



Indian Naval LOs at Madagascar and Abu Dhabi

Why in News

India is planning to post **Naval Liaison Officers (LOs)** at the **Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre (RMIFC)** in **Madagascar** and the **European Maritime Awareness in the Strait of Hormuz (EMASOH)** in **Abu Dhabi** for improved **Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA)**.

- This move comes after [India joined the Indian Ocean Commission](#) (IOC) as Observer in **March 2020** along with **Japan** and the [United Nations](#).

Key Points

- The move **aims to improve linkages** of the Navy's [Information Fusion Centre for Indian Ocean Region](#) (IFC-IOR) in **Gurugram** with other IFCs and become the **repository for all maritime data** in the IOR.
- [India is working closely with France](#), who is a pre-eminent member of IOC, to post a Naval LO at the RMIFC in Madagascar.
 - The **RMFIC functions under the aegis of the IOC** and is designed to deepen maritime domain awareness by monitoring maritime activities and promoting information sharing and exchange.
- The Navy LO is expected to be posted at **EMASOH by July** and at the **RMIFC by September or October 2020**.
 - India has a LO at the IFC in Singapore for over four years now.
- **Indian Ocean Commission**
 - It is an **intergovernmental body and regional forum** created in **1984** to protect the interests of the **western Indian Ocean islands**.
 - It consists of **Madagascar, Comoros, La Réunion** (French overseas territory), **Mauritius** and **Seychelles**.
 - IOC has **five observers** which are **China, European Union (EU), Malta** and **International Organisation of La Francophonie (OIF), India, Japan** and **the UN**.
 - OIF is a 54 french speaking nations collective.
- **European Maritime Awareness in the Strait of Hormuz**
 - France started EMASOH with the aim to monitor maritime activity and guarantee freedom of navigation in the [Persian Gulf](#) and the [Strait of Hormuz](#).
 - It is **based at the French naval base in Abu Dhabi** (UAE).
 - It was declared operational by the French Ministry of Armed Forces in February 2020.
- **India's Other Initiatives:**
 - To strengthen the naval forces and surveillance, India has signed a series of [white shipping agreements](#), **Logistics Support Agreements (LSA)** and **maritime cooperation agreements** with several countries, recently.

- For example, [India Australia Virtual Summit](#) announced a joint declaration on a shared vision for maritime cooperation in the [Indo-Pacific](#) in which they agreed to deepen navy-to-navy cooperation and strengthen MDA in the Indo-Pacific region through enhanced exchange of information.
- In **2015**, India unveiled its strategic vision for the Indian Ocean i.e. [Security and Growth for All in the Region](#) (SAGAR). It is an increasing recognition of the increasing importance of maritime security, maritime commons and cooperation.
 - Through SAGAR, India seeks to **deepen economic and security cooperation with its maritime neighbours** and **assist in building their maritime security capabilities**.

Information Fusion Centre for Indian Ocean Region

- The **Indian Navy** set up the IFC-IOR in **December 2018** within the premises of the **Information Management and Analysis Centre** (IMAC) in Gurugram to track maritime movements in the region.
 - IMAC is located in **Gurugram** and is the main centre of the Indian Navy for **coastal surveillance and monitoring**.
 - IMAC is a **joint initiative of Indian Navy, Coast Guard and Bharat Electronics Ltd** and functions under the [National Security Adviser](#) (NSA).
- IFC is the **single point centre linking all the coastal radar chains** to generate a seamless real-time picture of the nearly 7,500 km coastline.
- **France** became the **first country to deploy** a LO at the IFC-IOR **followed by the USA** and several other countries including Australia, Japan and the UK have announced their intention to post LOs.
- It **coordinates with similar centres** across the globe which include:
 - Virtual Regional Maritime Traffic Centre (VRMTC)
 - Maritime Security Centre-[Horn of Africa](#) (MSCHOA)
 - [Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery](#) (ReCAAP)
 - Information Fusion Centre-Singapore (IFC-SG)
 - International Maritime Bureau-Piracy Reporting Centre (IMB-PRC)

Way Forward

- India's engagement with the Western Indian Ocean will facilitate collective engagement with the islands there, which are becoming strategically significant.
- Given China's growing presence in the region, India will be able to increase its naval presence and gain support for its maritime projects across the Indo-Pacific.
- India's consultative, democratic and equitable leadership can help achieve the security and sustainable growth to all in the region.

Source: TH