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Q10

What are the maritime security challenges in India ? Discuss the organisational, technical and procedural initiatives taken to improve the maritime security.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2022 · GS III · 10 marks · Indian Economy

Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment.

Core demand of the question

- State maritime security challenges facing India
- Explain organisational, technical and procedural initiatives to meet them

Revision summary

Maritime security covers terror from the sea, piracy, smuggling, IUU fishing, and extra-regional presence on energy and trade lanes.

26/11 showed the gap between Navy blue water and unpoliced creeks.

- **Organisation:** Navy, Coast Guard, marine police, NCSMCS, IMAC and IFC-IOR, plus the Andaman and Nicobar Command.
- **Technical:** coastal radars, AIS, aircraft, UAVs, harbour sensors, and boat-crew identity.
- **Procedural:** joint SOPs, Sagar Kavach exercises, fisherman networks, and ISPS port security.

Introduction

India's security does not stop at the beach. **Maritime security** covers the coastline, exclusive economic zone, sea lanes, ports and offshore assets against terror from the sea, piracy, smuggling, illegal fishing, and grey-zone presence of extra-regional navies. After 26/11, the Union rebuilt coastal architecture in three layers: who commands, what sensors see, and how a craft is boarded.

Body

Challenges

- **Terror from the sea:** small craft infiltration (Mumbai 26 November 2008 remains the teaching case).
- **Piracy and armed robbery** in the western Indian Ocean and, at times, closer approaches; Indian seafarers on foreign-flag ships are exposed.
- **Smuggling:** narcotics, arms, gold, and people on dhows and fishing boats.
- **Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing;** depletion and foreign trawlers in the EEZ.
- **Grey-zone naval presence,** research vessels, and extra-regional bases that sit on India's sea lanes of communication (energy from the Gulf, trade through Malacca).
- **Offshore oil, undersea cables and island territories** (Andaman and Nicobar, Lakshadweep) as targets or intelligence platforms.

- **Cyclone and climate** damage to coastal infrastructure is a security-of-supply issue, not only a disaster issue.

Organisational initiatives

- **Indian Navy** as the principal maritime force; **Indian Coast Guard** for EEZ and pollution; **marine police** in coastal States after 26/11.
- **National Committee for Strengthening Maritime and Coastal Security (NCSMCS)** and joint operations centres; **Information Management and Analysis Centre (IMAC)** and the later **Information Fusion Centre - Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR)** at Gurugram for sharing white-shipping data.
- **Andaman and Nicobar Command** as a tri-service watch on the eastern approaches.
- Customs, NCB and State police in a coastal security scheme; **Sagar Prahari Bal**-type specialised units in the Navy for force protection.

Technical initiatives

- **Coastal radar chain**, Automatic Identification System (AIS), National AIS network, and Vessel Traffic Services at ports.
- **Satellite and UAV** surveillance; Navy and Coast Guard aircraft and ships for EEZ patrol.
- **Biometric / identity** for fishermen and boat registration so a terrorist craft is harder to hide in the fishing fleet.
- **Harbour defence**: barriers, patrol boats, and underwater sensors at sensitive ports.

Procedural initiatives

- **Standard operating procedures** for Navy-Coast Guard-marine police hot pursuit and boarding.
- **Community policing** of fishermen as the first sensor; joint exercises such as **Sagar Kavach**.
- **International**: information sharing through **IFC-IOR**, coordinated patrols with neighbours, and Indian Ocean naval symposium-type diplomacy.
- Port security under **ISPSI** (International Ship and Port Facility Security) Code after 9/11, implemented in Indian major ports.

Flow diagram

Maritime challenges -> Terror smuggling piracy
Maritime challenges -> EEZ fishing SLOCs
Navy Coast Guard marine police -> Response
Radar AIS IMAC IFC-IOR -> Response
SOPs Sagar Kavach boat ID -> Response

Conclusion

India's maritime challenge is terror craft, crime, illegal fishing and contested sea lanes. The reply is a Navy-Coast Guard-police command chain, radars and AIS, and boarding SOPs that treat the fisherman as a sensor. 26/11 forced that architecture; **IFC-IOR** extends it across the ocean.

Facts & figures

26/11

Mumbai terror attacks of 26 November 2008; attackers used the sea route, triggering coastal security reform.

Indian Coast Guard

Armed force for EEZ protection, search and rescue, and marine pollution; complementary to the Navy.

IFC-IOR

Information Fusion Centre - Indian Ocean Region: white-shipping information hub hosted by India.

IMAC

Information Management and Analysis Centre: coastal security information node for Indian agencies.

ISPS Code

IMO International Ship and Port Facility Security Code applied at Indian ports after the post-9/11 maritime regime.

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