

India vows to keep oceans free

S. Jaishankar

India is working with “like-minded” countries on preserving security of the oceans where India has a particular responsibility, Foreign Secretary S. Jaishankar has said.

“As the Indian Ocean takes centre stage in the 21st century, the onus is on us, as equal stakeholders, to collectively secure and nurture our oceanic states,” Mr. Jaishankar told a meeting of maritime experts at the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) held in Delhi.

“The Indian government has been working with like-minded countries to preserve the integrity, inviolability and security of the maritime domain,” he said, according to a release issued by the Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA) that organised the conference.

The words of India’s top diplomat are significant ahead of the ASEAN and East Asia summits in Manila next week, where Japan has reportedly suggested an official meeting of the “Quad” grouping of U.S.-Japan-Australia-India. While India is not a military alliance partner, as the other three countries are, the MEA spokesperson had said India is “open” to the idea of the quadrilateral. In Perth last week, Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop had also endorsed the idea, calling it a continuation of a 2008 quadrilateral plan that was subsequently shelved.

“Already Australia has regular meetings with Japan and Australia and the U.S. so it’s natural that we should continue to have such discussions but there is nothing formal but there has been no decision made on [the quadrilateral with India],” Ms. Bishop told reporters.

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