

AIR Spotlight: Indo-Pacific Regional Dialogue 2022

AIR Spotlight is an insightful program featured daily on the All India Radio Newsonair. In this program, many eminent panellists discuss issues of importance which can be quite helpful in [IAS exam](#) preparation.

This article is about the discussion on the **Indo-Pacific Regional Dialogue 2022**.

Participants:

1. Anil Trigunayat, Former Ambassador
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Context

The Indo-Pacific Regional Dialogue 2022 was recently conducted by the Indian Navy in New Delhi.

Indo-Pacific Regional Dialogue 2022 (IPRD 2022)

- The Indo-Pacific Regional Dialogue (IPRD) is an annual international conference that seeks to foster the exchange of ideas and promote the liberation of maritime issues relevant to the Indo-Pacific region.
- IPRD is the annual apex-level regional strategic dialogue of the Indian Navy.
 - IPRD is mainly organised by the National Maritime Foundation (NMF), which is the Navy's chief knowledge partner for the international event.
- IPRD has been organised since 2018 and was postponed in 2020 due to the COVID pandemic.
- IPRD 2022 is the fourth edition of the conference.
- **The theme of IPRD 2022:** Operationalising the [Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative \(IPOI\)](#)
- IPRD 2022 was attended by more than 800 participants, including delegates from 20 friendly foreign countries and international organisations.
- Key issues discussed during the conference include:
 - Building Maritime Connectivity: Ports, Trade and Transport
 - Capacity-Building and Capability Enhancement: Leveraging the Physical and Social Sciences
 - Transitioning from a 'Brown' to a 'Blue' Economy in the Face of Climate Change
 - Practical Approaches to a Regional Blue Economy

Significance of the IPRD 2022

- On the sidelines of the conference, the Defence Minister of India at the [ASEAN](#) Defence Ministers' Meeting reaffirmed that India advocates a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific region.

- He further called for the peaceful resolution of disputes respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations.
- At a time when China is increasing its assertiveness on maritime issues in the Indo-Pacific region, the Defence Minister has said that India stands for freedom of navigation, unimpeded lawful commerce, peaceful settlement of maritime disputes and adherence to international laws such as the [UNCLOS](#).
- With the Indo-Pacific emerging as a major theatre for superpower competition, a peaceful Indo-Pacific is crucial for the security and prosperity of the world.
- Considering the number of choke points and various trading routes in the Indo-Pacific region which are extremely important for the well-being of India and other littoral nations, talks about ensuring maritime security through the IPRD 2022 have gained significance.

India's approach to its engagement in Indo-Pacific

- India's approach has mainly been influenced by Prime Minister's statements at the 2017 [Shangri-La Dialogue](#), where he said India's maritime approach would be "inclusive".
- Even in a maritime conference held in India's presidency, the Prime Minister of India reiterated that the freedom of navigation, respect of rights and international laws and conventions are crucial for peace in the Indo-Pacific.
- Further, India's position on the centrality of ASEAN has been clearly articulated by the Defence Minister of India on various platforms in recent times.
- India is also part of the [Quadrilateral Security Dialogue \(QUAD\)](#) which has a shared vision for a Free and Open Indo-Pacific.
- Through the vision of [SAGAR \(Security and Growth for All in the Region\)](#) envisioned by the Indian Prime Minister, India is cooperating with multiple partners to ensure economic growth & security in the region while tackling threats such as natural disasters.

Competition between India and China

- During the pandemic, India was seen as a more reliable and trusted partner for Indo-Pacific littoral countries which earlier relied heavily upon China for various aspects such as critical technology support, vaccine manufacturing and other healthcare facilities.
- Post the Galwan incident, China has realised that India is the only country in the region that has the potential to confront it.
- Further, with India currently being the fastest growing economy and a dwindling China's economy, both countries are in a sort of direct contest.
- Experts believe that such a kind of competition-cooperation policy between the two countries is expected to continue even in the coming days.

Way forward for India

- India must continue to engage with various multilateral organisations and instruments such as ASEAN and QUAD which enjoy significant influence in the region.
- With the countries in the region looking for a more holistic approach and alternatives for their engagement with China, India must look to utilise these opportunities to further its influence and soft power in the region.
- With India assuming the chairmanship/presidency of G20 and [Shanghai Cooperation Organisation \(SCO\)](#) in the coming year, India must undertake steps to establish a rule-based maritime order in the region.

