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New Maritime route through Arctic Ice

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AP Moller-Maersk, the world's largest container shipping groups cargo vessels, had navigated through the Russian Arctic on a trial journey.

- The ship arrived in St Petersburg on the Gulf of Finland after leaving Vladivostok on the North Pacific on August 22.
- The route can become the new maritime highway between Asia and Europe.
- The Northern Sea Route (along Russia's northern extremity) could potentially cut the travel distance between East Asia and Western Europe (currently via the Malacca Strait, Indian Ocean, Gulf of Aden and Suez Canal) from 21,000 km to just 12,800 km, and the journey time by 10-15 days.

The Vanishing Ice

- Years of melting ice have made it easier for ships to ply these frigid waters.
- The extent of sea ice covering the Arctic Ocean has declined in every decade since the 1980s, measurements which were taken every September show.
- As climate change is resulting in parts of the Arctic warming up to 100% faster than elsewhere, there is evidence that ancient, thick ice is disappearing as well.

The New Shipping Route

- As the seas warm, it is conceivable that ships, by the middle of this century, will be able to pass directly over the North Pole from the north of Russia to the north of Canada, at least for some weeks in the summer.
- The shipping activity in the region is likely to increase significantly over the next decade, also because Russia is likely to develop oil and gas fields in Siberia.

Issues with Arctic Sea Route

- **Costs**

High costs and varying conditions of Arctic ice can discourage the shippers who have to follow strict schedules.

- **Safety**

Increased insurance costs and safety considerations are other concerns.

- **Environment**

The noise and environmental pollution done by ships can severely impact the environment as well as the wildlife in the otherwise remote part of the world.