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ANALYSIS**

TOPIC

**India's Role in Global
Shipping Industry**

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INDIA'S ROLE IN GLOBAL SHIPPING INDUSTRY

In Context

- India submitted papers to the 111th Session of the International Maritime Organization's (IMO) Legal Committee (LEG) amid rising safety concerns among Indian seafarers .

India's Role in Global Shipping Industry

- India is the third-largest provider of seafarers worldwide**, following China and the Philippines.
- Currently representing **9.35% of the global seafaring population**, India aims to increase its share to **20% in the next 10 to 20 years**, with ship management companies playing a crucial role.
- Around 2,50,000 Indian seafarers serving on specialised cargo vessels worldwide.
- During the **COVID-19 pandemic**, Indian seafarers demonstrated their resilience and professionalism, enhancing India's standing in the global maritime market.
- The **Ukraine-Russia conflict** has also created opportunities for new players in the Indian maritime sector.

Major challenges

- The maritime industry, vital for global trade, depends heavily on **seafarers** who often face challenges and risks.
- Recent attacks on **commercial ships have heightened safety concerns** among Indian seafarers, with some considering quitting their jobs due to security fears.
 - Data from the International Maritime Bureau show a more than **10% increase in serious piracy** incidents over the last 10 months.
 - Instances** :In December 2023 and January 2024, Somali pirates targeted vessels such as the MV Ruen and MV Lila Norfolk.
 - the recent attacks on commercial ships in sensitive geographical areas such as the Red Sea and the Strait of Hormuz.
- Iranian shipping companies, in collaboration with international recruiters, **exploit Indian seafarers** by luring them with false promises of high salaries and opportunities in the Middle East.
- Seafarers often face **overwork**, are provided **insufficient food**, and are **forced into transporting illegal cargo**, despite paying hefty fees to secure overseas jobs.
 - Since 2020, over 200 cases of seafarer exploitation have been reported to the Indian Maritime Administration.
- The majority lacked legal representation, felt unfairly treated, and were unaware of their rights.
- Three years ago, the Maritime Union of India highlighted a 40% increase in kidnappings in the Gulf of Guinea, with 134 cases of assault, injury, and threats reported.
- Reports reveal cases of seafarers being held in **foreign jails, stranded in foreign waters, and subjected to illegal detentions.** ‘

Recent step of India

- India has submitted papers to the IMO's Legal Committee, which emphasise seafarers' security and contract terms.
- India has stressed the **need for a comprehensive approach** to maritime security and **advocated improved contractual conditions** for seafarers.
- India has called for **broader international cooperation** to tackle various maritime threats, including piracy, armed robbery, extremist attacks, regional conflicts, and emerging risks such as drone attacks and the use of maritime weapons.
- India has called for **vigilance, proactive measures**, and international cooperation to combat piracy and protect seafarers, in line with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

- India has also highlighted the **impact of unlawful recruitment practices** on seafarers' well-being and international trade.
- India has urged international coordination to address issues and ensure seafarers' rights under the **Maritime Labour Convention, 2006**.
- The Indian government and the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) launched the **'human rights at sea'** initiative.

Suggestions and Way Ahead

- Despite risks, many Indian seafarers remain committed to their careers at sea, which makes it imperative to have improved rights and protection.
- Addressing piracy requires a comprehensive land-based solution.
- There is a need to address crucial issues such as seafarers' security, contract terms, and broader maritime security challenges.
- This underlines the urgent need for government support and enhanced protection measures.
- The enhanced international cooperation is needed to safeguard seafarers and ensure uninterrupted navigation, especially amid rising incidents involving Indian seafarers and geopolitical tensions.

Mains Practice Question

[Q] How does India play a significant role in keeping the global shipping industry running? discuss challenges faced by Indian seafarers and ways to solve them .

