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**News: Afanasy Nikitin Seamount (AN Seamount)**

- Recently, India applied for Rights to Explore the Indian Ocean Seabed Beyond its Jurisdiction, Including Cobalt-Rich Afanasy Nikitin Seamount (AN Seamount). India's interest is fueled by concerns over Chinese vessels conducting reconnaissance there.

**Afanasy Nikitin Seamount (AN Seamount)**

- The Afanasy Nikitin Seamount (AN Seamount) is a structural feature (400 km long and 150 km wide) in the Central Indian Basin, located about 3,000 km away from India's coast.
- From an oceanic depth of about 4,800 m, it rises to about 1,200 meters and it is rich in deposits of cobalt, nickel, and manganese and copper.
- To proceed with extraction, interested parties/countries must first apply for an exploration license to the International Seabed Authority (ISA). This organisation operates autonomously under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).
- These rights are specific to areas that are part of the open ocean. Around 60% of the world's seas are Open Ocean and though believed to be rich in a variety of mineral wealth, the costs and challenges of extraction are prohibitive.

## Countries having provided with Exploration Licences

- Both state-owned and government-sponsored companies from India, France, Russia, Germany, China, Singapore and the UK had sought permission for minerals prospecting in the high seas.

## Licence Granted

- Four licences have been granted for the Pacific Ocean, the Clarion Clipperton Zone between Hawaii and Mexico and the Magellan Seamount in the northwest Pacific.
- Two licences are for the Indian Ocean Ridge, while one for Rio Grande Rise in the southern Atlantic.
- **India's Exploration Applications:** Along with the application for AN Seamount, India has also applied for permission to explore another region, spanning 3, 00,000 square km, called the Carlsberg Ridge in the Central Indian Ocean to investigate for polymetallic sulphides, which are large smoking mounds near hydrothermal vents that are reportedly rich in copper, zinc, gold and silver.
- **Previous Exploration Efforts:** India has previously secured exploration rights to two other large basins in the Central Indian Ocean and has undertaken

surveys in these regions, demonstrating its commitment to marine exploration and resource assessment.

- India has been studying the seabed and carrying out test mining for about two decades through institutes like National Institute of Oceanography (NIO) and National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT).

