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Operation Southern Readiness 26-2: India and the Combined Maritime Forces

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SECURITY & DEFENCE

GS3

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Operation Southern Readiness 26-2: India and the Combined Maritime Forces

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✓ Every fact web-verified against primary sources

*The is hosting the multinational maritime-security exercise **Operation Southern Readiness 26-2** at the **Southern Naval Command, Kochi**, from **July 20 to 23, 2026**, in partnership with the **Combined Maritime Forces (CMF)**. The exercise reinforces India's stated aim of deepening cooperative maritime security across the Indian Ocean Region.*

WHAT IS OPERATION SOUTHERN READINESS

Operation Southern Readiness 26-2 is a multinational exercise conducted under the umbrella of the **Combined Maritime Forces (CMF)** and hosted by the **Indian Navy**. It centres on the practical building blocks of maritime security: **maritime-domain awareness**, **information sharing**, and **coordinated responses** to threats at sea. The drills are designed to sharpen how partner navies detect, track and respond together to challenges such as **piracy**, **trafficking** and **illegal fishing**.

Hosting the exercise at the **Southern Naval Command in Kochi**, the Navy's premier training command, signals India's growing comfort in convening multinational maritime activity on its own coast rather than only participating abroad.

Exercise at a Glance

FEATURE	DETAIL
Name	Operation Southern Readiness 26-2
Host	Indian Navy
Venue	Southern Naval Command, Kochi
Dates	July 20 to 23, 2026
Framework	Combined Maritime Forces (CMF)
Focus	Maritime-domain awareness, information sharing, coordinated response
Threats addressed	Piracy, trafficking, illegal fishing

THE COMBINED MARITIME FORCES

The **Combined Maritime Forces (CMF)** is a **multinational naval partnership of more than 40 nations, headquartered in Bahrain**. It is one of the largest maritime security groupings in the world and works to keep sea lanes across the Indian Ocean and adjoining waters safe from piracy, terrorism and other illicit activity.

India joined the CMF as a partner in 2023. Partnership allows the Indian Navy to plug into a wide information-sharing and coordination network while retaining full operational independence, an arrangement that suits India's long-standing preference for issue-based, non-treaty cooperation at sea.

How This Differs from Bilateral Exercises

It is important not to confuse this multinational activity with India's **bilateral** and mini-lateral exercises:

- **Malabar** is a **multilateral** naval exercise involving the navies of India, the United States, Japan and Australia (the Quad members).
- **Varuna** is the bilateral India-France naval exercise.
- **Operation Southern Readiness**, by contrast, is a **CMF-framework** multinational exercise open to a much broader set of partners.

India also anchors maritime cooperation through the **Information Fusion Centre-Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR)**, based at **Gurugram**, which shares real-time maritime information with partner countries and complements exercises like this one.

INDIA AS A NET SECURITY PROVIDER

India describes itself as a **net security provider** in the **Indian Ocean Region (IOR)**, meaning it contributes more to regional security than it draws from it. This posture rests on the vision of **SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region)**, articulated as India's approach to a stable, rules-based and inclusive maritime order.

Exercises under the CMF advance three Indian objectives: strengthening **interoperability** with partner navies, improving **maritime-domain awareness** across a vast ocean space, and reinforcing India's role in the wider **Indo-Pacific**. India's official stand is to **enhance regional maritime security cooperation** through such partnerships while safeguarding **freedom of navigation** and lawful commerce in line with international law.

UPSC RELEVANCE

GS Paper 3: Security; India's defence and maritime cooperation; internal and external security challenges through coastal and sea routes.

Prelims pointers:

- **Operation Southern Readiness 26-2:** hosted by the **Indian Navy** at **Kochi**, **July 20 to 23, 2026**, under the **CMF**.
- **Combined Maritime Forces (CMF): 40-plus nations, headquartered in Bahrain; India joined as a partner in 2023.**
- **Malabar** = India, US, Japan, Australia; **Varuna** = India-France bilateral.
- **IFC-IOR** is based at **Gurugram**.
- **SAGAR** = Security and Growth for All in the Region.

 FACTS CORNER, KNOWLEDGE PEDIA

Operation Southern Readiness 26-2 runs July 20 to 23, 2026 at the Southern Naval Command, Kochi.

The Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) groups more than 40 nations and is headquartered in Bahrain.

India became a CMF partner in 2023, retaining operational independence.

Focus areas: maritime-domain awareness, information sharing, and coordinated responses to piracy, trafficking and illegal fishing.

SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) frames India's maritime outreach.

The IFC-IOR at Gurugram shares real-time maritime information with partner nations.

Sources: Press Information Bureau, Indian Navy, Combined Maritime Forces

Source: Operation Southern Readiness 26-2: India and the Combined Maritime Forces — Ujiyari.com | Free UPSC & State PCS Current Affairs

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