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# IOS SAGAR Second Edition — India's Naval Diplomacy and the Indian Ocean Security Architecture

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**SUBJECTS COVERED****SECURITY & DEFENCE** **IR****CURATED & WRITTEN BY****Bharat Choudhary**

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# IOS SAGAR Second Edition — India's Naval Diplomacy and the Indian Ocean Security Architecture

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## ✎ WHY IN NEWS

The second edition of Indian Ocean Ship (IOS) SAGAR commenced on March 16, 2026, with the Indian Navy leading a joint maritime training programme with personnel from 16 nations of the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS), beginning at Kochi and transitioning to a sea deployment on an Indian Naval Ship. India assumed the IONS chair in February 2026.

## IOS SAGAR — PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

**IOS SAGAR** stands for **Indian Ocean Ship — Security and Growth for All in the Region**. It is a unique Indian Navy-led initiative that enables naval personnel from friendly foreign countries to **train and operate together aboard an Indian Naval Ship**.

**What makes it unique:** Unlike bilateral naval exercises (which involve ships from two countries operating together), IOS SAGAR is a **multilateral capacity-building initiative** where foreign naval officers and sailors are actually **embedded within the crew of an Indian warship** — training, sailing, and conducting real operations alongside Indian sailors.

**Programme structure:**

**Shore-based phase (Kochi):** 2–3 weeks of intensive professional training at **Indian Naval establishments in Kochi** — covering seamanship, navigation, maritime law, anti-piracy protocols, damage control, and naval doctrine

**Sea deployment phase:** Foreign personnel embark on an Indian Naval Ship for active maritime patrol, exercising real-world tasks — communication, watch-keeping, damage control, gunnery, and anti-submarine warfare

**Participating nations (second edition, 2026):** 16 IONS nations — members of the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium drawn from South Asia, Southeast Asia, East Africa, Gulf, and Australia regions.

## THE SAGAR DOCTRINE — INDIA’S MARITIME VISION

**SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region)** was articulated by **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** during his visit to **Mauritius on March 12, 2015** — establishing India’s strategic framework for the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

### Five pillars of SAGAR:

**Security:** Safeguarding the maritime domain from piracy, terrorism, natural disasters

**Growth:** Sustainable, inclusive development of Indian Ocean island and littoral states

**Rule-based order:** Respecting maritime law (UNCLOS), freedom of navigation, and sovereignty

**Blue economy:** Developing ocean resources (fisheries, seabed minerals, offshore energy) sustainably

**Digital and infrastructure connectivity:** Cable networks, port infrastructure, satellite links across the IOR

**MAHASAGAR framework (2025):** India upgraded the SAGAR vision to **MAHASAGAR — Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions** — announced by PM Modi during his visit to **Mauritius in March 2025**. MAHASAGAR extends the framework from the Indian Ocean to broader maritime engagement, with Africa as a central pillar. Under MAHASAGAR, India launched two key initiatives: the **AIKEYME** (Africa-India Key Maritime Engagement) naval exercise and the **IOS SAGAR** mission.

## IONS — INDIAN OCEAN NAVAL SYMPOSIUM

**Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS)** is India’s primary multilateral naval platform in the Indian Ocean Region.

### Key facts:

**Founded:** 2008; proposed by the Indian Navy

**Chair:** Rotates among member navies (2-year tenure)

**India assumed chair:** February 2026 (from the Royal Thai Navy; 9th IONS Conclave of Chiefs at Visakhapatnam on 20 Feb 2026; tenure 2026–28; India returns after 16 years)

**Membership: 25 member navies and 9 observers** from the Indian Ocean littoral (coastal) states — South Asia, Southeast Asia, Persian Gulf, Red Sea, East Africa, South Africa, Australia

**Purpose:** Information sharing, maritime security coordination, disaster response, combating piracy and trafficking, capacity building

**Distinction from QUAD:** IONS includes a much wider membership including non-Western nations; QUAD (India, US, Japan, Australia) is a strategic security arrangement specifically countering China’s influence

**IONS Working Groups:**

Maritime Security (piracy, terrorism, trafficking)

Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR)

Information Security and Interoperability (IS&I) — enhances real-time information exchange and joint maritime operations

**INDIA’S NAVAL EXPANSION — STRATEGIC CONTEXT**

**India’s growing naval footprint:**

The Indian Navy has been undergoing a significant capability expansion:

Capability	Status (2026)
Aircraft Carriers	2: INS Vikramaditya + INS Vikrant (India’s first indigenous carrier, commissioned 2022)
Nuclear Submarines	2 SSBNs operational (INS Arihant, commissioned 2016; INS Arighaat, commissioned Aug 2024); INS Aridhaman (S4) completed deep-sea trials, set for induction April–May 2026
P-75I (SSK)	6 next-gen diesel-electric conventional subs with AIP; Mazagon Dock + TKMS (Germany); IGA signed Jan 2026; first delivery expected ~2032
P-8I Poseidon	Maritime patrol aircraft from Boeing; anti-submarine warfare
Overseas facilities	Seychelles (Assumption Island); Mauritius; Sri Lanka (Trincomalee discussions); Oman (Duqm)

**Why the Indian Ocean matters:**

80% of world’s oil trade passes through the Indian Ocean

50% of all containerised cargo uses IOR shipping lanes

Critical chokepoints: **Strait of Hormuz, Strait of Malacca, Bab-el-Mandeb, Mozambique Channel**

China's **String of Pearls** — strategic infrastructure (ports, bases) in Gwadar (Pakistan), Hambantota (Sri Lanka), Kyaukpyu (Myanmar), Djibouti — encircles India

**India's counter-strategy — SAGAR + IOS SAGAR:**

**Capacity building:** IOS SAGAR and IONS build partner navies' capabilities, creating an informal India-led maritime security network

**Port access agreements:** ACSA-type agreements with France, US, Japan, Australia for mutual logistics support in IOR ports

**QUAD maritime surveillance:** India participates in QUAD's Maritime Domain Awareness initiative

## UPSC RELEVANCE

**Prelims:** SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region; PM Modi; Mauritius 2015); MAHASAGAR (2025; broader successor framework); IOS SAGAR (Indian Ocean Ship; 2nd edition March 2026; 16 IONS nations; Kochi); IONS (Indian Ocean Naval Symposium; 2008; India-proposed; 25 members + 9 observers; India chair 2026–28); UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea; 1982; 12 nm territorial sea; 200 nm EEZ; 350 nm continental shelf); INS Vikrant (India's first indigenous aircraft carrier; commissioned Sept 2022; built at Cochin Shipyard).

**Mains GS-2/GS-3:** India's maritime strategy — SAGAR, MAHASAGAR, IONS | Indian Ocean geopolitics — China's String of Pearls vs. India's naval diplomacy | India's security partnerships — QUAD, IORA, IONS comparative | Blue economy and India's maritime economic potential | Seapower and India's aspirations as a leading power in the Indo-Pacific.

## ★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

### IOS SAGAR:

Full form: Indian Ocean Ship — Security and Growth for All in the Region

1st edition: 2025 (inaugural)

2nd edition: Commenced March 16, 2026; 16 IONS nations

Structure: Shore training at Kochi → Sea deployment on Indian Naval Ship

India assumed IONS chair: February 2026

### SAGAR DOCTRINE:

Articulated by: PM Narendra Modi

Where/when: Mauritius, March 12, 2015

Pillars: Security, Growth, Rule-based order, Blue economy, Connectivity

### MAHASAGAR:

Full form: Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions

Announced: PM Modi in Mauritius, March 2025 (successor/upgrade to SAGAR)

Scope: Extends beyond Indian Ocean to broader maritime engagement; Africa as central pillar

Key initiatives: AIKEYME naval exercise; IOS SAGAR mission

### IONS:

Full form: Indian Ocean Naval Symposium

Founded: 2008; Proposed by: Indian Navy

Membership: 25 member navies + 9 observers

India's current role: Chair (since Feb 2026; assumed from Royal Thai Navy at 9th Conclave of Chiefs, Visakhapatnam; tenure 2026–28)

Purpose: Maritime security coordination, HADR, information sharing

### INDIAN NAVY — KEY PLATFORMS (2026):

INS Vikramaditya: Aircraft carrier; ex-Russian Admiral Gorshkov; commissioned 2013

INS Vikrant: India's first indigenous aircraft carrier; commissioned Sept 2022; Cochin Shipyard

INS Arihant: India's first nuclear-armed submarine (SSBN); commissioned August 2016

INS Arighaat: 2nd SSBN; commissioned 29 August 2024

INS Aridhaman (S4): 3rd SSBN (larger, more capable); completed deep-sea trials; set for induction April–May 2026; 4th submarine (S4\*) to be named INS Arisudan

### INDIAN OCEAN — STRATEGIC GEOGRAPHY:

Key chokepoints: Strait of Hormuz (~20% global oil), Strait of Malacca, Bab-el-Mandeb, Mozambique Channel  
% world oil trade via IOR: ~80%

China's String of Pearls: Gwadar (Pakistan), Hambantota (Sri Lanka), Kyaukpyu (Myanmar), Djibouti

### INDIA'S OVERSEAS NAVAL PRESENCE:

Assumption Island, Seychelles: India developing airstrip + naval facilities

Mauritius: Agalega Islands; India-funded airstrip and jetty

Duqm, Oman: ACSA-type logistics access

**UNCLOS KEY NUMBERS:**

Territorial Sea: 12 nautical miles (exclusive sovereignty)

Contiguous Zone: 24 nm (limited jurisdiction)

Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ): 200 nm (resource rights)

Extended Continental Shelf: up to 350 nm (seabed resource rights)

**OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:**

IORA: Indian Ocean Rim Association (1997; 23 members; secretariat: Mauritius; India a founding member)

Blue economy: economic activities in oceans; India's Blue Economy Policy 2021

Quad: US, India, Japan, Australia; revived 2017; summit level from 2021

QUAD Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA): satellite-based monitoring of IOR shipping

Sources: [PIB](#), [Indian Navy](#), [GKToday](#), [MEA](#)

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