



# **DAILY EDITORIAL ANALYSIS**

**TOPIC**

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**CHARTING A ROUTE FOR IORA  
UNDER INDIA'S CHAIRSHIP**

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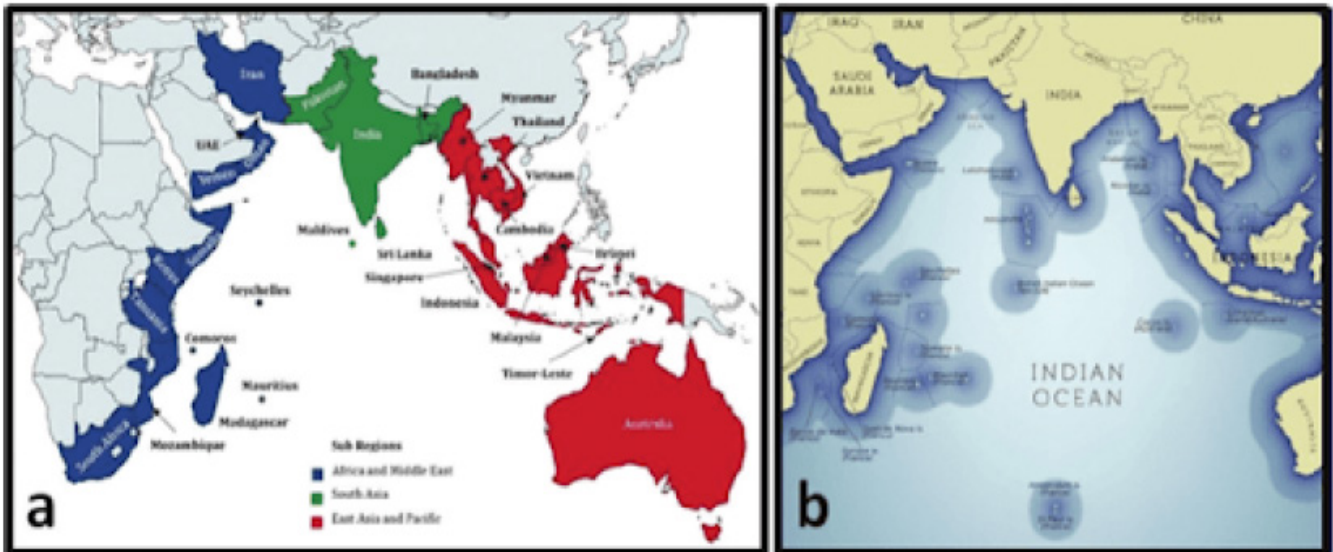
## CHARTING A ROUTE FOR IORA UNDER INDIA'S CHAIRSHIP

### Context

- The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) is set to witness a transformative phase under **India's chairship starting November 2025** (it is now Vice-Chair).

### About the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)

- It is an intergovernmental organization **established in 1997** to foster economic, political, and security cooperation among countries bordering the Indian Ocean, with **23 member states and 12 dialogue partners**.



- It focuses on six priority areas:
  - Maritime Security;
  - Trade and Investment Facilitation;
  - Fisheries Management;
  - Disaster Risk Reduction;
  - Academic, Science & Technology Cooperation;
  - Tourism and Cultural Exchanges;
- Secretariat:** Mauritius
- Current Chair:** Sri Lanka is the current chair (2023-2025).
  - Chairmanship of IORA** is rotated among member states **every two years**, allowing different nations to shape its strategic vision.

### Indian Ocean

- 3rd largest ocean, carrying half of the world's container ships, one third of the world's bulk cargo traffic and two thirds of the world's oil shipments.
- Home to nearly 2.7 billion people
- Sub Regions:** Australasia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, West Asia and Eastern & Southern Africa
- Regional Groupings:** ASEAN, SAARC, GCC and SADC, to name a few.

### Importance of IORA for India

- Geopolitical Leverage:** The Indian Ocean is a critical geostrategic zone, connecting major global trade routes.
  - India, as a founding member of IORA**, leverages the platform to assert its influence in the region and counterbalance the growing presence of external powers like China.

- **Strengthening Regional Ties:** IORA provides a platform for India to deepen its engagement with African and Southeast Asian nations, enhancing its **Act East** (*Enhancing engagement with Southeast Asian nations*), **Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative** (*Strengthening partnerships for sustainable maritime governance*).
- **Economic Opportunities:** The Indian Ocean accounts for **75% of global trade and 50% of daily oil consumption**.
  - ♦ It produces \$1 trillion in goods and services, and its intra-IORA trade was \$800 billion in 2023.
  - ♦ IORA facilitates trade and investment among member states, boosting India's economic ties with countries in **Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East**.
- **Maritime Security:** India collaborates with IORA members to address maritime challenges such as piracy, terrorism, and illegal fishing.
  - ♦ India seeks to enhance maritime domain awareness through collaborative mechanisms like the **Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR)** and coordinated naval exercises with IORA nations.
  - ♦ The association's focus on maritime safety and security aligns with **India's SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) vision**.
- **Blue Economy:** IORA promotes sustainable use of ocean resources, a priority for India as it seeks to harness the potential of its vast coastline and **Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)** for economic growth.
  - ♦ India aims to share best practices in marine resource management, promote eco-friendly policies, and **support Small Island Developing States (SIDS)** in tackling climate change challenges.
- **Disaster Risk Management:** The Indian Ocean is prone to natural disasters like tsunamis and cyclones.
  - ♦ IORA's initiatives in **disaster risk reduction** and **resilience-building** complement India's efforts in **humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR)** and **Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI)** initiative.

### India's Priorities as IORA Chair

- **Strategic Importance:** India's Chairship aligns with its broader vision of a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific region.
  - ♦ By leading IORA, India is reinforcing its role as a maritime power and a key stakeholder in the Indian Ocean.
- **Enhancing Financial Resources:** IORA's budget, primarily dependent on member contributions, is limited.
  - ♦ India could explore innovative funding mechanisms such as shipping, oil and gas, and marine tourism industries.
- **Leveraging Technology:** Digitized record-keeping and efficient data processing could enhance decision-making and policy implementation.
- **Capacity Building:** India could spearhead the development of maritime-ready courses in collaboration with academic and research institutions.
  - ♦ These programs would focus on areas like **maritime safety, fisheries management, and disaster risk reduction**, addressing the region's resource-intensive needs.
- **Promoting Sustainable Development:** Aligning with its **SAGAR vision**, India can prioritize sustainable practices in fisheries, marine biodiversity conservation, and renewable energy adoption.
- **Strengthening Cultural and People-to-People Ties:** India's Chairship emphasizes historical and cultural links among IORA countries.
  - ♦ Exchange programs, heritage conservation efforts, and tourism promotion are being pursued to deepen socio-cultural bonds.

### Challenges Ahead

- **Diverse member interests:** Balancing priorities between developed and developing nations.
- **Geopolitical rivalries:** Managing external influences from China and Western powers.
- **Resource constraints:** Mobilizing financial and technical resources for large-scale projects.
  - ♦ Except for countries like Singapore, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and France, **most of the member-states are developing Asian and African economies**.

**Conclusion**

- India's chairship of IORA offers a unique opportunity to shape the future of regional cooperation in the Indian Ocean.
- By focusing on financial sustainability, technological integration, capacity building, and sustainable development, India can strengthen IORA's foundation and ensure its relevance in addressing the region's challenges.
- As the world looks to the Indian Ocean for economic and strategic opportunities, India's leadership could set a precedent for inclusive and effective regional governance.

Source: TH

**Mains Practice Question**

**[Q]** What strategic priorities and policy measures should India focus on during its chairship of The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) to address regional challenges and strengthen cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region?

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