



INDIA ASSUMES CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE INDIAN OCEAN NAVAL SYMPOSIUM

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The 9th Conclave of Chiefs of the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) convened at Visakhapatnam on **20 Feb 2026**, bringing together Chiefs of Navies and Heads of Maritime Security Agencies from **33 countries**, representing IONS Members, Observers, and other Indian Ocean littoral nations. Participation spanning from the Atlantic to the Pacific reflected the growing alignment of like-minded navies committed to strengthening maritime cooperation and security in the Indian Ocean Region.

In a historic moment for the forum, **the Indian Navy assumed the Chairmanship of IONS from the Royal Thai Navy, marking India's return to the helm after 16 years.** Having earlier held **the inaugural Chairmanship from 2008 to 2010**, India now takes forward the forum that has evolved into a central platform for professional maritime collaboration. Adm Dinesh K Tripathi, Chief of the Naval Staff and **Chair of IONS**, articulated a clear and forward-leaning vision to reinforce the functional relevance of IONS by strengthening its Working Groups on Maritime Security, Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief, and Information Sharing and Interoperability as the principal drivers of cooperation.

Key developments during the Conclave included the launch of the upgraded IONS website, undertaken by the Indian Navy to enhance usability, institutional continuity, and secure engagement among member navies. **The Philippines was included as an Observer, and Oman joined the IONS Working Group on HADR**, further enhancing the scope of collaborative engagement under IONS and widening forum's cooperative reach.

India also outlined initiatives to be advanced during its tenure, including the conduct of the IONS Maritime Exercise (IMEX), continued deployment of IOS SAGAR to IONS member countries with participation of personnel from IONS navies and maritime security agencies onboard, and structured Maritime Information Sharing Workshops and dialogues aimed at enhancing operational interaction, professional exchange, and capability enhancement.

The 9th Conclave marks a renewed phase in the evolution of IONS. As India assumes the Chair, it signals strengthened momentum, expanded engagement, and a deeper collective commitment to maritime stability in the Indian Ocean Region.





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