



CURRENT AFFAIRS



Argasia Education PVT. Ltd. (GST NO.-09AAPCAI478E1ZH)
Address: Basement C59 Noida, opposite to Priyagold Building gate, Sector 02,
Pocket I, Noida, Uttar Pradesh, 201301, CONTACT NO:-8448440231

Date -17 October 2023

FERRY SERVICE ACROSS PALK STRAIT

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details "Ferry Service across Palk Strait". This topic has relevance in the Geography section of the UPSC CSE exam.

GS 1: Geography

Why in the news?

India and Sri Lanka inaugurated a ferry service across the Palk Strait, marking a significant step toward enhanced connectivity. This initiative comes nearly 40 years after the civil war in Sri Lanka disrupted the link between Nagapattinam in Tamil Nadu and Kankesanthurai in Jaffna.

The newly launched ferry service is anticipated to have a positive impact on travel and trade with Kankesanthurai, which is the Sri Lankan port closest to ports situated on the west coast of India.

Background:

- The Palk Strait, a narrow body of water separating India and Sri Lanka, has been a source of contention between the two countries, primarily concerning the sharing of fish resources.
- This strait is known for being a critical breeding ground for marine resources, particularly shrimp.
- Despite an agreement reached in the 1970s to establish an imaginary boundary line called the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL), Indian fishermen, predominantly from Tamil Nadu and Puducherry, continue to face arrests by the Sri Lanka Navy for alleged "poaching" or "illegal" fishing within Sri Lankan waters.
- Both governments have engaged in numerous rounds of bilateral negotiations, and fishing community leaders from both sides have held talks over the years. However, a lasting solution to this issue remains elusive.

About Palk Strait:

- The Palk Strait is a narrow body of water connecting India's Tamil Nadu state to the island nation of Sri Lanka.
- It derives its name from Robert Palk, who was a British Raj administrator in the Madras Presidency from 1755 to 1763.
- The strait is bordered by Pamban Island (India) on the east, Adam's Bridge (also known as Rama's Bridge, a chain of shoals), the Gulf of Mannar, and Mannar Island (Sri Lanka) to the west.
- It serves as a crucial link between the northeastern Bay of Bengal in the north and the southwesterly Gulf of Mannar in the south.
- The southwestern section of the strait is often referred to as Palk Bay.

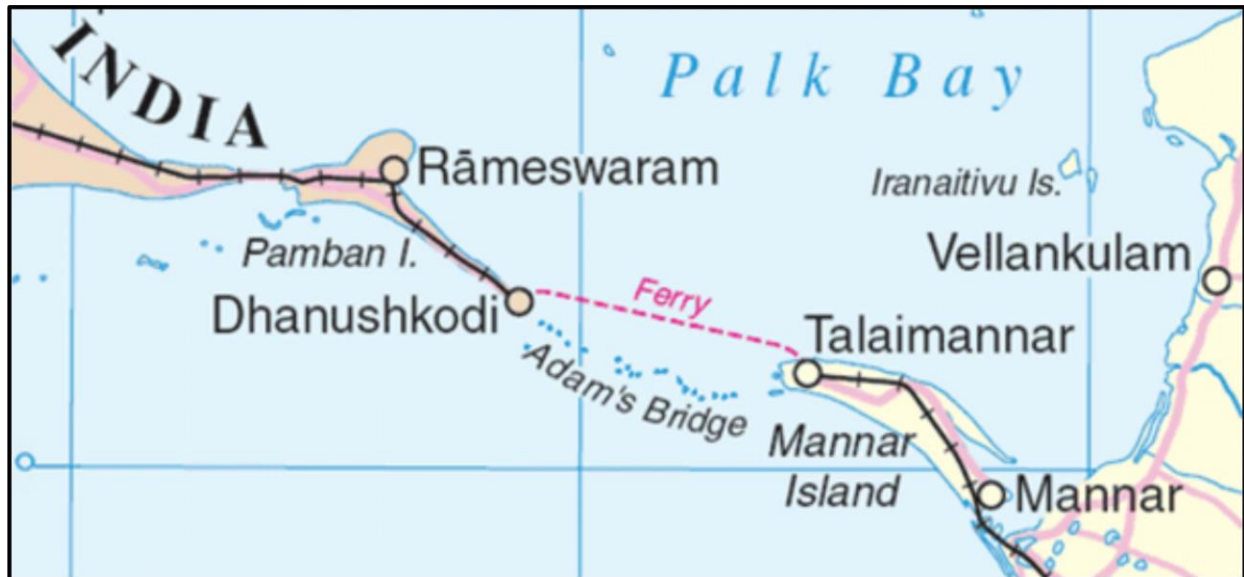
- The Palk Strait has a length ranging from 40 to 85 miles (approximately 64 to 137 kilometers) and a depth of less than 330 feet (about 100 meters).
- Various rivers, including the Vaigai River in Tamil Nadu, flow into the strait.
- The port of Jaffna, which is a significant commercial center in northern Sri Lanka, is located along the shores of the Palk Strait.



About Adam's Bridge:

- Adam's Bridge is a formation of limestone shoals that connects Pamban Island, also known as Rameswaram Island, located off the southeast coast of Tamil Nadu, India, and Mannar Island, situated off the northwest coast of Sri Lanka.
- Geologically, this bridge was once a land route that connected India and Sri Lanka.
- The length of the bridge is approximately 50 kilometers, and it serves as a link between the Gulf of Mannar to the southwest and the Palk Strait to the northeast.
- Parts of the sandbanks are dry, and the sea in the area is quite shallow, with depths ranging from 1 to 10 meters in various places, making navigation challenging.

- According to scientific understanding, Ram Setu, or Adam's Bridge, is a natural formation resulting from tectonic movements and the accumulation of sand in corals.
- This structure holds cultural and religious significance in both Hindu and Muslim traditions. Hindus believe it to be the bridge constructed by Lord Ram and his army to cross to Lanka and confront Ravan. In Islamic legend, it is associated with Adam, who, according to belief, used the bridge to reach Adam's Peak in Sri Lanka, where he stood on one foot in repentance for 1,000 years.



SOURCE:

[Lanka-India ferry service resumes after 40 years](#)

Q.1 Consider the following statements about the Palk Strait:

1. The Vaigai River flows into the Palk Strait.
2. The Palk Strait connects Tamil Nadu to Sri Lanka.

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: C

Q.2 Consider the following statements about the Palk Strait:

1. The port of Jaffna is situated along the Palk Strait.
2. The Port of Mangalore is situated along the Palk Strait.

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 Discuss the strategic significance of the Palk Strait in the context of maritime security and its implications for India-Sri Lanka relations.

Rishabh

REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP (RCEP)

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details "Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)". This topic has relevance in the "International Relations" section of the UPSC CSE exam.

For Prelims:

What is the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)?

For Mains:

GS2: International Relations

What are the impacts of RCEP?

Why in the news?

Sri Lanka and Bangladesh are currently evaluating the possibility of becoming members of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).

About Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)

- The RCEP is a **free trade agreement** that brings together a group of countries to promote economic cooperation and reduce trade barriers.
- It is one of the largest trade agreements in the world. RCEP was signed in November 2020 and includes **15 member countries**:
 - **ASEAN member countries:** Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.
 - **Plus Five countries:** China, Japan, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand.
 - The **population** of the 15 member countries amounts to approximately **30% of the world's total** (2.2 billion people), contributing to around **30% of the global GDP** (\$29.7 trillion).
- **Functioning of RCEP:**
 - The RCEP is expected to eliminate a range of import tariffs within 20 years.
 - It includes intellectual property, telecommunications, financial services, e-commerce and professional services provisions.
- **India opted out of the RCEP negotiations** in November 2019 over "significant outstanding issues."

TRADE AGREEMENTS

PLUTUS
IAS

01

PTA

(Preferential Trade Agreement): Preferential access through a positive product list.



02

FTA

(Free Trade Agreement): Encompasses more, specifying exclusions via a negative list.



03

CECA

(Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement): Includes trade tariff negotiations.



04

CEPA

(Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement): Comprehensive, covering tariffs, customs, competition policies, and intellectual property rights (IPR), among others.



India chose not to join the RCEP for several reasons:

- **Protection for Domestic Industry and Agriculture:** India wanted more safeguards for its industries and farms against a flood of imports, especially from China, but RCEP didn't provide those protections.
- **Unresolved Concerns:** India had significant concerns throughout the negotiations, which were not addressed by the deadline for signing the deal. Many of these concerns were related to China's role in the agreement.
- **Trade Imbalance with China:** India already had a substantial trade deficit with China, and there were worries that RCEP could worsen this imbalance by flooding India with Chinese goods and products from other countries.
- **Tensions with China:** The recent conflict in the Galwan Valley had strained India's relationship with China, making it a major factor in India's decision.
- **Issues with Proposed Agreement Provisions:** India was concerned about certain aspects of the proposed agreement, including fair access to markets, rules of origin, dispute resolution mechanisms, and the impact on domestic industries.

Potential Impacts:

- **Negative Impacts:**
 - **Reduced Trade and Investment:** India's economy could see decreased trade and investment with RCEP nations, impacting both sides negatively.
 - **Chinese Competition:** China's regional influence may grow, posing challenges to Indian exporters and foreign investment prospects.
 - **Reduced Regional Integration:** The absence of India could impede progress toward greater regional integration in Asia.
 - **Geopolitical Tensions:** India's choice might increase regional geopolitical tensions, particularly in light of its historical rivalry with China. It could be seen as a lack of willingness to cooperate.
- **Positive Impacts:**
 - **Protection of Domestic Industries:** India's domestic sectors, especially agriculture and manufacturing, could be shielded from competition with cheaper Chinese imports.

- **Time for Domestic Reforms:** With the saved time from not joining RCEP, India could focus on reforming its domestic economy to enhance competitiveness.
- **Potential for a Better Future Deal:** India might negotiate a more favourable agreement with RCEP members once its concerns have been addressed.

Notably, India has entered into bilateral free trade agreements (FTAs) with several RCEP members, which could offset some of the negative impacts of its absence from RCEP. However, it's crucial to acknowledge that FTAs have a narrower scope than RCEP, which covers a broader range of issues encompassing goods, services, investment, and trade rules.

Sources:

[Sri Lanka, Bangladesh mull over joining RCEP bloc – The Hindu](#)

Q1. With reference to the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), consider the following statements:

1. RCEP is a customs union that brings together 15 Asian nations.
2. New Zealand is a member of RCEP.
3. RCEP includes provisions related to financial services, e-commerce and professional services.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (b)

Q2. Consider the following:

1. PTA – Encompasses specifies exclusions through a negative list.
2. FTA – Offers access via a positive list.
3. CECA – Covers trade tariff negotiations.
4. CEPA – Includes tariffs, customs, competition policies, IPR and others

How many of the abovementioned pairs are correct ?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) Only three
- (d) All Four

Answer: (b)

Q3. Discuss the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and its significance in the context of international trade and India's decision to abstain from the agreement.

Gaurav