

6. Inflight and Maritime Telecom Connectivity in India

Prelims: Governance- Institutional Reforms, Policies

Mains: GS-II- Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their Design and Implementation.

Why in News?

- ▶▶ Union Ministry for Communications, Electronics & Information Technology has launched the maritime communication services.

Providing Maritime Connectivity:

- ▶▶ Nelco India's leading VSAT solutions provider is the first Indian company that will now provide quality broadband services to the maritime sector.
- ▶▶ Nelco through global partnerships, infrastructure including transponder capacity on satellite of ISRO and a comprehensive service portfolio
- ▶▶ It will help Energy, Cargo and Cruise vessels by enhancing operational efficiency, improving crew welfare and enabling customer services.
- ▶▶ Maritime Connectivity will enable high-end support to those in sea by providing access to Voice, Data and Video services while traveling on sailing vessels, cruise liners, ships in India, using satellite technology.

Making it possible through IFMC license:

- ▶▶ In December 2018, the Govt. announced the licenses for In-flight and Maritime Communications (IFMC) that allows voice and internet services while flying over the Indian skies and sailing in Indian waters.
- ▶▶ The IFMC licence has not only enabled connectivity for on-board users on ships but also brings operational efficiencies for shipping companies which were less evolved until now.
- ▶▶ The IFMC license is a key initiative of the Telecom Ministry, a move to liberalise satellite communication services in India.
- ▶▶ It permits both international and Indian aircrafts and vessels.

FMC Rules:

- ▶▶ In a major policy decision, Department of Telecommunications, Ministry of Communications had notified the Flight and Maritime Connectivity (FMC) Rules, 2018 on 14th December, 2018.
- ▶▶ It permits voice and data service provisioning in flights and ships.

- ▶▶ The intent is to open the airspace and territorial waters for telecommunication services for general public which was not possible earlier due to lack of enabling rules.
- ▶▶ Rules envisage creation of satellite gateway within India for providing telecom services in aircraft and ships through Indian licensed service providers.
- ▶▶ Further, Indian satellite bandwidth has to be utilised. If a foreign satellite is used, it has to be approved by ISRO.
- ▶▶ Only the authorized IFMC service provider, can provide wireless voice or data or both type of services on ships within Indian territorial waters and on aircraft within or above India or Indian territorial waters.

