

The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE

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Egypt's Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty, during his visit to India for the first India-Egypt Strategic Dialogue, emphasized that progress on the Palestinian issue is essential for the revival of the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC). The IMEC, envisioned as a transformative connectivity project linking India to Europe via the Middle East, has stalled amid the ongoing Gaza conflict. Abdelatty also encouraged India to join Egypt's Suez Canal Economic Zone (SCZONE), highlighting broader cooperation in trade, industrial development, and technology.

Resolution of Palestinian question necessary for IMEC: Egyptian FM

In Delhi for the first India-Egypt Strategic Dialogue, Abdelatty urges India to join the Egyptian Suez Canal Economic Zone; meets Jaishankar, calls on PM Modi; IMEC project, unveiled at the G-20 Summit in 2023, stalled soon after due to Gaza war

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

Plans for the India-Middle East-Europe-Economic Corridor (IMEC) cannot proceed without some progress on the Palestinian question, Egypt's Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty said on Friday, adding that Egypt would be interested to join all such connectivity projects once the situation is "conducive".

Mr. Abdelatty told a group of presspersons that he had discussed the IMEC project with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar during the first India-Egypt Strategic Dialogue on Friday, and also proposed that India join the Egyptian Suez Canal Economic Zone (SCZONE), where Russia, China, and a few other countries already have separate industrial complexes.

On Friday, he called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who praised Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi for the Gaza Peace Plan signed with U.S. President Donald Trump this week.

Derailed by attacks

The IMEC was launched during the G-20 in New Delhi in September 2023 by a number of countries including India, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, the U.S., and the European Union, and is meant to be routed via Israel's Haifa port. The project floundered within a month, however, after the October 7 terror attacks in Israel and the Israeli bombardment of Gaza.

While welcoming all connectivity projects "between the east and west", Mr. Abdelatty said that the aspirations of the Palestinian people for their own



Building relations: Prime Minister Narendra Modi meeting Foreign Minister of Egypt Badr Abdelatty in New Delhi on Friday. PTI

State was necessary for peace and security in the region, and it would not be possible to run a cross-regional connectivity project like the IMEC without it.

"If we are serious about having final peace and security, a comprehensive deal and the security for Israel and the whole region, the only solution is to res-

pond positively to the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people to have their own statehood, to have their own independent state," Mr. Abdelatty said in response to a question from *The Hindu*.

Indian industrial zone

Turning to bilateral matters, Mr. Abdelatty said

that India and Egypt have committed to doubling bilateral trade from the present level of \$5 billion, with particular potential in the areas of chemicals, minerals, pharmaceuticals, phosphates, digital technology, artificial intelligence, and renewable energy.

"We have a special industrial zone for China and for Russia in the SCZONE and we are encouraging an Indian industrial zone where we would provide all facilitation and incentives to Indian companies," he said, adding that India would be able to export goods beyond Egypt, with its population of 120 million, to a market of more than "two billion inhabitants" across Africa, South America, Europe, and Arab countries that are connected to Egyptian ports through free trade agreements.

Issue Overview

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Daily News Analysis

- Core Concern: The IMEC project, launched at the G20 Summit 2023, cannot advance without regional stability — which hinges on resolving the Palestinian question.
- Geopolitical Context: The project’s route through Israel’s Haifa port became politically and logistically unviable following the Israel-Gaza war.
- Egypt’s Stand: Cairo insists that peace and security in the region depend on acknowledging Palestinian aspirations for an independent state.
- India’s Role: India, as a major IMEC stakeholder, is urged to balance its connectivity ambitions with its traditional support for Palestinian statehood and growing ties with Israel.

Key Observations

- Diplomatic Insight: Egypt positions itself as a peace broker and logistical hub through the Suez Canal, reinforcing its strategic importance.
- Economic Opportunity: India’s potential participation in the SCZONE would allow access to African, European, and Arab markets via Egypt’s extensive trade linkages.
- Connectivity Disruption: The Gaza war derailed IMEC’s initial momentum, underscoring how geopolitical instability undermines economic projects.
- Strategic Dialogue: India-Egypt partnership is diversifying into emerging sectors — AI, renewables, and digital technology — reflecting mutual interests beyond traditional trade.

Static and Current Linkages

Static Topic	Current Relevance
India’s West Asia Policy	Balancing ties with Israel, Palestine, and Arab states.
Connectivity Corridors	IMEC as a counter to China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).
Geopolitics of Suez Canal	Egypt’s pivotal role in maritime trade and global logistics.
India-Egypt Relations	Growing cooperation post-2023 Strategic Dialogue.
Global Peace & Security	Palestinian statehood as a prerequisite for lasting regional stability.

Analytical Perspective

- Geopolitical Implications: The IMEC’s success depends on Middle Eastern stability; unresolved conflicts make infrastructure diplomacy fragile.
- Diplomatic Balancing: India must pursue strategic pragmatism — maintaining relations with Israel while supporting peace efforts that align with its non-aligned heritage.
- Economic Strategy: Egypt’s SCZONE provides India with a gateway to new markets, reducing dependence on China-centric routes.
- Regional Leadership: Egypt reasserts its influence in Arab geopolitics by linking economic cooperation to peacebuilding.

Solutions and Policy Significance

- Peace Diplomacy: Renewed international engagement for a two-state solution to stabilize West Asia.

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Daily News Analysis

- Strategic Participation: India's investment in SCZONE can complement IMEC, ensuring alternate trade connectivity.
- Diversified Engagement: Expanding bilateral trade into tech, renewable energy, and AI strengthens economic resilience.
- Multilateral Cooperation: Utilize G20, BRICS, and UN forums to advocate for peaceful regional integration.

Strategic & Societal Implications

Aspect	Implication
Regional Stability	Peace in Gaza essential for transcontinental connectivity.
India's Foreign Policy	Test of strategic autonomy amid shifting alliances.
Trade & Logistics	Suez Canal remains a crucial node for India-Europe supply chains.
Global Diplomacy	Highlights the interdependence of peace and economic cooperation.
South-South Cooperation	Egypt and India can jointly champion development-driven diplomacy.

Challenges Ahead

- Prolonged Gaza conflict and political fragmentation.
- Divergent interests among IMEC partners (India, Israel, UAE, EU, USA).
- Risk of IMEC turning symbolic without on-ground implementation.
- Need for balancing moral diplomacy (Palestine) with realpolitik (Israel).
- Competition with China's BRI and parallel connectivity initiatives.

Conclusion

The IMEC's promise as a bridge between India and Europe hinges not just on infrastructure, but on peace and political resolution in West Asia. Egypt's insistence on addressing the Palestinian question underscores that economic integration cannot thrive amid conflict. For India, deepening engagement with Egypt — through SCZONE participation and diplomatic dialogue — offers both strategic and moral dividends. A stable Middle East will ultimately determine whether IMEC evolves into a symbol of cooperation or remains a casualty of unresolved geopolitics.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Ques: Consider the following statements about the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC):

1. It was launched during the 2023 G20 Summit in New Delhi.
2. It aims to connect India with Europe through the Middle East.
3. The corridor is expected to pass through Israel's Haifa port.
4. Egypt is one of the founding members of IMEC.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1, 2, and 3 only
- (c) 2, 3, and 4 only
- (d) 1, 3, and 4 only

Ans : b)

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques: Evaluate the potential of the Suez Canal Economic Zone (SCZONE) as a strategic partner for India in achieving supply chain diversification and enhanced connectivity with Europe and Africa. **(150 Words)**

The inauguration of the third production line of Tejas Mk1A and the second line of Hindustan Turbo Trainer-40 (HTT-40) at HAL's Nashik facility marks a significant milestone in India's journey towards defence self-reliance. The initiative reflects the government's focus on indigenisation, technological advancement, and strengthening strategic capabilities, aligning with India's broader national security and Make in India objectives.

Nashik unit open; HAL can roll out 24 Tejas jets a year

Rajnath Singh flags off the first light combat aircraft Mk1A produced at the facility; Minister opens the third production line for the fighter and the second of Hindustan Turbo Trainer-40 aircraft

Saurabh Trivedi
Hemanth C.S.
NASHIK

The production lines of the light combat aircraft Tejas Mk1A and the training aircraft HTT-40 are proof of the synergy among government, industry and academia, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said here on Friday, asserting that no challenge was too big if faced together.

He was speaking after inaugurating the third production line of Tejas Mk1A and the second of the Hindustan Turbo Trainer-40 at the Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. facility.

The Defence Minister flagged off the first LCA Mk1A aircraft produced at the facility, describing it as a symbol of India's growing self-reliance in defence.

Highlighting the transformation of India's defence sector in the past decade under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, Mr. Singh said the country, which once imported 65-70% of its military hardware, now manufactured nearly 65% of it domestically. "Our goal is to increase this to 100% in the near future," he said.



Coming on stream: Rajnath Singh during the flagging off of new production lines at HAL in Nashik on Friday. @SPOKESPERSONMOD X

He recalled that when the government under Mr. Modi came to power in 2014, it faced numerous challenges such as limited defence preparedness, import dependence, and a lack of private sector participation.

"Earlier, defence production was largely confined to government enterprises. There was insufficient focus on planning, advanced technology, and innovation, which made us dependent on other nations and created strategic vulnerabilities," he said. "These challenges pushed us to adopt new thinking and reforms. Today, we are manufacturing domestically what we used to import – fighter jets, missiles, engines, and elec-

tronic warfare systems."

Mr. Singh reaffirmed the government's commitment to inducting indigenous technologies into the armed forces and hailed HAL as the backbone of India's defence manufacturing ecosystem. He commended HAL for supporting the recently de-commissioned MiG-21 fleet and its pivotal role during Operation Sindoor.

"In our security history, few instances have tested our system as much as Operation Sindoor. HAL provided round-the-clock support to the Indian Air Force, ensuring operational readiness. The Nashik team carried out crucial integration of the BrahMos missile on Su-30 aircraft, which destroyed terrorist

hideouts during the operation," he said.

"This proved that India can design, produce, and deploy its own systems effectively," he added.

HAL plans

The first two production lines of the LCA and the first production line of the HTT-40 are in Bengaluru. The company initiated establishment of the third production line to fast-track delivery of Tejas to the IAF. The production line in Nashik has a capacity of eight aircraft a year.

The company said that with the third production line, HAL would achieve a total production capacity of 24 aircraft per year for LCA Mk1A.

The third Line had resulted in creation of approximately 1,000 jobs, and development of more than 40 industry partners in and around Nashik, including in cities of Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Madhya Pradesh. In two years, the company plans to expand capacity in Nashik up to 10 aircraft a year by way of establishing an additional Assembly Jig Line, Tooling and Pre-installation Check facilities for Line Replaceable Units.

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Daily News Analysis

- Core Concern:** India’s historical dependence on imported defence equipment limited strategic autonomy and operational preparedness.
- Government Initiative:** Establishment of additional production lines to enhance indigenous defence manufacturing capacity and reduce reliance on imports.
- Strategic Objective:** Fast-track delivery of modern fighter and trainer aircraft to the Indian Air Force (IAF), supporting operational readiness and national security.

Key Observations

- Defence Indigenisation:** India has shifted from importing 65–70% of military hardware to manufacturing nearly 65% domestically, aiming for 100% self-reliance.
- HAL’s Role:** HAL is central to India’s defence manufacturing ecosystem, providing critical support during past operations (e.g., Operation Sindoor).
- Capacity Expansion:** Nashik production line will add 8 Tejas Mk1A aircraft annually, contributing to a total projected output of 24 aircraft per year.
- Economic & Employment Impact:** Creation of ~1,000 jobs and involvement of 40+ industry partners across Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Madhya Pradesh.

Static and Current Linkages

Static Topic	Current Relevance
Defence Manufacturing	Expansion of HAL production lines for LCA Mk1A and HTT-40 enhances domestic production capabilities.
Strategic Autonomy	Indigenous fighter jet production reduces import dependence and strengthens national security.
Industry-Academia-Government Synergy	Collaborative approach enables technological innovation and production efficiency.
Employment & Economy	Defence production hubs create local employment and industrial growth.
National Security	Faster induction of modern aircraft enhances IAF operational readiness.

Analytical Perspective

- Technological Implications:** Establishing multiple production lines accelerates innovation, integration of advanced systems (e.g., BrahMos missile on Su-30), and operational readiness.
- Economic Implications:** Local industry participation and job creation enhance regional economies and support MSME growth.
- Strategic Implications:** Increased domestic production mitigates dependence on foreign suppliers, reduces vulnerabilities, and strengthens deterrence capabilities.
- Policy Lens:** Government reforms post-2014 focused on private sector participation, advanced planning, and indigenous R&D, reshaping India’s defence ecosystem.

Solutions and Policy Significance

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Daily News Analysis

- Capacity Building:** Expanding production lines and modern assembly facilities to meet IAF requirements.
- Private Sector Collaboration:** Engaging industry partners across multiple states to strengthen the supply chain.
- R&D and Innovation:** Integration of advanced technology and indigenous systems ensures self-reliance and operational efficiency.
- Long-term Planning:** Incremental expansion plans (e.g., Nashik facility's future 10 aircraft/year capacity) align with strategic defence preparedness.

Strategic & Societal Implications

Aspect	Implication
Defence Self-Reliance	Strengthens national security and reduces strategic vulnerabilities.
Regional Employment	Creation of jobs and industrial clusters supports local economies.
National Pride & Capability	Indigenous design, production, and deployment boosts India's global defence stature.
Policy & Governance	Demonstrates effectiveness of government-industry-academia collaboration.
Military Preparedness	Faster induction of modern aircraft ensures readiness for current and future threats.

Challenges Ahead

- Scaling production to meet IAF demand while maintaining quality.
- Integrating private sector capabilities efficiently across states.
- Sustaining R&D for next-generation aircraft and defence technologies.
- Managing supply chain dependencies for critical components.
- Balancing economic, strategic, and technological priorities simultaneously.

Conclusion

The launch of HAL's Nashik production lines for Tejas Mk1A and HTT-40 highlights India's journey from import dependence to defence self-reliance. Strategic investments in indigenous manufacturing, coupled with government-industry collaboration, enhance operational readiness, create employment, and strengthen national security. Continued expansion, innovation, and policy support are essential to achieve complete indigenisation of defence capabilities, ensuring that India can design, produce, and deploy advanced systems independently while fostering economic growth.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Ques: Which of the following statements about Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) Nashik facility is/are correct?

1. It has started the third production line for Tejas Mk1A.
2. The Nashik facility is intended to produce 24 Tejas aircraft per year.
3. HAL is planning to shut down its Bengaluru facility after Nashik comes online.

Options:

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 1 and 3 only
- d) All of the above

Ans: a)

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques: Discuss the significance of the HAL Nashik production lines for Tejas Mk1A and HTT-40 in strengthening India's defence self-reliance.

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Page 06 : GS 2 : International Relations / Prelims

The 75th anniversary of China-India diplomatic ties and the 80th anniversary of the United Nations provide a critical context to reflect on the evolving global governance system. Recent engagements between the leaders of China and India, particularly through multilateral platforms such as SCO and BRICS, highlight the role of these two Asian powers in promoting multipolarity, multilateralism, and a people-centered approach to international relations. Initiatives like the Global Governance Initiative (GGI) aim to reform and strengthen global governance, addressing the challenges of unilateralism, protectionism, and hegemonism.

Better global governance, led by China and India

The year 2025 marks the 75th anniversary of diplomatic ties between China and India. Since April 1, 1950, exchanges between the two great countries have come a long way, in which heads of state (government) diplomacy plays a key role in enhancing mutual trust, mutual respect and mutual complementarity. Highlighting more recent achievements are the interactions and friendship between the two leaders – China's President Xi Jinping and India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi. From 2014 to 2024, Mr. Xi and Mr. Modi have met 18 times. When the year 2014 was declared as the Year of China-India Friendly Exchanges, Mr. Xi paid a state visit to India in September and made a trip to Ahmedabad, the home town of Mr. Modi. China and India issued a Joint Statement on Building an Even Closer Partnership for Development. In May 2015, Mr. Modi made his first visit to China, and Mr. Xi received him in Xi'an, Mr. Xi's home town.

From 2016 to 2019, the two leaders met multiple times each year on the occasions of the BRICS summit, the G-20 summit, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit. Affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, the next few years saw the two leaders exchange greetings and messages through letters and in telephone conversations. With the resumption of face-to-face meetings, Mr. Xi held talks with Mr. Modi on the sidelines of the BRICS summit in Johannesburg in August 2023. And in October 2024, the two leaders held a bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the 16th BRICS summit in Kazan, reaching important understandings on improving and growing China-India relations.

A milestone for the United Nations

This year also marks the 80th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, following the victory of the world anti-fascist war. Eighty years ago, upon deep reflection on the bitter lessons of the First and Second World Wars, the international community established the UN, commencing a brand new practice in global governance. In the past 80 years, the UN-based visions and practice of global governance have made historic contributions to maintaining world peace and development. However, the first few decades of the 21st century saw the world increasingly confronted with volatility, turbulence, uncertainty and unpredictability.

Faced with harmful "isms" such as unilateralism, protectionism, isolationism, separatism, terrorism, extremism and hegemonism, humanity needs to dwell on a major subject of our times, i.e., in order not to slip into a rule of jungle law, the kind of global governance system that needs to be built and how to reform and improve our global governance. Therefore, at such an important juncture, the 25th SCO Summit in Tianjin and the 19th in-person Xi-Modi meeting during the summit have been highly anticipated and



Qin Jie
is the Consul General of the People's Republic of China, in Mumbai

expected by not only the more than 2.8 billion people in China and India but also the rest of the world, to shed some light on subjects such as bilateral relations, global governance and the future of humanity.

Partners, not rivals

Indeed, as pointed out by Sudheendra Kulkarni, political adviser and scholar, the 2025 Tianjin SCO Summit could be one of the most successful in the organisation's history. This could be because of the changing world order (with the West rapidly losing its dominance in global affairs in the irreversible trend of multipolarity and multilateralism), and, more significantly, due to the growing importance of Asia and Eurasia. Mr. Xi and Mr. Modi are two leaders who have shown vision and wisdom in their friendly interactions.

Mr. Xi has emphasised that China and India should shoulder the crucial responsibility of improving the well-being of the two peoples, promoting solidarity and rejuvenation of developing countries, and advancing the progress of human society. China and India should be good neighbours and partners who help each other succeed. He made four points of suggestion – China and India should strengthen strategic communication and deepen mutual trust; expand exchanges and cooperation to achieve mutual benefit and win-win; accommodate each other's concerns and get along in peace and harmony, and strengthen multilateral coordination to safeguard our shared interests. Mr. Modi echoed Mr. Xi in this by saying that the India-China relationship is back on a positive trajectory, that peace and stability in the border regions have been maintained, and that direct flights were to resume.

Such progress benefits not only the peoples of India and China but also the whole world. India and China are partners, not rivals. Their consensus far outweighs their disagreement. India-China cooperation will make the 21st century a genuine Asian century, and the two sides joining hands will increase the strength of multilateralism in international affairs.

The highlight of the Tianjin SCO summit was the Global Governance Initiative (GGI) raised by Mr. Xi, based on five basic principles. First, stay committed to sovereign equality. All countries, regardless of size, strength or wealth, shall have their sovereignty and dignity respected, their domestic affairs free from external interference, the right to independently choose their social system and development path, and the right to participate in, make decisions in and benefit from the global governance process as equals. Greater democracy should be promoted in international relations to make the global governance system better reflect the interests and the aspirations of the majority of countries, especially the developing countries.

Second, stay committed to international rule of law. The purposes and principles of the UN

Charter are universally recognised basic norms of international relations and must be upheld unwaveringly. International law and rules must be applied, equally and uniformly, without any double standards or imposition. Major countries must take the lead in advocating and defending international rule of law.

Third, stay committed to multilateralism. Global affairs should be decided by all, and the governance system built by all, and the fruits of governance shared by all. The UN is the core platform for practising multilateralism and advancing global governance, whose role must be enhanced, not weakened.

Fourth, stay committed to the people-centered approach. The people of all nations are the fundamental actors in global governance, and their well being is its ultimate benefit. It must seek improvement through reforms in order to inspire a greater sense of fulfilment through accelerated common development, a greater sense of safety through more effective response to humanity's common challenges, and a greater sense of well being through advancing the common interests of different countries and communities.

Fifth, stay committed to real results. Effective global governance is essentially one that resolves real problems. It must address both the root causes and symptoms to find sustainable solutions. Developed countries should earnestly take on their responsibilities and provide more resources and public goods, while developing countries should pull together for strength and do their best for the world.

The task ahead

The GGI is another major initiative and public good offered by China. With the aim of addressing the deficit of global governance, the GGI stems from the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, and responds to the shared aspiration of most countries. To reform and improve global governance does not mean overturning the existing international order or to create another framework outside the current international system. Rather, the goal is to make the existing international system and institutions better in taking action, working effectively, adapting to changes, responding promptly and effectively to various global challenges, and serving the interests of all countries.

As key members of the SCO and BRICS, China and India should step up to shoulder their responsibility in improving global governance, upholding multilateralism, strengthening communication and coordination on major international and regional issues, and in defending international fairness and justice. They should follow the strategic guidance of their two leaders, bearing in mind the importance of the larger picture and long-term view, taking on the responsibility of improving the well-being of their peoples, and in promoting the solidarity and the rejuvenation of developing countries.

China-India cooperation can increase the strength of multilateralism in international affairs

Issue Overview

- **Core Concern:** Existing global governance frameworks face legitimacy and effectiveness challenges amid rising unilateralism, protectionism, and geopolitical volatility.

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Daily News Analysis

- Bilateral Context:** China-India cooperation is seen as a stabilizing factor in regional and global politics, leveraging the combined influence of over 2.8 billion people.
- Strategic Objective:** Enhance multilateral decision-making, equitable participation of developing nations, and sustainable solutions to global challenges.

Key Observations

- Bilateral Engagement:** From 2014–2024, Xi Jinping and Narendra Modi met 18 times, strengthening mutual trust, respect, and cooperation.
- Multilateral Cooperation:** Engagements through SCO, BRICS, and G20 summits underline the importance of Asia and Eurasia in shaping global governance.
- Global Governance Initiative (GGI):** Aims to reform the existing international system around sovereign equality, rule of law, multilateralism, people-centered approach, and real results.
- Positive Trajectory:** Peace and stability along China-India borders, direct flight resumption, and dialogue-oriented problem-solving reinforce the narrative of partnership, not rivalry.

Static and Current Linkages

Static Topic	Current Relevance
Diplomacy & Bilateral Relations	China-India high-level meetings improve strategic trust and collaboration.
Multilateralism	SCO, BRICS, and UN-centered reforms strengthen cooperative decision-making.
Global Governance	GGI addresses legitimacy, equity, and effectiveness deficits in the current system.
Regional Stability	Asia-centric cooperation promotes peace and development in Eurasia.
Developing Countries	Initiatives emphasize solidarity, rejuvenation, and shared development benefits.

Analytical Perspective

- Strategic Implications:** China and India, as major Asian powers, are positioned to influence multipolar global order and promote equitable participation of developing countries.
- Policy Implications:** GGI proposes actionable reforms based on sovereignty, law, multilateralism, and people-centered outcomes, enhancing the legitimacy of global institutions.
- Bilateral Implications:** Constructive dialogue, conflict management, and mutual accommodation pave the way for stable regional cooperation.
- Global Impact:** Strengthening multilateralism and equitable governance can counter unilateral tendencies and contribute to sustainable peace and development.

Solutions and Policy Significance

- Reform Existing Institutions:** Strengthen UN and other multilateral platforms to be more representative and effective.
- Enhance Strategic Communication:** Regular high-level engagements to build trust and prevent misperceptions.
- Promote People-Centered Policies:** Focus on welfare, sustainable development, and equitable growth for all nations.

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Daily News Analysis

- **Shared Responsibility:** Developed countries provide resources, while developing countries collaborate to address global challenges.

Strategic & Societal Implications

Aspect	Implication
Global Governance	GGI and China-India cooperation improve effectiveness and equity in international affairs.
Regional Stability	Bilateral partnership reduces potential conflicts and fosters peace in Asia and Eurasia.
Developing World Empowerment	Solidarity initiatives support common development and greater participation in global decision-making.
Multilateralism	Strengthening SCO, BRICS, and UN-based platforms enhances collective problem-solving.
Long-term Global Order	Collaborative leadership contributes to a multipolar, rules-based international system.

Challenges Ahead

- Managing strategic rivalry while fostering cooperation.
- Ensuring effective implementation of GGI principles across diverse geopolitical contexts.
- Balancing national interests with collective global welfare.
- Countering unilateralism and hegemonism from major powers outside the China-India axis.
- Sustaining long-term regional and global trust amid economic, political, and security shifts.

Conclusion

Aim, Think & Achieve

China and India, through strengthened bilateral engagement and multilateral cooperation, are poised to play a leading role in reforming global governance. Initiatives like the Global Governance Initiative (GGI) aim to make international institutions more equitable, people-centered, and results-oriented, addressing contemporary challenges such as unilateralism, protectionism, and strategic instability. Constructive dialogue, shared responsibility, and regional cooperation can ensure that the 21st century becomes genuinely multipolar, advancing peace, sustainable development, and the collective interests of humanity.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Ques: Which of the following statements regarding India–Russia oil trade in 2025 is correct?

- a) India completely stopped importing oil from Russia in 2025.
- b) India remains the largest buyer of Russian oil, though imports fell by ~45% in some PSUs between June–Sept 2025.
- c) India imposed penalty tariffs on the U.S. due to energy imports.
- d) Russia no longer exports oil to India.

Ans : b)

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques. Analyse the role of India-China bilateral diplomacy in promoting peace, stability, and sustainable development in Asia and beyond. How does it contribute to strengthening multilateralism? **(250 Words)**

Page : 09 : GS 3 : Environment / Prelims

Karnataka's recent environmental challenges, including multiple tiger deaths and escalating human-animal conflicts, highlight the stark gap between governmental sustainability rhetoric and on-ground ecological realities. Infrastructure and development projects, such as hydroelectric plants, transmission lines, and railway projects, are being prioritised over forest conservation, leading to habitat fragmentation, biodiversity loss, and socio-ecological tensions. This underscores the need for a balanced approach that aligns development objectives with ecological integrity.

in conflict zone

Years saved due to non-environmental projects in 2022	35,580
Years gained by cost of projects	2161

Wildlife deaths

Elephant deaths	22,483
Tiger deaths	6,226
Leopard deaths	3,738
Other deaths	554

Forest encroachment cases in Karnataka

Cases registered in 2023	44,812
Cases closed in 2023	4,849
Cases pending in 2023	559

Source: Forest Department's e-Pathshala database

Green rhetoric versus the practical reality

The recent deaths of six tigers at MM hills and repeated cases of man-animal conflict expose Karnataka's continued prioritisation of infrastructure projects over environment, despite the loud sustainability rhetoric, argues **R. Kirishna Kumar**

Describing a corporate sustainability report in Bengaluru recently, Karnataka's Minister for Forests, Ecology and Environment, Eshwar B. Khadure made a pointed observation: "If there is greenery, there is life; if there are forests, there is a future".

Such lofty statements tend to put a gloss over the negative fallout of policy decisions that are antithetical to conservation. Ironically, the very department Mr. Khadure heads has taken decisions that jeopardise environment and ecology. It is the Sharanavathi pumped storage project in Sharanavathi or the mini hydro projects in the Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary in Channarayana district, along a tributary on Goa Tamara power project, or failure to clear forest encroachments, the state policy is inconsistent with its avowed intention of forest protection. Activists perceive a pattern in the decision-making that prioritises infrastructure over environment, which endangers ecological integrity.

India projects policies

The Sharanavathi Pumped Storage Project threatens to inundate large tracts of evergreen forest in one of the few remaining biodiversity-rich landscapes in the Western Ghats.

The Karnataka Power Corporation Ltd (KPCCL) is promoting the 2,000 MW pumped storage hydroelectric facility. The project site is an ecologically fragile and sensitive area. The scheme requires 42.26 hectares (103.05 acres) of forest land and 60.33 hectares (149.57 acres) of non-forest land from the Sharanavathi Valley Lion Tailed Macaque Wildlife Sanctuary.

This includes the 11.64 hectares (28.76 acres) of forest land and 28.07 hectares (69.57 acres) of non-forest land proposed to be acquired from the sanctuary's recreation buffer zone. The National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) has accorded its principle approval for the project, for which the Government of Karnataka and the State Board for Wildlife have given their consent.

The Sharanavathi Valley is part of the Western Ghats biodiversity hotspot, and shelters numerous endemic and endangered species. This includes an estimated 700 lion-tailed macaques, which are among the world's forest primates. Though a few members of NBWL made feeble attempts to oppose the project and questioned its economic feasibility, such objections were brushed aside.

As it is to reduce the negative environmental impact, several 'mitigation measures' are being included in the project, and they are merely cosmetic in nature, which fails to minimise ecological damage.

There is a people's movement brewing against the Sharanavathi project. Activists under the banner of 'Sharanavathi Nivasi', or People for Environment, met in Bengaluru on October 11 to express their opposition to the project. They pointed out that not all projects promoted under the banner of 'renewables' are inherently sustainable or ecologically sound.

Opposing both the Sharanavathi and Varahi Pumped Storage schemes, the citizens resolved that not only should they be scrapped, but also future renewable energy planning must respect ecological integrity of the site.

Mini hydro projects

Three mini hydro projects have been proposed within the Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary in Channarayana district. However, they are bound to pose a threat to biodiversity of wildlife, apart from disturbing the riverine ecosystem. While the Government of Karnataka is yet to clear them, questions are being raised as to why there is no outright rejection of such proposals.

One is the renewal of diversion of 4,803 ha for the Bangalore-Channarayana Mini Hydro Project by Power Power Corporation, a new diversion for the Bhachukali 2x2.5 MW Mini Hydro Project by Madhyanagar Energy Private Limited, and the re-diversion of part of the same land for a 3.5 MW project by Balaji Geo-ery Power Private Limited.

While the extent of land diversion may appear small and insignificant when viewed in isolation, such projects collectively have a cascading negative impact. In the long run, they will undermine the ecological integrity of the surrounding landscape, according to global scholars, wildlife conservationists.

Six tiger deaths

The imperative of opposing these proposals also stems from recent tiger deaths – five in June 2023 and another in October – all of which were a direct fallout of retaliatory killing linked to human-wildlife conflict. The deaths of six tigers in the MM hills, including human-wildlife conflict, are a direct fallout of retaliatory killing linked to human-wildlife conflict.

Such conflicts arise from habitat loss, disruption in prey-predator dynamics, and human encroachment, said Nalkani in a memo read out to the forest department.

Mini hydro projects, despite their name, cause major ecological damage by way of tree-felling, impeding wildlife movement, creating habitat fragmentation, said activists who have urged the government to take a firm stance against such proposals.

Incidentally, the Karnataka Elephant Task Force, which was constituted as per the orders of the High Court of Karnataka in 2002, in its report noted that the key elephant habitats, including protected areas such as the Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary and BB Tiger Reserve, are covered under various leases and other concessions on forest land.

The task force suggested a time-bound restoration of the land as elephant habitats after making an inventory of such concessions and leases within the designated forests, and initiate necessary process. Activists have argued that extending the existing leases or issuing fresh permission for projects is not the way forward to restore elephant habitats.

Transmission line project

With respect to Goa Tamara 400 KV DVC Quad Transmission Line Project, the government has flip-flopped on its own decision. The project proposes to link the existing power grid at Nanjunda in Tharwad district with Kallur in Goa with a 94 kilometre transmission line.

Over 72 kilometres of the proposed transmission line is to be laid across forests within Karnataka. This includes a 6.6 km stretch through the Anshi-Bandipur Tiger Reserve, one of the most sensitive wildlife habitats in the Western Ghats.

The project requires diversion of 27,000 hectares of forest land spread across Tharwad, Belagavi, and Uttara Kannada districts, and felling of over 62,000 trees as per the government's own admission.

In March 2024, Mr. Khadure had cautioned of fideals against placing such projects on the table for approval. But more recently, the Forest Department made U-turn on the original decision, and has asked the project proponents to modify the proposal with realignment of the line and other mitigatory measures.

Habitat-Antelope line

The state government's ambivalence on the Hubli-Belagavi railway line and failure to take a firm decision against it to also conflict with larger, at large, tracks of prime forests in the Western Ghats will be impacted with cascading negative impact on the environment.

These, and many such projects, would not only intensify human-wildlife conflict but also increase conflict levels, undermining ecological stability of critical forest areas.

According to government statistics, Karnataka had 48 human lives due to elephant attacks in 2023. In 2022, there were 27 human deaths, and between 2019-2023, 161 people died due to elephant attacks. Between 2020 and 2024, 12 people died in tiger attacks.

Forest Department's e-Pathshala database indicates that 25,380 conflicts in which cattle were raised, were reported during 2023-24 and 22,610 cases granted by way of grants. Of the 35,380 conflict incidents, 22,610 cases pertained to the elephant attacks alone, followed by 6,226 cases related to wild boar, 3,738 cases related to leopard attacks, and 554 cases pertaining to tiger attacks.

Such conflict incidents are a fallout of agricultural infrastructure projects in ecologically sensitive areas, coupled with encroachment and shrinking forest cover and escalating human-animal conflict in villages abutting forest boundaries. And it is the local and the marginalised communities that bear the brunt of such policy contradictions, which are inimical to environmental conservation.

Encroachment cases

Adding to the conflict and habitat disruption is the forest encroachments. There is a backlog of such cases building up across Karnataka. The Forest Department's annual report for 2024-25 indicates that there were 44,812 encroachment cases pending across Karnataka as on March 31, 2024. This includes 109 fresh cases added during 2023-25, raising concerns over dwindling forest cover and habitat fragmentation.

Bengaluru division alone has 4,849 forest encroachment cases in the areas covered by Bengaluru Urban, Bengaluru Rural, Bengaluru South, Kolar, Chikballapur districts and the Banaraghatta National Park. But the number of encroachments cleared across Karnataka was 243 cases during the year.

Karnataka tiger conflicts have increased in recent years, forcing the authorities to brace the animals in conflict situations and shift them to rescue centres, as a measure.

High conflict numbers in Bengaluru Circle

Given the extent of encroachment, the conflict numbers are also high in the Bengaluru Circle. As many as 3,447 crop damage cases were registered during 2023-25, apart from 1,623 cases of cattle kill, while across the state, 4,560 cattle kill cases were registered due to wild animal attack.

The forest cover in Karnataka spans an area of 40,076.23 sq. km, which is 30.2% of the geographical area of 1,31,794 sq. km. As per the annual report of Forest Department of Karnataka, the percentage of forest area to geographical area was 22.6% in 2018-19.

Forest land earmarked for infrastructure purposes over the years is chipping away the existing green cover.

Up to March 31, 2024, as many as 807 projects were cleared entailing transfer of 24,422.65 hectares, or 80,046.5 acres, of forest land for non-forest purposes. This included 73 irrigation projects, 188 mining and allied projects, 40 road works, 19 urban projects, and 126 transmission line projects, among others.

During 2024-25, an additional 143 projects were cleared and 277,013 hectares, or nearly 681.5 acres, of forest land, was diverted for non-forest purposes. This included three for mining and allied category, and two for transmission lines.

Conservation in the Indian context is also about balancing community needs with forest protection, which calls for local support and an engagement.

But with increasing human deaths and crop depredation, the local community support for conservation is waning, which hinders efforts for wildlife protection.

Even as the government's rhetoric of sustainability and conservation has grown in recent years, so has the ecological imbalance and stress on the ground as evident in the official statistics.

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Issue Overview

- Core Concern:** Government-approved infrastructure projects in ecologically sensitive areas compromise forest integrity, biodiversity, and wildlife habitats.
- Human-Wildlife Conflict:** Rising cases of elephant, tiger, leopard, and wild boar attacks are direct outcomes of habitat loss and encroachment.
- Policy Contradictions:** While official statements stress sustainability, project approvals and delayed forest protection measures exacerbate environmental degradation.

Key Observations

- Infrastructure Impacts:** Projects such as Sharavathi and Varahi pumped-storage schemes, mini-hydel projects in Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary, and Hubballi–Ankola railway line threaten ecologically sensitive zones.
- Biodiversity Risks:** Forest diversions endanger species like the lion-tailed macaque and tigers, disrupting prey-predator dynamics and migration routes.
- Conflict Statistics:** 35,580 human-wildlife conflict incidents reported in 2024–25; 22,483 cases involve elephants. Human fatalities due to wildlife and crop losses are increasing.
- Encroachment Issues:** Over 44,812 forest encroachment cases pending across Karnataka, further reducing forest cover and intensifying conflicts.
- Policy Inconsistencies:** Approvals often bypass ecological considerations, while mitigation measures are cosmetic and insufficient.

Static and Current Linkages

Static Topic	Current Relevance
Environmental Conservation	Western Ghats and Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary face ecological threats from infrastructure projects.
Biodiversity Protection	Endangered species like tigers and lion-tailed macaques are at risk due to habitat fragmentation.
Human-Wildlife Conflict	Rising incidents of attacks on humans and livestock highlight ecological imbalance.
Governance & Policy	Gap between sustainability rhetoric and project approvals erodes environmental credibility.
Community Engagement	Local communities face livelihood losses, reducing support for conservation initiatives.

Analytical Perspective

- Ecological Implications:** Habitat fragmentation, deforestation, and river ecosystem disruption threaten long-term biodiversity and ecological stability.
- Socio-Economic Implications:** Crop raids, livestock deaths, and human fatalities undermine community livelihoods and human well-being.
- Governance Implications:** Policy inconsistency and delayed enforcement of forest protection measures weaken institutional credibility and rule of law.
- Strategic Conservation Lens:** Sustainable development requires balancing infrastructure needs with environmental integrity and local community participation.

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Solutions and Policy Significance

- **Strict Environmental Assessment:** Implement rigorous ecological impact assessments before approving infrastructure projects.
- **Habitat Restoration:** Time-bound restoration of degraded or encroached forest lands, especially elephant and tiger corridors.
- **Community-Centric Conservation:** Engage local communities in forest protection, compensatory measures, and conflict mitigation.
- **Sustainable Development Planning:** Integrate renewable energy, transmission, and transport projects with minimal ecological disruption.
- **Policy Coherence:** Align state-level project approvals with environmental laws, NBWL recommendations, and ecological priorities.

Strategic & Societal Implications

Aspect	Implication
Wildlife Conservation	Protecting endangered species maintains ecological balance and biodiversity.
Human Safety & Livelihood	Reducing conflicts ensures community well-being and sustainable livelihoods.
Governance Credibility	Transparent, consistent policies strengthen public trust and enforcement of environmental laws.
Sustainable Development	Environmentally sensitive infrastructure planning supports long-term socio-economic growth.
Ecological Resilience	Maintaining forest cover and connectivity safeguards ecosystem services and climate resilience.

Challenges Ahead

- Overriding political or economic priorities over ecological concerns.
- Large-scale habitat fragmentation from cumulative impact of multiple projects.
- Escalating human-wildlife conflict threatening lives and local support for conservation.
- Backlog of forest encroachment cases and inadequate enforcement.
- Balancing development demands with stringent ecological protection and legal compliance.

Conclusion

Karnataka's environmental scenario illustrates a critical disconnect between policy rhetoric and practical action. Infrastructure projects, coupled with encroachments and habitat loss, are increasing human-wildlife conflict and threatening biodiversity. Effective conservation requires integrated planning, rigorous ecological safeguards, community engagement, and consistent policy implementation. Without reconciling development with environmental integrity, sustainability goals remain aspirational, while both wildlife and human communities bear the adverse consequences.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Ques : Which of the following statements about the HAL Tejas Mk1A production line in Nashik is/are correct?

1. It is the first production line of Tejas Mk1A in India.
2. Nashik line has an initial capacity of 8 aircraft per year, contributing to a total projected 24 aircraft per year.
3. The project has created over 1,000 jobs and involved more than 40 industry partners.

Select the correct answer:

- A) 1 only
- B) 2 and 3 only
- C) 1 and 3 only
- D) 1, 2, and 3

Ans: b)

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques: Examine the challenges of balancing infrastructure development with biodiversity conservation in Karnataka, with reference to tiger and elephant habitats. **(150 Words)**

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In News : GS 2 : International Relations / Prelims

The 19th Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Mid-Term Ministerial Meeting held in Kampala, Uganda, reflects the continued relevance of NAM in the contemporary multipolar world. Established during the Cold War to uphold sovereignty, independence, and neutrality, NAM has evolved into a platform for South-South cooperation, digital equity, and sustainable development. India, as a founding member, continues to advocate for reinvigorating NAM to address 21st-century global challenges while maintaining strategic autonomy.

Issue Overview

- **Core Concern:** In a world dominated by major power blocs, smaller and developing countries need a platform to assert their sovereignty, promote cooperation, and influence global governance.
- **Strategic Objective:** Utilize NAM as a forum to advance balanced autonomy, equitable development, and collective action on climate, technology, and trade.
- **India's Role:** Strengthening NAM's relevance for multipolarity, promoting South-South cooperation, and advocating global partnership without antagonizing major powers.



Aim, Think & Achieve

Key Observations

- **Historical Context:** NAM founded in 1961 in Belgrade, rooted in the 1955 Bandung Principles, led by Nehru, Nasser, Tito, Sukarno, and Nkrumah.
- **Membership & Influence:** 120 countries (53 Africa, 39 Asia, 26 Latin America & Caribbean, 2 Europe), 17 observers, 10 observer organisations; represents ~60% of UN membership.
- **Structure & Functioning:** Operates without permanent secretariat, charter, or budget; decisions based on consensus and rotational leadership.
- **Contemporary Focus:** Digital equity, global governance reform, climate resilience, South-South cooperation, and sustainable development.

Static and Current Linkages

Static Topic	Current Relevance
Sovereignty & Non-Alignment	Upholds principles of strategic autonomy and independence in a multipolar world.
Global Governance	NAM provides a collective voice for reforming international institutions and promoting fairness.
South-South Cooperation	Encourages collaboration on technology, trade, and climate resilience among developing nations.

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Static Topic	Current Relevance
International Diplomacy	India leverages NAM to maintain balanced engagement with major powers while promoting multilateralism.
Sustainable Development	NAM addresses 21st-century global challenges including climate action, digital divide, and equitable growth.

Analytical Perspective

- **Strategic Implications:** NAM serves as a platform for developing nations to assert autonomy, collaborate on common challenges, and influence global norms.
- **India's Role:** Balances engagement with major powers while leading initiatives on South-South cooperation and global governance reforms.
- **Policy Implications:** NAM's evolution from a Cold War bloc to a modern forum reflects adaptability, relevance, and opportunity for shaping multipolar global order.
- **Global Impact:** Collective action through NAM can enhance digital equity, climate resilience, and fair trade practices, benefiting both member nations and the broader global community.

Solutions and Policy Significance

- **Revitalizing NAM:** Promote its role as a relevant, proactive forum in the 21st century.
- **South-South Collaboration:** Strengthen technology sharing, trade partnerships, and climate action initiatives.
- **Digital Equity & Sustainable Development:** Address the global digital divide and climate vulnerabilities of developing countries.
- **Multilateral Advocacy:** Leverage NAM's collective voice to influence reforms in UN and other global governance institutions.

Strategic & Societal Implications

Aspect	Implication
Global Governance	NAM reinforces the voice of developing nations in international decision-making.
Regional Cooperation	Promotes South-South partnerships and knowledge sharing in technology and trade.
Strategic Autonomy	Provides a platform for non-alignment and balanced foreign policy engagement.
Sustainable Development	Supports collaborative efforts in climate resilience, health, and equitable growth.
Multipolar World Order	Strengthens collective agency of member nations, reducing dominance of single powers.

Challenges Ahead

- Maintaining unity among diverse member nations with varying priorities.
- Ensuring NAM's relevance in the 21st-century geopolitical and economic context.
- Balancing non-alignment with practical engagement in global power politics.
- Effectively addressing digital divide, climate change, and technological gaps among members.

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forums.

- Translating consensus into tangible actions in multilateral

Conclusion

The 19th NAM Mid-Term Ministerial Meeting underscores the enduring significance of strategic non-alignment in a multipolar world. By promoting South-South cooperation, digital equity, sustainable development, and global governance reforms, NAM remains a platform for developing countries to exercise collective agency. India's proactive role ensures that NAM evolves into a relevant forum for addressing contemporary challenges while preserving the principles of autonomy, neutrality, and multilateral partnership.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Ques: Which of the following countries were among the founding members of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)?

- 1) India
- 2) Egypt
- 3) Yugoslavia
- 4) Indonesia
- 5) Ghana

Options:

- a) 1, 2, 3, 4
- b) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
- c) 1, 2, 4, 5
- d) 1, 3, 4

Ans : b)

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques: Critically analyze how NAM can be revitalized to address contemporary global challenges such as digital divide, climate change, and equitable development. Assess India's potential leadership role in this process. **(150 Words)**

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Page : 06 Editorial Analysis

The next steps for Afghanistan after the New Delhi visit

The visit of Afghanistan's Acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi and its attendant excitement in mainstream and social media are now over. But this is only the beginning. What must follow is a step-by-step engagement, with the single objective of stabilising a devastated country, and, in the process, ensuring that New Delhi projects its credentials as a humanitarian force to reckon with. In these days of rampant war and war mongering, that counts. In addition, there are issues of strong security interests, that in fact, need not be a zero sum game with Pakistan. In fact, it might just deliver a certain stability to Pakistan as well, provided that it is ready to accept it.

Terror and the realities on the ground

The joint statement between the two sides, which angered Islamabad, only reiterated the Taliban's immediate condemnation of the Pahalgam attack (April 2025), and, similarly, reiterated promises by Kabul to never allow its territory to be used against India. That promise has been made often to the international community. This has been acknowledged by the United Nations Security Council Sanctions Monitoring Committee Report which commends the Taliban's actions against the Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K), even while it questions Kabul's actual capability in countering it – given the reclusive Mullah Haibatullah's penchant for running a parallel regime from Kandahar.

The report also notes that while the leader of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) leader, Noor Wali Mehsud, received funds from the Taliban, Kabul was hesitant to act against it, out of fears of allying itself with the IS-K.

In short, Pakistan's demands that it act against the TTP are not naive but deliberate propaganda. Rawalpindi knows its Afghanistan. While the Taliban are no saints, they are also not the crafty



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India must ensure a step-by-step engagement with Afghanistan, also ensuring that it projects its credentials as a humanitarian force to reckon with

terrorist sponsors Rawalpindi would have everyone believe. However, getting rid of that narrative requires actions on the ground, which is where India could come in. One line of activity is to ensure that the Taliban's mostly successful drug eradication programme is knit into crop substitution programmes and that there is an end-to-end process which ensures farmers security and exports. This is urgent as reliable reports indicate an uptick in cultivation, even as meth labs sprout across the country. Given the huge drug seizures along India's borders, a comprehensive training programme by the Narcotics Control Bureau would be highly desirable. The brute force being used now to counter narcotics actions is hardly helpful to the Taliban.

For Kabul to 'normalise', it needs the absolute basics of any city. A recent report notes that Kabul may be the first city in the world to completely run dry by 2030. Years of war have taken their toll on projects. India's reiteration of an earlier offer to build the Shahtoot dam on the Kabul river will cause alarm in Pakistan, given a reported drop of 16% in flows. The Kabul river is a part of the Indus river system, and logically should be made part of a new treaty so that all differences are ironed out. In other words, there should be a deal that benefits all, which Islamabad will find difficult to refuse. A water-starved country is hardly the most desirable neighbour.

Education for all

The issue of women's education is paramount. The few Taliban leaders who did support it such as Abdul Baqi Haqqani who were in favour of women's education were quickly replaced by hardliners such as Mawlawi Habibullah Agha.

Changing this cruel practice is vital in not just reframing the Taliban but also India's outreach. As of now, India has announced 1,000

e-scholarships for students through the Indian Council of Cultural Relations which is nowhere enough. The online option needs to be extended to all major colleges, giving them a special dispensation in terms of foreign exchange regulations.

This may also be focused on areas where India is planning to make investments. For instance, in the joint statement, mining is a key area of interest. Therefore, skills need to be developed in the country, so that a minimal Indian presence is necessary, and which creates employment in the country.

The goal of a stable country

Finally, though it is standard practice now to talk of a 'whole of government' approach, this rarely happens in practice. While the National Security Council Secretariat is meant to do this, it needs to be strengthened so that all arms of the government, including finance, water and power, are all working towards a specific objective – to ensure that Afghanistan stays friendly and stable.

This objective needs to remain constant across governments so that the fundamental principle of 'selection and maintenance of aim' is achieved with the objective of ensuring that India's relevance remains permanent and is not part of shifting policies. But there is a key problem. The Pakistan army has no stake at all in ensuring the stabilisation of Afghanistan given its continuing desire to dominate the Taliban. Ordinary Pakistanis do, and most of them are Pashtuns with business and family ties across the border.

Potential revenues from Afghanistan trade and transit is estimated at \$10 billion. None of this will matter as long as Pakistan remains a security state. If a country that is repeatedly labelled as the cradle of terrorism needs to be changed, the so-called international community has to work on systemic change in Pakistan. Democracy is not just a nice aspiration. It works, almost every time.

GS. Paper 2– International Relations

UPSC Mains Practice Question: Analyse India's post-New Delhi engagement with Afghanistan and its implications for regional stability and India's strategic interests. **(150 Words)**

Context :

The recent visit of Afghanistan's Acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi to New Delhi underscores India's proactive engagement with Afghanistan to stabilise the war-torn country. Beyond symbolic diplomacy, India aims to establish itself as a

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Daily News Analysis

credible humanitarian partner while safeguarding strategic interests, countering cross-border terrorism, and promoting socio-economic development.

Issue Overview

- Core Concern:** Afghanistan faces political instability, security threats from IS-K and TTP, water scarcity, and socio-economic fragility.
- India’s Strategic Objective:** Ensure regional stability, promote humanitarian aid, and prevent Afghan territory from being used against India.
- Diplomatic Balancing:** Engagement must also navigate Pakistan’s sensitivities while ensuring Afghanistan’s autonomy and development.

Key Observations

- Security & Terrorism:** Taliban condemned Pahalgam attack; Kabul pledges non-use of territory for attacks on India. UN Security Council acknowledges Taliban’s action against IS-K but notes operational limitations.
- Drug Eradication:** India can support crop substitution and narcotics control programmes to curb meth cultivation and cross-border drug trafficking.
- Water & Infrastructure:** Shahtoot Dam project on Kabul river addresses urgent water scarcity; potential negotiations needed with Pakistan regarding Indus water rights.
- Education & Skill Development:** Women’s education and e-scholarships need expansion; aligning education with investments (e.g., mining) can generate employment and capacity building.
- Whole-of-Government Approach:** Coordinated action across finance, infrastructure, and foreign policy is essential to ensure long-term stability and India’s relevance.

Static and Current Linkages

Static Topic	Current Relevance
Regional Security	Afghanistan’s stability is key to India’s national security and counterterrorism strategy.
Diplomacy & Humanitarian Engagement	India projects itself as a responsible and stabilising partner in South Asia.
Development & Infrastructure	Water projects, education, and skill-building foster long-term stability.
Cross-Border Relations	Managing Pakistan’s influence on Taliban and fostering bilateral cooperation indirectly.
Economic Interests	Trade and transit potential (\$10 billion) depends on stable Afghan governance and security.

Analytical Perspective

- Strategic Implications:** Afghanistan’s stabilisation strengthens India’s regional security, counters terrorism, and limits external influence from hostile actors.
- Diplomatic Implications:** Step-by-step engagement with the Taliban and coordination with international community enhances India’s image as a humanitarian and strategic partner.

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- **Economic Implications:** Infrastructure, skill development, and trade linkages can create sustainable economic growth and reduce instability.
- **Policy Lens:** Long-term, consistent policy across governments is essential; "whole-of-government" coordination ensures effectiveness in security, diplomacy, and development initiatives.

Solutions and Policy Significance

- **Security Collaboration:** Support Afghan anti-terror initiatives and capacity building without directly confronting local sensitivities.
- **Development Programmes:** Expand drug eradication-linked crop substitution, infrastructure projects, and vocational training aligned with Indian investments.
- **Education Initiatives:** Scale e-scholarships and promote women's education to empower Afghan youth.
- **Diplomatic Strategy:** Maintain consistent, long-term engagement, balancing relations with Pakistan while ensuring Afghan sovereignty.

Strategic & Societal Implications

Aspect	Implication
Regional Stability	Stabilising Afghanistan contributes to broader South Asian peace and reduces cross-border terrorism.
Humanitarian Outreach	India strengthens soft power and global image through aid and development initiatives.
Economic Development	Infrastructure, skill-building, and trade opportunities support long-term economic growth.
Diplomatic Influence	Step-by-step engagement positions India as a credible partner and mediator in regional affairs.
Counterterrorism	Reduces the likelihood of Afghan territory being used for attacks against India.

Challenges Ahead

- Taliban's internal power dynamics may limit implementation of agreed commitments.
- Pakistan's strategic influence over Taliban can undermine India's initiatives.
- Resource constraints and administrative capacity may hamper education, infrastructure, and narcotics programmes.
- Ensuring continuity of policy across successive Indian governments.
- Balancing humanitarian engagement with hard security concerns in a volatile region.

Conclusion

India's engagement with Afghanistan post-New Delhi visit represents a strategic blend of humanitarian assistance, security cooperation, and diplomatic influence. Stabilising Afghanistan requires coordinated action across governance, development, and education sectors while navigating regional sensitivities, particularly with Pakistan. Long-term, consistent engagement will enhance India's credibility, promote regional stability, and generate economic and security benefits, contributing to a safer and more resilient South Asia.