

The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE

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British Prime Minister Keir Starmer backed India's bid for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council to make it more representative and responsive. He also supported permanent representation for other nations, including Africa, Brazil, Japan, and Germany.

U.K. PM Starmer backs permanent seat in UN Security Council for India

Press Trust of India

LONDON

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer joined the leaders of the U.S. and France in backing India's bid for a permanent seat on the UNSC to make it a more representative body that is not "paralysed by politics".

During his speech at the UN General Assembly (UNGA) on Thursday, Mr. Starmer called for reforms to ensure the global multilateral system is "more representative and more responsive". Besides permanent representation



Keir Starmer

for India, Africa, Brazil, Japan and Germany, the U.K. also made a pitch for more seats for elected members of the Security Council.

"We need to make the system more representative and more responsive

to those who need it most," said Mr. Starmer.

"So we will make the case not just for fairer outcomes, but fairer representation in how we reach them; and this also applies to the Security Council. It has to change to become a more representative body, willing to act – not paralysed by politics. We want to see permanent African representation on the Council, Brazil, India, Japan and Germany as permanent members, and more seats for elected members as well," he said.

The Labour Party lead-

er, making his first UNGA address as U.K. Prime Minister, also set out a change in Britain's approach. He said: "To support this we will also change how the U.K. does things. Moving from the paternalism of the past towards partnership for the future. Offering game-changing British expertise and working together in a spirit of equal respect." French President Emmanuel Macron also backed India's bid for permanent membership in the UNSC to make the UN more efficient and representative.

Analysis of the news:

- During his address at the United Nations General Assembly, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer emphasised the need for reforms to make the global multilateral system more representative and responsive.
- The UK supports permanent membership for India, Africa, Brazil, Japan, and Germany on the UNSC.
- Starmer highlighted the importance of fairer representation and outcomes, stating that the UNSC must not remain "paralysed by politics."
- He also proposed more seats for elected members to make the Security Council more effective.
- The UK's approach will shift towards partnership rather than paternalism, offering British expertise while respecting equal collaboration.

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The Indian Army is enhancing its artillery capabilities by developing long-range rockets and futuristic ammunition, inspired by lessons from recent conflicts. This includes extending the range of the Pinaka system, diversifying suppliers, and focusing on indigenization for robust supply chains.

Long-range rockets, futuristic ammunition on Army wish list

Taking lessons from Ukraine war, it is looking at extending the range of Pinaka rockets; it wants to diversify its vendor base, especially for 155 mm artillery shells, to build resilient supply chains

Dinakar Peri
NEW DELHI

Building on the lessons from the Ukraine war and the offensive by Israel in Gaza, the Indian Army is going for extended range rockets, which have proven to be decisive, and indigenising and diversifying the vendor base, especially for 155mm artillery shells, to build resilient supply chains. It is also going for futuristic ammunition, a senior officer said.

The indigenous Pinaka multi-barrel rocket launch system is being widely exploited and their ability is second to none, Lt. Gen. Adosh Kumar, Director-General of the Regiment of Artillery, said speaking to the media ahead of the Regiment's 198th raising day on Saturday.

"We are looking at extending range of the Pinaka rockets and lot of work is going on, first to double and then to almost [make it] four times the present range. The Defence Research and Development Organisation is confident of achieving it."

Last year, the Defence



The Pinaka rocket launch system during the Republic Day parade in New Delhi. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Acquisition Council (DAC) approved procurement of the Pralay tactical ballistic missiles with a range of 400 km and Nirbhay subsonic cruise missiles with a range of 1,000 km, both of which will give a long-range strike option to the Indian military.

The development trials of Pralay are almost over, the officer said. The trials for Nirbhay are on and in April it was tested with an indigenous engine. It is expected to be given to the Army for trials next year.

The other aspect is that the Pinaka can fire a variety of ammunition and that is where its efficacy in the

battlefield comes in, the officer noted.

Trials on

"Trials are currently on for guided extended range Pinaka rockets. High altitude are already done, trials in the plains are scheduled next month. If the trials are successful, we hope to conclude the deal soon and that will double present range of Pinaka. And they are also guided which means their precision will automatically improve."

As reported earlier, the guided ER rockets will take the range of Pinaka to 75 km and beyond. The HIMARS (high-mobility artil-

lery rocket system), which the U.S. has supplied to Ukraine, and similar systems also use guided rockets, officials observed.

For artillery guns, the Army has already drawn a road map to convert all its guns to 155 mm standard. Another ammunition is the high explosive pre-fragmented rockets for Pinaka which will increase the range by 15%-20%.

The trials are over, and the contract is expected to be signed this fiscal, Lt. Gen. Kumar noted.

The area denial munition (ADM) system which can be anti-tank and anti-personnel is also under development.

The trials of one of the types are over and the contract is expected to be signed this fiscal, while for other types, the work is on and the DRDO has identified production partners, the officer said.

The ADM rocket system was successfully flight-tested by the DRDO and the Army first in April 2022.

The war in Ukraine is in its third year and has shattered perception that wars will be short and swift, Lt. Gen. Kumar said.

Long-range Rocket Development:

- The Indian Army is focused on extending the range of the Pinaka multi-barrel rocket launcher system.
- Efforts are underway to double the current range of Pinaka rockets and eventually increase it up to four times.

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Daily News Analysis

- ▶ Guided extended range (ER) Pinaka rockets are undergoing trials, which, if successful, will take the range to over 75 km.
- ▶ The high explosive pre-fragmented rockets for Pinaka are set to increase the range by 15%-20%.
- ▶ Trials of guided ER rockets have already been completed in high-altitude areas, with plains trials scheduled soon.

Futuristic Ammunition Development:

- ▶ Indian Army aims to indigenize and diversify the vendor base for 155mm artillery shells for resilient supply chains.
- ▶ A road map is in place to convert all artillery guns to the 155mm standard.
- ▶ Area denial munition (ADM) system, both anti-tank and anti-personnel, is under development.
- ▶ DRDO has successfully flight-tested the ADM rocket system, and further production partnerships have been identified.
- ▶ The development trials for Pralay ballistic missiles are nearing completion.
- ▶ Army trials are expected for Nirbhay cruise missiles next year.

Pralay Ballistic Missiles And Nirbhay Cruise Missiles

- ▶ **Pralay Ballistic Missiles Type:** Quasi-ballistic surface-to-surface missile.
- ▶ **Range:** Targets can be hit from 150-500 km away.
- ▶ **Payload:** Capable of carrying 350-700 kg of high-grade explosives.
- ▶ **Developer:** Developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
- ▶ **Propulsion:** Powered by a solid propellant rocket motor and advanced technologies.
- ▶ **Guidance:** Features state-of-the-art navigation and integrated avionics.
- ▶ **Manoeuvrability:** Can change its path mid-air after a certain range. Nirbhay Cruise Missiles Type: Subsonic cruise missile.
- ▶ **Range:** Strike range of 1,000 kilometres.
- ▶ **Engine:** Recently tested with the indigenous "Manik" turbofan engine.
- ▶ **Features:** Low-altitude "sea-skimming" flight using waypoint navigation.
- ▶ **Payload:** Can carry a 450 kg payload, including high explosives or a small nuclear warhead.
- ▶ **Developer:** Developed by DRDO in collaboration with local firms.
- ▶ **Deployment:** Deployed from land-based mobile launchers, enhancing military capabilities across all three branches of the Indian Armed Forces.

Page 07 : GS 2 : International Relations

The Palk Strait, a significant maritime region between India and Sri Lanka, influences bilateral relations through trade, fishing rights disputes, and security concerns. Its ecological richness and strategic location underscore the importance of cooperation for regional stability and economic development.



The Nagapattinam-Kankesanthurai ferry docked at Kankesanthurai port in the Northern Province of Sri Lanka. www.india.gov.in

A journey across the Palk Strait

The Nagapattinam-Kankesanthurai ferry between India and Sri Lanka, restarted in October 2023 after nearly 40 years, was suspended after a week and resumed only this August. While the demand for the service was initially low, it has picked up in the last few weeks. **Nachinarkkiniyam M.** travels on the ferry with tourists, traders, and refugees and reports on the excitement and concerns about the initiative in the two countries

In a cloudy September morning, five childhood friends in their late 60s gathered at Nagapattinam port in Tamil Nadu, their laughter cutting through the sea breeze. For over four decades, they had travelled across India together, but that day was different. They were boarding the Nagapattinam-Kankesanthurai ferry between India and Sri Lanka for the first time. When asked the purpose of their visit, retired headmaster, C. Sugumar, who was part of the group, said with a wide grin, "Just for fun."

The ferry service had been restarted on October 14, 2023, after a nearly 40-year hiatus. In video messages, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the then Sri Lankan President, Ranil Wickremesinghe, had hailed the diplomatic effort and highlighted the importance of launching the service between the two nations. Calling it a "new chapter in diplomatic and economic ties between India and Sri Lanka," Modi said that the service would help strengthen cultural, commercial, and civilizational ties between India and Sri Lanka. Wickremesinghe said the ferry was an important step in improving connectivity.

However, authorities temporarily suspended service after just a week, citing technical issues and rough weather.

On August 16 this year, service was resumed, with support from the External Affairs Ministry. The demand was initially low, forcing the operator to reduce frequency from seven days to three days a week. When interest grew again, the operator, Indi Sri Ferry Services Private Limited, added a fourth day. In recent weeks, there has been an encouraging rise in occupancy, with an average of 80 passengers per trip. Ticketing agencies said this was due to positive feedback, largely by word-of-mouth.

A ferry ride to another country

The ferry accommodates 165 passengers and crew and includes 27 premium seats. The price of a ticket is ₹5,000 for economy and ₹7,500 for premium. Passengers are allowed 21 kilograms of baggage for free. They can carry up to 50 kg of baggage by paying ₹50 for every additional kg. The ferry leaves Nagapattinam at 8 a.m. and reaches Kankesanthurai at noon. It leaves Sri Lanka at 2 p.m. and returns to India by 6 p.m.

The captain of the passenger ferry, Sivagurun, was in Beskar. He explained that the vessel would operate at 18 knots with strict anti-smuggling protocols and would be monitored by authorities from both nations throughout the journey.

Both sides can inspect the vessel at any time. It is mandatory for us to provide information on all aspects of the journey, including passenger numbers and nationalities, for transparency and security," Beskar said. He added that the ferry was equipped with life jackets, life rafts, and rescue boat.

A group of five families in the ferry was excited to explore Sri Lanka's cultural and historical ties with India. They aimed to visit places connected to the Hindu epic, the Ramayana.

S. Shanika, who was travelling with her husband and son, was delighted. "We are going to

see the land where Sita (from the Ramayana) was imprisoned," she said.

The same day, R. Sagitha, a librarian from Jaffna in the Northern Province of Sri Lanka, said the ferry service to travel to Tamil Nadu. She said it offered a more affordable alternative to flying.

"Traveling by air costs 60,000/70,000 Sri Lankan rupees (₹2,000/₹6,000), but the ferry is only 31,000 rupees (₹8,600) to go across the Palk Strait and come back," she said.

During the journey, Sagitha and her fellow passengers formed a WhatsApp group called "Ship Friends." They promised to stay in touch after the journey ended.

Reflecting on her return from Sri Lanka, Shanika said, "We visited temples and saw remnants of the war. But what stood out was the warmth of the local Tamils who treated us not as visitors, but as family."

While the passengers enjoyed the ride, they also had suggestions for improvement. "While most of the trips are smooth, rough seas can occasionally cause bumpy rides. A larger ferry could provide a more comfortable experience in such conditions," noted a senior crew member.

Prabhakaran V., an environmental activist from Chennai, who was travelling with his wife, Akshaya, said that the couple had originally planned to go to Sri Lanka for their honeymoon, but the delay in resuming the service had forced them to delay their visit.

"There could be more food options," Prabhakaran complained, referring to the packets of instant noodles and ready-to-eat food that were available for purchase in the ferry. "They could also offer better amenities at the ports, a smoother connection to Jaffna, and a help desk for the elderly at the Kankesanthurai terminal." Jaffna is located 21 kilometres from the port. As buses are rare, auto rickshaws are the only mode of transport to the capital city of the Northern Province.

Many traders said that while the service is use-



Passengers on route to Kankesanthurai, Sri Lanka, from Nagapattinam, India. www.india.gov.in

ful, the baggage allowance could be increased to at least 100 kg per passenger. R. Rohan, a trader from Colombo, imports ready-made garments from Tamil Nadu using the ferry service. Despite the relatively low fares for the ferry, Rohan said that the margins in his trade are thin, and he would have to pass on much on travel costs. "More baggage allowance would help," he said.

Rohan also felt that the immigration process in India was time-consuming and the officers unfriendly.

Historical connections

The links between India and Sri Lanka are historical. Writer and publisher K. Sachinbhanthanthan noted that the Tamil text, *Chola Mandala Seshagan*, refers to a famine in Jaffna in the 13th century. "Sadayappa Vallal, the patron who supported Kambar in writing the Tamil epic *Kambharavayam*, is said to have sent a thousand boats of rice to the king of Jaffna in Jaffna," he said.

Sachinbhanthanthan highlighted the flourishing tobacco trade via the Kankesanthurai port, which thrived until the 1950s, especially with Kerala. The Jaffna Malayalam Tobacco Exporters Association played a key role in this trade, he added.

R. Kalsalingam, a Tamil writer from Paruthithurai in Jaffna, explained the significance of the ports of the Northern Province, such as Kankesanthurai, Oorakavalthurai, Paruthithurai, and Valvetthurai. His grandfather, a "Thangal" (sailor) on the Paruthithurai-Nagapattinam route, witnessed the region's prosperity, he recalled. However, former Sri Lankan Prime Minister S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike's nationalisation efforts led to the shutdown of many operations, he said.

Highlighting the region's shipbuilding history, B. Meehanai Sundaram, son of a shipbuilder from Valvetthurai in Jaffna, spoke of the prominence of these areas in producing skilled sailors. His father built the ship, *Purnanthe Pathini*, during British rule, which was later sold to Pakistan. Though smuggling increased after the ports ceased functioning, Sundaram said many sailors from these areas continue to work globally, keeping the legacy of their craftsmanship alive.

The British, too, established formal transport links between India and Sri Lanka. In the late 1880s, the Boat Mail Express connected Talaimannar and Kankesanthurai through a collaboration between the Sri Lankan and Indian Railways, allowing for seamless travel and the movement of goods. Under British colonial rule, Indian Tamils, known as "hill country Tamils," were brought to Sri Lanka to work in plantations on the southern tip of Tambora island in Tamil Nadu, shifting the route to Kankesanuram. The service continued until the Sri Lankan civil war in 1983 forced its suspension. In 2011, an attempt was made to revive the Thoothukudi-Colombo ferry service, but it was short-lived.

S. Kabinamani Annal, 88, from Matale in the Central Province of Sri Lanka, fondly recalled over a phone call her journey on the ferry in 1965, from Talaimannar on the northwestern coast of Mannar Island to Kankesanuram in the Ramnathapuram district of Tamil Nadu. She spent 10 days at her ancestral home in Karakkudi and visited relatives in Stranganai and Madurai.

"If the rice cooked at home in Matale was packed in leaves, it would still be hot when we landed in Ramnathapuram," she said. Annal said that her family would often travel to India to maintain their land and pray temples.

Since then, there have been many efforts to resume the ferry service across the Palk Strait. S. Niranjan Narayanaswamy, managing director of Indi Sri Ferry Services, who has long championed stronger India-Sri Lanka ties, was among those leading the initiative. During colonial rule, Narayanaswamy's ancestors operated ships between Jaffna and Valparagam town in Nagapattinam district, transporting passengers and goods.

According to him, tourism can reconnect the

Will Jaffna truly benefit from this economic relationship or merely become a market for Indian goods, which will undermine local production?

AHILAN KADIRGAMAR
Senior lecturer at the University of Jaffna

Tamils on both sides of the Palk Strait and open up new opportunities. "Connectivity is the first priority," Narayanaswamy said. "Once that is established, other aspirations can follow."

Economic and strategic ties

Highlighting the need for stronger connectivity between India and Sri Lanka, Sai Murali S., the Consul General of India in Jaffna, explained that the Indian government has been covering part of the costs of the ferry service. "The aim is to lower crew costs and strengthen bilateral ties," he said.

The Sri Lankan government plans to expand the Jaffna International Airport and introduce new routes to Tamil Nadu and diaspora hubs. Sai Murali said that the Indian government would also bear part of the costs of the expansion of the airport. Thanks to the success of the Charnai Jaffna route by air, there are now IndiGo flights between India and Sri Lanka every day.

"India will also be managing renovation costs at Kankesanthurai port; work is set to begin this year," he said. "Prime Minister Modi's vision includes restoring the Talaimannar-Rameswaram route too. There are feasibility studies under way to reconstruct the ancient land bridge between Dhanshodhi and Talaimannar, with India covering most of the cost." Sai Murali added that discussions are also ongoing with more ferry operators to pitch in and also to improve the quality of service between Kankesanthurai and Nagapattinam. Passenger feedback is expected to help the authorities resolve issues.

K.D.S. Ruvanchandra, Secretary of Sri Lanka's Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Aviation, acknowledged India's vital role in enhancing connectivity. A bilateral committee oversees ferry operations, though challenges remain, especially in securing vessels with cargo capacity.

"We have implemented security measures at Kankesanthurai port. Customs and immigration officers are working alongside Sri Lanka Ports Authority security and Naval officers," Ruvanchandra said, stressing the importance of preventing illegal activities.

A boon for the Tamil community

Sri Lankan Tamil refugees in India said they prefer the ferry over flights as it has a larger cargo capacity. R. Manikandan, 25, was born in the Bewakottai special camp in Sivagangai district in Tamil Nadu as a refugee. He recently returned to Sri Lanka by the ferry and obtained citizenship for the first time in his life. "I felt a deep connection. Everything seemed so near, both physically and emotionally," he said.

The ferry service has been hailed as a boon for the deep cultural and spiritual ties between India and Sri Lanka. He emphasised plans to create a tourist-friendly environment with proper facilities, including information centres and support for hotels and guides.

R. Jayasekaran, President of the Jaffna Chamber of Commerce, stressed the need for improving the ferry service and introducing cargo services. "India could supply 75% of our daily needs, which would reduce our reliance on China," he said. Jayasekaran explained that a 500-tonne cargo ship could lower costs, expand Jaffna's market, and reduce dependence on Colombo.

S. Narasimham from the India-ASEAN-Sri Lanka Chamber of Commerce and Industry, added, "We are very watchful of the ferry development. While the current patronage appears to be low, the introduction of a cargo service in the near future could certainly capture our attention."

Scepticism and concern

However, fishermen on both sides were sceptical that relations would improve through the ferry service. Cautiously hopeful about future relations between the Tamil fishermen of Sri Lanka and Tamil Nadu, S. Subramanyam, former president of the Northern Province Fishermen's Unity, highlighted the impact that India's business travellers had on Sri Lankan fishermen. "They cut our nets and take away our livelihoods," he said.

Subramanyam recalled the time when the fisherfolk from both sides would share food and enjoy camaraderie at sea. "They would watch Tamil movies like *Pattinam*, *Promiya*, and *Zange* *Pudhukkam* in Rameswaram during the 1970s," he said. "But those days are long gone."

R.M.P. Rajendra Natar, President of the Indian National Fishermen Union, echoed these concerns. "We face attacks from the Sri Lankan Navy and our government remains silent when our boats are seized," he said. Despite the challenges, Natar stressed that Indian fishermen bear no ill will towards Sri Lankan fishermen, as many of them continue to struggle post-war.

Ahilan Kadirgamar, senior lecturer at the University of Jaffna in Sri Lanka, welcomed the renewed connectivity, but emphasised that it is only part of a more complex picture. While Tamil Nadu's economy has flourished, Jaffna remains largely rural, he noted. "Will Jaffna truly benefit from this economic relationship or merely become a market for Indian goods, which will undermine local production?" he asked.

Kadirgamar was also worried about how tourism would impact the fragility of the region, and the potential over-reliance on India. "The Northern Province is now viewed through New Delhi's strategic lens," he said. "The India-Sri Lanka relationship is increasingly centred on security and geopolitics rather than cultural ties."

Palk Strait: Overview

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- ▶ The Palk Strait is a narrow body of water between India and Sri Lanka.
- ▶ It connects the Bay of Bengal to the Gulf of Mannar.
- ▶ It is generally 40-85 kilometres wide, but it can be narrower in some areas.
- ▶ Major islands in the strait include Adam's Bridge (Rama Setu).
- ▶ The region is characterised by shallow waters, making navigation challenging.
- ▶ It serves as a crucial fishing ground for local fishermen.
- ▶ The Palk Strait is known for its biodiversity, including coral reefs and marine species.

Significance in India-Sri Lanka Relations

- ▶ The Palk Strait is strategically significant for maritime security and trade routes.
- ▶ It facilitates bilateral trade and tourism between India and Sri Lanka.
- ▶ Disputes over fishing rights in the strait have caused tensions, affecting diplomatic relations.
- ▶ The area is vital for the livelihood of Tamil fishermen from both nations.
- ▶ Development of infrastructure projects, like ports, has implications for regional connectivity.
- ▶ The strait plays a role in humanitarian and environmental cooperation.
- ▶ Strengthening ties through joint initiatives in the strait can enhance regional stability.
- ▶ The Palk Strait is pivotal for maritime security and counter-terrorism efforts in the Indian Ocean.

UPSC Mians PYQ: 2013

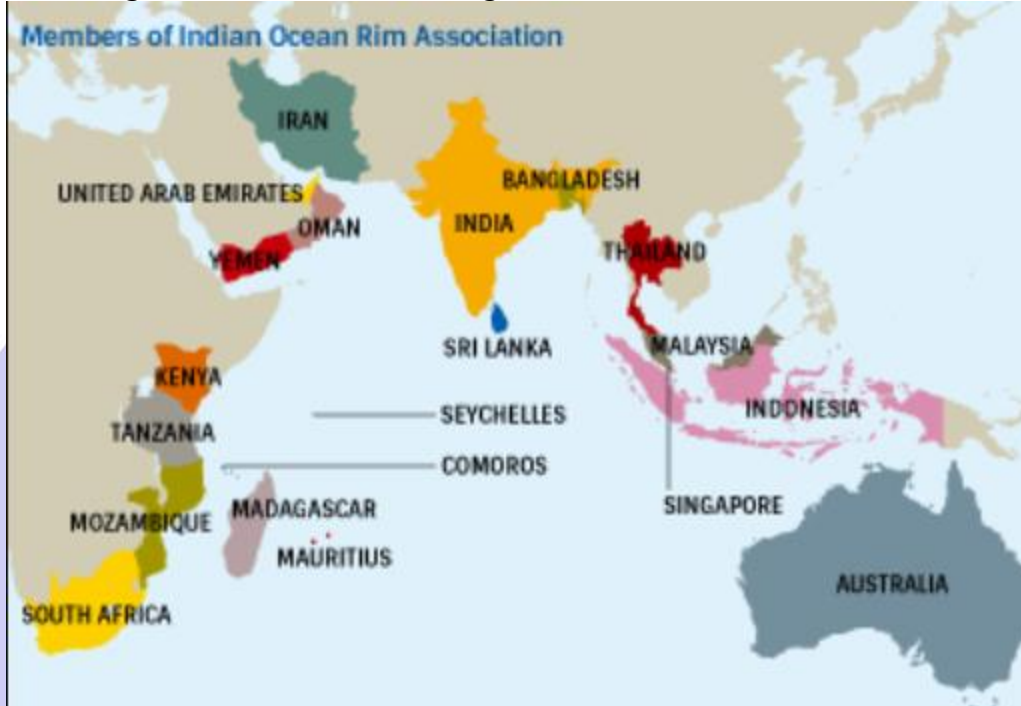
Ques : In respect of India – Sri Lanka relations, discuss how domestic factors influence foreign policy. (200 words/10m)

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Organization In News : Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)

The second IORA seminar on Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing took place at Goa's Naval War College, focusing on its economic, environmental, and security impacts. Delegates from 17 IORA countries discussed strategies to counter IUU fishing in the Indian Ocean.



Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)

- ▶ IORA is a regional organisation comprising 23 member states along the Indian Ocean rim.
- ▶ Established in 1997, it aims to promote sustainable development and regional cooperation.
- ▶ It focuses on areas like maritime security, trade facilitation, disaster risk management, and blue economy.
- ▶ Member countries include India, Australia, Indonesia, South Africa, and several others from the Indian Ocean region.
- ▶ Observers include countries like China, the U.S., and the U.K.
- ▶ The IORA Secretariat is based in Mauritius.
- ▶ IORA fosters collaboration on economic growth, environmental protection, and maintaining maritime security in the Indian Ocean region.
- ▶ It also addresses challenges like illegal fishing, piracy, and climate change impacting coastal communities.

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UPSC Prelims PYQ : 2015

Ques : With reference to 'Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC), consider the following statements:

1. It was established very recently in response to incidents of piracy and accidents of oil spills.
2. It is an alliance meant for maritime security only.

Which of the statements given above is/ are correct?

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

Ans: (d)



Location In News : Nazca Lines

Recently, Scientists have discovered more than 300 never-before-seen Nazca Lines in Peru.



Why in the news?

- ▶ The new lines included abstract humanoids, "decapitated heads," domesticated animals, fish, birds, cats, a potential "ceremonial scene" and human/animal interactions.
- ▶ The most bizarre shape was arguably a 72-foot-long (22 meters) "killer whale holding a knife."
- ▶ The staggering new haul was unearthed in just six months with the help of artificial intelligence (AI) and almost doubles the number of known geoglyphs in the region.

What are Nazca Lines?

- ▶ The Nazca Lines are a group of large human-carved geoglyphs located in a roughly 170-square-mile (440 square kilometres) area of Peru's Nazca Desert.
- ▶ The ancient artworks were likely created between 200 B.C. and A.D. 500 by members of the pre-Incan civilisation, known as the Nazca (or Nasca), who removed the upper layers of the desert's red-tinged surface pebbles to reveal sections of lighter soil in a wide range of different shapes and sizes.
- ▶ Researchers had already found around 430 Nazca Lines since the mysterious shapes were rediscovered by aeroplane passengers in the 1920s.
- ▶ Most of these geoglyphs were identified in the last 20 years with the help of advancements in satellite imagery.

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Russia's geopolitical pivot to Asia, a new India chapter

In 2022, Moscow cut its economic ties with Europe and made a U-turn to the Asian countries. As a result of this move, the knot of neoliberal interdependence between Russia and Europe became undone, with costs to the global economy.

The need for such a turn was repeatedly proclaimed since the financial crisis of 2007-08 but was 'adjourned sine die'. For the Russian political leadership, the core motives remained well-established. The country's economy was closely woven into western markets and financial structures and, therefore, remained susceptible to external shocks resulting from political and ideological confrontations.

The core feature of today's geopolitical manoeuvres is that they have both eastern and southern implications. Russia's \$240 billion trade with China did not overshadow the dynamism of India-Russia ties, which, for many, proved to be the most important outcome. The countries without common borders and well-established logistic routes have managed to build up trade relations almost from scratch. The opportunities offered by India, previously considered as *terra incognita* for Russian business, spurred discussions on the necessity to change the economic grounds of cooperation.

The factors that mattered

For Russia, political imperatives were a prerequisite for enhanced commercial relations. India's position of non-involvement in the European conflict served as a guarantee for stability in policy planning. For India, on the contrary, it was the economy that led to the extension of political contacts, as foreign policy is driven by internal factors.

These distinct positions have become a subject for convergence and a shift to more pragmatic grounds. India is not willing to make any type of political commitment. But, at the same time, it imports Russian oil which helps it with savings and also provides it an opportunity to re-export it to Europe as a petroleum product. Another case is the import of fertilizers and sunflower oil from Russia that helps to reduce food inflation amid climate shocks.



Ivan Shchedrov

Junior Research Fellow at the Institute of World Economy and International Relations of the Russian Academy of Sciences (MEMO-RAS)

In just three months after the Ukraine conflict, the countries have covered much of what they have failed to do in decades. Russia is India's fourth large trading partner. In June 2022, the level of bilateral trade surpassed \$3.5 billion. Two years later, in May 2024, the figure rose to \$7.5 billion. If one factors in unofficial trade, the figure could rise to several billion. Thus, in just one month, the trade turnover figure exceeded that of the entire 2021.

The meeting between Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Russian President Vladimir Putin in July this year resulted in the announcement of setting up a bilateral trade target of \$100 billion by 2030. In the context of the relatively low capacity of the Russian market, problems in access to foreign technologies, low-developed logistic routes and a sanctions regime, achieving this target will require additional political efforts.

Some hurdles

The first problem arises from the lack of economic complementarity between the two countries. Russia is now promoting its own industrial production and pursues a policy of moderate technological nationalism. It is the same with India which is pursuing a 'Make in India' agenda.

Second, the sanctions regime limits opportunities to overcome trade imbalances. Small and medium enterprises could become major factors in the boosting of bilateral trade and investments, but the countries lack a stable payment mechanism, an investment protection agreement, a clear arbitration system and single logistics operator for transport corridors which can provide a full spectrum of transportation services for exporters. Some of these obstacles could be eliminated by having a better presence of Russian banks in India – by the means of integration of national payment systems and creation of the payment gateways in order to soften the effect of sanctions in the financial sphere.

Third, technology and investments. This area was a hallmark of the India-Soviet friendship but became the main casualty in the collapse of the

USSR. Except the nuclear and military spheres, the current bilateral interaction lacks big investment projects in the secondary sector as well as research programmes of significance. Today's technology cooperation should be more business oriented. Construction and the modernisation of factories, power plants, refineries and mines in India are promising areas.

Finally, cooperation in science and education does not have the desired pace of development. It should include projects in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) subjects and also in social science, which would help to eliminate the information vacuum between each other.

The outlook

The Ukrainian crisis has become the major incentive for Russia's turn to India but it limits the scope of the bilateral engagement. India is now facing pressure from outside and Russia is directing its financial resources to sustain its economy. These circumstances have caused scepticism about the stability and life time of the current thaw.

In the midterm, there could be a certain contribution from the booming military complex. Russian industry will be able to increase its share in the Indian market due to the low-price characteristics of products. With prospects of a transition of some Russian production capacity from the military to the civilian sphere, engineering will cause no less interest. Agricultural and construction machinery, railroad trains and medical equipment could be bound for India. At the same time, India could provide Russia with a range of products less accessible for business and consumers. Smartphones and digital processing units have already become India's main export items.

The major problem is about the quality of trade. India's export misses engineering products; smartphones exported to Russia are manufactured in the assembly plants of foreign companies. In order to have a more stable footing, India and Russia should look at how to increase integration in bilateral production chains and negotiate issues of localisation.

The Ukrainian crisis has become the major incentive for Russia's turn to India, but there are hurdles in the bilateral engagement

GS Paper 01 : History : Modern Indian History

UPSC Mains Practice Question Examine the historical significance of the Self-Respect Movement in Tamil Nadu and its relevance in contemporary India, especially in addressing cultural homogenization and ensuring social justice. (250 w /15 m)

Context :

No: 1521, Second Floor, H-Block, 5th Street, Anna Nagar, Chennai-80.

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Daily News Analysis

- The Self-Respect Movement, initiated in 1925 by Periyar, promoted social justice, rationalism, and women's rights, challenging caste-based oppression.
- It emphasised self-respect marriages, women's autonomy, and intersectionality.
- In today's context, it faces challenges like cultural homogenization by Hindutva ideology, necessitating renewed efforts for social justice and inclusive societal values.

The Emergence of Self-Respect

- The Self-Respect Movement began in 1925 with the launch of the Tamil weekly "Kudi Arasu" and Periyar's departure from the Indian National Congress (INC).
- It sought to empower oppressed communities by promoting social justice and rational thinking.
- The Justice Party, ruling the Madras Presidency, supported non-Brahmin politics and reforms, aligning with the movement.
- Periyar organised the first Self-Respect Conference in 1929, advocating equal rights for women, the abolition of caste names, and broader social reforms.

Key Reforms and Achievements

- The Self-Respect Movement popularised "self-respect marriages," which excluded Brahmin priests and emphasised autonomy and dignity for women. These marriages were legalised when the DMK formed the government in 1967.
- The movement also championed women's rights, including widow remarriage, divorce, property rights, and reproductive autonomy, while promoting inter-caste marriages.
- Despite criticisms of being anti-nationalist, the movement prioritised social reform over political independence, fearing the replacement of British rulers with elite Hindu caste groups. It contributed to the spirit of federalism in India.

Challenges and Future Directions

- The rise of the Hindutva ideology and cultural homogenization poses a significant challenge, as it promotes a singular national identity, threatening the regional, linguistic, gender, and caste-based diversity the movement seeks to protect.
- The movement must evolve to address modern gender-related issues, such as LGBTQIA+ rights and gender fluidity, integrating these new concerns while maintaining its foundational principles.
- Misinformation and caste biases perpetuated through digital media are also challenges.
- The movement needs to engage the youth, especially those unfamiliar with caste practices but vulnerable to right-wing propaganda.

A Critical Mission for Social Justice

- As it enters its second century, the Self-Respect Movement faces the critical mission of combating rising divisive ideologies and cultural homogenization.
- By addressing contemporary issues while staying true to its core values, the movement can continue to fight for social justice, equality, and rationalism.

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- ▶ Reviving its revolutionary spirit is essential for ensuring an inclusive society, guiding future generations in preserving and advancing its ideals.
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