

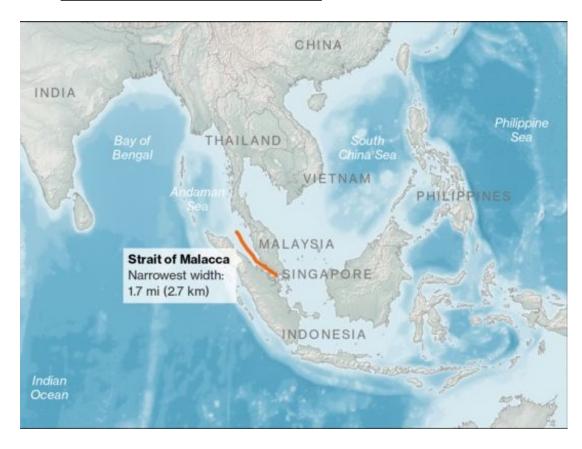
## Indra 2020 to be held in Andaman Sea

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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**

- 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** (<u>PASSEX</u>) with the USA Navy's USS Nimitz carrier strike group in July this year.
- China Factor:
  - Recently, India has <u>withdrawn from the Kavkaz-2020</u> 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**