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India won't be power it deserves to be but for strong maritime system: Doval

"The trajectory of this nation is well defined. We know where we are going. And when our time comes...we as a nation have to be strong. India will not be able to become the power it deserves to be unless it has a very strong maritime system," Doval said.

By: **Express News Service** | New Delhi |

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National Security Advisor Ajit Doval chairs the inaugural meeting of the Multi-Agency Maritime Security

Group Policy, in New Delhi on Thursday. Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral R Hari Kumar was also present. (ANI)

Stating that the Indian Ocean, which has been an “ocean of peace”, is now witness to rivalries and competitions, National Security Adviser Ajit Doval on Thursday said that India needs to protect its interests since the region has the potential to witness clash of interests.

Speaking at the first meeting of the Multi-Agency Maritime Security Group (MAMSG), Doval said security at the high seas and economic wellbeing is inextricably linked and all stakeholders must work unitedly.

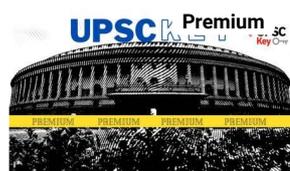
“In the changing geopolitical scenario, the Indian Ocean, which has been an ocean of peace, is gradually becoming competitive. We see a potential of having a clash of interest, we need to protect it and be vigilant,” he said.

“The trajectory of this nation is well defined. We know where we are going. And when our time comes...we as a nation have to be strong. India will not be able to become the power it deserves to be unless it has a very strong maritime system,” Doval said.

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The meeting was chaired by Vice Admiral G Ashok Kumar (retd), the country's first National Maritime Security Coordinator. Chief of Naval Staff Admiral R Hari Kumar was among the top officials who attended the deliberations.

Top maritime and coastal security officials from all 13 coastal states and Union Territories as well Indian Navy and other central agencies attended the meeting.

“The more we develop, the more assets we create, the more prosperous we get, greater would be the vulnerability and the need for security in the maritime domain,” Doval said.

In national security discourse, the importance of land and maritime borders are very different, Doval said. He said one cannot fence the maritime borders, and that disputes in seas are resolved through international norms and laws, while land disputes are bilateral in nature.

He also said denying accessibility to foreign intelligence agencies looking to undertake espionage activities is a major challenge.

Doval referred to initiatives such as the Colombo security conclave for cooperation among the like-minded countries in the maritime domain and that it could be expanded further.

“Our responsibility as a premier maritime power is extremely important,” he said.

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