

## **Indian Ocean cannot be backyard of India: China**

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**Beijing:** The Indian Ocean cannot be a backyard of India which navies of other countries could not visit, according to the Chinese ministry of defence here.

China, which has been expanding its naval operations into the blue waters of the world, says that it's important that oceans are accepted as part of the legitimate area of operation.

Senior Captain Zhao Yi told visiting Indian journalists on Tuesday that India had a "special role to play in stabilising the Indian Ocean region", but it could not be treated as its backyard.

Answering questions from the journalists, he said that it was "not appropriate" to say that the ocean could be India's backyard, "otherwise how would you explain the right of navigation by the navies of Russia, American and Australia there," he said.

Zhao met the journalists along with eight other officials and top academics attached to ministry of defence, including the ministry's spokesperson.

Special Colonel Yang Yujun, the spokesperson explained that he had invited the others to bring about a better understanding of military issues.

Zhao said that a geopolitical research thinktank in the US has said that "severe clashes" could break out in the Indian Ocean area, adding that he did not agree with that.

"But if someone views the ocean as their backyard, this possibility could not be eliminated." He said the region was very important for international maritime trade and was "vital" not only for China but for the world.

"So it is understandable for the Chinese navy to navigate the Indian Ocean," he said through a translator.

In a white paper on China's military strategy released by the ministry of defence on May 26, and which was discussed by the spokesperson at the interaction with Indian journalists, the military has said that the "traditional mentality that land out-weighs sea must be abandoned and great importance has to be attached to managing the seas and oceans and protecting maritime rights and interests".

The paper also says that in line with the strategic requirement of offshore waters defence and open seas protection, the Chinese navy "will gradually shift its focus" from offshore waters defence to combination of such waters and "open seas protection".

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