



## Indra 2020 to be held in Andaman Sea

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### Why In News

**India and Russia** are scheduled to hold **Indra 2020** in the **Andaman Sea**, close to the **Strait of Malacca** instead of the **Indian Ocean Region** (IOR).

- The Strait of Malacca **connects Indian Ocean to the South China Sea** and is 900 km in length and is also a **prominent trade route between East Asia and West Asia-Europe**.
- IOR is under **high operational alert by the Indian Navy** due to the ongoing **standoff with China in Ladakh**.



### Key Points

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- The **Indra series of exercises began in 2003** and was conducted as a **bilateral naval exercise** alternately between the two countries.
    - However, the **first joint Tri-Services Exercise was conducted in 2017**.
    - **Indra 2020** will be the **first bilateral naval exercise** since all such engagements were **suspended due to Covid-19 pandemic**.
  - Its timing coincides with **Indian Defence Minister's visit to Russia** for the **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Defence Ministers Meet**.
  - Andaman Sea was also the location where frontline warships of the **Indian Navy conducted a Passage Exercise (PASSEX)** with the USA Navy's **USS Nimitz carrier strike group** in July this year.
  - **China Factor:**
    - Recently, **India has withdrawn from the Kavkaz-2020 multinational exercise in Russia** due to the restrictions posed by the pandemic. However, the **participation of Chinese troops in the same exercise** is apparently the main reason.
    - Indian Navy is keeping a **close watch on the movement of Chinese Naval ships in the IOR** because their presence in the IOR has gone up considerably over the years in the name of Anti-Piracy patrols.
      - In **2017**, China opened its first overseas **military base in Djibouti** in the **Horn of Africa**.
      - Given its strategic location, **India has embarked on a major infrastructure expansion plan on the Andaman and Nicobar island chain**.

**Source: TH**