



# Civils Cafe

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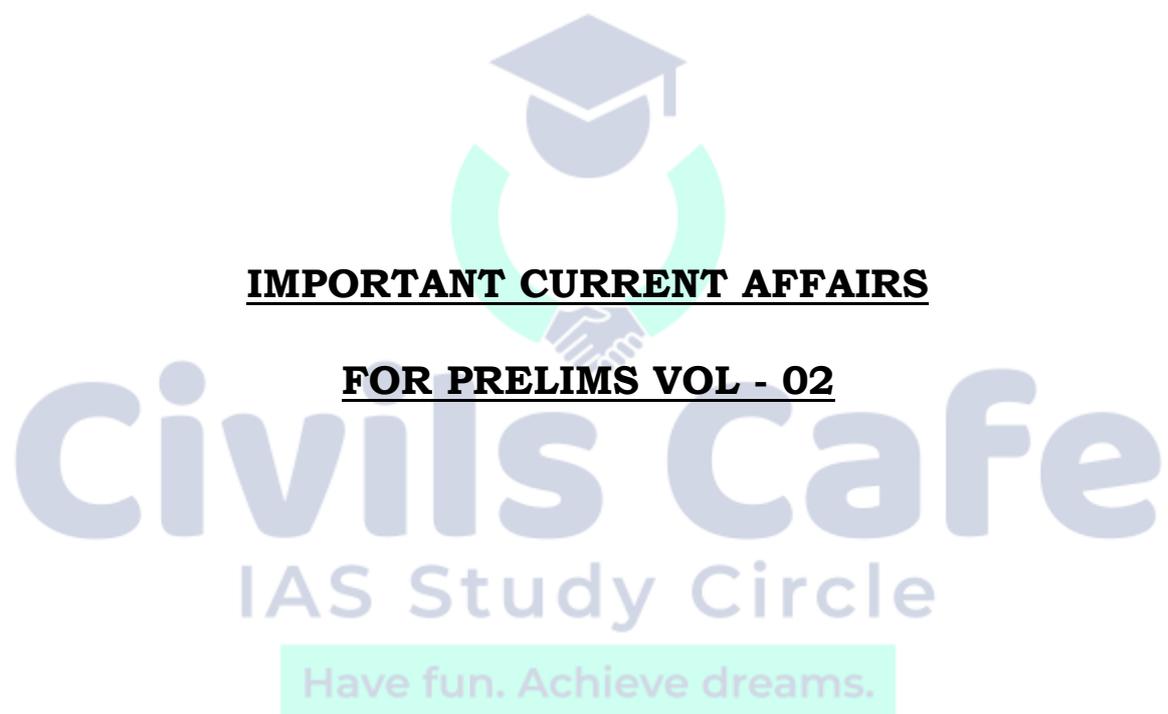
## IMPORTANT CURRENT AFFAIRS FOR PRELIMS VOL 02

- POLAR SILK ROAD
- BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE
- ARCTIC REGION
- BROAD BASED TRADE AND INVESTMENT AGREEMENT
- EUROPEAN UNION
- FREE TRADE AGREEMENT
- MUCROMYCOSIS
- UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITES
- GLOBAL CLIMATE RISK INDEX
- MPLAD SCHEME



SCAN TO EXPLORE





**INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS****1. POLAR SILK ROAD**

IN NEWS: China In its 14th Five Year Plan released recently has pledged to build a Polar Silk Road (PSR) over the period 2021–2025

**ABOUT POLAR SILK ROAD**

- Polar Silk Road or Transpolar Sea Route will connect the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean
- It covers three oceans namely, Pacific, Arctic and Atlantic Ocean.
- Polar Silk Route would be the third route that would be passing through the North pole or closer to it.

**IMPORTANCE OF POLAR SILK ROAD**

- China is not an Arctic state but has been increasing the activities in the Polar region. It also became an observer member of the Arctic Council in 2013.
- China plans to integrate the Polar Silk Road with its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).
- China's interests in the Arctic are threefold—execute strategic ambition, enhance economic supremacy, and acquire polar great power status.
- This is aimed through massive infrastructural development and network of trans-continental connectivity.
- China sees the Arctic as a major source of energy security and thus has a keen interest in exploiting its natural resources like polar minerals, oil, natural gas and fish stock along with utilising it for trade, transportation and tourism

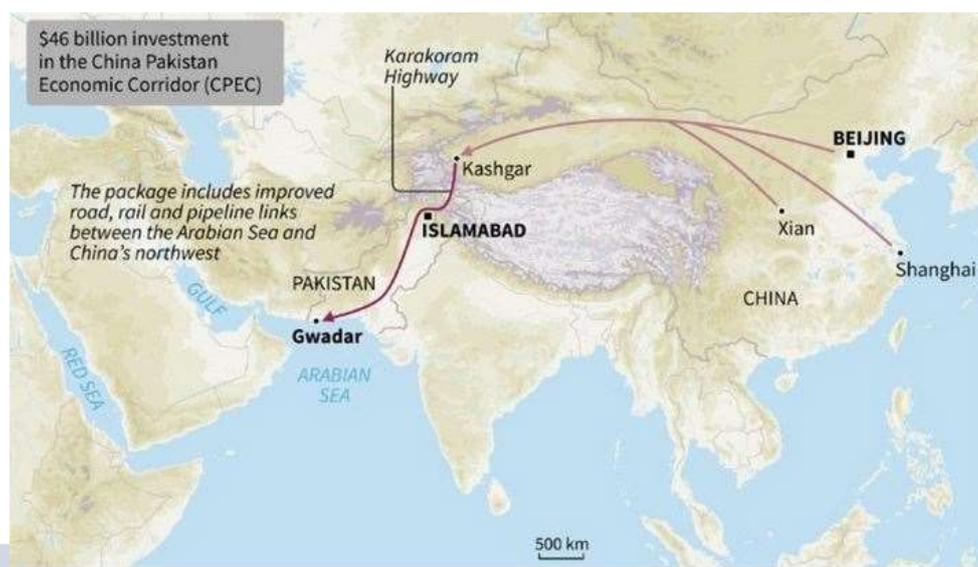
### ARCTIC COUNCIL

- Ottawa Declaration 1996 established the Arctic Council and declared eight circumpolar countries as member states.
  1. Canada
  2. Denmark
  3. Russia
  4. Sweden
  5. United States
  6. Iceland
  7. Norway
  8. Finland
- Denmark represents Greenland and the Faroe Islands
- In 2019, India was re-elected as an Observer to the Arctic Council.
- The Arctic Council is not a treaty-based organisation rather a consensus based international organisation.
- Its decisions and recommendations are non-enforceable.
- Its mandate explicitly excludes military security.

### BELT & ROAD INITIATIVE (BRI)

- China's ambitious project that focuses on connectivity and cooperation among multiple countries spread across the continents of Asia, Africa, and Europe.
  - Land based Silk Road Economic Belt is expected to connect China with Central Asia, Eastern Europe, and Western Europe.
  - Sea based Maritime Silk Road is expected to connect China's southern coast to the Mediterranean, Africa, South-East Asia, and Central Asia.

- China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a part of Belt and Road Initiative and India is opposed to the BRI since CPEC passes through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) - Indian Territory illegally occupied by Pakistan.



### **PREVIOUS UPSC QUESTION**

1) 'Belt and Road Initiative' is sometimes mentioned in the news in the context of the affairs of \_\_\_\_\_ (CSP:2016)

- (a) Africa Union
- (b) Brazil
- (c) European Union
- (d) China

Ans: d

2). Consider the following countries: \_\_\_\_\_ (CSP:2014)

1. Denmark
2. Japan
3. Russian Federation
4. United Kingdom
5. United States of America

Which of the above are the members of the 'Arctic Council'?

- (a) 1, 2 and 3      (b) 2, 3 and 4  
(c) 1, 4 and 5      (d) 1, 3 and 5

Ans: d

## GEOGRAPHY

### 2. ARCTIC REGION

#### IN NEWS:

- As per the WWF-Arctic Programme, the Arctic region is warming up twice as fast as the global average.
- Recently, India drafted a new Arctic policy that aims at expanding scientific research, sustainable tourism and exploration of mineral oil and gas in the Arctic region

#### ABOUT ARCTIC:

- The Arctic is a polar region located at the northernmost part of Earth consisting of Arctic Ocean, adjacent seas, and parts of Alaska (United States), Canada, Finland, Greenland (Denmark), Iceland, Norway, Russia, and Sweden.

- Unlike Antarctica, the Arctic is not a global common and there is no overarching treaty that governs it.

### **Impact of Warming on Arctic**

- Affect sea levels, salinity levels, and current and precipitation patterns.
- Arctic vegetation, Tundra is returning to swamp, the permafrost is thawing, sudden storms are ravaging coastlines and wildfires are devastating interior Canada and Russia.
- Extinction of 40 different Indigenous Cultures.

Arctic indigenous peoples include for example Saami in circumpolar areas of Finland, Sweden, Norway and Northwest Russia, Nenets, Khanty, Evenk and Chukchi in Russia, Aleut, Yupik and Inuit in Alaska, Inuit in Canada and Inuit (Kalaallit) in Greenland.

### **About India's new Arctic Policy**

- India has designated Goa-based National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research to act as a nodal body to coordinate among various scientific bodies to promote domestic scientific research capacities in the Arctic.
- The draft document outlines five pillars of India's Arctic policy: scientific research, economics and human development; connectivity; global governance and international cooperation; and development of Indian human resource capabilities.

India launched its first scientific expedition to the Arctic in 2007 and set up a research station 'Himadri' in the international Arctic research base at Ny-Ålesund in Spitsbergen, Svalbard, Norway.

India has two other observatories in Kongsforden and Gruvebadet in Norway.

## INDIAN ECONOMY

### **3) BROAD-BASED TRADE AND INVESTMENT AGREEMENT**

IN NEWS: Recently, India and UK have decided to hold regular interactions for re-initiation of bilateral trade and investment agreements (BTIA)

#### **BROAD-BASED TRADE AND INVESTMENT AGREEMENT**

- India and EU had launched talks for having a wide-ranging Free Trade Agreement (FTA), officially called broad-based BTIA, long ago in 2007 but BTIA talks have been suspended since 2013 over differences on market access and movement of professionals.
- BTIA was proposed to encompass trade in goods, services and investments and also adopted a Connectivity Partnership.
- India and the EU expect to promote bilateral trade by removing barriers to trade in goods and services and investment across all sectors of the economy.
- The Connectivity project not only focuses on physical infrastructure but also envisages enhancing digital, energy, transport and people-to-people connectivity.

- India-EU connectivity roadmap covers three main areas — trade and investment, science and technology and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)

### European Union

- European Economic Community was established in 1957 by a European Coal and Steel Community.
- Later, Maastricht Treaty (also known as the Treaty on European Union) morphed EEC into the European Union
- After Brexit, EU has 27 member countries.
- EU was India's largest trading partner in goods 2019-20, ahead of China and the US, with total trade close to USD 90 billion.

### FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

FTAs are a pact between two or more nations to reduce barriers to imports and exports where goods and services can be bought and sold across international borders with little or no government tariffs, quotas, subsidies, or prohibitions to inhibit their exchange.

The concept of free trade is the opposite of trade protectionism or economic isolationism.

#### FTAs of INDIA

- Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement (CECPA) between India and Mauritius.
- South Asia Preferential Trading Agreement (SAPTA): It is for promoting trade

amongst the member countries came into effect in 1995.

- South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA): A Free Trade Agreement confined to goods, but excluding all services like information technology. Agreement was signed to reduce customs duties of all traded goods to zero by the year 2016.
- Asia Pacific Trade Agreement (APTA): a preferential tariff arrangement that aimed at promoting intra-regional trade

### **PREVIOUS UPSC QUESTION**

1. With reference to the international trade of India at present, which of the following statements is/are correct? (CSP:2020)
2. India's merchandise exports are less than its merchandise imports.
3. India's imports of iron and steel, chemicals, fertilisers and machinery have decreased in recent years.
4. India's exports of services are more than its imports of services.
5. India suffers from an overall trade/current account deficit.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 4 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) 1, 3 and 4 only

Ans: d

## HISTORY AND CULTURE

### 4. UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITES

**IN NEWS:** Recently Six sites have been added to India's tentative list of UNESCO world heritage sites.

#### SITES IN TENTATIVE LIST

- Maratha military architecture in Maharashtra: It has 12 forts dating back to the era of the 17th century Maratha king Chhatrapati Shivaji. These forts offer new insight in various forms of architecture including rock cut features, construction of perimeter walls in layers on hill tops and slopes, temples, palaces, markets, residential areas, and almost every form of medieval architecture.
- Hire Benkal megalithic site in Karnataka: 2,800-years-old megalithic site is one of the largest prehistoric megalithic settlements where some funerary monuments are still intact.
- Bhedaghat-Lameta Ghat of Narmada Valley in Madhya Pradesh: Bhedaghat, referred to as the Grand Canyon of India, is a town in the Jabalpur district. It is known for its marble rocks and their various morphological forms on either side of the Narmada River and also several dinosaur fossils were identified.
- Ganga ghats in Varanasi: Ghats were rebuilt in the 18th century by Maratha rulers. They have special significance in Hindu mythology, and are primarily used for bathing and Hindu religious rituals.
- Temples of Kanchipuram: On the bank of River Vegavathi. Its rich legacy has been the endowment of the Pallava dynasty, and temples are a fine example of Dravidian styles.

- Satpura Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh: It is the largest tiger-occupied forest and also has the largest tiger population.

### **WORLD HERITAGE SITES**

- It can be a natural or man-made area or a structure that is of international importance, and a space which requires special protection.
- Sites are officially recognised by UNESCO
- The list is maintained by the International World Heritage Programme administered by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee, composed of 21 UNESCO member states which are elected by the General Assembly.
- Each World Heritage Site remains part of the legal territory of the state wherein the site is located and UNESCO considers it in the interest of the international community to preserve each site.

### **UNESCO SITES IN INDIA**

- India has 38 world heritage sites, including 30 cultural properties, 7 natural properties and 1 mixed site.
- The latest one included are: Kakatiya Rudreshwara (Ramappa) Temple, Telangana and Dholavira: A Harrapan City, Gujarat

Check UNESCO World heritage sites and sites in India

## **5) RAMAPPA TEMPLE**

IN NEWS: Ramappa temple received UNESCO's World Heritage tag.

### **ABOUT RAMAPPA TEMPLE**

- It is located in Palampet village, Warangal, Telangana
- First UNESCO World Heritage site in Telangana.
- It was built in 1213 A.D during the reign of Recharla Rudra, General of Kakatiya King Ganapati Deva.
- It is known after the name of the principal architect of temple Ramappa.
- The main deity of the temple is Ramalingeswara swamy.
- The Temple is also known as Rudreshwara Temple.

### **FEATURES OF THE TEMPLE**

- The temple is characterised by a 6 feet high Stellate Platform (Star shaped) with walls, pillars and ceiling adorned with intricate carvings which showcase epitome of Kakatiya Sculpture.
- Building features decorated beams, pillars of granite and dolerite.
- Distinctive and pyramidal Vimana (horizontal stepped tower) made of lightweight porous brick called 'floating bricks' which reduces the weight of roof structure.
- Temple sculptures illustrate regional dance customs and Kakatiyan culture.
- The temple is constructed based on the ideology and practice sanctioned in the dharmic texts.

**KNOWLEDGE BOOSTER****KAKATIYA DYNASTY:(1123-1323 CE)**

- Kakatiyas were the feudatories of Western Chalukyas of Kalyani.
- They emerged as a prominent dynasty during the 12-13th century.
- Pratap Rudra 1 also known as Kakatiya Rudradeva the Kakatiyas emerged as sovereign.
- Hanamakonda was their first capital and later Orugallu/Warangal.
- Most prominent rulers in this dynasty were Ganapati deva and Rudramadevi.
- The Italian Traveller Marco Polo visited the Kakatiya kingdom during the reign of Rudramadevi and made a detailed account of the Kakatiya administration.

**ART AND ARCHITECTURE UNDER KAKATIYAS**

- The scenic Pakhal lake in Warangal was built by Ganapathi Deva.
- The 1000 pillar temple in Warangal was built during the Kakatiya Rule and is another example of the exquisite Kakatiya Architecture.
- The Koh-i-Noor Diamond, which is now among the jewels set in the British Crown, was mined and first owned by the Kakatiya Dynasty.
- The iconic Kakatiya Thoranam (gateway) built by Ganapatideva in the 12th century is said to resemble Toranas of sanchi stupa.

**SOCIETY**

- Kakatiya society was not caste rigid.
- Hereditary nature of occupation was not there, anyone could choose any occupation.
- Kakatiya rule came to an end in 1323CE when Warangal was conquered by Giasuddin Tuglaq.

## CURIOUS MIND

UNESCO World Heritage Sites?

**Previous question**

1. Which one of the following was a very important seaport in the Kakatiya Kingdom? CSP - 2017

- (a) Kakinada
- (b) Motupalli
- (c) Machilipatnam (Masulipatnam)
- (d) Nellore

Answer: b

**SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY****6) MUCORMYCOSIS**

IN NEWS: The Union government has asked the States to declare mucormycosis, the fungal infection being reported in COVID-19 patients, an epidemic.

**ABOUT MUCORMYCOSIS**

- Mucormycosis or Black Fungus is a rare but serious infection caused by a group of moulds known as mucormycetes present naturally in the environment.
- It mainly affects people who are on medication for health problems that reduces their ability to fight environmental pathogens

- Commonly afflicts the sinuses or the lungs after inhaling fungal spores from the air
- Warning signs include headache, fever, coughing, blood vomits, breathlessness and altered mental status.
- It enters the body through fungal spores from the air or can also occur on skin after a cut, burn, or skin injury.

## **ENVIRONMENT**

### **7) Global Climate Risk Index**

IN NEWS: German watch, the Germany-based think tank, recently released the 16 th edition Global Climate Risk Index,2021

### **REPORT AND ITS FINDINGS**

- Report is published annually.
- Index analyses the extent to which countries and regions have been affected by the impacts of weather-related loss events (storms, floods, heat waves etc.)
- For the period from 2000 to 2019, Puerto Rico, Myanmar and Haiti rank highest.

### **STATUS OF INDIA**

- India ranked at 7th Position in Climate Risk Index 2021. It means India is the 7th worst-hit country by extreme weathers. In 2020, India ranked 5th on the index.
- Report also points to an increase in the number of heat waves, increased intensity and frequency of cyclones and an increased rate of melting of glaciers in India.

- Indian monsoon lasted a month longer than usual in the year 2019.
- Eight tropical cyclones hit the country in the year 2019. The worst of which was “Cyclone Fani”

## POLITY

### **8)MPLAD SCHEME**

IN NEWS: Union Cabinet has decided to restore the Member of Parliament Local Area Development (MPLAD) Scheme which was suspended in April,2020. Now MPs will get 2 crores annually under the scheme instead of 5 crore earlier.

### **ABOUT MPLAD**

- MPLAD is a plan scheme fully funded by the Government of India.
- The scheme aims to create a mechanism in which Members of Parliament (MP) could recommend projects of development nature in the locality based on local needs.
- It includes creation of durable community assets (drinking water, primary education, public health, sanitation) as well as provision of basic facilities including community infrastructure.
- It was first launched in 1993.
- Initially It was constituted under the control of the Ministry of Rural Development and later in 1994 it was shifted to the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.
- MPs are to recommend every year, works costing at least 15 percent of the MPLADS entitlement for the year for areas inhabited by Scheduled Caste population and 7.5 per cent for areas inhabited by S.T. population.
- Funds are released in the form of grants in-aid directly to the district authorities.
- The funds released under the scheme are non-lapsable.

- The liability of funds not released in a particular year is carried forward to the subsequent years, subject to eligibility.
- The MPs have a recommendatory role under the scheme.
- The district authority is empowered to examine the eligibility of works, sanction funds and select the implementing agencies, prioritise works, supervise overall execution, and monitor the scheme at the ground level.
- At least 10% of the projects under implementation in the district are to be inspected every year by the district authority.

### **ROLE OF MPs**

- Recommendatory role.
- Elected Lok Sabha MPs can recommend works in their respective constituencies.
- Elected MPs of Rajya Sabha can recommend work in the state from which they were elected.
- Nominated members of either house of Parliament can recommend work anywhere in India.

As per the Guidelines released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme implementation in 2016 the MPLAD fund can be utilised for implementation of schemes like Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan, Water conservation through rainwater harvesting etc.

The government had in April 2020 decided not to operate MPLAD for the Financial year 2020-21 and 2021-22 and place the MPLADS funds for these two-years at the disposal of the Ministry of Finance to meet the emergent

needs of people. The fund saved under MPLAD scheme was used to provide free ration under PM Garib Kalyan Yojana and to provide free vaccine.

### **PREVIOUS UPSC QUESTION**

With reference to the funds under Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS), which of the following statements are correct?

1. MPLADS funds must be used to create durable assets like physical infrastructure for health, education, etc.
  2. A specified portion of each MP's fund must benefit SC/ST populations.
  3. MPLADS funds are sanctioned on yearly basis and the unused funds cannot be carried forward to the next year.
  4. The district authority must inspect at least 10% of all works under implementation every year.
- CSP-2020

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only                      (b) 3 and 4 only  
 (c) 1, 2 and 3 only                  (d) 1, 2 and 4 only

Answer : d

### **PRACTICE QUESTIONS**

1.) Which of the following statements are not correct with regard to the Polar Silk Road?

1. It covers three oceans namely, Arctic Ocean, Southern Ocean and Pacific Ocean.
2. China became an Arctic state in 2013 and plans to integrate the Polar

Silk Road with its Belt and Road Initiative.

3. It is the first route that passes through the North Pole or closer to it.

(a) 1 & 2 (b) 3 only (c) 1 & 3 (d) 1,2,3

ANS: (d)

2) Consider the following statements with respect to Mucormycosis

1. Mucormycosis is a viral infection being reported in COVID-19 patients

2. Its a contagious disease.

3. Black fungus is non curable.

Which among the statements are not correct?

(a) 1 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) All of the above (d) None of the above

Ans: (c)

3) Consider the following statements with respect to MPLADS

1. MPLADS is a Central Plan Scheme fully funded by the Government of India

2. Under MPLADS, the role of the Members of Parliament is to recommend works and award the contracts while overseeing their execution.

3. Nominated Members of the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha can recommend works for implementation, anywhere in the country.

Which among the statements are correct?

(a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) 1 and 2 only (d) 1 and 3 only

Ans: (d)

4) Consider the following:

1. Global Climate Risk Index is a biannual report by German watch.

2. India in 7th position indicates that it's the 7th most environment friendly country in the world.

Which among the statements are correct?

(a) 1 only    (b) 2 only    (c) Both 1 and 2    (d) None of the above

Ans: d

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