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ANCIENT RED SEA TRADE ROUTE

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the Topic details "Ancient Red Sea Trade Route". This Topic has relevance in the Ancient History section of the UPSC CSE exam.

For Prelims:

About the Ancient Red Sea Trade Route?

For Mains:

GS 1: Ancient History

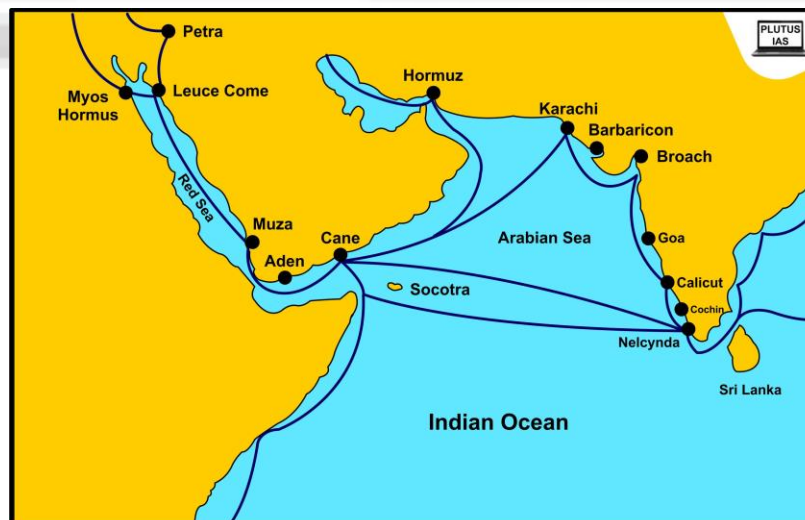
Significance of Ancient History?

Why in the news:

The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor, unveiled during the G20 Summit, evokes the historical trade route that once connected the Indian subcontinent with the Roman Empire.

Recognition of Ancient Red Sea Trade Route:

- Historians have long acknowledged the existence of trade between Rome and India in ancient times.
- Sir Mortimer Wheeler's excavations during the 1930s and 40s at Arikamedu, near modern-day Pondicherry, provided concrete evidence of Indo-Roman trade during the 1st century CE.



Underappreciation of Indian Merchants and Ship Owners:

- Indian merchants and ship owners played a pivotal role in this historical exchange. Unfortunately, their contributions have often been overlooked in historical accounts.

Immense Scale of the Trade:

- Recent revelations have shed light on the enormous scale of this trade route. Current estimates indicate that custom taxes from Red Sea trade with India, Persia, and Ethiopia accounted for up to one-third of the Roman exchequer's income.

Source of Revelation:

- The remarkable insight into the trade's magnitude comes from the Muziris Papyrus. This document was authored by an Egypto-Roman financier based in Alexandria and provides details about goods obtained from an Indian merchant located in distant Muziris, situated on the Kerala coast.

Economic Impact on the Roman Empire:

- The Muziris Papyrus reveals import taxes exceeding two million sesterces on cargo valued at nearly nine million sesterces.
- Indian imports into Egypt by the 1st century CE may have surpassed a billion sesterces annually, significantly bolstering the Roman Empire's finances.
- These revenues were vital for sustaining the vast Roman Empire, surpassing the incomes of entire subjugated nations.

Trade Commodities on the Red Sea Route:

- Luxuries from India, including malabathrum (similar to cinnamon), ivory, pearls, gemstones, and especially pepper, were highly sought after throughout the Roman Empire.
- Indian pepper, in particular, became a staple, appearing in approximately 80% of the recipes found in the Roman cookbook of Apicius.
- In the opposite direction, trade involved the export of gold to India, leading to a trade imbalance.
- Historical records also suggest that Indians developed a taste for Roman wine.

Organization and Duration of the Trade:

- Agreements between merchants from Kerala and shippers from Alexandria suggest the existence of a well-organized trade network.
- Goods were transported in containers resembling modern cargo vessels.
- Indian mariners skillfully harnessed monsoon winds, allowing for a journey of six to eight weeks from India to Egypt.

Indian Involvement in the Trade:

- Indians, including dynasties, showed a keen interest in seafaring. Indian sailors left their mark in locations such as the Hoq caves on the Socotra island, highlighting their active participation in the trade.

Red Sea Trade vs. Silk Road:

- Contrary to contemporary perceptions, the Red Sea trade route during the Roman era held greater historical importance than the Silk Road.
- The concept of the Silk Road, as we understand it today, did not exist in ancient times, and interactions between China and Europe were limited.

Ongoing discoveries continue to shed light on the significance of the Red Sea trade route. Questions about India's impact during this period, its role in global trade, and its influence on ideas remain open. While Indian scholars have made substantial contributions to this field, efforts to disseminate these findings more broadly are essential for a deeper understanding of history.

SOURCE:

<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-history/william-dalrymple-maritime-trade-route-india-europe-silk-road-8935580/>

Q.1 Consider the following statements about Arikamedu:

1. Arikamedu is an archaeological site near Pondicherry that has revealed evidence of Indo-Roman trade during the 1st century CE.
2. Sir Mortimer Wheeler conducted the excavations at Arikamedu.
3. Arikamedu was a major centre for bead production.

How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

ANSWER: C

Q.2 Consider the following statements about the Ancient Red Sea Trade Route:

1. The Ancient Red Sea Trade Route was a significant trade link between Rome and India in ancient times.
2. Custom taxes from the Red Sea trade with India, Persia, and Ethiopia accounted for up to one-third of the Roman exchequer's income.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

ANSWER: A

Q.3 The Ancient Red Sea Trade Route was a significant link between Rome and India. Comment.

Rishabh

INTERNATIONAL TRIBUNAL FOR THE LAW OF THE SEA (ITLOS)

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details "International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS)". This topic has relevance in the "International Relations" section of the UPSC CSE exam.

For Prelims:

What is the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS)?

For Mains:

GS2: International Relations

Why in the news?

A landmark case will be heard by the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS), with nine small island states seeking protection for the world's oceans from the devastating effects of climate change.

International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS):

- **Establishment:**
 - ITLOS is an independent judicial institution established through the 1982 **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)**.
 - The Tribunal is headquartered in the city of Hamburg, Germany.
 - The tribunal's official languages are English and French.
- **Composition:**
 - The Tribunal comprises **21 independent members elected through a secret ballot** by the States Parties to the UNCLOS.
 - Each State Party can nominate up to two candidates for membership.
- **Jurisdiction:**
 - ITLOS holds jurisdiction over **any disputes related to the interpretation or application of the UNCLOS**.
 - Additionally, it has authority over **matters specified in other agreements that grant jurisdiction to the Tribunal**.
 - Disputes falling within the scope of the Convention can include issues such as
 - demarcation of maritime zones and navigation
 - the conservation and management of marine resources
 - marine environment conservation and protection
 - marine scientific research
- **Eligibility:**
 - ITLOS is accessible to **States Parties** to the UNCLOS, which encompasses both states and international organisations that are signatories to the Convention.
 - Furthermore, it is open to **entities beyond States Parties**, including states or intergovernmental organisations that have not ratified the Convention, as well as state-owned enterprises and private entities.

More about the News:

- The nine small island states have turned to the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) to **determine whether carbon dioxide emissions absorbed by the oceans can be classified as pollution** and, if so, what obligations countries have to prevent it.
- Ocean ecosystems, responsible for generating half of the world's oxygen and mitigating global warming by absorbing carbon emissions, are under threat due to rising emissions causing warming and acidification of seawater, which harms marine life.
- The countries argue that the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) binds nations to prevent ocean pollution. Still, it does not explicitly classify carbon emissions as pollutants, which the plaintiffs contend should be.

Sources:

[Small islands take ocean protection case to UN court – The Hindu](#)

Q1. With reference to the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS), consider the following statements:

1. ITLOS has jurisdiction over disputes about interpreting the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).
2. ITLOS can hear cases related to marine scientific research.
3. Access to ITLOS is limited to States Parties to UNCLOS and excludes state-owned enterprises and private entities.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) None

ANSWER: (a)

Q2. How is the membership of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) determined?

- (a) By appointment by the United Nations Secretary-General
- (b) By election through a secret ballot by States Parties to the UNCLOS
- (c) By invitation from the United Nations General Assembly
- (d) By nomination from non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

Answer: (b)

Q3. Discuss the significance of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea in addressing the impacts of climate change on the world's oceans.

Gaurav Nikumbh