Supply chain diversification & greater regional cooperation are key to stronger maritime inter-dependence amid strained security environment: Raksha Mantri at Indo-Pacific Regional Dialogue 2026

“Certain actors & nations seek to exploit the criticality of oceans for narrow unilateral gains; Answer to interconnected world’s vulnerabilities lies in building resilience”

Maritime security must evolve with emerging threats; Leveraging emerging technologies is the need of the hour, says Shri Rajnath Singh

“Technology must not become another source of inequality among nations; Benefits to a few won’t achieve collective resilience”

“Economic development & environmental responsibility must progress together; Oceans cannot be treated as unlimited source of resources”

“Maritime sector to be a key driver of India’s Viksit Bharat journey; Govt striving to develop a comprehensive maritime ecosystem”

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Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh has called for making inter-dependence among regional partners more secure and resilient through diversification of supply chains, reliable maritime infrastructure, enhanced maritime awareness and greater cooperation, along with the ability to anticipate, withstand and recover from disruptions, amid growing strains in the global maritime security environment. He was delivering the commemorative address at the Indo-Pacific Regional Dialogue (IPRD), the Indian Navy’s annual apex-level international strategic conference, being held in New Delhi on November 4, 2026.

Describing oceans as bridges rather than barriers among nations & civilisations, Raksha Mantri highlighted their role in sustaining livelihoods and facilitating the exchange of goods, knowledge & culture. He stated that despite the international community's

awareness of these universal dependencies, certain actors and nations seek to exploit the criticality of the oceans for narrow unilateral gains. “The global maritime security environment is strained by deliberate trade disruptions. We see blatant challenges to the freedom of navigation and the weaponisation of narrow maritime passages. This growing instability in the maritime domain casts a long shadow over the broader international order,” he added.



Shri Rajnath Singh asserted that the answer to the vulnerabilities of an interconnected world lies in building resilience, emphasising that globalisation cannot be abandoned in response to every disruption, nor should maritime spaces that have enabled human progress be closed. He stressed that the objective must be to make inter-dependence more secure.

Highlighting the evolving nature of maritime security, Raksha Mantri stated that challenges could arise not only from conventional military activities but also from non-traditional threats such as piracy, trafficking, illegal fishing, cyber-attacks and natural disasters. He underscored the need for maritime security to evolve with the changing maritime domain. “Artificial intelligence is changing the way data is processed, while autonomous systems are expanding the possibilities of surveillance & operations. New sensors are improving our ability to observe the oceans. Advances in materials, biotechnology and data analytics are opening new avenues for research and application. These developments have enormous implications for maritime security and economic activity. But technology, by itself, is not the answer. The more important question is how we use technology to address real challenges,” he said.

Shri Rajnath Singh also underlined that technology must not become another source of inequality among nations as the Indo-Pacific includes countries with different levels of technological and economic capability. “Some possess advanced research infrastructure. Others are still developing the institutional and human resources required to participate fully in this transformation. If technological progress benefits only a limited number of countries, we will not achieve the collective resilience that our region requires,” he said.



Raksha Mantri called for promoting cooperation in research, education, innovation and capacity building, stating that a stronger scientific capability in one country can contribute to the security & prosperity of the entire region. Terming it particularly important for smaller maritime nations and developing countries, he said the most useful technology is not necessarily the most expensive or sophisticated; it is the one that solves a real problem.

Shri Rajnath Singh emphasised that as India moves towards Viksit Bharat by 2047, the maritime domain will play a crucial role in the country's national transformation. He highlighted Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi-led Government's efforts to develop a comprehensive maritime ecosystem through investments in port infrastructure and connectivity, port-led development under Sagarmala, promotion of coastal economic activities and strengthening of the maritime industrial base. He described the Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047 as the national blueprint for this transformation, with emphasis on technology, innovation, research, education and skills.

Raksha Mantri underlined the need for economic development and environmental responsibility to progress together, stating that oceans cannot be treated as an unlimited source of resources. He advocated the protection of marine ecosystems, responsible utilisation of ocean resources and placing the interests of coastal communities at the centre of development efforts. "National prosperity and ecological responsibility are not competing objectives. They must reinforce each other," he said.

Reaffirming India's commitment to an open, inclusive and rule-based maritime order, Shri Rajnath Singh highlighted the vision of MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions) that recognises the interconnected nature of security and prosperity among nations and underscores that the maritime future of the Indo-Pacific cannot be shaped by any single country acting alone. He also termed the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative, announced by PM Modi in 2019, as a practical framework for advancing maritime cooperation across seven interconnected areas.



Emphasising the need to translate regional cooperation into tangible outcomes, the Raksha Mantri urged the participants of IPRD to move beyond identifying challenges and focus on practical action. He pitched for stronger scientific networks, joint research, exchanges between universities and maritime institutions, and the development of affordable technological solutions to common challenges. Stressing that the deliberations at the IPRD must lead to concrete outcomes, he said ideas emerging from the dialogue must translate into partnerships, projects and measurable outcomes.

“The future of the Indo Pacific will not be shaped by technology alone. It will be shaped by the wisdom with which we use that technology, the partnerships we build and the confidence we create among nations,” Shri Rajnath Singh said, reiterating India's readiness to contribute to this collective endeavour.

Raksha Mantri expressed hope that the deliberations would lead to meaningful discussions and practical cooperation. He concluded with a call to move “from shared challenges to shared understanding. From shared understanding to shared knowledge. And from shared knowledge to shared resilience and shared prosperity.”

In his address, Admiral Krishna Swaminathan, Chief of the Naval Staff (CNS) highlighted the interconnected nature of the oceans and the uneven distribution of scientific knowledge, research infrastructure and technological capabilities across the Indo-Pacific. He emphasised that maritime cooperation must extend beyond equipment acquisition to building sustainable capabilities, enabling partner nations to operate, maintain, adapt and upgrade technologies.



Underscoring the need for a broader and more integrated approach to maritime challenges, the CNS called for greater collective investment in ocean science and research, enhanced sharing of scientific data and technology, and collaborative research initiatives, including joint scientific expeditions. He also highlighted the importance of strengthening existing regional institutions and mechanisms through trust, transparency and inclusive ocean governance.

The CNS observed that IPRD-2026 provides an important platform for translating shared maritime interests into practical outcomes and generating concrete, forward-looking recommendations to strengthen science, technology and academic cooperation across the Indo-Pacific

Also among the dignitaries present were Chief of the Army Staff General Dhiraj Seth, Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Ashutosh Dixit, former CNS and Chairman, NMF Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi (Retd).



The three-day IPRD 2026, being conducted by the Indian Navy in association with the National Maritime Foundation (NMF), commenced on November 3, 2026. The second day of the dialogue focused upon two closely connected issues of regional maritime resilience: a better shared understanding of activities at sea and a stronger scientific capacity to anticipate and respond to environmental change.

The day also witnessed a ministerial session featuring a special address by the Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science & Technology and Earth Sciences Dr Jitendra Singh. He also released an NMF publication titled 'Alternative Hull Forms for the Future Indian Navy'.

Adding a Naval perspective to the overarching theme of IPRD 2026, an interactive session 'Perspectives from the Flag Bridge' brought together former Indian Navy chiefs Admiral RK Dhowan, Admiral Sunil Lanba, Admiral Karambir Singh and Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi, and former Commander of the Sri Lanka Navy, Admiral Jayantha Perera, in a conversation hosted by Director General, NMF Vice Admiral Pradeep Chauhan. This session offered invaluable insights on the relationship between maritime strategy, technological change and regional cooperation, with a specific reference to naval cooperation under the aegis of the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium, which is currently being chaired by the Indian Navy.

In addition, a session, moderated by Commodore Abhinav Barve, Indian Navy, focused upon 'Oceanographic Science and Climate Resilience'. In this session, the speakers deliberated upon the scientific foundations of regional preparedness with special emphasis on cooperative maritime networks for climate resilience in Indian Ocean Island States such as Mauritius and Seychelles. The aspects of translation of ocean science into policy and collaborative sharing of ocean data, including cooperation involving research vessels, observation networks, forecasting capabilities and appropriate data-sharing arrangements, were also addressed during this session.

The two ministerial sessions on the second day of IPRD 2026 lent strategic guidance to the conference and offered a holistic perspective on India's collaborative approach in addressing maritime security concerns in the Indo-Pacific.

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