

## 5. Maritime Security of India- Economy

Recently, the defence minister called on the global maritime community to cooperate in addressing evolving and complex challenges at sea while inaugurating Exercise MILAN 2026 in Visakhapatnam, emphasizing mutual trust, shared responsibility, and adherence to international law

### 1. Concept of Maritime Security

Maritime security refers to the protection of national sovereignty, territorial integrity, and economic interests in maritime zones including territorial waters, Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), and high seas.

It encompasses -

1. Protection of coastal and offshore assets.
2. Securing Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs).
3. Safeguarding ports, shipyards, and naval bases.
4. Prevention of illegal maritime activities.

It integrates both traditional security (naval defence) and non-traditional security (piracy, climate threats, trafficking, environmental risks) dimensions.

### 2. Strategic Importance for India

#### Geostrategic Location

India is centrally located in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), through which -

1. Nearly 80% of global oil trade passes.
2. Major east-west maritime trade routes operate.

India has -

1. A coastline of over 7,500 km.
2. 1,382 islands (Andaman & Nicobar, Lakshadweep).
3. An EEZ of over 2 million sq. km.

This makes maritime security central to national power projection.

#### Economic Significance

1. Around 95% of India's trade by volume and nearly 70% by value is seaborne.
2. Energy security is heavily dependent on maritime imports of crude oil and LNG.
3. Blue Economy potential includes -
  1. Fisheries.
  2. Offshore hydrocarbons.
  3. Deep-sea mining.
  4. Renewable ocean energy.

Maritime disruption directly affects GDP growth and macroeconomic stability.

### 3. Major Challenges and Emerging Threats

#### A. Geopolitical Rivalries

Increasing militarization of the Indo-Pacific. China's naval expansion and presence in the IOR through -

1. Dual-use ports.
2. Submarine deployments.
3. Maritime Silk Road initiatives.

Strategic competition impacts regional balance of power.

### **B. Maritime Terrorism and Piracy**

1. Post-26/11 Mumbai attacks, coastal infiltration remains a key concern.
2. Piracy resurgence nearby –
  1. Gulf of Aden.
  2. Western Indian Ocean.

Offshore oil platforms and major ports are high-value targets.

### **C. Supply Chain Vulnerabilities**

#### **Disruption of chokepoints such as**

1. Strait of Hormuz.
2. Bab El-Mandeb.
3. Malacca Strait.

Cyber-attacks on ports and shipping logistics systems. Global shipping crises can impact domestic inflation and energy security.

### **D. Illegal and Unregulated Activities**

1. Smuggling of arms and narcotics.
2. Human trafficking.
3. Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing.
4. Maritime cyber threats targeting port infrastructure.
5. Maritime boundary violations.

### **E. Climate Change and Environmental Risks**

1. Rising sea levels threatening coastal infrastructure.
2. Increased frequency of cyclones in the Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea.
3. Coastal erosion and salinity intrusion.
4. Marine pollution affecting fisheries and livelihoods.

Maritime security is now interlinked with climate resilience.

## **4. India's Strategic Response and Initiatives**

### **A. MAHASAGAR Vision**

1. Stands for Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions.
2. Builds upon the earlier SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) doctrine.

#### **Focuses on**

1. Collaborative maritime governance.
2. Capacity building of littoral states.
3. Disaster response and humanitarian assistance.

### **B. Naval Modernization**

#### **Expansion of Indian Navy capabilities**

1. Aircraft carriers (e.g., INS Vikrant).
2. Nuclear-powered submarines.
3. Advanced destroyers and frigates.
4. Long-range maritime surveillance aircraft (P-8I).

Development of indigenous defence manufacturing under Atmanirbhar Bharat. Enhanced maritime domain awareness (MDA) systems.

### **C. Multilateral and Naval Cooperation**

#### **Exercise MILAN**

1. Major multilateral naval exercise.
2. MILAN 2026 held at Visakhapatnam with participation from 74 countries.

#### **Participation in**

1. QUAD maritime cooperation.
  2. Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS).
- Promotes interoperability and collective maritime security.

### **D. Strategic Partnerships**

#### **Defence and maritime security agreements with**

1. European Union
2. France
3. Australia
4. Japan

Logistics Exchange Agreements for access to bases. Joint patrols and information sharing.

### **E. Coastal Security Architecture**

1. Strengthening Indian Coast Guard (ICG).
2. Coastal radar chain network.
3. Automatic Identification Systems (AIS).

#### **Coordination between**

1. Navy.
2. Coast Guard.
3. Marine Police.
4. Fisheries departments.

Post-26/11 reforms significantly improved coastal vigilance.

### **F. Port and Infrastructure Development**

#### **Sagarmala Programme**

1. Port-led development.
2. Modernization and capacity expansion.
3. Coastal economic zones.

#### **Smart ports integrating**

1. Green technologies.
2. Digital tracking.
3. Logistics optimization.

## **5. Maritime Security and Blue Economy**

1. Sustainable use of marine resources.
2. Balancing economic exploitation with environmental protection.
3. Deep-sea mining missions.
4. Marine biodiversity protection under international frameworks.

Maritime security supports long-term blue economy sustainability.

## 6. Institutional Framework

1. Indian Navy – primary defence role.
2. Indian Coast Guard – law enforcement and search & rescue.
3. National Maritime Domain Awareness (NMDA) Project.
4. Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) for real-time data sharing.

## 7. Way Forward

1. Strengthen indigenous shipbuilding and submarine capabilities.
2. Expand maritime cyber security framework.
3. Enhance cooperation with ASEAN and African littoral states.
4. Integrate climate resilience into port planning.
5. Promote regional maritime security architecture led by India.
6. Improve surveillance of island territories.

## 8. Conclusion

Maritime security for India is not confined to coastal defence but extends to ensuring regional stability, uninterrupted trade flows, energy security, and strategic influence in the Indo-Pacific.

A comprehensive approach combining –

1. Naval modernization,
2. Diplomatic engagement,
3. Economic infrastructure development,
4. Climate resilience,

is essential for India's transformation into a major maritime and global power while safeguarding ecological sustainability.

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