Defence & Security · GS - III

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

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2025	GS - III	Defence & Security

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

Maritime trade, Indian Ocean, SLOCs, ports, piracy, terrorism, illegal fishing, trafficking, coastal surveillance, SAGAR, IFC-IOR, IMAC, coastal police

Model Answer

Introduction

India's geographic position in the Indian Ocean makes maritime security essential for economic and national security. A substantial share of India's external trade by volume is carried by sea, while critical energy imports and global supply chains depend on secure maritime routes.

1. Importance

Secure sea lanes of communication ensure uninterrupted trade in energy, raw materials and manufactured goods. Ports and coastal infrastructure are also critical economic assets. Maritime security therefore directly supports growth, energy security and strategic autonomy.

2. Major challenges

1. Piracy and armed robbery threaten commercial shipping.
2. Maritime terrorism can target ports, ships and coastal communities.

3. Smuggling of narcotics, arms and humans exploits maritime routes.
4. Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing affects resources and coastal livelihoods.
5. Unregulated movement of vessels creates surveillance challenges.
6. Cyberattacks on ports, shipping and navigation systems can disrupt trade.
7. Natural disasters and climate-induced coastal risks can damage infrastructure.
8. Strategic competition in the Indian Ocean increases security complexity.

3. Way forward

India should strengthen:

1. Coastal radar and automatic identification systems.
2. Information sharing through the Information Fusion Centre–Indian Ocean Region.
3. Coordination among Navy, Coast Guard, marine police and intelligence agencies.
4. Port cybersecurity and critical infrastructure protection.
5. Joint exercises and maritime-domain-awareness partnerships with regional countries.
6. Capacity-building of island and littoral states under the SAGAR approach.
7. Community-based coastal surveillance involving fishermen.

Conclusion

Maritime security requires a whole-of-government and whole-of-region approach. Combining technology, inter-agency coordination, international cooperation and resilient coastal communities can secure India's maritime trade while strengthening its role as a responsible Indian Ocean power.

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