

Antarctica Ocean Sanctuary

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Why in news?

- A plan for the world's largest ocean sanctuary in Antarctica has been blocked.

More information

- The **Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR)**, had considered the proposal of creating the East Antarctic marine park.
- Member states of the organization failed to agree over a **8 million square kilometer maritime protection zone**.
- The proposed sanctuary is five times the size of Germany, **would ban fishing in a vast area in the Weddell sea**, protecting key species including seals, penguins and whales.
- Consensus is needed from all 24 members of CCAMLR and the European Union for the creation of the marine park.
- But **China and Russia had been key in blocking the proposal**, which was first floated by Australia, France and the European Union in 2010 before being scaled down in 2017.
- Both China and Russia **have fishing interests in the region**.
- Antarctica is home to **penguins, seals, tooth fish, whales and huge numbers of krill**, a staple food for many species.
- They are considered **critical for scientists to study how marine ecosystems function** and to understand the impacts of climate change on the ocean.
- Plans were set out in 2009 to establish a series of marine protected areas (MPAs) in the Southern Ocean allowing marine life to migrate between areas for breeding and foraging.

- The CCAMLR summit, held in **Hobart, Australia** (Secretariat of CCAMLR), was able to establish a **massive US and New Zealand-backed MPA around the Ross Sea** in 2016.