

Sri Lanka has imposed a ban on foreign vessels

written by iasexam.com | 12/02/2024



Context: The global community is currently discussing the ban on Chinese ships in Sri Lanka's exclusive economic zone.

Key Points:

- Sri Lanka has a recent development of prohibiting any Chinese research vessels from docking at its ports or operating within its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) for a period of one year.
- This decision reflects a reaction to an appeal made by the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, that the Sri Lankan President should bear in mind the strategic and security interests of India.
- Concern arose as the Chinese research vessel Shi Yan 6 undertook a joint maritime survey with the Sri Lankan maritime agency from October to November, which act prompted objections from India.
- Both India and the US have lodged complaints to Sri Lanka for the rise of Chinese war and research ships in the Indian Ocean with some of those ships known to anchor at Sri Lankan ports.

China is increasing its involvement and investments in the Indian Ocean region:

- Both in 2008 and in 2014 Beijing sent its navy and submarines to the Gulf of Aden as part of its actions in support of its ongoing efforts to fight piracy.
- More remarkably, in 2017, China for the first time set up a military base outside of its territory, in the Horn of Africa, to be specific in Djibouti.
- Lately, just in November of last year, Sri Lanka vested approval in China's largest energy conglomerate, Sinopec, to establish a top of the line oil refinery in Hambantota.
- Hambantota is the place where China got a lease for a deep sea port in 2017, as Colombo did

not honour its debt obligations.

Why does India see China's influence in Sri Lanka as a problem?

- China has substantially expanded its footprint in Sri Lanka and is now the largest creditor of the country.
- Chinese loans represent 15% of Sri Lanka's external debt and the country is overly relying on this credit to address its foreign debt burden.
- China spent an incredible amount of money around USD 12 billion in Sri Lanka's infrastructure projects between 2006 and 2019.
- Nevertheless, although to put a stop to economic problems caused by the covid-19 pandemic, China's government was quite financial generous, China hasn't been quite economically engaged with Sri Lanka in 2022.
- Generally speaking, China's relationships with island countries in South Asia and the Indian Ocean are relatively good, while its relations with Southeast Asia and the Pacific confront various conflicts and resistance.

Source: The Hindu

Practice question:

Q1.What do you understand by 'The String of Pearls'? How does it impact India? Briefly outline the steps taken by India to counter this. (2013)

Q1.What do you understand by 'The String of Pearls'? How does it impact India? Briefly outline the steps taken by India to counter this. (2013)