



## Coastal Radar Chain Network

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### Why in News

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India's efforts are in advanced stages to set up **coastal radar stations in Maldives, Myanmar and Bangladesh.**

The radar chain—which will **link up with similar systems in India, Sri Lanka, Mauritius and Seychelles**—will provide **a comprehensive live feed of ship movements in the Indian Ocean Region** that can be used by friendly navies.

### Key Points

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- **Coastal Radar Chain Network:**

- The **aim** is to create a **network of information and maritime domain awareness** in the **strategic Indian Ocean Region**.
- This will also help in **expanding India's assistance for capacity building** to Indian Ocean littoral states.

The assistance to these countries comes under India's programme called **SAGAR - Security and Growth for All in the Region**.

- Under **Phase-I** of the coastal radar chain network, **46 coastal radar stations** have been set up across the country's coastline.
- Under **Phase-II** of the project, which is currently underway, **38 static radar stations and four mobile radar stations** are being set up by the **Coast Guard** and is in an advanced stage of completion.

The Indian Coast Guard is a **multi-mission organization**, conducting round-the-year real-life operations at sea. It operates under the **Ministry of Defence**.

- The **primary aim of surveillance radar design** is to **detect and track small fishing vessels** for Coastal surveillance application.
  - However, the radar can also be directly used for **VTS (Vessel Traffic management Services) application**, harbor surveillance and navigational purposes.
  - It will also help in **monitoring any illegal activities in the sea**.
- Ultimately, the data collected would feed into the **Information Fusion Centre for the Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR)**.

- **Information Fusion Centre for the Indian Ocean Region:**

- The IFC has been **established at Gurugram** and is **collocated with the Information Management and Analysis Centre** which is jointly administered by the Indian Navy and Indian Coast Guard.

- The **Indian Navy's Information Management and Analysis Centre (IMAC)**, set up after the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks, is the **nodal agency for maritime data fusion**.
- It will soon become a **National Maritime Domain Awareness (NDMA) centre**.

- IFC-IOR has established itself as the **hub of maritime security information in the IOR through white shipping information exchange agreements** with 21 countries and 20 maritime security centres.

**White shipping information** refers to exchange of relevant advance information on the identity and movement of commercial non-military merchant vehicles.

- **Strategic Indian Ocean Region:**

- The Indian Ocean Region, in view of its strategic location as also being home to a vast majority of the world's population, can be considered as the economic highway that drives global commerce.
- With **over 75% of the world's maritime trade** and **50% of daily global oil consumption** passing through the region; IOR is vital to world trade and the economic prosperity of many nations.
- At any given time, there are **close to 12,000 ships** in the Indian Ocean Region and **300 fishing vessels** that need to be always monitored.
- The IOR is also **a fragile environment**, with **threats such as** maritime terrorism, piracy, human and contraband trafficking, illegal and unregulated fishing, arms running and poaching being prevalent.
- Further, there has been **a steady rise in the deployment of Chinese research vessels in the Indian Ocean Region.**

Increasing presence of China in the Indian Ocean Region has been a **strategic concern for India.**

- **Recent Related Initiatives:**

- The council of ministers of **IORA (Indian Ocean Rim Association)** countries met virtually in December 2020. IORA is an **inter-governmental organisation**, established in 1997. **India is a member country.**
- The **four-nation Malabar Exercise** involving India, Australia, the USA and Japan was concluded and hosted in two phases by the Indian Navy in the Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea.
- Earlier this year in March, **India joined the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) as Observer.** The Commission is an important regional institution in Western/African Indian Ocean.

## Way Forward

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- The environmental threat to the marine ecosystem due to climate change and unprincipled depredation of marine resources **threatens the very sustenance of some of the small island states in the Indian Ocean. India's presence in the UN Security Council as a non-permanent member for the next two years** and the **Presidency of the G20 in 2023** will provide it with the opportunity to highlight the issues of these small island states at multilateral forums.
- **Maritime Diplomacy and 'showing the flag'** forms an important part of regional capacity building. Bilateral and multilateral naval exercises, maritime information-sharing mechanisms, developing common standard operating protocols and showing the flag through the port visits are important foreign policy instruments.

- **Export of military hardware** also constitutes an important aspect of economic and military diplomacy and contributes to regional capacity building. Presently India is exporting military hardware to many of its smaller neighbours but the **recent transfer of a Kilo-class submarine to Myanmar** was a new high and sent a distinct message to the region of the importance India attaches to regional capacity building and maritime security.

**Source: TH**