity, Indian investment into Korea, Indian technical contribution to Korean space and semiconductor ambitions, becoming the relationship's self evident characteristic, discussed as readily as the flows moving the other direction, rather than requiring deliberate effort to surface, as this framework's own research repeatedly did.

The Next Generation of Joint Strategic Visions

By 2050, the relationship should have progressed through at least four successive five year Joint Strategic Vision cycles beyond 2026 to 2030, each incorporating the lessons of its predecessor. This framework's own thirty one pillar architecture should itself have been revised through at least one, and plausibly several, of the reviews recommended here, a relationship confident enough in its own maturity to reshape the framework used to describe it.

Short-Term Priorities (1-5 Years)

Overview

This subsection consolidates, into a single agenda covering roughly 2026 to 2031, the most urgent priority actions recommended across this framework's thirty one pillars and Implementation Framework.

Concluding Unfinished Negotiations

The single most consequential priority is concluding the CEPA upgrade, targeted for 2027, already twelve rounds into a process this framework treated as the clearest test of whether April 2026's political commitments become a binding instrument. Alongside this, at least one

firm, commercially binding green hydrogen or ammonia offtake agreement should be concluded under the Article 6.2 arrangement.

Closing the Four Institutional Gaps

This framework treats establishing dedicated mechanisms for Water Resources, Disaster Management, Healthcare, and Gender Equality Cooperation as non-negotiable within this window, since disaster and health cooperation in particular require comparatively little negotiation over sensitive terms. The Water Resources memorandum with K-water and the disaster management memorandum modelled on India's existing Germany agreement are the two most immediately achievable, given clear templates already available.

Activating Dormant Mechanisms

The 2018 sports and tourism memoranda should undergo the formal activity audit recommended in the Institutional Mechanisms subsection within the first year, with a clear determination of renewal, updating, or replacement.

Delivering the Physical and Institutional Milestones Already in Motion

The second K9 Vajra batch should complete delivery. The HD Hyundai Tamil Nadu joint venture should progress to physical construction. India's approved semiconductor projects should begin production, with Tata Semiconductor's Dholera facility as the leading indicator. The Mumbai Korea Center should open, and the 2028 Friendship Festival should be delivered as planned, ideally alongside completion of the memorial park examined in Culture and Heritage Cooperation.

Expanding Connectivity

The single Delhi-Seoul air route should expand, with new nonstop connections to at least one of Chennai, Bengaluru, or Mumbai serving as this framework's preferred, concrete measure of follow through on the recommendations made throughout this document.

Establishing the New Working Groups

The four new working groups recommended, on energy, cyber security, agricultural technology, and consular affairs, should be established within a coordinated timeframe early in this period.

Sequencing Considerations

The institutional gap closing agenda, given its lower negotiating complexity, should be substantially complete within the first two years, freeing attention for the CEPA and connectivity negotiations in years two through four. The physical milestones will proceed largely on their own industrial timelines regardless of diplomatic sequencing.

Risks to This Short Term Agenda

Two risks stand out: the demonstrated volatility of Korean domestic politics, which could disrupt sustained ministerial attention if a future government deprioritizes the relationship, and the risk that well resourced, high visibility pillars continue absorbing disproportionate bureaucratic attention, leaving the institutional gap agenda perpetually deferred, precisely the pattern the escalation procedure was designed to prevent.

The 2028 Mid-Term Review as the Period's Culmination

This period should culminate in the 2028 mid-term review, assessing progress against every priority named here, giving this five year period a clear, dated point of accountability at its midpoint.

Medium-Term Priorities (5-15 Years)

Overview

This subsection addresses roughly 2031 to 2041, the last reasonable window to correct course before the 2050 vision becomes implausible to achieve on schedule, should the short term priorities stall.

Consolidating a Second Generation of Institutional Mechanisms

By this period's start, the four institutional gaps should have progressed from establishment to operational maturity, multiple meeting cycles conducted, baseline monitoring indicators generated, ideally at least one concrete joint project delivered. This is the period in which these four pillars either join the ranks of the well institutionalized, or reveal themselves as lower genuine priorities than their short term establishment suggested, a distinction the escalation procedure is designed to surface.

From Pilot Projects to Systematic Programmes

The specific pilots recommended for the short term, one hydrogen offtake agreement, one new co-production platform, one water resources demonstration city, should by now be evaluated and, where successful, systematically replicated. The CEPA upgrade should have generated its own successor negotiation, compressing the decade and a half gap between the original 2010 agreement and its 2026 upgrade process.

Maturing the Technology Partnerships

The semiconductor partnership should progress toward joint chip design during this period rather than waiting for the long term horizon. KASA's stated 2032 lunar lander goal falls within this window, and the ISRO-KASA working group should treat it as a concrete opportunity for the technical exchange recommended in the Space Cooperation pillar.

Addressing Structural Trade and Investment Imbalances

The trade deficit and investment asymmetry should show measurable improvement, not merely continued growth in absolute volumes, which already occurred over the preceding decade without correcting the underlying imbalance. A narrowing of the naphtha dominated export composition is the specific indicator against which the CEPA upgrade's actual rebalancing effect should be judged.

Connectivity and Human Capital at Scale

The single air route should have become a genuine multi city network. Korean language education should have produced its first substantial cohort of fluent Indian professionals entering the workforce. The K-Dream Stage competition and its successors should by now have operated for over a decade.

A Second Mid-Course Review

A dedicated comprehensive review, positioned around 2036, structured identically to 2028's, ensures the span to the long term horizon does not proceed a full decade without structured accountability.

Regional and Multilateral Positioning at Maturity

Shared multilateral positions should have moved from statements of alignment to demonstrated mutual support during specific votes and campaigns. Should India achieve NSG membership within this period, that would meaningfully accelerate the civil nuclear cooperation this framework found resting on a largely dormant 2010 memorandum.

Institutional Confidence to Streamline

Working groups that have achieved their purpose or shown persistent overlap should be formally merged or retired, a sign of institutional confidence rather than failure.

Long-Term Strategic Goals (15-30 Years)

Overview

This final subsection addresses roughly 2041 to 2056, extending beyond the 2050 milestone since a thirty year horizon measured from 2026 reaches into the mid 2050s. This subsection treats 2050 not as this framework's final destination but as a milestone within a longer trajectory.

India's Centenary and Korea's Own Long-Term Milestones as Shared Reference Points

This period encompasses India's 2047 centenary and KASA's own Mars mission target of 2045. This framework's long term goal is that by the time both milestones pass, the relationship will be substantively integrated into each country's own long term national projects: Indian semiconductor and shipbuilding capacity meaningfully strengthened by Korean partnerships as India approaches its centennial goals, and Korean deep space ambitions meaningfully informed by the mission design exchange recommended in Space Cooperation.

A Relationship Measured in Decades of Institutional Continuity

By this period's end, the relationship will have operated under six or more successive Joint Strategic Vision cycles, a duration exceeding the entire Special Strategic Partnership designation's existence at this framework's time of writing. The periodic review and escalation mechanisms should by then have been tested across multiple full cycles, including at least one genuine institutional consolidation and at least one successful invocation of the escalation procedure.

The Four Institutional Gaps as a Closed Chapter

By this horizon's end, Water Resources, Disaster Management, Healthcare, and Gender Equality Cooperation should be indistinguishable, in institutional depth and visibility, from the pillars this framework found already well developed. A future review should find no occasion to repeat this framework's finding that Korea does not appear on India's list of bilateral disaster management partners.

A Genuinely Reciprocal Innovation Economy

Unicorn Incubator's model should have scaled well beyond its 2026 base into a mature, bidirectional innovation ecosystem, founders, engineers, and investors moving between the two countries with the ease recommended for aviation, visa, and academic exchange elsewhere in this document.

Closing Statement on the Long-Term Horizon

This framework does not claim to predict with confidence what this relationship, India's own trajectory, or Korea's political and economic circumstances will actually look like three decades on. What this framework has attempted, across its thirty one pillars, Implementation Framework, and this Roadmap, is a structured, honest baseline as of 2026, naming both genuine strengths and specific, documented gaps without exaggerating the former or obscuring the latter, so that whoever revisits this relationship across the coming decades has a clear record against which to measure what actually changed.

End Note

This framework began with an Executive Summary describing a relationship at an inflection point, and it closes, thirty one pillars, an Implementation Framework, and a Roadmap later, with a more textured and, this framework hopes, more honest picture of what that inflection point actually looks like up close. The India-Republic of Korea relationship examined throughout this document is not a single story of steady, uniform progress. It is, instead, a relationship advancing rapidly and concretely in some domains, semiconductors, shipbuilding, defence co-production, carbon markets, while remaining genuinely underdeveloped in others, water resources, disaster management, healthcare, gender equality, in ways this framework has tried to document precisely rather than paper over with the kind of uniformly positive language that a document produced closer to either government might have been inclined to use.

This unevenness is not, in this framework's assessment, a reason for pessimism about the relationship as a whole. A partnership that has, within a single year surrounding the April 2026 State Visit, concluded twelve rounds of trade negotiations, signed a carbon market agreement, launched a technology bridge, held its first bilateral naval exercise, and doubled down on a defence co-production programme already delivering rising local content, has demonstrated a capacity for concrete action that many bilateral relationships with a longer formal history cannot claim. The specific gaps this framework has identified are, for the most part, gaps of attention and sequencing rather than gaps of capability. Both India and the Republic of Korea individually possess sophisticated disaster management systems, developed healthcare sectors, and active gender equality institutions. What this framework has found missing is not the underlying capacity on either side, but the specific, deliberate act of connecting that capacity bilaterally, an act considerably less demanding than the semiconductor fabrication facilities, shipyards, and howitzer production lines the relationship has already successfully built together.

This framework has also tried to model, throughout its pillars, a particular way of writing about a bilateral relationship: one that cites its sources precisely, states plainly when those sources disagree with each other, as they did over India's status within Korea's Employment Permit System, and treats the absence of evidence for a claim as more useful to a reader than a confident assertion invented to fill a gap. This framework's own architecture, adapted from an earlier document prepared for a different bilateral relationship, is offered in the same spirit, a structure this framework hopes will prove useful not because it is original, but because a common architecture, applied honestly and consistently to different relationships, allows the relationships themselves to be compared and learned from in ways that bespoke, one off assessments cannot easily support.

The two nations examined in this framework are separated by more distance, in most conventional senses, than most of India's other strategic partners, and connected by a shared history considerably thinner than the deep, centuries old ties India maintains with several of its neighbours, resting instead on a decade of formal Special Strategic Partnership status, a

newly signed set of 2026 agreements, and, if the legend examined in the Culture and Heritage Cooperation pillar is given weight, a single, ancient, and only partially verifiable royal marriage. From that comparatively thin foundation, this framework has documented a relationship building, with real speed in several domains, toward the considerably more substantial partnership its own thirty one pillars describe. Whether that building continues at the pace of the past year, or slows back toward the more modest trajectory of the decade preceding it, is a question this document cannot answer. Only the two governments, and the institutional mechanisms this framework has recommended they strengthen, can answer it, over the years this framework's own Roadmap has attempted to look ahead toward.

The central opportunity, therefore, lies in converting momentum into institutional depth. Agreements and summit-level announcements can establish direction, but durable bilateral partnerships are ultimately measured by what continues between summits: officials who communicate regularly, businesses that invest with confidence, researchers who collaborate across borders, students who study in one another's institutions, armed forces that train together, and communities that develop a genuine familiarity with one another. The recommendations across these thirty one pillars are intended to provide that connective tissue. Their value will not lie in the number of mechanisms created, but in whether those mechanisms produce measurable outcomes, survive changes in political leadership, and gradually make cooperation routine rather than exceptional.

The India–Republic of Korea relationship consequently enters its next phase with both significant promise and clear responsibilities. India brings its scale, growing technological and industrial capabilities, strategic position, and expanding global role; Korea brings advanced manufacturing expertise, technological depth, investment capacity, and a demonstrated ability to translate strategic priorities into industrial outcomes. The strongest partnership will be one in which these strengths become complementary rather than parallel. If the two countries can institutionalise the progress already achieved while systematically addressing the areas that remain underdeveloped, the relationship can evolve from a promising strategic partnership into a genuinely comprehensive one. That outcome is neither inevitable nor guaranteed. It will depend on sustained political commitment, institutional discipline, and the willingness of both countries to invest not only in the highly visible successes, but also in the quieter forms of cooperation that ultimately determine whether a bilateral relationship endures.

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