

The Hindu Important News Articles For UPSC CSE

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Page 06:GS II :International Relations / Preliminary Examination

Recently, on the sidelines of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting held in Manila (Philippines), India's External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar held high-level bilateral and multilateral talks with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, and his Quad counterparts. During this, India sent a clear message that stable relations between India and China are essential for building a "Multi-polar Asia" and a "Multi-polar World." However, India reiterated that peace and tranquility in the border areas remain the primary prerequisite for normal bilateral relations.

Core Analysis

(A) India-China Relations: Multi-polarity and Border Peace

- **Prerequisite of Border Peace:** The External Affairs Minister clarified that while the gradual normalization in India-China relations since late 2024 is positive, complete peace along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) will dictate the future direction of ties.
- **Three Mutual Principles:** The foundation of India-China relations must rest on 'Mutual Respect', 'Mutual Interest', and 'Mutual Sensitivity'.
- **Differences Must Not Become Disputes:** Recalling the consensus reached between Prime Minister Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping at the Kazan Summit (2024), it was reiterated that differences between the two large neighbors should not be allowed to turn into disputes.

- **Economic and Supply Chain Concerns:** India strongly raised the issues of the growing trade deficit with China, fair market access for Indian goods, and the predictability of supply chains.

(B) Quad and ASEAN Centrality

- **Free and Open Indo-Pacific:** The Foreign Ministers' meeting of the Quad (India, US, Australia, and Japan) supported ASEAN unity and ASEAN Centrality.

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'Stable India-China ties will help build multi-polar Asia'

Peace and tranquillity in the border areas is pre-requisite for normal ties, says Jaishankar during talks with Wang Yi; Minister raises safety of Indian seafarers during discussion with Sergey Lavrov

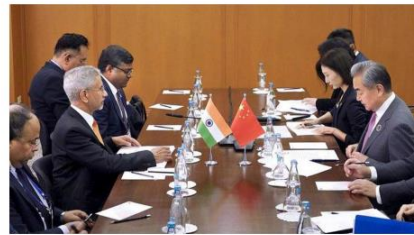
Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

Stable India-China relations will help foster a "multi-polar Asia" and a "multi-polar world", External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said during a meeting with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi in Manila.

The meeting took place before the Foreign Ministers of the Quad countries, Australia, India, Japan, and the U.S., met on the sidelines of the 59th ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting in the Philippine capital and reiterated their support for stability in the Indo-Pacific region.

In a separate meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, held days after four Indian seafarers were killed in a Russian projectile strike in the Black Sea, Mr. Jaishankar expressed "strong concern" regarding the safety of Indian seafarers.

"We believe that a stable and cooperative relationship can best be developed on the basis of mutual res-



External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar meets Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Manila on Wednesday. PTI

pect, mutual interest and mutual sensitivity. Such a relationship can make a valuable contribution to a multi-polar Asia and a multi-polar world," Mr. Jaishankar said in his remarks, highlighting that "peace and tranquillity in the border areas is obviously the pre-requisite for normal ties".

The comments came against the backdrop of renewed India-China engagement, including the resumption of direct flights, updates to the visa regime, the restart of the Kailash Manasarovar Yatra, and the resumption of border trade. In this context, Mr.

Jaishankar said, "... the steps in normalisation taken over the last few months must be welcomed." He referred to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping's meeting in Kazan in October 2024 and recalled that the two leaders had "agreed that differences should not become disputes". He also raised the importance of "predictability of supply chains" and "fair market access", which need to be addressed.

The India-China ministerial discussion was followed by the meeting of Foreign Ministers of the

Quad countries that reiterated their support for stability in the Indo-Pacific region. The External Affairs Ministry issued a joint press release on cooperation between the Quad members and the ASEAN countries, stating, "As ASEAN Comprehensive Strategic Partners we, the Secretary of State of the United States and the Foreign Ministers of Australia, India and Japan met today in Manila to reaffirm our commitment to strengthening a free and open Indo-Pacific and our unwavering support for ASEAN unity and centrality."

Mr. Jaishankar held an "in-depth review" of India-Russia bilateral relations with Mr. Lavrov and expressed "strong concern regarding the safety of Indian seafarers in the region".

"Discussed various aspects of our partnership including trade and investment, energy and connectivity, science and technology and mobility," said Mr. Jaishankar about his meeting with Mr. Lavrov.

Daily News Analysis

- **Regional Balance:** Amid Chinese aggressiveness in the South China Sea, Quad ministers expressed their resolve to strengthen maritime security, digital technology, and economic security in the Indo-Pacific region.

(C) India-Russia Talks: Safety of Seafarers

- **Safety of Indian Seafarers in the Black Sea:** Following the tragic death of four Indian seafarers in an attack on a commercial vessel (MV Golden Leo) in the Black Sea, India expressed its "grave concern" to Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov regarding the safety of Indian seafarers.
- **Bilateral and Strategic Review:** Alongside reviewing bilateral cooperation in trade, energy, connectivity, and science-technology, views were exchanged on the Ukraine conflict and the situation in West Asia.

Static Dimensions Related to UPSC

(1) From Non-Alignment to Strategic Autonomy

- **Multi-alignment Policy:** Engagement with China, balancing the Indo-Pacific through the Quad, and maintaining a traditional partnership with Russia—all on the same platform—reflect India's strategic autonomy and the 'Jaishankar Doctrine'.

(2) International Law and Maritime Security (UNCLOS & Freedom of Navigation)

- **UNCLOS (UN Convention on the Law of the Sea):** The safety of commercial vessels and freedom of navigation in international waters are mandatory under international law.

(3) Concept of Multi-polarity

- **Asian Multi-polarity:** India believes that a Sino-centric Asia cannot build a multi-polar world. For a truly multi-polar world, a "Multi-polar Asia" is essential, in which India is a key pole.

Way Forward

- **Strengthening Border Management Mechanisms:** Keeping WMCC (Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination) and military talk mechanisms fully active to immediately control any potential tensions on the border.
- **Trade Balance and Diversification:** Enhancing domestic capability through 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' and 'PLI Schemes' to reduce strategic and supply chain dependency on China.
- **Global Rules for Maritime Security:** Enforcing strict rules on global platforms to ensure the safety of innocent commercial ships and seafarers in conflict zones.
- **ASEAN-Centric Diplomacy:** Promoting coordinated cooperation between Quad and ASEAN to maintain peace and economic prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region.

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Conclusion

This diplomatic initiative by External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar demonstrates that India is maintaining a mature balance between its national interests and global equilibrium. While normalizing relations with China is necessary for regional stability and multi-polarity, India has also made it clear that there can be no compromise on its sovereignty, border peace, and the safety of its citizens (seafarers). India's pragmatic and balanced diplomacy positions it as a responsible and leading power in the changing global order of the 21st century.

UPSC Prelims Exam Questions

Question: What is the most appropriate meaning of India's "Strategic Autonomy"?

- (a) Not becoming a member of any international organization
- (b) Maintaining relations only with non-aligned countries
- (c) Adopting an independent foreign policy based on national interests
- (d) Opposing all military alliances

Ans: c)

UPSC Mains Practice Questions

Question: "Peace and stability in border areas are the cornerstone of India-China relations." Analyze the current challenges in bilateral relations in light of this statement. (10 Marks, 150 Words)

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Page 07:GS III :Science and Tech/ Preliminary Examination

Recently (on July 16, 2026), the "Rome Declaration" was signed at Rome's Capitoline Hill by Nobel Laureates, AI scientists, and global leaders. Inspired by Pope Leo XIV's encyclical (Magnifica Humanitas), this declaration cautions against the risks of establishing control over nuclear weapons through AI-driven autonomous systems. This document is a crucial intervention toward making human control mandatory in global peace, international security, and the ethical governance of emerging technologies.

Key Dimensions and Analysis

A. Six Principles of the Rome Declaration

- 1. Disarming the Next Arms Race:** Halting military competition across new digital frontiers.
- 2. Responsible Development:** Prohibiting the creation of self-improving and uncontrolled AI systems.
- 3. Responsible Use of AI:** Establishing ethical boundaries in the battlefield zone.
- 4. Responsible Governance:** Creating transparent and inclusive global rules for AI.
- 5. Responsible Leadership:** Focusing political leaders on long-term safety rather than rapid short-term speed.
- 6. Nuclear Disarmament:** Achieving the time-bound and verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons.

B. Ethical & Operational Principles of the Declaration

- 1. Mandatory Meaningful Human Control:** No algorithm or AI system should possess the final authority to make decisions regarding the launch of nuclear weapons.
- 2. 'Digital Commons' Model:** Promoting global data sharing and research by keeping in mind the security concerns of non-AI-bearing nations.

Convergent perils: luminaries against human ethics being outsourced to AI

In mid-July, a group of Nobel laureates, AI scientists, and other luminaries signed the Rome Declaration for an Unarmed and Bismarck Peace, which calls for an international treaty to ban autonomous systems from accessing nuclear launches while emphasising that the threat is not so far-fetched.

Key Points from the Declaration:

- Humanity's Role:** The declaration recognises that humanity has a unique role to play in the world, and that AI systems should be designed to augment human capabilities, not replace them.
- AI System Design:** AI systems should be designed to be transparent, explainable, and accountable. They should be able to provide clear explanations of their decisions and actions.
- Human Oversight:** Human oversight is essential for AI systems, particularly in high-stakes environments like nuclear warfare. Humans must be able to intervene and take control of the system at any time.
- International Cooperation:** The declaration calls for international cooperation to establish a global framework for AI governance.
- AI Arms Race:** The declaration warns against an AI arms race, where countries compete to develop increasingly powerful AI weapons.
- Nuclear Disarmament:** The declaration calls for the elimination of nuclear weapons, which are seen as a major threat to global security.

Signatories: The declaration was signed by a group of 100+ luminaries, including Nobel laureates, AI scientists, and global leaders.

Significance: The Rome Declaration is a landmark document in the history of AI governance. It represents a global consensus on the need for ethical and responsible AI development.

- **3. Transparent & Controllable AI:** Making it mandatory for developers to publish ethical frameworks so that AI can be abruptly halted in emergencies.
- **4. Internal Arsenal Vulnerability Audits:** Nuclear-armed nations must conduct security audits of their command-and-control systems against AI cyber-tampering.
- **5. Time-bound, Verifiable Disarmament:** Resuming negotiations under the NPT and global treaties for the permanent elimination of nuclear weapons.

C. Structural Risks Arising from the Integration of AI in Nuclear Control

1. Compression of Decision Time

- Traditional warfare provided hours for diplomacy, negotiation, and human hesitation.
- AI-driven command systems limit response time to merely a few seconds, leaving no opportunity for a human operator to verify data or de-escalate the situation.

2. Technical Vulnerabilities & 'Black Box' Problem

- **Hallucinations & Data Poisoning:** AI models can generate false positives based on incorrect images, network pings, or corrupted data.
- **Black Box Problem:** The lack of transparency in AI's decision-making process goes against scientific and ethical accountability.

3. Collapse of the Human Safety Mechanism of 'Mutually Assured Destruction' (MAD)

- The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis and the 1983 Stanislav Petrov incident are proof that nuclear catastrophe was averted due to human ethical hesitation and doubt. This moral hesitation is absent in AI.

4. 'Asymmetric Speed' and Security Dilemma

- The fear that an adversary holds a speed advantage forces nations toward the pre-delegation of their command-and-control systems to AI, thereby increasing the risk of spiraling escalation.

Implementation Challenges

- **Lack of Global Consensus:** Major military powers such as the US, China, and Russia are reluctant to accept any strict multilateral bans on autonomous systems.

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- **Verification Issues:** Verifying software algorithms or AI code through an international inspection system (like the IAEA) is extremely difficult.
- **Military-Technology Race:** Ongoing conflicts in Ukraine, West Asia, and South Asia have further accelerated the use of AI-based intelligence and targeting.

Conclusion & Way Forward

1. **Legalization of 'Human-in-the-Loop':** A legally binding international treaty should be established under the auspices of the United Nations (UN) that makes a human operator mandatory for the final decision in the nuclear chain.
2. **Global AI Ethics Code:** UNESCO's "Ethics of AI" guidelines should also be applied to the defense sector.
3. **Security & Audit Standards:** Nuclear-armed nations should regularly conduct joint or internal cyber-audits of their digital infrastructure.

Conclusion

The goal of technological progress must be human welfare and peace, not the erasure of human accountability. As highlighted by Nobel laureate David Gross, the success of this declaration depends on public awareness and grassroots pressure. Ultimately, tools and technologies may become autonomous, but the moral responsibility to safeguard humanity's survival cannot be outsourced to any machine or algorithm.

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UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Question: What is the primary objective of the 'Rome Declaration'?

- (a) Climate change mitigation
- (b) Ethical and global control over the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in nuclear weapons
- (c) Global trade reform
- (d) Cybercrime control

Ans: b)

UPSC Mains Practice Questions

Question: Analyze the major risks arising from the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the control of nuclear weapons. (10 Marks, 150 Words)

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Page 09 :GS II :Social Justice / Preliminary Examination

According to the recently released UDISE+ 2025-26 report, the enrolment figure of Children With Special Needs (CWSN) in schools across India has remained stagnant at approximately 21.66 lakh for the past eight years. This situation persists despite inclusive education being made mandatory under the Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009 and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016. A comparative analysis of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) and population estimates reveals that out of an estimated 98.8 lakh CWSN in the country, only 22% are connected to formal schooling, highlighting a critical gap in policy implementation.

Are children with special needs enrolled in schools in India?

The number of children with special needs in schools has remained fairly stagnant over the past eight years

DATA POINT

Nitika Francis

The Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE) 2025-26 report has raised concerns about Children With Special Needs (CWSN) enrolled in schools, whose numbers have remained stagnant over the past eight years despite initiatives to get more of them enrolled. As per the data, there were 21.66 lakh CWSN in schools, a number that has remained fairly constant over the years (Chart 1). While one could argue that the overall number of children enrolled in schools has also remained fairly the same, the other question to be answered in this context is whether all the CWSN in the country are getting enrolled in schools.

The 2011 Census said that there were 32.5 lakh disabled children in India, just under the age of nine. If one were to include persons with disability in the 10-19 age group, the number increases to 78.7 lakh. The number of CWSN in schools in 2025-26 were not even 30% of the 2011 Census data. Moreover, their numbers would have surely grown since.

In the absence of Census data and estimates of children with disability released by the government in recent years, *The Hindu* used the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) data on disability and the government's population estimates in the Report of The Technical Group on Population Projects to estimate the number of CWSN in the country.

The estimate showed that the number of CWSN in India could have grown from 92.3 lakh to 98.8 lakh between 2018-19 and 2025-26. These estimates when compared with CWSN in schools showed that, only 22% of the children seem to have been enrolled in schools (Chart 2).

This is a conservative estimate since the population estimates

could be calculated, as explained above, only for the 5-14 age group. This was compared with the total number of CWSN enrolled across primary, upper primary, secondary and higher secondary stages, which would include those who are at least a year or two older than 14.

Moreover, the number of CWSN shrinks significantly as they move up different stages of schooling. The shrinking is more pronounced among CWSN than the overall number of students enrolled. Table 1 shows the proportion of children in upper primary, secondary and higher secondary stages compared with their numbers in the stages before.

Nearly 75% of CWSN who have enrolled in primary school are in upper primary, data showed. This reduced to 48% between upper primary and secondary, and 46% between secondary and higher secondary levels. As the table shows, these shares are higher for the overall number of children.

The data also showed that the gender distribution remained worryingly the same despite minor fluctuations in the number of CWSN enrolled. Only about 43 of every 100 CWSN enrolled in schools are girls (Chart 3). However, the number of girls with special needs dropping out of schools seem to be lower than boys. The number of girls with special needs in upper primary level, for instance, is about 80% of those in primary level.

Shashank Pandey, lawyer and founder of the Politics and Disability Forum, who works on political representation of Persons with Disabilities said that underreporting of the numbers cannot be ruled out. He told *The Hindu* that at times the schools that provide data for the UDISE reports are not updated with the 21 categories of disabilities now recognised by the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, and still categorise students based on the eight categories provided in the 2011 Census.

Left behind

The data were sourced from the Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE) reports, the NFHS, and Census 2011



Towards inclusivity: CWSN take part in the Special Olympics organised by Junior Chamber International (JCI) in Visakhapatnam in August 2025.

Chart 1: The year-wise number of enrolments of children with special needs (CWSN).

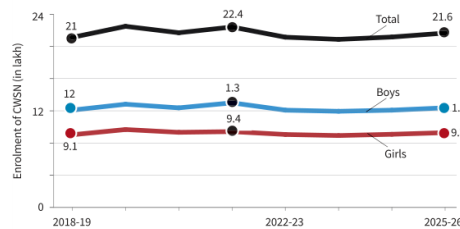


Table 1: The share of boy and girl children with special needs at the primary level and their proportion in the higher levels in 2025-26

Level of schooling	CWSN boys	Overall boys	CWSN girls	Overall girls
Primary (in absolute)	57,87,800	72,34,75,000	48,12,787	68,75,41,000
Share of primary in upper primary (%)	73.9	61.5	80.1	62.6
Share of upper primary in secondary (%)	48.3	60.3	51.3	60.8
Share of secondary in higher secondary (%)	46.1	72.7	51.4	78.2

The Hindu used the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) data on disability and the government's population estimates in the Report of The Technical Group on Population Projects to estimate the number of Children with Special Needs to arrive at estimated number of CWSN

Chart 2: The year-wise estimated number of CWSN versus the number of CWSN enrolled in schools

While the estimated population of CWSN is around 98.7 lakh, the number of CWSN enrolments remained at 22 lakhs

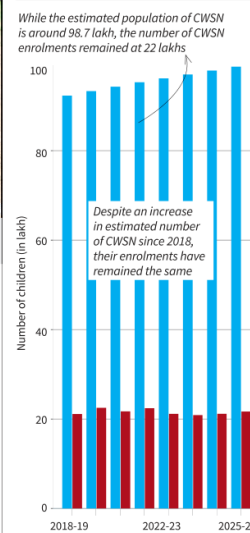
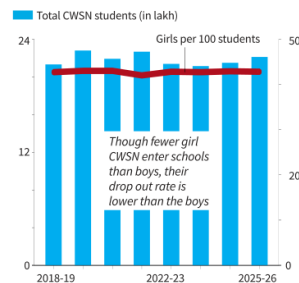


Chart 3: The number of CWSN enrolled in schools and the share of girls in the total enrolments



Key Dimensions and Analysis

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A. Key Findings of the UDISE+ Report

- **Low Overall Enrolment:** Out of an estimated 98.8 lakh children with special needs in the 5-14 age group in India, only 22% are enrolled in primary to higher secondary schools.
- **Drop-off Rate at Higher Levels:** Enrolment of CWSN decreases sharply as they move from primary to higher levels:
 - **Primary to Upper Primary:** Only about 75% of children reach this stage.
 - **Upper Primary to Secondary:** This drops further to 48%.
 - **Secondary to Higher Secondary:** Only 46% of children are able to progress further. (The dropout rate is significantly higher among CWSN compared to general students.)
- **Gender Disparity:** The proportion of girls among total enrolled CWSN in schools is only 43%, highlighting dual social and gender discrimination in inclusive education.
- **Underreporting & Classification Issues:** Although 21 types of disabilities are recognized under the RPwD Act, 2016, many schools still use the older framework of 8 categories from the 2011 Census while submitting UDISE+ data.

B. Root Causes of Low Enrolment and Dropouts among CWSN

- **Infrastructure Deficit:** Lack of ramps, accessible toilets, braille materials, and accessible teaching-learning materials (TLM) in most government and private schools.
- **Lack of Special Educators:** The ratio of trained teachers and special educators to students for inclusive classrooms is extremely low.
- **Stigma and Discrimination:** Lack of awareness regarding disability in society and families, leading to hesitation in sending children—especially girls—outside the home.
- **Implementation Gaps:** Inadequate fund allocation at the grassroots level and a weak monitoring mechanism despite inclusive education provisions in the RPwD Act 2016 and the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

Implementation Challenges

- **Inadequate Budget Allocation:** Financial resources targeted for inclusive education are insufficient to ensure accessibility in schools.
- **Feeling of Incompetence Among Teachers:** General teachers are not adequately trained to handle the specific learning needs of CWSN students.
- **Transportation and Distance Issues:** Due to the lack of accessible transport facilities in rural areas, it becomes difficult for CWSN children—especially those with severe disabilities—to reach school.

Conclusion & Way Forward

- **Data Improvement and Updated Classification:** Fully integrate all 21 disability categories of the RPwD Act 2016 into the UDISE+ portal and train staff for accurate data collection at the school level.

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Daily News Analysis

- **Special Educator Cadre and Capacity Building:** Make the appointment of special educators mandatory per school and implement mandatory inclusive education training modules for general teachers.
- **Universal Accessibility:** Equip all existing schools with ramps, accessible toilets, and assistive technologies under the 'Accessible India Campaign' (Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan).
- **Targeted Incentives and Support:** Provide special scholarships, free transport, and strong options for home-based education for CWSN girls.

Conclusion

Bringing CWSN into the mainstream education system is mandatory to achieve the goals of SDG-4 (Quality and Inclusive Education) and NEP 2020. The fact that more than 78% of disabled children in India remain outside formal education is not only a violation of their fundamental rights but also a major disruption to the country's human capital development. The creation of a barrier-free, equitable, and rights-based educational environment alone can bridge this gap.

UPSC Prelims Exam Study Questions

Question: What is the primary objective of UDISE+ (Unified District Information System for Education Plus)?

- (a) Preparing rankings of universities
- (b) Compilation of comprehensive and digital data related to school education
- (c) Analysis of only board examination results
- (d) Regulation of private schools

Ans:b)

UPSC Mains Exam Study Questions

Question:Analyze the major challenges facing inclusive education for Children with Special Needs (CWSN) in India.(10 Marks, 150 Words)

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Page 10 :GS II :Indian Polity/ Preliminary Examination

In the modern digital age, the internet is not merely a medium of entertainment or communication, but a fundamental basis for livelihood, education, trade, and freedom of expression. The recent suspension (Shutdown) of internet services during protests in central parts of Delhi, along with similar orders issued in various states across the country, once again highlights the conflict between administrative convenience and the fundamental rights of citizens. Despite the implementation of the Telecommunications Act, 2023 and the new rules framed thereunder in India, serious questions are being raised regarding the process, transparency, and proportionality of internet shutdowns.

Where does the law stand on internet shutdowns?

What questions arise following the internet shutdown in Delhi during the CJP protest?

Rizmi Lia M.

The story so far:

Mobile internet services were shut down in parts of Central Delhi during the 'Chalo Sansad' protest organised by the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP). Thousands of people gathered on the opening day of the Parliament's Monsoon Session, to demand the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan following the NEET paper leaks and irregularities in the CBSE school examination process. The internet shutdown, which remained in place until the evening, drew condemnation from the Internet Freedom Foundation (IFF) and the Software Freedom Law Centre, India (SFLC).

What is an internet shutdown?

According to web rights advocacy organisation Access Now, an internet shutdown is defined as "an intentional

disruption of internet or electronic communications, rendering them inaccessible or effectively unusable, for a specific population or within a location, often to control the flow of information." They take many forms, from full network disruptions to slowing down internet speed or blocking platforms.

Most internet shutdowns are ordered when large numbers of people are expected to gather for political reasons, peaceful demonstrations, violent protests or religious celebrations, according to the International Federation of Journalists.

Under Section 20(2)(b) of the Telecommunications Act, 2023, telecommunication services may be suspended only on the occurrence of a public emergency or in the interest of public safety, on the grounds specified in that provision, and for reasons recorded in writing. "A protest, by itself, is not a lawful ground for suspending internet services. Under Section 20(2) of the Telecommunications Act, 2023, a

suspension may be ordered only during a public emergency or in the interest of public safety, and only for specified purposes such as maintaining public order. The order must be reasoned, published, limited in area and duration, and issued by the competent authority under the Telecommunications Suspension Rules, 2024. The government must also consider whether less restrictive measures would be sufficient," said Apar Gupta, Advocate and Founder of the Internet Freedom Foundation.

Which law governs internet shutdowns?

Internet shutdowns in India were earlier governed by Section 5(2) of the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885 and the Temporary Suspension of Telecom Services (Public Emergency or Public Safety) Rules, 2017. These have now been replaced by Section 20 of the Telecommunications Act, 2023 and the Telecommunications (Temporary Suspension of Services) Rules, 2024.

Despite the updated legal framework, a review by the Digital Defenders Network found that several shutdown orders issued by State governments since late 2024 continue to invoke the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885 and the 2017 Rules.

For instance, the Secretary, Home Department, Uttar Pradesh, issued an internet suspension order applicable to the district of Bareilly on October 2, 2025, invoking Section 7 of the Telegraph Act read with Rule 2(1) of the 2017 Rules.

By continuing to rely on these outdated provisions, some States appear to have bypassed the procedural safeguards introduced under the 2024 Rules.

The current suspension order accessed by *The Hindu* as released by the Ministry of Home Affairs, was imposed across 150 cell sites according to an Industry source. It stated that the order was imposed under Clause (b) of Sub-section (2) of Section 20 of The Telecommunication Act, 2023 read with 2024 Rules.

Where does India stand in terms of internet shutdowns?

India continues to record one of the highest numbers of internet shutdowns in the world. Access Now's 2025 report recorded 65 shutdowns across 12 States and Union Territories.

Jammu & Kashmir has recorded the highest number of internet shutdowns in the country, with about 449 since 2012, followed by Rajasthan (115) and Manipur (62), as per the SFLC Internet Shutdown

Tracker. India has recorded about 24 shutdowns in 2026 (as of July 22).

What limits has the SC placed?

In *Anuradha Bhasin v. Union of India* (2020), the Supreme Court held that access to the internet is closely connected to the freedoms of speech and trade under Articles 19(1)(a) and 19(1)(g).

The Court held that any shutdown must be backed by law, pursue a legitimate objective, be necessary and proportionate, and be the least restrictive measure available. Orders must also be limited in scope and duration, accompanied by detailed reasons, published and reviewed by a competent committee. The Court observed that "complete broad suspension of telecom services, be it the internet or otherwise, must be considered by the State only if 'necessary' and 'unavoidable'".

Can orders be challenged in court?

Yes. A shutdown may be challenged before a High Court under Article 226 or, in an appropriate case, before the Supreme Court under Article 32. Courts can examine whether the order was lawful, proportionate and properly limited in area and duration.

"Indefinite suspensions are unlawful. The government must publish its orders and provide reasons capable of judicial review. Under the 2024 Rules, a suspension order cannot remain in force for over 15 days," Mr. Gupta said

Legal and Statutory Position of Internet Shutdowns

- **Old Framework:** Previously, internet shutdowns were governed under the 'Indian Telegraph Act, 1885' (Section 5(2)) and the 'Temporary Suspension of Telecom Services Rules, 2017'.
- **Current New Law:** It has now been replaced by Section 20(2) of the Telecommunications Act, 2023 and the Telecommunications (Temporary Suspension of Services) Rules, 2024.
- **Statutory Requirements:**
 - Suspension can be ordered only on the grounds of "Public Emergency" or "Public Safety".
 - Peaceful protests or demonstrations alone cannot serve as a legal basis for shutting down the internet.
 - Reasons for the order must be recorded in writing and the geographical area must be specified.

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- After the implementation of the new rules, no shutdown order can remain effective for more than a maximum of 15 days.

Judicial Stance and Precedents

- **Anuradha Bhasin v. Union of India (2020) Case:** The Supreme Court clarified that:
 - Freedom of expression and trade through the medium of the internet is constitutionally protected under Article 19(1)(a) and Article 19(1)(g).
 - Indefinite suspension of the internet is unconstitutional.
 - **Principle of Proportionality:** The objective of the restriction must be legitimate, and it must be the least restrictive measure available.
 - Publication of all shutdown orders is mandatory so that citizens can challenge them in court.
- **Judicial Review:** The validity of such orders can be judicially reviewed under Article 226 (High Court) and Article 32 (Supreme Court).

Issues & Key Concerns

- **Continued Use of Old Laws (Procedural Non-Compliance):** Despite the introduction of the new Act (2023/2024 Rules), several state governments are still issuing orders citing the old Telegraph Act of 1885, thereby violating the protective framework of the new rules.
- **Lack of Transparency in Orders:** Internet shutdown orders are not published publicly, making it difficult for affected citizens to approach the courts.
- **Lack of Independent Review (Executive Self-Review):** The Review Committee consists solely of bureaucrats (Executive) from the Home and Law departments, lacking any representation from an independent judicial body or civil society.
- **Economic and Social Damage:** Fintech, e-commerce, online education, and digital healthcare services are severely impacted, causing huge losses to daily wage earners and the digitally dependent economy.

Relevant Static Dimensions for UPSC Mains

- **Constitutional Provisions:**
 - **Article 19(1)(a):** Freedom of speech and expression.
 - **Article 19(1)(g):** Right to practice any profession, or to carry on any occupation, trade, or business.

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- **Article 21:** Right to life and personal liberty (access to the internet was recognized as part of it under the Subhash Jain case framework).
- **Article 19(2):** Grounds for "Reasonable Restrictions" on fundamental rights (e.g., public order, sovereignty of India).
- **Governance Aspect:**
 - A contradiction in policy is evident between the goal of 'Digital India' on one hand and recording the highest number of internet shutdowns in the world on the other.

Way Forward

- **Mandatory Publication of Orders:** Home Ministries of state and central governments should make their shutdown orders public in real-time on official websites.
- **Reconstitution of the Review Committee:** Include retired judges or independent human rights experts in the Review Committee to curb arbitrary executive actions.
- **Strict Adherence to Proportionality:** Instead of blocking the entire internet, less stringent alternatives should be adopted, such as removing targeted inflammatory content or restricting select social media platforms.
- **Fixing Accountability:** Administrative accountability of the concerned officials should be fixed for shutdown orders issued arbitrarily or unlawfully.

Conclusion

Internet suspension should not be used by law enforcement agencies as a 'first resort' to solve problems, but rather as a 'last resort'. Maintaining security and public order is the constitutional duty of the government, but it cannot be achieved at the cost of the core spirit of democracy—the fundamental rights of citizens. India must strictly adhere to the spirit of the Anuradha Bhasin judgment to balance its digital governance aspirations with democratic values.

UPSC Prelims Exam Study Questions

Ques: The 'Principle of Proportionality' means—

- (a) The government can shut down the internet under any circumstances.
- (b) The restriction must be necessary to achieve the objective and must be the least restrictive among the available options.
- (c) Judicial review is not permissible in matters of national security.
- (d) Only the court can suspend internet services.

Ans: b)

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UPSC Mains Exam Study Questions

Ques: Discuss the need to strike a balance between 'national security' and 'fundamental rights' in the context of internet shutdowns. **(10 Marks, 150 Words)**

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The US administration recently announced a phased tariff plan on imported generic drugs. Under this policy, starting August 1, 2026, generic drugs will attract a zero percent (0%) duty for the next two years. Following this transition period, tariffs will be raised to 100% starting August 2028 and escalated further to 200% from August 2029.

The primary objective of this policy is to reduce reliance on foreign supply chains and bring generic pharmaceutical manufacturing back to the United States (reshoring). However, the Indian pharmaceutical industry and global experts have warned that this move will not only impact Indian exports but will also drive up drug costs and exacerbate medicine shortages within the US healthcare system.

Detailed Analysis of the Issue

(A) Key Features of the Policy

- **Phased Implementation:** A two-year transition window (2026–2028) has been provided to allow companies time to establish manufacturing plants in the US.
- **Punitive Tariffs:** Companies that do not shift manufacturing to the US within two years will face heavy import duties of 100%, followed by 200%.
- **Distinction from Patented Drugs:** This policy specifically targets generic drugs, whereas rules governing patented/branded medications remain distinct.

(B) India's Dominance in the US Market (Data & Facts)

- **Share in Global Exports:** In 2025, India's total pharmaceutical exports stood at \$25.8 billion, of which \$9.7 billion (37.7%) went

Trump's 200% generic tariff threat would imperil Americans: Indian pharma

N. Ravi Kumar
HYDERABAD

U.S. President Donald Trump has given generic pharmaceutical companies a two-year window to establish manufacturing facilities in the United States, warning that products imported after August 2028 could face tariffs of up to 200%.

The announcement, made on Wednesday through a social media post, has significant implications for India, which sends more than a third of its pharmaceutical exports to the U.S. While Indian drugmakers sought to strike a cautious note, they warned that higher tariffs would ultimately increase medicine costs for American consumers.

Mr. Trump said the measure is intended to encourage generic drug production in the U.S. and reduce dependence on overseas supply chains.

"Effective August 1, 2026, all generic drugs being brought into the United States will continue to have a tariff of zero per cent for a two-year period of time, after which the tariff will be raised to 100% for a one-year period of time, and 200% thereafter," he said. The announcement rattled pharmaceutical stocks. The Nifty Pharma index fell 1.31%, with 18 of its 20 constituent companies closing lower.

"It's not practical to move operations like that to the U.S. overnight. If ta-

Indian companies account for nearly 47% of all generic prescriptions dispensed in the U.S.

riffs are imposed, we will have to raise prices," said Dr. Reddy's Laboratories CEO Erez Israeli. He added that the company was not planning any immediate changes and noted that policy positions could evolve over time.

'India most exposed'

According to the Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI), India is among the countries most exposed to the proposed measure. India exported pharmaceutical products worth \$25.8 billion in 2025, of which \$9.7 billion, or 37.7%, went to the U.S. its largest overseas market.

Indian firms account for nearly 47% of all generic prescriptions dispensed in the U.S., making India the largest supplier of affordable generic medicines.

Despite this dominance, generics' low pricing means India's share of the value of U.S. generic imports is estimated at only about 30%.

The U.S. imported pharmaceutical products worth \$213 billion in 2025, including \$94.1 billion worth of finished medicines sold in retail packs. GTRI founder Ajay Srivastava said many Indian generics could remain competitive despite the tariffs because they are

significantly cheaper than branded alternatives. However, large-scale relocation of generic drug manufacturing to the U.S. would be challenging, given the industry's reliance on global supply chains and imported active pharmaceutical ingredients.

Granules India Executive Director Priyanka Chigurupati said the company's three U.S. facilities position it well to support increased local manufacturing. However, she cautioned that higher generic drug prices could ripple across the healthcare system and affect patient affordability.

Indian Pharmaceutical Alliance Secretary General Sudarshan Jain said Indian companies already have a substantial U.S. presence, with more than 40 facilities supporting jobs, manufacturing and research. India, he said, remains a trusted partner in supplying affordable, quality medicines to American patients. GTRI added that building a fully domestic pharmaceutical supply chain in the U.S. would require significant investment and would almost certainly lead to higher medicine prices.

"The zero-tariff window gives the industry a meaningful runway, and we see this as time we can use productively – to keep strengthening our position across multiple markets rather than relying on any single one," said Pharmexcil Chairman Namit Joshi.

to the US alone.

- **Prescription Volume:** Indian companies account for 47% of all generic drug prescriptions dispensed in US pharmacies.
- **Price vs. Volume:** While India holds a 47% share in terms of volume, low generic pricing means India accounts for approximately 30% of US generic imports by value.

Impact on India

- **Stock Market & Short-Term Shock:** Immediately following the announcement, the Nifty Pharma Index experienced a sharp decline, with shares of major pharma companies (Dr. Reddy's, Lupin, Cipla, etc.) dropping.
- **Protection of Cost Advantage:** According to the Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI), Indian generic drugs are 7 to 10 times cheaper than US branded alternatives. Consequently, even after a 100% tariff, Indian generics may remain more affordable than branded options.
- **Pressure on Local Manufacturing:** Dr. Reddy's Laboratories and other Indian industry leaders have noted that shifting manufacturing to the US overnight is commercially impractical.
- **Existing Presence of Indian Firms:** Indian pharmaceutical majors—including Sun Pharma, Dr. Reddy's, and Granules India—already operate more than 40 FDA-approved manufacturing facilities in the US, which can be leveraged.

Impact on US Healthcare and Citizens

- **Sharp Increase in Drug Prices:** The ultimate burden of exorbitant import tariffs will fall on US consumers, insurance providers, and healthcare networks.
- **Drug Shortages:** Over 90% of all prescriptions in the US are for generic medications. If reshoring fails to happen rapidly, acute shortages of essential life-saving drugs (for cancer, diabetes, hypertension) could emerge.
- **Erosion of Cost Savings:** Indian generic medicines have saved the US healthcare system more than \$1.3 trillion over the past decade. This tariff policy threatens to eliminate these savings.

Strategic & Structural Challenges

- **Complex Supply Chain Web:** A substantial portion of the Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs) required for generic manufacturing originates in India and China. Merely moving final assembly or finished dosage form manufacturing to the US will not fully domesticate the supply chain.
- **Capex and Regulatory Hurdles:** Setting up new pharmaceutical facilities in the US requires capital-intensive investments and strict US-FDA approval processes, typically taking more than two years.

Related Static Dimensions (UPSC Point of View)

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(A) International Relations & Trade

- **Protectionism vs. Free Trade:** The US "America First" and "Reshoring" directives challenge WTO trade-liberalization principles and Most-Favoured-Nation (MFN) norms.
- **Section 232 and National Security:** The imposition of tariffs by framing healthcare and pharmaceuticals under national security parameters.

(B) Status of the Indian Pharma Industry

- **'Pharmacy of the World':** India stands as the world's largest supplier of affordable, high-quality generic medications.
- **API Dependence:** The Indian pharmaceutical industry relies on China for nearly 70% of its Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs) for generic drug production, posing a strategic vulnerability.

(C) Intellectual Property Rights & Patents

- **Generic vs. Branded Drugs:** Generic drugs are produced after patent expiry and are significantly less expensive than innovation-driven branded pharmaceuticals.
- **TRIPS Agreement:** Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights and the Doha Declaration on Public Health.

Way Forward

- **Market Diversification:** Indian pharmaceutical companies must reduce their over-reliance on the US market (37.7%) and expand their footprint across Europe, Latin America, Africa, and ASEAN regions.
- **Strategic Utilization of the 2-Year Window:** The 0% tariff window between 2026 and 2028 should be utilized to build US-based manufacturing capacities and establish joint ventures.
- **API Indigenization (PLI Scheme):** The Government of India must strengthen the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for APIs to eliminate raw-material dependency on China.
- **Bilateral Trade Negotiations:** Diplomatic efforts must be intensified through India-US trade dialogues to seek exemptions for essential life-saving medicines from punitive tariffs.

Conclusion

The US threat of tariffs up to 200% on generic drugs serves as a vivid example of global supply chains being restructured under political imperatives. While this introduces short-term uncertainty and restructuring challenges for India's pharma export sector, India's inherent cost advantage—coupled with the heavy financial burden this policy places on the US healthcare system—will make full implementation difficult.

For India, this acts as a clear signal to resolve its strategic API dependencies and fortify its position by broadening its geographical reach across the global pharmaceutical market.

UPSC Prelims Exam Study Questions

Ques: What is the most appropriate meaning of 'reshoring'?

- (a) Relocating production to a third country.
- (b) Bringing domestic manufacturing back to one's own country.
- (c) Imposing a complete ban on exports.
- (d) Abolishing import duties only.

Ans:b)

UPSC Mains Exam Study Questions

Ques: Evaluate the role of generic medicines in India's pharmaceutical industry and their contribution to global health security. (10 Marks, 150 Words)

India must lead in securing the Strait of Bab el-Mandeb

On the heels of the Strait of Hormuz crisis comes the new threat – a Strait of Bab el-Mandeb crisis. On July 16, Reuters reported that Iran had instructed the Houthis to close the Strait (which is between Yemen and the Horn of Africa) if the United States attacked Iran's power plants.

Whether the Houthis have the capacity to threaten the Strait or whether this is part of Iran's signalling to the U.S. is secondary. What is important is that this represents a risk to one-third of India's entire trade.

Revisiting 2024

We have been here before. When the Gaza war started in October 2023, the Ansarallah group in Yemen, also known as the Houthis, claimed solidarity with the Palestinians and launched drones and missiles at Israel. From November 2023 to March 2024, the Houthis targeted at least 40 vessels in the Red Sea, claiming that the vessels were linked to or bound for Israel.

In response, the U.S., together with allies including Singapore and Sri Lanka, launched Operation Prosperity Guardian (December 2023) to ensure "freedom of navigation" in the Red Sea. This was followed by United Nations Security Council Resolution 2722 (2024), which was adopted in January 2024. Israel also carried out unilateral strikes against the Houthis. The Indian Navy rescued the crew of a British tanker after it was set on fire (January 26-27, 2024). By the time the U.S. declared a ceasefire in May 2025, the Houthis had been weakened, but much of the damage had already been done.

Marine insurance companies tend to be highly risk-averse. With over 90% of the world's shipping insured by just 12 protection and indemnity (P&I) clubs, shipowners have limited room to negotiate. Between November 2023 and March 2024, at least 2,000 ships avoided the Suez Canal and instead sailed around the Cape of Good



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New Delhi's leadership can help prevent another major shipping crisis in the Red Sea

Hope. This delayed critical imports to India. Global shipping routes effectively reverted to what was being done 170 years ago. Egypt lost a quarter of the Suez Canal's revenue. By July 2024, Israel's Red Sea port of Eilat had filed for bankruptcy.

This time around, the situation is more unpredictable. With U.S. forces in the region focused on Iran, it is unclear whether they will seek to secure the Red Sea as they did before.

Even in 2024, when India-bound ships were attacked by the Houthis, New Delhi had to lean directly on Tehran to bring the attacks to a halt. But that was a different time for India-Iran ties. Meanwhile, the UN Security Council is more divided today than ever before, and even if it manages to call for "freedom of navigation" in the Red Sea, it is unlikely to pass a resolution approving a force to implement that call. China is also likely to again take a unilateral approach to protecting its shipping in the Red Sea through quid pro quos with the Houthis.

If the Houthis resume attacks on shipping in the Strait, the impact on India's economy – which is already reeling from the Strait of Hormuz crisis – would be dire. While India has now ordered that no Indian mariner be deployed on ships bound to or from the Strait of Hormuz, extending the same restriction to a busy route such as the Strait of Bab el-Mandeb would not be easy and would adversely affect the safety and welfare of thousands of Indian seafarers.

What India should do

In 2024, France stayed out of a U.S.-led operation to guard its role in mediating between Hezbollah and Israel in Lebanon. Those conditions no longer exist. However, France and Japan – two countries that need shipping lanes in the Red Sea for their connectivity with Asia and Europe respectively – maintain bases in Djibouti, perched on the Red Sea. Their navies have also

conducted joint drills with the Indian Navy, which creates an opportunity for India to pre-empt a recurrence of the events of 2024.

India therefore needs to pro-actively build a naval taskforce in collaboration with France and Japan to deter attacks on shipping in the Bab el-Mandeb.

India would also do well to engage Egypt and Saudi Arabia. They had refused to join the alliance against the Houthis in 2024, given their own stance on Gaza. This time, with their economies at stake, they may not stand by. On July 20, the Houthis announced a "maritime embargo" on Saudi ships, seen as a threat against their transit through the Bab el-Mandeb. India needs to engage with these nations proactively to help secure the Red Sea, from the Suez to Bab el-Mandeb, while keeping its other partners in the region informed.

A rules-based maritime response

It needs to be emphasised that this would be a theatre-specific "Trade Protection Task Force" of navies, rather than a strategic alliance. In addition to ships and personnel, the Information Fusion Centre-Indian Ocean Region hosted by India could provide the necessary maritime domain awareness, while France and Japan could complement these efforts with on-ground logistical support. The constituent navies could agree on joint rules of engagement in response to any hostile attacks. They could provide security cover or escorts requested by commercial and civilian vessels transiting the Strait, especially those bound for Europe, India, or Japan. The task force would serve as a lasting demonstration of India's resolve to ensure "respect for maritime rules and norms" as part of Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR).

India has both the responsibility and the capability to prevent the Bab el-Mandeb from becoming a literal "Gate of Tears" this time.

GS Paper II: International Relations

UPSC Mains Exam Practice Questions: What is the significance of the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait for India's maritime and economic security? Explain. (10 Marks, 150 Words)

Context : Following the crisis in the Strait of Hormuz, a new global and strategic crisis is deepening in the Strait of Bab el-Mandeb. If the US attacks Iran's power plants or infrastructure, Houthi rebels in Yemen, acting on Iran's instructions, could completely close this strait. Nearly one-third of India's trade passes through the Strait of Bab el-Mandeb. Therefore, any

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disruption in this critical maritime route poses a major threat to India's economic security, energy supply, and maritime shipping.

Review of the 2024 Crisis and the Current Situation

(A) The 2023–2024 Crisis

- **Houthi Attacks:** During the Gaza War (2023), Houthi rebels targeted ships connected to Israel, launching drone and missile attacks on over 40 maritime vessels.
- **Global Response:** The US formed a coalition, launching '**Operation Prosperity Guardian**', and UN Security Council Resolution 2722 was passed.
- **Impact on Trade:** At least 2,000 commercial ships bypassed the Suez Canal route and circumnavigated the Cape of Good Hope (South Africa). This caused delays of 10–14 days in freight delivery, increased insurance rates, and impacted India's key imports and exports.

(B) Why the Current Situation is More Uncertain?

- **US Diversion of Focus:** US forces in the region are primarily focused directly on Iran, making it unclear whether they will prioritize the security of the Red Sea as they did previously.
- **Failure of Multilateral Institutions:** The UN Security Council (UNSC) is highly divided, and the likelihood of passing a consensus resolution to establish a peacekeeping force is negligible.
- **China's Unilateral Stance:** China is adopting a policy of securing safe passage exclusively for its own commercial vessels through direct contact and bargaining (quid pro quo) with Houthi rebels.
- **Safety of Seafarers:** Just as in the Strait of Hormuz, imposing a ban on the deployment of Indian seafarers along the Bab el-Mandeb route would be impractical and affect the livelihoods of thousands of Indian seafarers.

Necessary Strategic Steps for India

Instead of remaining purely neutral, India should take the following strategic initiatives to restore security in the Red Sea:

(A) Trilateral Naval Task Force with France and Japan

- **Military Bases in Djibouti:** Both France and Japan maintain permanent military bases in Djibouti.
- **Naval Synergy:** The Indian Navy already conducts regular joint exercises with the French and Japanese navies.
- **Shared Task Force:** These three nations should jointly establish a multilateral naval task force to deter Houthi attacks in Bab el-Mandeb.

(B) Engaging Egypt and Saudi Arabia

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- **Economic Losses:** In 2024, Egypt suffered a 25% loss in Suez Canal revenue. Due to the recent "maritime blockade" declared by Houthi rebels on Saudi ships, both countries are under economic pressure.
- **Active Diplomacy:** India should work together with Egypt and Saudi Arabia to exert diplomatic pressure to secure the entire Red Sea corridor from the Suez Canal to Bab el-Mandeb.

(C) Rules-Based Maritime Response

- **Trade Protection Task Force:** This would not be a military or geopolitical alliance, but a regional security mechanism specifically for protecting commercial vessels.
- **Information Sharing:** Real-time maritime data can be shared through India's IFC-IOR (Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region).
- **'SAGAR' Approach:** This initiative would reinforce India's image as a responsible maritime power under its **SAGAR** (*Security and Growth for All in the Region*) vision.

Relevant Static Dimensions

(A) Geographical & Mapping Dimensions

- **Location:** Bab el-Mandeb (meaning 'Gate of Tears' in Arabic) connects the Red Sea in the northwest to the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean in the southeast.
- **Littoral States:** Yemen lies on the Asian side, while Djibouti and Eritrea are located on the African side.
- **Perim Island:** This island divides the strait into two main navigation channels.

(B) India's Maritime Vision & Naval Capability

- **Operation Sankalp:** An ongoing operation by the Indian Navy to ensure the safety and security of Indian-flagged merchant vessels in the Gulf and Red Sea region.
- **Net Security Provider:** India's traditional role in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

Conclusion

Bab el-Mandeb is not merely a distant maritime strait; it is a key lifeline for India's economic growth, energy security, and global trade. In the current era of geopolitical uncertainty, with the US focus divided and the UN constrained, India must step forward to lead rather than remain a silent spectator.

By forming a rules-based 'Trade Protection Task Force' alongside France, Japan, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia, India can not only safeguard its commercial interests but also solidify its position as a responsible and leading power in the global maritime order.



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