

India ready to join Apec, US to help

NEW DELHI: India is ready to join Apec ([Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation](#)) and the US has committed to facilitating an Indian membership. This, say Indian and US sources, is key to India's economic integration in the Asia-Pacific region and build Indian dominance of the Indian Ocean region. India's Apec membership should be seen with the US-India decision on Sunday to cooperate in building aircraft carriers for India.

This is the more important strategic vision outlined on Sunday, where it says seemingly innocuously, "US welcomes India's interest in joining the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, as the Indian economy is a dynamic part of the Asian economy."

India was invited to the Apec summit in Beijing in 2014 by the Chinese president, Xi Jinping, but no invitation to join the grouping was made by the Chinese president. India had said then a membership would have to be supported by the US. On Sunday, the US agreed to help India's case.

This will be huge for India. India missed the Apec bus initially and thereafter membership was closed until 2011. It was believed that India would have to undertake tough domestic reforms to bring its systems up to speed to join a high-power economic grouping of this nature.

Meanwhile, the US unveiled Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP), which took economic integration among countries (other than China) to the next level. By committing to joining Apec, India has indicated it was willing to undertake domestic reforms.

More important, India has signed up to the US vision first outlined by former secretary of state Hillary Clinton that India would be the linchpin of US' "rebalancing" in Asia. In the Asia-Pacific, India and US will focus on the East Asia Summit.

In the Indian Ocean, India will work more closely with US and Japan to build its maritime footprint. The decision to cooperate on building aircraft carriers comes months after the US agreed to provide cuttingedge technology and avionics for India's naval vessels.

Sunday's declaration is a logical forward movement from there.

