

1. Arctic is attracting global interest. What are the reasons for this? In this context, critically examine India's entry into the Arctic Council. (150 words)

**Answer:**

The Arctic is a polar region located at the northernmost part of the Earth. The global interest in the region has increased significantly because of its rich resources, shipping route. The following are the reasons for increased interest in the Arctic are:

- Resource Potential of Arctic: the region has abundance of Hydrocarbons; Mineral Reserves; Marine Resource, which has encouraged nations surrounding it to establish sovereignty over it.
- Trade Route and Shipping: Arctic shipping has become a reality in the summer months. The Northwest passage, mainly along Canada's Arctic Coast, will link Far East Asia with North America, while the North-East Passage, mainly along Russia's Arctic shoreline, would provide an alternate route between Asia and North America, but also between Europe and Asia. These Arctic routes, which used to be the stuff of fables in the 18th and 19th centuries, will cut global shipping routes by several thousand kilometres.
- Tourism: The Arctic region is now becoming a popular tourist destination. In 2010, over 50,000 tourists sailed the pristine waters of a hitherto forbidden zone.

India has been closely following the developments in the Arctic region in the light of the new opportunities and challenges emerging for the international community due to global warming induced melting of Arctic's ice cap. Today India's interests in the Arctic region are scientific, environmental, commercial as well as strategic. As an observer to Arctic Council India has to fulfill following obligations:

- 1) It will have to recognize the sovereign rights of members of Arctic Council.
- 2) UNCLOS law will be the legal basis for determining how the zone will be managed.
- 3) Members have to follow and always contribute to the work of the council
- 4) The observer states have to respect the indigenous population and local culture and tradition.

The above obligations go against India's long standing notion that there should be treaty like the Antarctic treaty and an authority to manage the pristine zone. These two stands seem to be diluted. India has also accepted UNCLOS law. This has further diluted India's stand. However, India has got a platform to voice its concerns about the region.

**Conclusion:**

India should consider carefully whether it should pursue its reported application to join the Arctic Council as a permanent observer. It should be noted that a condition for being granted this status is acceptance of the sovereign rights of the Arctic Council members over the Arctic Ocean. India should instead press for the Antarctic Treaty template where the territorial claims of States have been shelved for the duration of the Treaty. The reasons for which the international community accepted the discipline of the Antarctic Treaty are today even more compelling and urgent with respect to the Arctic. Placing this on the U.N. agenda during India's term in the Security Council and

initiating international action on it could be a historic contribution by India in its role as a responsible global power.

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## PRACTICE QUESTIONS

### **Answer the following Questions**

1. What do you understand by food irradiation? Highlighting some of its unique applications, examine its relevance for India. (150 words)
2. Whereas misuse of technology has abetted the spread of fake news, it is with the aid of technology that this menace can be curbed. Elaborate. (150 words)

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