



# Indian Ocean Naval Symposium

[Source: PIB](#)

## Why in News?

The Indian Navy hosted the Emerging Leaders Panel under **Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS)** at Kochi, providing young naval leaders a platform to discuss maritime cooperation, and regional security in the [Indian Ocean Region \(IOR\)](#).

## What is the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS)?

- **About:** The IONS is a **voluntary initiative** aimed at enhancing maritime cooperation among the navies of **IOR littoral states**.
  - It provides an open forum for discussing regional maritime issues, sharing information, and fostering common understanding for cooperative solutions.
- **Members:** IONS has a **collective strength of 34 states** (25 Members, including India, and 9 Observers).
- **Inaugural Seminar:** The inaugural IONS conclave was held in 2008 in New Delhi, with the **Indian Navy as Chair (2008-2010)**. India is set to chair IONS again (2025-27) during the 9th CoC planned in India at the end of 2025.
- **Functional Areas & Working Groups (IWG):**
  - **Humanitarian Assistance & Disaster Relief (HADR):** Planning and conducting joint relief operations during natural disasters.
  - **Capacity Building:** Member states regularly host **maritime training exercises and workshops** under IONS to enhance skills and interoperability among regional navies.
  - **Counter-Piracy & Maritime Crime:** Develop Strategies to combat piracy, smuggling, and illegal maritime activities.

## What are the Key Facts About the Indian Ocean Region (IOR)?

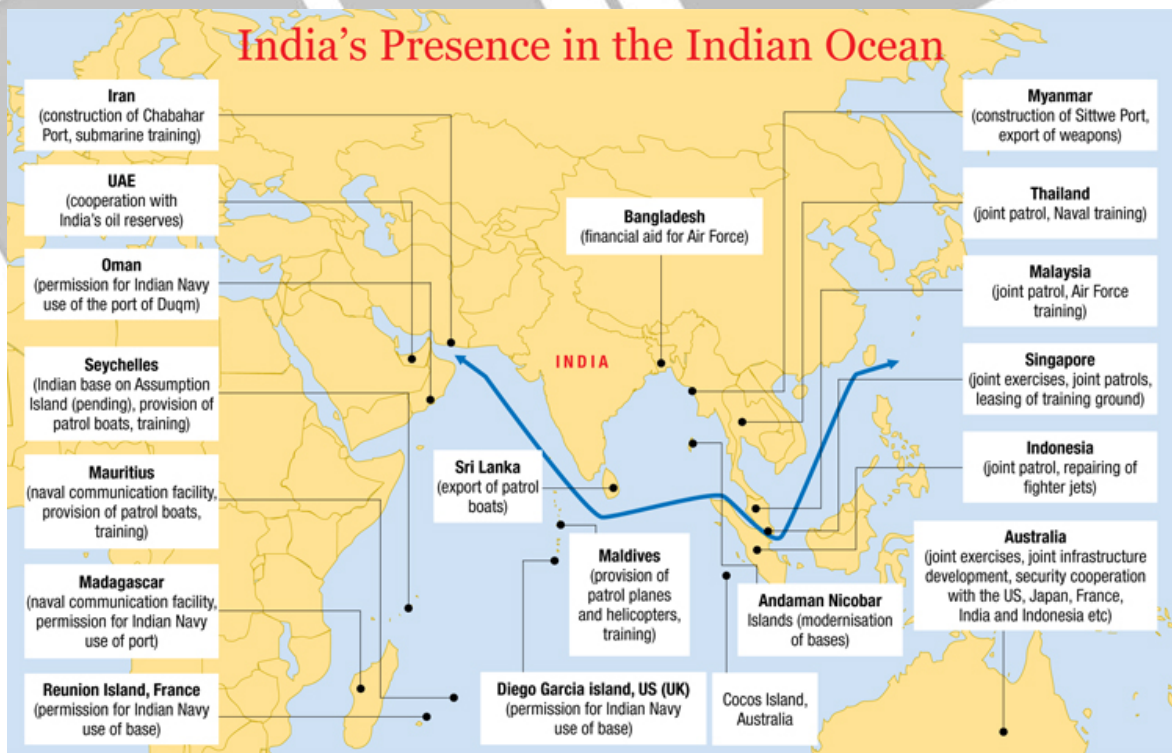
- **About:** It covers about **one-fifth of the world's ocean area**. The Indian Ocean is the **third largest ocean in the world** after the Pacific, Atlantic.
  - It is bounded by Asia (north), Africa (west), Australia (east), and Antarctica (south), and its deepest point at the **Sunda Deep, Java Trench (Indonesia)**.
- **Major Seas and Bays:** The Indian Ocean has the fewest marginal seas among major oceans, including the [Red Sea](#), [Persian Gulf](#), Arabian Sea, Andaman Sea, Bay of Bengal, [Gulfs of Aden and Oman](#), and the Great Australian Bight.
  - The Indian Ocean has **major epipelagic currents** that influence global ocean circulation.
- **Strategic Significance of IOR:**
  - Hosts **40+ states**, nearly **40% of global population**.
  - Handles **~2/3 of world's oil shipments**, **1/3 cargo**, **~50% container traffic**.
  - Key chokepoints: **Suez Canal, Bab el-Mandeb, Strait of Hormuz, Strait of Malacca** → critical for **global trade, energy flows, strategic security**.
  - Resource-rich: **fisheries, offshore oil (~40% of global output), mineral sands**.
  - For India: **7,500 km coastline**, **80%+ energy imports** pass through IOR → vital for **trade, defence, energy security**.

- **Governance of IOR:** [Indian Ocean Rim Association \(IORA\)](#) established in **1997**, is an **intergovernmental forum** with its apex body, the **Council of Foreign Ministers (COM)**, meeting annually to set policies.
  - Sri Lanka is the current Chair of [IORA](#), while India, currently **Vice-Chair** and part of the **Troika**, will assume the **Chairship for 2025-2027**.

## What is the Role of India in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR)?

### India as a Unifier in the IOR:

- **Shared Vision:** Through [SAGAR and Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security Across the Regions \(MAHASAGAR\)](#), India drives collective security, growth, and sustainable development in the IOR.
- **Geo-Strategic Engagement:** India is expanding its presence beyond its borders, including potential military bases in the [Indo-Pacific region](#).
  - India aims to build trust, transparency, and maritime cooperation while upholding international law, particularly the [United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea \(UNCLOS\)](#).
- **Security & Defense Cooperation:** India builds trust as a net security provider via defense exercises like [AIKEYME \(Africa\)](#), [MILAN \(multinational\)](#), [SIMBEX \(with Singapore\)](#) and joint patrols with island states.
- **Institutional Role:** India leads platforms like IORA, IONS, and the [Indian Ocean Conference](#), acting as a bridge among diverse littoral states.
  - Through initiatives like “**Act East**”, “**Neighbourhood First**”, India is enhancing maritime connectivity and regional influence.
- **Economic & Development Partner:** India invests in blue economy, trade integration, renewable energy, and capacity building.
  - The **Indian Navy (IN)** acts as a “**first responder**,” offering **humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR)**, as seen after the 2004 Asian Tsunami and in subsequent evacuations from conflict or disaster zones.



## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

### **Prelims**

**Q. With reference to 'Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC)', consider the following statements: (2015)**

1. It was established very recently in response to incidents of piracy and accidents of oil spills.
2. It is an alliance meant for maritime security only.

**Which of the statements given above is/ are correct?**

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

**Ans: (d)**

PDF Reference URL: <https://www.drishtiias.com/printpdf/indian-ocean-naval-symposium-2>

