



INDIAN OCEAN REGION

JULY 2026





India Positions Itself as a Guarantor of IOR Security

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh described India as the primary guarantor of peace and stability in the Indian Ocean Region, highlighting the Navy's role in securing maritime interests and sea lanes. The statement reflects New Delhi's ambition to act as a net security provider while expanding its strategic responsibilities across the IOR.



Chagos Islands Deal Faces Uncertainty Amid US Intervention

The proposed transfer of sovereignty over the Chagos Islands to Mauritius faced renewed uncertainty following US objections. The dispute highlights the continuing strategic importance of Diego Garcia and the tension between decolonisation and military imperatives. Washington's intervention demonstrates how great-power strategic interests continue to shape sovereignty questions in the Indian Ocean.





Indian Navy Foils Piracy Attempt in Gulf of Aden

INS Trikand thwarted an attempted pirate attack on the merchant vessel MV Golden Arsenal in the Gulf of Aden, with the crew securing themselves before Indian naval commandos intervened. The operation demonstrates India's expanding role as a maritime security provider and its ability to protect commercial shipping amid renewed piracy concerns.



India-Southeast Asia Submarine Cable Project Strengthens Digital Connectivity

The I-2SEA submarine cable project linking India, Malaysia and Singapore marks an important expansion of regional digital infrastructure. Beyond connectivity, subsea cables have growing strategic significance for economic resilience, data flows and technological security. The project strengthens India's integration with Southeast Asia's digital ecosystem and emerging Indo-Pacific technology networks.





India and Indonesia Deepen Strategic Partnership

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Indonesia strengthened cooperation in defence, maritime security, trade, critical minerals, digital technology and connectivity. Both countries emphasised ASEAN centrality and a free, open Indo-Pacific. Enhanced India-Indonesia cooperation strengthens New Delhi's strategic presence in the eastern Indian Ocean and its engagement with Southeast Asia.



Somali Piracy Resurges Around the Horn of Africa

A resurgence in Somali pirate attacks is adding another layer of insecurity to commercial shipping already affected by Red Sea and Gulf tensions. The convergence of piracy, geopolitical conflict and weakened maritime security could increase shipping risks, insurance costs and naval demands, particularly around the Gulf of Aden and Horn of Africa.



India and Australia Strengthen Defence and Strategic Cooperation

India and Australia advanced cooperation in defence, nuclear energy and strategic technologies during Prime Minister Modi's visit. The deepening partnership strengthens two major maritime powers' alignment within the Indo-Pacific. Enhanced defence cooperation also supports India's broader strategy of developing resilient partnerships with like-minded states amid increasing strategic competition across the region.



Indonesia and Germany Join India's Maritime Information Network

Indonesia and Germany deployed their first International Liaison Officers to India's Information Fusion Centre-Indian Ocean Region. Their participation expands India's maritime information-sharing network and strengthens regional maritime domain awareness. The development demonstrates growing international confidence in India's capacity to coordinate surveillance and security cooperation across the wider Indian Ocean.



India Expands Maritime Interoperability Through RIMPAC 2026

India's participation in RIMPAC 2026, including the deployment of a P-8I maritime reconnaissance aircraft, reinforces growing India-US naval interoperability. India's role in theatre-level anti-submarine warfare planning represents an important expansion of its operational profile. The exercise strengthens India's ability to coordinate with major maritime powers across the Indo-Pacific.





US Strikes Damage Infrastructure at Chabahar Port

US airstrikes reportedly damaged a surveillance tower at Iran's Chabahar port, raising concerns over the security of India's strategic connectivity infrastructure. Although India indicated that its terminal remained unaffected, the incident highlights the vulnerability of Chabahar amid escalating US-Iran tensions and the geopolitical risks surrounding India's access to Afghanistan and Central Asia.





Suspected Somali Pirates Seize Tanker Near Yemen

The reported seizure of a tanker near Yemen highlighted the renewed convergence of piracy and geopolitical instability in the western Indian Ocean. With commercial shipping already facing threats from the Houthis and regional conflict, renewed Somali piracy further complicates maritime security and could place additional pressure on international naval deployments.





Houthis Declare Naval Blockade Against Saudi Arabia

Yemen's Houthi movement declared a naval blockade against Saudi Arabia, threatening commercial and energy shipping around the Red Sea and Bab el-Mandeb. The escalation places another critical maritime chokepoint under pressure, potentially affecting global energy flows and shipping. It also demonstrates the expanding regional consequences of the wider Iran-related conflict.



China Deepens Military Footprint in Sri Lanka

China's renewed defence engagement with Sri Lanka highlights Beijing's expanding strategic footprint in the Indian Ocean. Increased military cooperation, training and defence assistance could deepen Colombo's dependence on China while providing Beijing greater influence over a strategically located maritime state, raising concerns for India's security and regional strategic balance.



INS Malvan Strengthens India's Anti-Submarine Warfare Capability

The commissioning of INS *Malvan*, a Mahe-class anti-submarine warfare shallow-water craft, strengthens India's ability to counter underwater threats along its coastline. Its induction reflects growing attention to littoral security and submarine activity in the IOR, while reinforcing India's emphasis on indigenous naval capabilities and coastal maritime domain awareness.



Operation Southern Readiness Deepens Multinational Maritime Cooperation

Operation Southern Readiness 26-2 brought together personnel from 27 countries in Kochi to strengthen maritime security cooperation and interoperability. Conducted with Combined Maritime Forces, the exercise reinforces India's role in coordinating multinational maritime-security efforts and developing collective capabilities to address piracy, trafficking and other non-traditional threats across the Indian Ocean.



Diego Garcia Emerges as a Pressure Point in Iran-UK Tensions

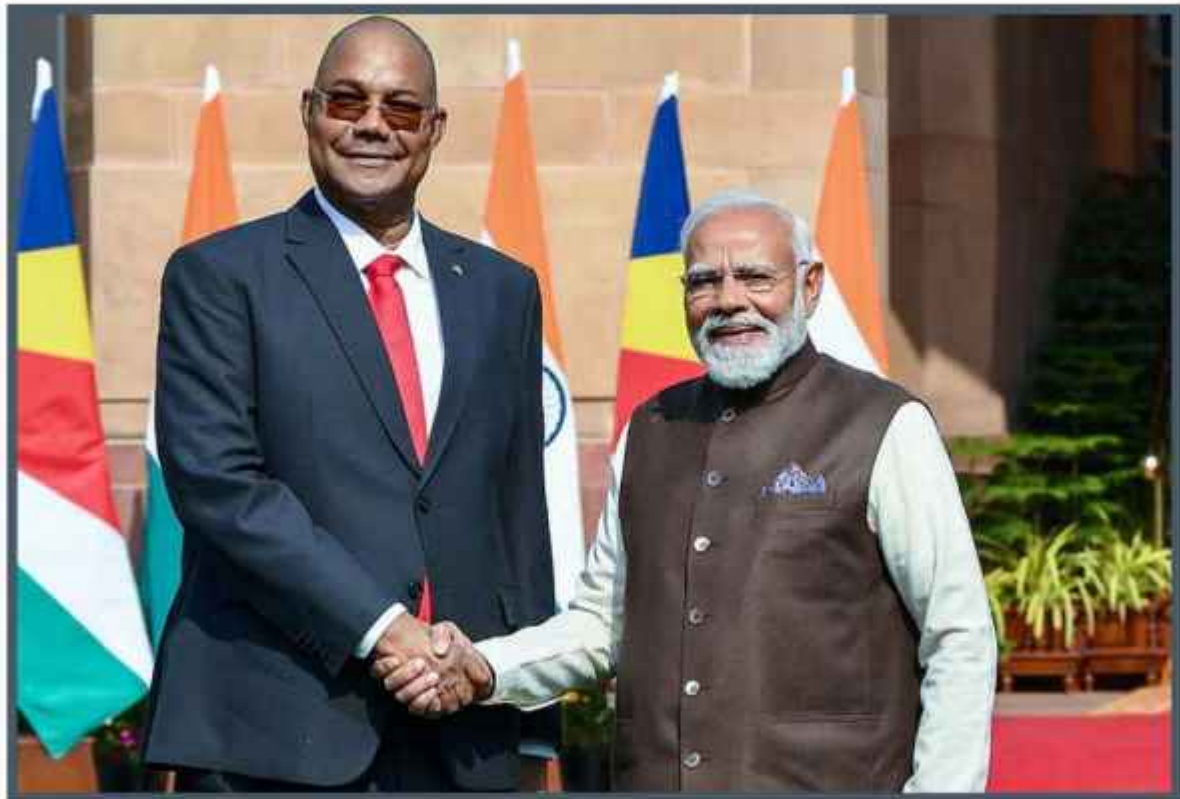
An Iranian parliamentary warning over Diego Garcia underscored the island's strategic importance amid escalating tensions with Britain and the United States. Britain's provision of access to US forces has increased Tehran-London friction, highlighting how Diego Garcia functions as a critical military platform for power projection from the Indian Ocean.





Saudi Arabia Moves Towards Multinational Maritime Defence Coalition

Saudi Arabia announced plans for a multinational maritime defence coalition involving 14 supporting countries to protect shipping through the Red Sea, Bab el-Mandeb and Gulf of Aden. The initiative represents a significant regional response to Houthi threats and demonstrates growing willingness among regional states to assume greater responsibility for maritime security.



India Expands Development Partnership with Seychelles

India and Seychelles advanced development cooperation through an agreement for 1,008 affordable housing units. While primarily developmental, the project contributes to India's broader engagement with small island states in the western Indian Ocean. Such initiatives strengthen diplomatic goodwill and reinforce India's image as a development and capacity-building partner in the region.



India's Maritime Posture Expands Across the IOR

Developments throughout July demonstrated India's expanding maritime-security role, combining naval deployments, anti-submarine capabilities, information-sharing, multinational exercises and partnerships with Indonesia, Australia and other regional states. Collectively, these initiatives indicate a shift from primarily coastal defence towards a more comprehensive regional maritime-security posture and reinforce India's ambition to act as a net security provider.



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