

Indian Ocean Rim Association

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Why in news?

- External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar (EAM) attended the 23rd Council of Ministers' (COM) meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA).
- The meeting was hosted by Sri Lanka, the current IORA Chair.

Indian Ocean Region (IOR)

- IOR is a geographical region that encompasses the Indian Ocean and its surrounding areas, including the littoral states and islands.
- The region spans from:
 - the African coast in the west to the Australian coast in the east, and
 - from the Arabian Peninsula and the Persian Gulf in the north to the southern coast of Sri Lanka and Australia in the south.
- The Indian Ocean is the world's third-largest ocean, covering an area of approximately 70.6 million square kilometres.
- It is home to several important sea lanes of communication, including the **Strait of Malacca, the Suez Canal, and the Bab-el-Mandeb strait, which connect Asia, Europe, and Africa.**

What is the Significance of Indian Ocean Region (IOR)?

- **Geopolitical Importance:**
 - Due to its geographical location, it serves as a major transit route for global trade, including oil and gas shipments.
 - It is home to several important chokepoints, such as the Strait of Malacca and the Bab-el-Mandeb strait.
- **Economic Importance:**
 - The IOR is home to several fast-growing economies, including India, China, and several Southeast Asian nations.
 - The region is rich in natural resources, including oil, natural gas, and fisheries, and is a major destination for foreign investment.
 - **It shares 64% of the global population and 60% of the global GDP.**
- **Security Importance:**
 - The IOR is also a region of great security importance, with several countries in the region facing threats from terrorism, piracy, and maritime security challenges.
 - The region has seen increased military activity in recent years, with major powers such as the US, India, and China increasing their presence in the region.
- **Environmental Importance:**
 - The IOR is home to several important marine ecosystems, including coral reefs and mangrove forests, that are vital for maintaining biodiversity and supporting local communities.
 - The region is also vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, including rising sea levels and increased frequency of extreme weather events.

What is IORA?

- IORA is an inter-governmental organisation which was established on 7 March 1997.
 - It was formerly known as the Indian Ocean Rim Initiative and the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC).

- The IORA Secretariat is based in Mauritius. It became an observer to the UN General Assembly and the **African Union** in 2015.
- **Members** – It has 23 Member States and 11 Dialogue Partners.
 - China is a dialogue partner in the IORA.

Objectives

- To promote sustainable growth and balanced development of the region;
- To focus on those areas of economic cooperation which provide maximum opportunities for development, shared interest and mutual benefits;
- To promote liberalisation, remove impediments and lower barriers towards a freer and enhanced flow of goods, services, investment, and technology within the Indian Ocean rim.

Six priority pillars of IORA



Significance of IORA

- The IOR has always made significant contributions to the world economy.
- The region is home to 35% of the world's population and also accounts for 19% of total gross domestic product.
- Moreover, 80% of seaborne trade uses routes through the Indian Ocean.
- Furthermore, 80% of seaborne oil trade and 100,000 commercial vessels depend on this route every year.

News Summary: 23rd Council of Ministers' meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Association

- External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar participated in the annual meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) being held in Colombo.

- It was held under the theme of “**Strengthening Regional Architecture: Reinforcing Indian Ocean identity**”.

Key highlights of 23rd Council of Ministers’ meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Association

- **Sri Lanka took over as Chair and India as Vice Chair of the IORA**
 - During the meeting, Sri Lanka took over as Chair, while India took over as Vice Chair of the IORA grouping.
 - Sri Lanka assumed the Chairship of IORA for the term 2023-25.
 - India assumed the Vice-Chair role of IORA for 2023-25, leading to Chairship in 2025-27.
- **New Dialogue Partner**
 - **Saudi Arabia** became the 11th Dialogue Partner of the Association.
- **Adoption of the IORA’s Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (IOIP)**
 - The outcome document welcomed the adoption of the IORA’s Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (IOIP) by the 22nd Council of Ministers in Dhaka in November 2022.
 - It appreciated India’s initiative to formulate a Roadmap for the implementation of IOIP.
- **Agreements signed between India and Sri Lanka on the sidelines of the summit**
 - India and Sri Lanka signed three agreements on bilateral cooperation.
 - The agreements include:
 - Indian assistance for housing projects,
 - modernising schools and
 - a new joint project between the Indian National Dairy Development Board, Amul cooperative and the Sri Lankan Cargill Group to increase milk production in Sri Lanka.

Q1) What is Indo-Pacific region?

The Indo-Pacific is a region that includes the Indian Ocean, the Pacific Ocean, and the land masses that surround them. It’s also known as the Indo-West Pacific or Indo-Pacific Asia.

The Indo-Pacific is a recent concept that’s been gaining popularity. It’s seen as an idea that captures the shift in power and influence from the West to the East.

Q2) Where is Strait of Malacca?

Strait of Malacca, waterway connecting the Andaman Sea (Indian Ocean) and the South China Sea (Pacific Ocean). It runs between the Indonesian island of Sumatra to the west and peninsular (West) Malaysia and extreme southern Thailand to the east and has an area of about 25,000 square miles (65,000 square km).

Source: [At Indian Ocean conference in Colombo, Jaishankar raises dangers of unviable debt, projects | MEA | Republic of South Africa](#)