



Maximising the Benefits of India's Blue Economy

This article is based on [“Developing the blue economy requires collaborative effort”](#) which was published in Hindu Business Line on 02/01/2022. It talks about India's Blue economy and related challenges.

For Prelims: Sagar Mala Project, Sustainable development, Gross Domestic Product (GDP), United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Overfishing, Indian Ocean Dipole, Palk Bay, Deep Ocean Mission, India-Norway Task Force on Blue Economy for Sustainable Development, Sagarmala Project, O-SMART, Integrated Coastal Zone Management, National Fisheries Policy, NavIC.

For Mains: Significance of the Blue Economy, Challenges Related to India's Blue Economy, Steps taken by the Government to Promote the Blue Economy.

As the world's **seventh-largest country by land area**, it's no surprise that **India has a vast and diverse maritime territory**. From the **bustling port cities along the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal to the idyllic beaches of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands**, the country's **blue economy** plays a vital role in its economic growth and development.

The government has also launched a number of initiatives to **support the growth of the blue economy, including the Sagar Mala Project**, which aims to modernise India's port infrastructure and improve connectivity to coastal areas, and the **Blue Economy Program**, which focuses on promoting **sustainable economic development** in coastal areas.

There are a number of challenges related to the blue economy in India including **climate change, marine pollution and overexploitation of marine resources**. Therefore, there is a need to scrutinise the potential of the Blue economy to play a significant role in India's economic development and contribute to the country's long-term prosperity.

What is the Blue Economy?

- **Blue economy refers to the sustainable use of marine resources** for exploration, economic growth, improved livelihoods, and transport while preserving the health of marine and coastal ecosystems.
 - In India, the blue economy encompasses a wide range of sectors, including **shipping, tourism, fisheries, and offshore oil and gas exploration**.
- **80% of world trade happens using the seas, 40% of the world's population live near coastal areas**, and more than 3 billion people access the oceans for their livelihood.

What is the Significance of the Blue Economy?

- **Transport:** With an over **7,500-km-long coastline** spread across nine coastal states, 12 major, and 200 minor ports, India's blue economy supports **95% of the country's business through transportation** and contributes an estimated 4% to its **Gross Domestic Product (GDP)**.
- **Expansion of Shipping Industry:** India is looking to expand its **presence in the shipping industry** and increase its capacity as a hub for **ship repair and maintenance, which can come with various economic and geopolitical benefits**.
- **Offshore Energy Production:** There are also opportunities to develop **offshore wind and solar energy in India**, which could help to meet the country's growing energy needs.
- **Aquaculture and Marine Biotechnology:** The blue economy can support the growth of these sectors, which have the **potential to contribute to the country's food security** and improve the health of the ocean ecosystem.
- **Synergy With SDG:** It supports all of the **United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, especially **SDG14 'life below water'**.

What are the Challenges Related to India's Blue Economy?

- **Lack of Infrastructure:** There is a lack of **ports, airports, and other infrastructure in many coastal areas of India**, which can make it difficult to develop and expand economic activities in these regions.
- **Overfishing:** **Overfishing** is a major challenge in India's coastal waters, as it can **lead to the depletion of fish stocks and harm the marine ecosystem**. This can have negative impacts on the fishing industry and other sectors of the blue economy.
- **Marine Pollution:** Pollution from sources such as **oil spills, plastic waste, and industrial effluent** can harm marine ecosystems and have negative impacts on the blue economy.
- **Climate Change:** **Rising sea levels, negative Indian Ocean dipole** and other impacts of climate change can pose risks to **coastal communities** and also have negative impacts on the blue economy.
- **India-Sri Lanka Fishing Conflict:** The boundary between **Indian and Sri Lankan waters in the Palk Bay is not clearly defined**, which has led to confusion and conflict between Indian and Sri Lankan fishermen.
 - To address this issue, both **India and Sri Lanka have attempted to negotiate agreements** to regulate fishing in the Palk Bay and establish clear boundaries. However, **these efforts have not always been successful in resolving the issue**.

What are the Steps taken by the Government to Promote the Blue Economy?

- [Deep Ocean Mission](#)
- [India-Norway Task Force on Blue Economy for Sustainable Development](#)
- [Sagarmala Project](#)
- [O-SMART](#)
- [Integrated Coastal Zone Management](#)
- [National Fisheries Policy](#)
- [NavIC](#)

What Should be the Way Forward?

- **Sustainable Resource Management:** Implementing sustainable resource management practices, such as **setting catch limits, establishing marine protected areas, and enforcing regulations** to prevent overfishing and other forms of resource extraction, can help to ensure the **long-term viability of marine resources** and the industries that rely on them.
- **Investment in Infrastructure:** Investing in infrastructure such as **ports, airports, and other facilities in coastal areas** can help to support the growth and expansion of economic activities in these regions.
- **Research and Development:** Investing in **research and development to improve technologies and practices in the blue economy** can help to increase efficiency and reduce the negative impacts on the environment.

- India must focus on **marine ICTs, and transport (shipping) and communication services, and the creation of a knowledge hub** for marine research and development.
- **Partnerships and Collaboration:** Working with other countries, international organisations, and other stakeholders to **exchange knowledge and expertise, and to collaborate on projects and initiatives**, can help to support the growth and development of the blue economy.
 - Also, India should not look at its **oceans as just water bodies**, but as a global stage for continued **economic, social, and cultural dialogue**.

Drishti Mains Question

Examine the challenges and opportunities for India's blue economy and suggest innovative strategies for the sustainable development of this sector.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year's Question (PYQs)

Mains

Q1. Explain various types of revolutions, took place in Agriculture after Independence in India. How have these revolutions helped in poverty alleviation and food security in India? **(2017)**

Q2. Defining blue revolution, explain the problems and strategies for pisciculture development in India. **(2018)**

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