

White Shipping Information

February 5, 2021

In news : While addressing Indian Ocean Region (IOR) Defence Ministers' Conclave the Defence Minister of India referred to White Shipping Information

What is White Shipping Information?

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

What is White Shipping agreement?

- It is an information network protocol that allows the navies of two countries to exchange information about ships in their oceanic territories.
- Ships would be classified into white (commercial ships), grey (military vessels), and black (illegal vessels)
- It facilitates preventing any potential threat from sea from impinging an coastal and offshore security of the country

India's White Shipping agreement

- In 2014, the Government had approved the proposal to conclude bilateral and multilateral agreements for exchange of white shipping information with Navies, Coast Guards and agencies entrusted with maritime security of 26 countries and 3 multinational groups.
- India has also signed white shipping agreements under IFC-IOR with many countries in the IOR and shares maritime information with all the partner countries.
- For example, India has signed White shipping agreement with US, France and Singapore recently

Why is White Shipping agreement important?

- The seas of the entire world are interlinked and vessels can sail routinely around the globe in pursuit of cargo. Thus a vessel that is in Indian waters today maybe sailing towards a distant destination and similarly several vessels set sail from ports around the globe could be bound for India.
- Having advance information of the vessel, its destination and planned itinerary, etc. is thus extremely helpful towards collating an effective MDA as it can then be properly identified when detected.
- This information is likely to be available with the country from whose port it sails. The information is equally relevant for the destination country and those it passes enroute.
- Thus mutual exchange of such information, called white shipping information, is extremely useful for all concerned.
- These agreements, which enable exchange of unclassified information, are not security pacts per se, but would help augment existing capabilities to develop Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA), thus aiding maritime security.