

3. Chinese Trawlers in Southern Indian Ocean Worry India

Prelims: India- Bilateral Relations

Mains:

GS-II- India and its Neighbourhood- Relations.

GS-III- Security challenges and their Management in Border Areas

Why in News?

- ▶▶ There has been a huge increase in Chinese deep-sea fishing trawlers in the southern Indian Ocean far from the Chinese coast which has raised concerns in the government and the security establishment.

Highlights:

- ▶▶ In the last four years, on an average at least 500 Chinese trawlers were present in the region and around 32,250 incidents per year were recorded.
- ▶▶ The trawlers were, however, not in India's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) but beyond.
- ▶▶ This includes trawlers from China, Hong Kong and Taiwan.
- ▶▶ There were 1,100 occurrences near Somalia and 1,500 occurrences near the Coast of Oman.
- ▶▶ Occurrences are recordings of the Automatic Identification System (AIS) aboard trawlers and ships recorded when they are activated.
- ▶▶ A trawler can be recorded multiple times based on its AIS signature.
- ▶▶ The maritime movements in the region are tracked at the Navy's Information Management and Analysis Centre (IMAC) at Gurugram, which is the single-point centre interlinking all the coastal radar chains and other inputs along the coastline.
- ▶▶ The AIS information comprises name, MMSI number, position, course, speed, last port visited, destination and so on.
- ▶▶ This information can be picked up through various AIS sensors including coastal AIS chains and satellite-based receivers.
- ▶▶ Chinese trawlers have institutional backing and have processing facilities with them which are sold in the vicinity.
- ▶▶ While India has good inland fishing, the ocean fishing capacity is way below capacity.
- ▶▶ There have been recommendations for the need to boost domestic deep-sea fishing.

Way Forward:

- ▶▶ To address the issue, the National Maritime Domain Awareness initiative aims to integrate fishing, ports, customs so that the database is available to everyone.
- ▶▶ Currently, the States have their databases. As part of this evolving mechanism, the National Committee for Strengthening Maritime and Coastal Security is scheduled to meet to discuss the implementation.
- ▶▶ There has been a national effort to install AIS systems on ships under 20m for which a pilot study has been carried out.
- ▶▶ AIS works through satellite and the ISRO has already delivered 1000 transponders for trails in Gujarat and Tamil Nadu.

Exclusive Economic Zone:

- ▶▶ An Exclusive Economic Zone or EEZ is a zone in the sea approved by the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.
- ▶▶ Over this zone, a nation-state has exclusive special rights for exploring and using the marine resources.
- ▶▶ This right is also extended to the production of energy from wind and water.
- ▶▶ It extends from the baseline to two hundred nautical miles from the coast of the concerned country.
- ▶▶ In colloquial practice, the term can also contain the continental shelf.
- ▶▶ Generally, a state's exclusive right extends up to 200 nautical miles but there are exceptions to this rule such as whenever exclusive economic zones overlap, i.e., the baselines of the state coasts are under 400 nautical miles apart.
- ▶▶ The continental shelf or the territorial sea over 200 nautical miles is not included in this term.
- ▶▶ In a territorial sea, the state has complete sovereignty or authority over it.
- ▶▶ But in case of EEZ, a "sovereign right" is conferred to the state's rights below sea waters. The surface waters are international waters.