



Indian Ocean Naval Symposium

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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>

