

'QUAD NAVIES ENJOY HIGH DEGREE OF INTEROPERABILITY'

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: QUAD and India

Admiral Karambir Singh

The Quad navies of India, the U.S., Japan and Australia “already” enjoy a “high degree of interoperability” and have the capability and capacity to come together in an “almost plug and play mechanism” if the opportunity arises, Navy chief Admiral Karambir Singh said on Wednesday. He stated that it would not be surprising to see a Chinese naval expansion in the Indian Ocean region.

“We have seen regular Chinese naval presence in the Indian Ocean region for over a decade now. If the Chinese look west from where they are, their energy, markets and resources are located to their west. So, it won't be surprising that soon they would be coming into the Indian Ocean, as there is a saying that the flag follows the trade,” Adm. Singh said at the ongoing Raisina Dialogue, to a question on the rapid expansion of the Chinese Navy.

The Chinese Navy has seen massive expansion in recent years, with rapid addition of frontline warships. It has two aircraft carriers and a more capable one is under construction. In 2017, China opened its first overseas base at Djibouti in the Horn of Africa.

Talking of the Quad and possible military cooperation, Adm. Singh said the Quad was “evolving organically”, referring to the vaccine cooperation announced recently, among others. “As far as the military part is concerned, navies of Australia, Japan, U.S. and India already enjoy a high degree of interoperability. If an opportunity arises, we have the capability and capacity to come together in an almost plug and play mechanism,” he said.

Stating that as India emerges a more confident nation on the global stage, the Indian Navy was ready to do its bit to contribute to the Indo-Pacific's security and stability, Adm. Singh stressed the idea of “collective maritime competence” where each nation brings something to the table and can learn from each other and harness individual capabilities. As for the wider Indian Ocean region, Adm. Singh said the Navy's aim was to be the “preferred security partner”, be credible and forward-leaning in engagements and first responder in the region.

'Powerful signal'

Speaking on the churn in the Indo-Pacific, Commander of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Admiral Phil Davidson said the Quad had gained momentum and called it the “diamond of democracies in the region”.

He said one should think about the Quad in the broadest possible terms and realise its potential to create global economic opportunities, including diversification of supply chains, and address common interests such as cybersecurity concerns and space cooperation and other advanced technologies in future. “This coming together in this multilateral form sends a very powerful signal in support of the rules-based order, reflects our common values and mutual trust,” he said. The alternative, he said, was a stark contrast to a free and open region.

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