

India's Arctic Policy

March 18, 2022

In news– The Government of India has released India's Arctic policy titled "*India's Arctic Policy: Building a Partnership for Sustainable Development*" recently.

About the policy-

- **India's Arctic policy lays down six pillars:** *strengthening India's scientific research and cooperation, climate and environmental protection, economic and human development, transportation and connectivity, governance and international cooperation, and national capacity building in the Arctic region.*
- **India's Arctic policy aims to promote the following agenda–**
 - **Strengthening national capabilities and competencies in science and exploration,** climate and environmental protection, maritime and economic cooperation with the Arctic region.
 - **Inter-ministerial coordination** in pursuit of India's interests in the Arctic.
 - **Enhancing understanding of the impact of climate change in the Arctic on India's climate,** economic, and energy security.
 - **Contributing better analysis, prediction, and coordinated policymaking on the implications of ice melting in the Arctic on India's economic,** military and strategic interests related to global shipping routes, energy security, and exploitation of mineral wealth.
- **Studying linkages between polar regions and the Himalayas.**
- **Deepen cooperation between India and countries of the Arctic region under various Arctic forums,** drawing

expertise from scientific and traditional knowledge.

- **Increase India's participation in the Arctic Council** and improve understanding of the complex governance structures in the Arctic, relevant international laws, and geopolitics of the region.
- Implementing India's Arctic policy will involve multiple stakeholders, including academia, the research community, business, and industry and shall define timelines, prioritize activities and allocate requisite resources.
- **The National Center for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR)** in Goa, an autonomous institute under the Ministry of Earth Sciences, is the **nodal institution for India's Polar research programme, which includes Arctic studies.**
- The policy documents the history of India's relationship with the region, which can be traced back to **February 1920, when it signed the Svalbard treaty in Paris.**
- **In 2007, India launched its first scientific expedition to the Arctic.**
- Since then, India has been able to set up an observatory in Kongsfjorden as well as an atmospheric laboratory at Grove Badet.
- **Since 2013, India has been an Observer nation in the Arctic Council,** where it has consistently participated in meetings of Senior Arctic Officials and contributed to its six Working Groups.
- Under the banner of science and research, the Indian government hopes to build its research capabilities in the region by strengthening existing facilities, such as the **Himadri Arctic station in Svalbard.**
- It also hopes to align Indian research with international Arctic priorities. The policy further lays down plans to deploy space technology to better study the Arctic region.

The Arctic region-

- The Arctic is the northernmost region of Earth.
- Most scientists define the Arctic as the area within the Arctic Circle, a line of latitude at 66.5° north of the Equator.
- Within this circle are the Arctic ocean basin and the northern parts of Scandinavia, Russia, Canada, Greenland, and the U.S. state of Alaska.
- Apart from being rich in mineral and oil resources, the Arctic region is also particularly significant due to the many shipping routes that run through it.



Arctic Council-

- It is a high-level intergovernmental forum to promote cooperation, coordination, and interaction towards sustainable development and environmental protection in the Arctic.
- It was formally established in 1996.
- All Arctic Council decisions and statements require consensus of the eight Arctic States.
- Only states with territory in the Arctic can be members of the council.
- The **member states consist of Canada, Denmark(representing Greenland), Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the United States.**

- The Ottawa Declaration defines these states as Members of the Arctic Council.
- The Council's Strategic Plan 2021-2030 guides its work towards the Arctic as a "region of peace, stability and constructive cooperation, that is a vibrant, prosperous, sustainable and secure home for all its inhabitants, including Indigenous Peoples, and where their rights and wellbeing are respected."

Further

reading:

<https://journalsofindia.com/indias-arctic-policy/>