

**The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE**  
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The Supreme Court quashed a criminal case filed by Gujarat Police against Congress MP Imran Pratapgadhi for allegedly inciting discord through his poem.

- The court reaffirmed that poetry, satire, theatre, and stand-up comedy are legitimate expressions of free speech and must be protected.

# Free speech is an integral part of healthy and civilised society: SC

It quashes hate speech case filed against Congress MP; Bench says a person's views can't be silenced because the majority does not like them; Justice Oka says State shouldn't victimise individual opinions on behalf of those crippled by insecurity

**Krishnadas Rajagopal**  
NEW DELHI

**T**he Supreme Court on Friday said the fundamental right to free speech through poetry, theatre, stand-up comedy, and satire must be cherished, as it quashed a criminal case accusing Congress MP Imran Pratapgadhi of inciting discord through his poem on "suffering injustice with love".

The judgment was based on an appeal filed by Mr. Pratapgadhi against the registration of a criminal case by the Gujarat Police under Section 196 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. "Seventy-five years into our Republic, we cannot be seen to be so shaky on our fundamentals that a mere recital of a poem, or

for that matter, any form of art or entertainment, such as stand-up comedy, can be alleged to lead to animosity or hatred amongst different communities. Subscribing to such a view would stifle all legitimate expressions of view in the public domain, which is so fundamental to a free society," a Bench of Justices A.S. Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan wrote in its verdict.

**Restrictions and rights**  
Justice Bhuyan explained to Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta that the "reasonable restrictions" on free speech must remain reasonable. "Restrictions cannot be harmful or oppressive. Restrictions cannot overshadow the fundamental right to free speech," Justice Bhuyan said pointedly.



The Gujarat Police had filed a case against Imran Pratapgadhi, accusing the Congress MP of inciting discord through his poem. ANI

The top court said free speech was an integral part of a healthy and civilised society. A person's views cannot be silenced merely because the majority does not like the sound of them. The law enforcement authorities and courts must employ the standards of reasonable, strong-minded,

firm, and courageous minds, and not weak and vacillating ones who scent danger in every hostile point of view, before initiating criminal action against freedom of expression.

Justice Oka, who authored the judgment with inputs from Justice Bhuyan,

said the State and the police should not play ball to victimise individual opinions on behalf of those crippled by insecurity and view criticism as a threat to their power and position.

The Gujarat Police had registered a case against Mr. Pratapgadhi, accusing him of promoting enmity among people of different groups on the basis of caste and religion.

Justice Oka, during a March 3 hearing of the case, remarked the poem was a reference to non-violence, a path followed by Mahatma Gandhi himself. Mr. Mehta had however found the poem at best "sadak chaap" (cheap). He objected to the comparison with Mahatma Gandhi.

The Bench referred to a tendency to stifle art and poetry.

## Key Judicial Observations:

### ➤ Fundamental Right to Free Speech:

- Free expression is vital for a healthy and civilised society.
- Speech cannot be silenced merely because the majority dislikes it.

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### ➔ Reasonable Restrictions:

- While free speech is subject to reasonable restrictions, these must not be oppressive or harmful.
- Law enforcement must adopt the perspective of strong-minded and courageous individuals, not weak or insecure ones.

### ➔ State's Role in Free Speech:

- The State and police must not be used as tools to victimise individuals who express critical opinions.
- The court condemned the tendency to stifle artistic expressions due to political sensitivities.

### ➔ Legal and Constitutional Angle:

- Article 19(1)(a) of the Indian Constitution guarantees freedom of speech and expression.
- Article 19(2) provides for reasonable restrictions on grounds such as public order, morality, and national security.
- The ruling reaffirms judicial precedence that mere discomfort or offense cannot be grounds to criminalize speech.

### ➔ Implications of the Judgment:

- Strengthens democratic discourse by protecting dissent and artistic freedom.
  - Limits misuse of sedition laws and hate speech provisions to curb political criticism.
  - Sets a precedent against arbitrary criminalization of speech under laws like Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.
- ➔ This judgment strengthens the constitutional commitment to free speech while cautioning against state overreach in criminalizing expression.

### UPSC Prilims Practice Question

Ques :Freedom of speech is the foundation of a democratic society. However, it is not absolute. Discuss the judicial interpretation of reasonable restrictions under Article 19(2) of the Indian Constitution.

A 7.7-magnitude earthquake struck northwest Sagaing, Myanmar, followed by a 6.4-magnitude aftershock, causing widespread destruction.

- ➔ The quake affected Myanmar and Thailand, killing at least 152 people and injuring hundreds.
- ➔ Myanmar's junta government, struggling with civil war and weak infrastructure, has sought international aid.

## Massive quake kills at least 144 in Myanmar and 8 in Thailand; junta seeks foreign help



**Shell-shocked:** Rescue workers near an under-construction building that collapsed after the tremor hit Bangkok, Thailand, on Friday. AP

**Agence France-Presse**  
NAYPYIDAW

A huge earthquake hit Myanmar and Thailand on Friday, killing more than 150 people and injuring hundreds, with dozens trapped in collapsed buildings and the death toll expected to rise.

The shallow 7.7-magnitude tremor hit northwest of the city of Sagaing in central Myanmar in the early afternoon, and was followed minutes later by a 6.4-magnitude aftershock.

The quake flattened buildings, downed bridges, and cracked roads across swathes of Myanmar, and even demolished a 30-storey skyscraper under construction hundreds of kilometres away in Bangkok.

While the full extent of the catastrophe is yet to emerge, the leader of isolated Myanmar, in the grip of a civil war, issued a rare plea for international aid.

Junta chief Min Aung Hlaing said 144 people had been killed, with 732 confirmed injured, but warned the toll was "likely to rise". Eight deaths have been confirmed so far in Thailand, with more expected.

He urged massive relief efforts in the wake of the disaster and said he had "opened all ways for foreign aid".

Four years of civil war sparked by the military seizing power have ravaged Myanmar's infrastructure and healthcare system, leaving it ill-equipped to respond to

such a disaster.

The country declared a state of emergency across the six worst-affected regions after the quake, which the World Health Organization described as a "very, very big threat to life and health".

### 'Mass casualty area'

Hundreds of casualties arrived at a major hospital in Naypyidaw, where the emergency department entrance had collapsed on a car.

An official at the hospital, the same one visited by the junta chief, described it as a "mass casualty area" with medics treating the wounded outside.

"I haven't seen [something] like this before. We are trying to handle the situation," a doctor said.

Mandalay, Myanmar's second largest city, appeared to have been badly hit.

A resident reached by phone said the city was badly lacking in rescue personnel.

Across the border in Thailand, a 30-storey skyscraper under construction collapsed to a tangled heap of rubble and dust in a matter of seconds.

Interior Minister Anutin Charnvirakul said eight dead bodies have been recovered and, with between 90 and 110 people unaccounted for, the toll is expected to rise.

"We see several dead bodies under the rubble. We will take time to bring the bodies out to avoid any further collapses," he told presspersons.

As night fell, around 100 rescue workers assembled at the scene to search for survivors, illuminated by specially erected floodlights.

Visiting the site, Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra said "every building" in Bangkok would need to be inspected for safety, though it was not immediately clear how that would be carried out.

An emergency zone was declared in Bangkok, where metro and light rail services were suspended.

Strong quakes are extremely rare in Thailand.

India, France and the European Union all offered to provide assistance, while the WHO said it was mobilising its logistics hub in Dubai to prepare trauma injury supplies.

### Key Aspects of the Disaster:

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## ➔ Geographical Context:

- Tectonic Causes:
  - Myanmar lies in a seismically active region near the Sunda Trench and Indo-Burmese Arc.
  - The tremor was shallow, making its impact more destructive.
- Affected Areas:
  - Myanmar: Sagaing, Mandalay, Naypyidaw.
  - Thailand: Bangkok and nearby regions.

## ➔ Humanitarian and Infrastructure Impact:

- Casualties & Damage:
  - Over 150 dead, 700+ injured.
  - Hospitals overwhelmed, emergency zones declared.
  - 30-storey building collapsed in Bangkok, affecting metro services.
- Weak Infrastructure in Myanmar:
  - Civil war has crippled healthcare and disaster response mechanisms.
  - Many affected areas lack rescue teams and medical facilities.

## ➔ International Response & Aid:

- Myanmar's Junta Seeks Foreign Assistance:
- Unusual move due to Myanmar's political isolation post-military coup.

## ➔ Global Assistance:

- India, France, European Union, and WHO have extended help.
- WHO mobilizing trauma relief supplies from Dubai logistics hub.

## Key Issues & Challenges:

### ➔ Disaster Management in Conflict Zones:

- Civil war in Myanmar has weakened governance, making relief efforts difficult.
- State capacity is compromised, affecting coordination of aid.

### ➔ Urban Infrastructure & Earthquake Preparedness:

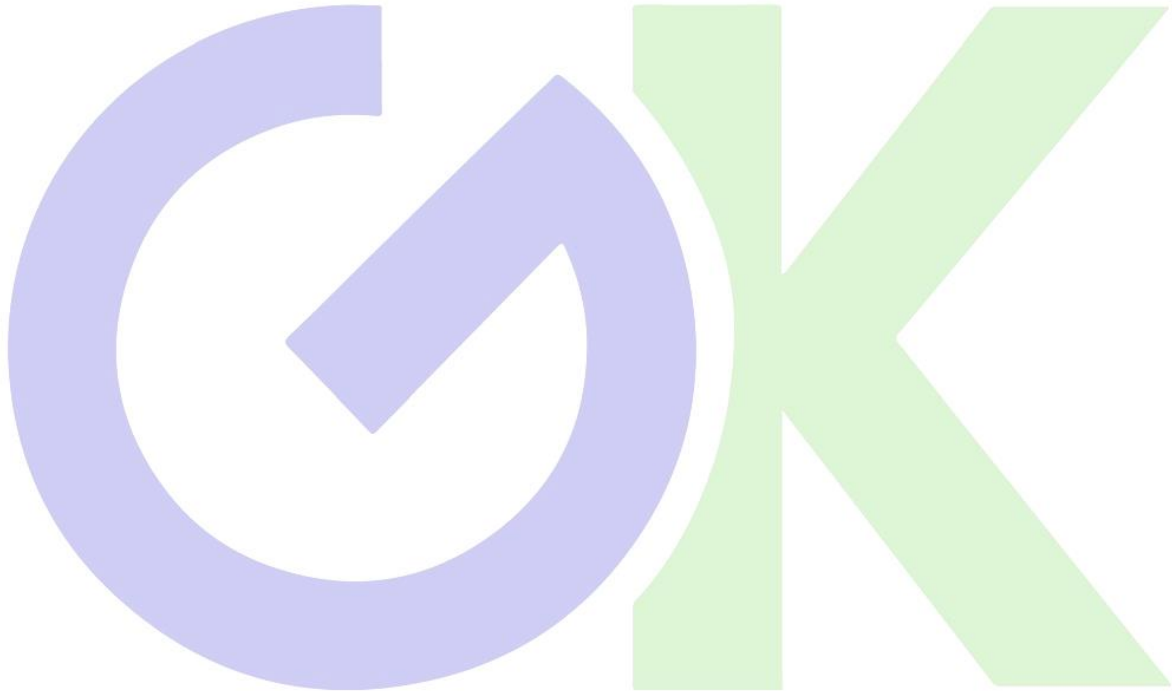
- Myanmar: Poorly enforced building codes lead to high structural collapse rates.
- Thailand: Rarely experiences quakes; hence, urban structures are not designed for seismic resistance.

### ➔ Regional & International Implications:

- Myanmar's political isolation could affect aid efforts.
- Disruptions in cross-border trade & logistics in Southeast Asia.
- Potential refugee movement if affected populations migrate for safety.

**UPSC Mains Practice Question**

**Ques :** Earthquake preparedness is crucial for reducing disaster impact. Analyze how developing nations can improve their urban resilience against seismic hazards. (250 words)



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The National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) upheld the Competition Commission of India (CCI)'s ruling that Google abused its dominant position in the digital payments and app store market.

- ➔ However, the fine was reduced from ₹936.44 crore to ₹216.69 crore.
- ➔ Google must now allow alternative payment systems and cannot discriminate against UPI-based payment systems.

## NCLAT cuts CCI fine on Google to ₹217 cr.

**Abhishek Law**  
NEW DELHI

The National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) has upheld a penalty imposed on Google by the Competition Commission of India (CCI) for abusing its dominant position in the digital payments and app store markets, while ruling the payment system is anti-competitive.

### Reduces fine

However, the quantum of penalty has been reduced to ₹216.69 crore from ₹936.44 crore imposed in October 2022.

Google will now have to



Google will now have to allow alternative payments system for apps. AFP

allow alternative payment systems for apps and in-app purchases. It also confirmed Google cannot discriminate against other UPI-based payment systems for the transactions.

The tribunal ruled that Google's imposition of its proprietary Google Play Billing System (GPBS) on app developers violated India's competition laws, effectively limiting market access for other payment service providers.

### Ex-ante regulations

The ruling signals a notable shift towards proactive regulation of Big Tech firms in India, as experts argue the current ex-post enforcement mechanisms are inadequate to prevent digital markets from "irreversibly tipping" in favour of dominant players.

"The existing powers of

CCI are based on an ex-post facto model and the need of the law. Regulating the digital market on the mode of ex-ante has also been emphasised," the NCLAT order observed.

It reflects the need for pre-emptive regulation (before the occurrence of anti-competitive behaviour) to manage the dynamics of digital markets. "We, thus, are of the view the Commission could not have issued any ex-ante directions," NCLAT said.

The case against Google originated from complaints by Match Group Inc. (Tinder's parent company), and the Alliance of

Digital India Foundation (ADIF), which accused Google of abusing its dominant position via GPBS.

Google, it was alleged, mandated developers to use its billing system for in-app purchases, thereby restricting alternatives like UPI or third-party gateways. It also levied a 15-30% fee on transactions, significantly higher than domestic payment providers, hurting smaller developers. Developers were also barred from informing users about alternative payment options outside Google's ecosystem.

*(The writer is with The Hindu businessline)*

### Key Facts for Prelims:

- ➔ What is the Issue?
  - Google mandated the use of its Google Play Billing System (GPBS) for app developers.
  - High commission charges (15-30%) were levied on transactions.
  - Restricted alternative payment options like UPI or third-party payment gateways.
  - Barred developers from informing users about alternative payment methods.
- ➔ Key Rulings by NCLAT:
  - Google's practices violated India's competition laws by restricting market access.
  - Google must allow alternative billing systems for in-app purchases.
  - No discrimination against UPI-based payment providers.

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- ➔ What is Ex-Ante vs. Ex-Post Regulation?
  - Ex-Post Regulation: Action taken after an anti-competitive practice occurs (current CCI model).
  - Ex-Ante Regulation: Pre-emptive action before monopolistic behavior arises (being considered for digital markets).
  - NCLAT recognized the need for Ex-Ante regulation but stated that CCI lacks legal power to enforce it.

## Prelims Bits:

- ➔ What is CCI?
  - Competition Commission of India (CCI) is a statutory body under the Competition Act, 2002.
  - Ensures fair competition and prevents anti-competitive practices.
- ➔ What is NCLAT?
  - National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) hears appeals against CCI orders.
  - Established under Companies Act, 2013.
- ➔ What is UPI?
  - Unified Payments Interface (UPI) is an instant real-time payment system developed by NPCI (National Payments Corporation of India).
- ➔ Global Comparison:
  - EU's Digital Markets Act (DMA) and USA's Antitrust Laws also regulate Big Tech dominance.
  - India may introduce a Digital Competition Law.

## UPSC Prelims Practice Question

**Ques :Which of the following statements about the Competition Commission of India (CCI) is correct?**

- a) It is a constitutional body.
- b) It regulates anti-competitive practices in India.
- c) It is under the Ministry of Finance.
- d) It can impose ex-ante regulations on digital markets.

**Answer: (b) It regulates anti-competitive practices in India.**



The Union Cabinet approved a ₹22,919 crore scheme to boost electronics component manufacturing in India for six years.

- ➔ The scheme is different from PLI (Production-Linked Incentive) and instead provides incentives based on turnover and employment creation.

### Key Facts for Prelims:

- ➔ Scheme Objectives:
  - Boost domestic value addition in electronics manufacturing.
  - Reduce dependence on imported electronic components.
  - Attract ₹59,350 crore investments.
  - Generate ₹4,56,500 crore worth of production.
  - Create 91,600 direct jobs.
- ➔ What Will Be Covered?
  - Active Components: Includes semiconductors and other high-tech critical components.
  - Sub-Assemblies: Controllers for displays and phone cameras.
  - Bare Components: Circuit boards, lithium-ion batteries, and hardware enclosures.
- ➔ How Is This Different from PLI?
  - Production-Linked Incentive (PLI): Manufacturers get incentives based on incremental production.
  - New Scheme: Provides incentives based on factory turnover and employment generation.

### Cabinet okays ₹22,919 crore scheme for electronics component manufacturing

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Friday approved a ₹22,919-crore Electronics Component Manufacturing Scheme for a period of six years, Union Minister of Electronics and Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnaw announced.

The scheme is the next step in the government's electronics manufacturing efforts, which have so far focused on setting up semiconductor fabrication units and IT hardware, along with finished goods like mobile phones.

"Passive component and sub-assembly manufacturing will increase domestic value addition," Mr. Vaishnaw told media-persons.

Unlike past schemes, this scheme would not be based on production-linked incentive, where manufacturers would be rewarded for incremental manufacturing, he added.

Instead, they would receive incentives pegged to the factory's turnover, as well as in employment creation. The target is to induce ₹59,350 crore in investments, production worth ₹4,56,500 crore, and the creation of 91,600 direct jobs in the coming years. Active components refer to semiconductors and other critical components. This scheme is targeted at sub-assemblies such as controllers for displays and phone cameras, and for 'bare components' which include circuit boards, hardware enclosures, and lithium-ion batteries, Mr. Vaishnaw said.

### Prelims Bits:

- ➔ What is the PLI Scheme?
  - Launched in 2020 to boost domestic manufacturing across multiple sectors.
  - Currently implemented in 14 sectors including semiconductors, IT hardware, and mobile phones.
- ➔ What is Semiconductor Manufacturing?

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## Daily News Analysis

- Semiconductors are essential for electronics, AI, and telecom.
- India is setting up semiconductor fabrication units (fabs) under India Semiconductor Mission (ISM).
- ➔ Related Government Initiatives:
  - Make in India – Promotes domestic manufacturing.
  - Atmanirbhar Bharat – Reduces import dependency.
  - Scheme for Promotion of Manufacturing of Electronic Components and Semiconductors (SPECS) – Encourages local semiconductor manufacturing.

### UPSC Prelims Practice Question

**Ques :**The recently approved ₹22,919 crore scheme for electronics component manufacturing aims to:

- a) Promote semiconductor fabrication units.
- b) Provide incentives based on turnover and employment creation.
- c) Increase mobile phone exports.
- d) Support only large multinational corporations.

**Answer: (b) Provide incentives based on turnover and employment creation.**

### In News : Bhaskaracharya National Institute for Space Applications & Geo-informatics

The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India recently signed an agreement with the Bhaskaracharya National Institute of Space Application and Geo-informatics (BISAG-N) to leverage advanced technologies in geographic information systems and remote sensing.

#### About Bhaskaracharya National Institute for Space Applications and Geo-informatics

- It is an autonomous scientific society registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860, under the Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY), Government of India.
- Location: Gandhinagar, Gujarat
- Objective: To undertake technology development & management, research & development, facilitate national and international cooperation, capacity building, and support technology transfer & entrepreneurship development in the area of geospatial technology.
- BISAG-N has three main domain areas: satellite communication, geo-informatics and geo-spatial technology.
- BISAG-N provides specialized services and solutions in implementing map-based Geographic Information Systems (GIS).
- BISAG-N undertakes all services for the entire process of implementing an enterprise level GIS system.
- These services include GIS database design and development, map creation/updation and finishing, data migration/conversion and format translation, software development and customization, systems integration, and technical consulting.
- BISAG-N also provides complete GIS solutions, which bundle hardware and software with GIS systems development services.
- BISAG-N offers comprehensive GIS/Photogrammetric solutions over large geographical areas.
- These include solutions and services in the areas of mapping, cartography, imaging, photogrammetry, and utility/environment resource management. BISAG-N provides solutions based on Remote Sensing, using multispectral data, for specific applications like agricultural crop monitoring, watershed management, forest fire mapping, etc.
- The Institute works in close coordination with Gol Ministries and State Government departments/agencies and has thus emerged as a National level agency to use satellite communication and Space & Geo-spatial technologies for the planning and development activities in various sectors of the Government.

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# India's geopolitical vision should be larger

**E**arlier this month, Russian President Vladimir Putin thanked world leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, for their “noble mission” to end the fighting between Ukraine and Russia. This has brought cheer to Indians.

But there is a question to be asked – Why has India refrained from playing a more active political role in regional and international conflicts around the world?

This is all the more surprising when one considers the decisive steps taken by Indian leaders in conflicts in the neighbourhood whether, *inter alia*, in Bangladesh in 1971 when India helped stop a genocide and give birth to a new nation; in the Maldives in 1988 by stopping armed mercenaries overthrow its President; in Sri Lanka in 2009 by helping in the defeat of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, or, recently, by combating piracy in the region.

Let there be no mistake. India has been an active net contributor to global public good whether through the ‘Vaccine Maitri’ initiative during the COVID-19 pandemic, robust climate action which includes establishing the International Solar Alliance, the sharing of digital public infrastructure to the world or its role as first responder during natural disasters.

## A reticence

However, in the last two decades, India has, rightly, prioritised economic growth, both under the United Progressive Alliance and National Democratic Alliance governments. This has catapulted India to the rank of fifth largest economy. Having reached there, we seem to have convinced ourselves that if we take an active political role in global or regional conflicts, it could adversely affect our growth and development.

India's reticence may also stem from the fact that it feels that getting involved in regional conflicts will upset the strong bilateral relations that have been carefully cultivated with countries. Or that these conflicts are best left to key players in that region and outside, like in West Asia where India has big stakes but does not want to be more proactive than the Gulf countries, which are lukewarm to the unfolding tragedy in Gaza and the region. Yes, all of the above has some rationale. At a time when the world order is disintegrating, and with India having global ambitions of its own, India's geopolitical vision should be larger, which will only help, not hinder, our economic ambitions.

Historically, one will be right to say that India provided political leadership to the Non-Aligned Movement to empower developing countries emerging from colonisation to find their voice. One might also be right to say that our multi-alignment policy of today is an equally



**T.S. Tirumurti**

was Ambassador/  
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August 2021

compelling political stand to navigate geopolitical fissures by strengthening our bilateral relations with every key country. But non-alignment was also for the Global South while multi-alignment is primarily for us.

However, when a country becomes the fifth largest economy, prides itself as a thriving democracy, aspires for a United Nations Security Council (UNSC) seat as a permanent member and also aspires to be an important pole in a multipolar world, the expectations of the international community from India only increase. India needs to do much more than take a stand or be a bystander. If in the UNSC, India claims that decisions are not credible without the participation of the world's largest democracy, then this logic applies equally to decisions taken outside the UNSC.

Mr. Putin's statement is an expression of gratitude to India's Prime Minister, who made a bold statement in his visiting Russia last year in the midst of the Ukraine war. India's decision to abstain on UNSC votes on the war, when there was considerable pressure to vote against Russia, influenced big developing countries to take a more balanced position on the war. Further, Mr. Modi had conveyed to the Russian President earlier that this is “not an era of war” and pressed him not to use nuclear arms. But Mr. Putin's statement is also a subtle encouragement to India to play a much bigger role. When India is one of the few countries with credibility which can speak to both Russia and Ukraine, should it not be on the high table?

## There is a global reset

The flip side is that if India does not meet those expectations, it is ceding space to countries such as Türkiye or Saudi Arabia or Qatar, to tackle conflicts in Europe, West Asia, Africa, or the South China Sea, where the stakes for India are high. The meeting between Ukraine and Russia in 2022 took place in Türkiye. The U.S.-Russia and U.S.-Ukraine talks that took place in Saudi Arabia recently, fit into an ambitious Saudi Arabia's version of multi-alignment. And just now, the Presidents of Rwanda and Democratic Republic of Congo met in Qatar to forge a ceasefire in eastern Congo. Further, geopolitical clout is something the Trump 2.0 administration recognises, unlike when India was ignored by its ‘strategic partner’ the U.S. during Troika Plus talks on Afghanistan, or in Bangladesh recently, in India's own neighbourhood.

Faced with a global reset, with the U.S. and parts of Europe lurching to the right, where the U.S. could downsize its engagements in some regions, particularly Europe and Asia on the one hand, and with fragmentation of trade and rising protectionism on the other, India needs to reach outdoors instead of just trying to protect its

space. Given that its adversarial relations with China are not going to vanish anytime soon and its trade deficit with China is set to increase with the supply chains closely linked, strengthening of alignments with friends in theatres outside the region is key. It becomes even more relevant when the U.S. and China move towards a “deal” which could end up dividing regions into their spheres of influence and the balance of power shifts in Asia, where the Quad (India, Japan, Australia and the U.S.) could potentially lose its strategic relevance and India comes under pressure.

## A time for a shift and also reform

This calls for regional policies, since regional policy is not just the sum of India's bilateral relations with countries in that region, be it West Asia or Central Asia. For example, India developed close bilateral relations with the Central Asian countries and important regional stakes, but downgraded its participation in the regional grouping, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. East Asia demands India's enhanced attention too, especially after its refusal to join the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). This is the time for a strategic shift towards Europe, which is under pressure. And also a time to undertake internal economic reforms to enhance India's competitiveness and meet U.S. expectations on a bilateral trade agreement, which could be the fulcrum for a broader engagement with the Trump 2.0 administration. However, being proactive in conflicts does not mean that India becomes a mediator or passes messages from one party to another. Further, waiting for warring parties or a dominant power such as America to invite India may be a prudent policy, but they will not ask India unless New Delhi conveys its readiness to be a geopolitical player committed to international peace and security.

For example, India played an important role, but not a mediatory one, in the Korean war in the UN Security Council between 1951-52 barely four years after Indian independence. The fact that India was an impoverished nation did not deter it. In recognition, it was made chair of the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission. During India's recent stint in the UNSC (2021-22), it was a bridge for divergent views.

Therefore, in a “Trumpian” world, and as the world order gets shaped in favour of the big powers, both old and new, and when there is geopolitical fragmentation, even unilateralism, let us not treat economic development and geopolitics as mutually exclusive. We need to practise multi-alignment in all its dimensions to gain the full benefits. India should use the window of Trump 2.0 and emerge as a major pole by actively shaping a disintegrating world order.

In a “Trumpian” world, India must not treat economic development and geopolitics as mutually exclusive

**Paper 02: International relation**

**UPSC Mains Practice Question: India's multi-alignment strategy has strengthened bilateral ties but limited its regional influence. Discuss.**

**Context :**

- ➔ Former Ambassador T.S. Tirumurti argues that India must expand its geopolitical role to match its economic growth and strategic aspirations.
- ➔ While India has traditionally been cautious in global conflicts, the changing world order demands a more proactive approach.

**Key Issues Highlighted in the Article**

➔ **India's Historical Geopolitical Role**

- Active interventions in the neighborhood:
  - 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War – Military action to stop genocide and create Bangladesh.
  - 1988 Maldives Operation Cactus – Prevented a coup attempt.
  - 2009 Sri Lanka Conflict – Assisted in defeating the LTTE.
  - Combating Piracy – Engaged in maritime security operations.
- Global Diplomatic Contributions:
  - Led the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) during the Cold War.
  - Played a key role in the Korean War peace process (1951-52).
  - Bridged divergent views in the UN Security Council (2021-22).

➔ **Why is India Cautious Today?**

- Economic Prioritization: Focused on GDP growth and becoming a \$5 trillion economy.
- Bilateral Sensitivities: Avoiding conflict involvement to maintain strong ties with all major powers.
- Regional Policy Gaps: Limited engagement in West Asia, Central Asia, and Africa compared to nations like Türkiye, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar.
- Lack of Proactive Diplomacy: Reluctance to propose bold initiatives in conflicts like Ukraine-Russia, Israel-Palestine, and Indo-Pacific tensions.

**Why Should India Expand Its Geopolitical Role?**

- ➔ Global Expectations: As the 5th largest economy, India must actively shape world affairs.
- ➔ UNSC Ambitions: Claiming a permanent seat in the UNSC requires active global engagement.

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## Daily News Analysis

- **Strategic Influence:** Nations like Türkiye, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia are expanding their diplomatic role—India should not cede space.
- **Emerging Global Power Vacuum:** The U.S. may reduce global engagement, requiring India to step up in Europe, West Asia, and Africa.
- **China's Challenge:** China's growing influence in global institutions and trade requires India to counterbalance through strategic alliances.

### India's Strategy Moving Forward

- **Regional Engagement:** Move beyond bilateral ties and engage with regional groupings (e.g., West Asia, Central Asia, and Africa).
- **Stronger Ties with Europe:** Europe faces economic and security challenges, offering opportunities for India.
- **Economic Reforms:** Enhance trade policies and competitiveness to strengthen relations with major partners like the U.S.
- **Geopolitical Assertion:** India should not wait for invitations but must actively shape global narratives.