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Q20

Why is maritime security vital to protect India's sea trade? Discuss maritime and coastal security challenges and the way forward.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2025 · GS III · 15 marks · Indian Economy

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

Core demand of the question

- **Why sea trade needs security:** 90% volume, energy, chokepoints
- **Challenges:** 26/11 coast, IUU, piracy, PLA Navy, Andaman
- **Way:** **SAGAR**, IPOI, IMBL, coastal police, Quad/IORA

Revision summary

About nine-tenths of India's trade volume and most oil still move by sea, so a chokepoint shock is an economic shock.

Coastal creeks, 26/11-style gaps, illegal fishing, piracy and a denser Chinese naval presence are the main challenges.

Red Sea attacks in 2023-24 showed how quickly freight and insurance can jump.

SAGAR, IPOI, IMAC fusion, coastal police and partner patrols are the reply.

Ports and shipbuilding make security a growth story, not only a patrol story.

Flow diagram

Sea trade oil containers -> Chokepoints Hormuz Malacca Red Sea

Chokepoints Hormuz Malacca Red Sea -> Security

26/11 IUU PLA Navy -> Security

SAGAR IMAC Coast Guard -> Security

Conclusion

SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) and **IPOI** as the diplomatic grammar. **Information Management and Analysis Centre (IMAC)** and **IMB** fusion for a common operating picture. **Coastal police, CISF in ports, Customs, and the Coast Guard** in one drill, not three egos. **Deep-water ports and transshipment** (Vizhinjam-type bets) so cargo need not wait in Colombo. **Quad and IORA** for domain awareness. **UNCLOS** litigation where needed. **Seafarer training and shipbuilding** so security is also an industry.

The way forward is **see, share, escort, and build**. A blue-water speech without a coastal police jetty is 26/11 waiting to recur.

Sea trade is India's energy and export lung, so maritime security is economic policy. Challenges run from creeks and piracy to a busier PLA Navy. **SAGAR**, coastal fusion, domain awareness and port capacity are the practical way forward.

Facts & figures

Trade by sea

India routinely notes that about 90 per cent of trade volume and a very high share of value move on ships.

SAGAR

India's 2015 Indian Ocean vision: security and growth for all in the region, the diplomatic frame for maritime presence.

26/11 lesson

The Mumbai attacks arrived by sea, after which coastal radar, police stations and the Coast Guard-navy join-up were strengthened, still unevenly.

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