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Page 01: GS 2 : International Relations

Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently met Chinese President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit in Tianjin. Both leaders underlined the importance of peace and tranquillity along the India–China border for the overall development of bilateral relations. The meeting comes at a time when both nations are facing challenges from global economic instability and protectionist trade policies of the U.S.

India, China commit to fair border solution: PM

After PM meets Xi, MEA says ready for 'reasonable and mutually acceptable' solution on the frontier

Xi says border issues should not define overall ties; he adds nations are not rivals, but cooperation partners

Foreign Secretary says India, China can stabilise world trade; leaders agree to reduce trade deficit

Vighnesh P. Venkitesh
TIANJIN

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, at his meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping on Sunday, underlined the importance of peace and tranquillity on the India-China border for continued development of bilateral relations.

Meeting on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit in the northern Chinese city of Tianjin, the two leaders agreed on the need to strengthen people-to-people ties through direct flights and visa facilitation, building on the resumption of the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra and tourist visas, amid an improving relationship between the neighbours. Mr. Xi said the border issue should not define overall relations.

"The two leaders noted with satisfaction the successful disengagement last year and the maintenance of peace and tranquillity along the border areas since then. They expressed

commitment to a fair, reasonable, and mutually acceptable resolution of the boundary question," the Ministry of External Affairs said in a statement following the meeting.

Mr. Modi called for mutual support in combating terrorism and the two leaders exchanged views on balanced bilateral trade, recognising that their economies could stabilise world trade, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said at a press briefing on Sunday night. They agreed to facilitate trade and investment ties while reducing their trade deficit, he said. They discussed the international economic situation, with Mr. Modi telling Mr. Xi that growing trade will contribute to a change in the world's perception of China, the Foreign Secretary added.

The meeting took place against the backdrop of U.S. President Donald Trump's tariff wars, with both India and China facing steep duties on their exports to the U.S., but Mr. Modi insisted that the rela-



Improved ties: Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Chinese President Xi Jinping during a meeting on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit in the Chinese city of Tianjin. PMO

tionship between India and China should not be seen through a "third-country lens".

'Positive momentum'

While the Prime Minister noted that both countries pursue strategic autonomy, the two leaders said they would expand their common ground on bilateral, regional, and global issues and challenges, such as terrorism and fair trade in multilateral platforms,

the MEA statement said.

"Had a fruitful meeting with President Xi Jinping... We reviewed positive momentum in India-China relations since our last meeting in Kazan [in Russia, in October 2024]," Mr. Modi said on X. "We agreed on maintaining peace and tranquillity in border areas and reaffirmed our commitment to cooperation based on mutual respect, mutual interest, and mutual solidarity," he added.

The two countries should work together to ensure peace and not let the border issue define their overall relations, Mr. Xi said during the bilateral meeting, adding that the "cooperative pas de deux of the dragon and the elephant should be the right choice for the two countries". China and India are not rivals, but cooperation partners, Mr. Xi said, a sentiment which echoed by Mr. Modi. Both leaders

India and China are victims of terrorism: Modi

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday told Chinese President Xi Jinping that both countries are "victims" of terrorism, and should work together to combat the "scourge". Responding to the media about whether Mr. Modi raised the issue of Pahalgam attacks, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said it was discussed during bilateral meeting. » PAGE 5

borhood First', 'Act East', and Indo-Pacific policies, the MEA said in a statement. Mr. Modi expressed the hope that the forthcoming elections in Myanmar will be held in a fair and inclusive manner. He underlined that India supports a Myanmar-led and Myanmar-owned peace process, the MEA added.

The Prime Minister also attended a banquet gala with other SCO leaders, including Russian President Vladimir Putin and Pakistani Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif.

He expressed support for China's presidency of the ongoing summit, the MEA said, indicating that he is unlikely to raise any objections to the Tianjin Declaration expected to be signed and issued on Monday. Mr. Modi also invited Mr. Xi to the BRICS summit that India will host in 2026. (The writer is in China on the invitation of the China Public Diplomacy Association)

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Main Analysis

1. Border Dispute and the Need for Peace

- Both sides expressed satisfaction with the recent disengagement and maintenance of peace along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).
- They emphasized that the boundary issue should not define the overall relationship.
- A fair, reasonable, and mutually acceptable solution was reaffirmed.

2. Bilateral Economic Cooperation

- Discussions were held on reducing trade deficit, facilitating investments, and strengthening trade ties.
- Both leaders recognized their economies' role in stabilizing global trade amid the U.S.–China tariff wars.

- Agreement to push for fair trade and multilateralism in platforms like SCO and BRICS.

3. People-to-People Connectivity

- Resumption of Kailash Mansarovar Yatra, new flight links, and visa facilitation were highlighted as steps to enhance cultural and people-to-people exchanges.

4. Security and Counter-Terrorism

- PM Modi stressed the need for mutual support in combating terrorism.
- Regional stability and security cooperation were emphasized.

5. Strategic Perspective

- Both nations reiterated their pursuit of strategic autonomy and rejected viewing ties through the lens of a “third country.”
- President Xi stated that India and China are partners, not rivals, while Modi echoed similar sentiments.
- This indicates a shift towards cooperation over competition in bilateral ties.

6. Other Dimensions

- Modi met Myanmar’s Senior General and assured India’s support under Neighborhood First and Act East Policy.
- India supported China’s SCO presidency and invited Xi Jinping to the BRICS summit in India (2026).

Conclusion

India and China, as rising Asian powers, can significantly shape regional and global order if they move beyond boundary disputes and focus on economic, cultural, and strategic cooperation. Peaceful and constructive engagement will not only strengthen bilateral ties but also promote Asian stability and a multipolar world order. However, the real challenge lies in addressing border mistrust, security concerns, and trade imbalances. If progress is made on these fronts, India–China relations can evolve into a genuine developmental partnership rather than a rivalry.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques: Analyse the recent diplomatic efforts between India and China in the context of the boundary dispute. (250 Words)

The Ramon Magsaysay Award, often regarded as Asia's Nobel Prize, was instituted in 1958 to honour individuals and organisations showcasing "greatness of spirit and transformative leadership." In 2025, **Educate Girls**, an Indian NGO, became the **first Indian non-profit organisation** to win this award, marking a milestone for India's civil society efforts in advancing gender justice in education.

NGO Educate Girls wins Ramon Magsaysay Award

It brought unschooled or out-of-school girls into classroom, and worked to keep them there until they were able to acquire credentials for higher education and employment, says foundation

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

Educate Girls, an Indian non-profit organisation working to educate unprivileged girls across the country, has been named as one of the three winners of the Ramon Magsaysay Award, 2025. The other winners are Shaahina Ali of the Maldives and Flaviano Antonio L. Villanueva of the Philippines.

Announcing the award for Educate Girls, also known as Foundation to Educate Girls Globally, the Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation said on Sunday that it was "an Indian organisation whose ground-breaking work in addressing gender injustice in education in India's most rural and remote areas creates a ripple effect that uplifts families, communities, and entire societies".

"Starting out in Rajasthan, Educate Girls identified the neediest communities in terms of girls' education, brought unschooled or out-of-school girls into the classroom, and worked to keep them there until they were able to acquire credentials for higher education and gainful employment," it said.



Bridging the gap: In this photo provided by the Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation, Safeena Husain, left, founder and Board member of the Foundation to Educate Girls, talks to a group in Rajasthan. AP

Reflecting on the milestone, Safeena Husain, the founder of Educate Girls, said, "Being the first Indian non-profit to receive the Ramon Magsaysay Award is a historic moment for Educate Girls and for the country. This recognition places a global spotlight on India's people-powered movement for girls' education, one that began with a single girl in the remotest village and grew to reshape entire communities, challenging traditions and shifting mindsets."

Acknowledging the award, Gayatri Nair Lobo,

CEO of Educate Girls, said the announcement was "historic and humbling".

Thrilling news

"Educate Girls is the first Indian organisation to win the Ramon Magsaysay Award. It is an absolutely thrilling news for us and this award belongs to our teams across the country – our *preraks*, our team *bali-ka*, the government, our donors and partners. But mostly this award belongs to our girls. Our girls who work tirelessly to get education," said Ms. Lobo in a video statement while con-

gratulating environmental activist Shaahina Ali of the Maldives and Fr. Flaviano Antonio L. Villanueva of the Philippines, who shot to fame for opposing former President Rodrigo Duterte's infamous drug war which led to widespread human rights abuse.

The Ramon Magsaysay Award was started in 1958 to celebrate "greatness of spirit and transformative leadership in Asia". Since 1958, over 300 achievers and organisations from Asia have received this award.

(With PTI inputs)

Key Analysis

1. About Educate Girls

- Founded by Safeena Husain, the organisation began its work in Rajasthan.
- Focus: enrolling out-of-school girls, preventing dropouts, and ensuring access to higher education and employability.
- Operates through grassroots volunteers such as Team Balika and Preraks.

2. Significance of the Award

- First Indian NGO to win the Magsaysay Award → international recognition for India's grassroots movement for girls' education.
- Validates efforts to address gender disparities in education, especially in remote and marginalized areas.
- Brings global attention to India's people-powered development models.

3. Impact on Society

- Ripple effect: Educating a girl leads to improved family health, reduced child marriage, better economic opportunities, and community empowerment.
- Helps in achieving India's commitments to SDG-4 (Quality Education) and SDG-5 (Gender Equality).
- Strengthens the idea of social capital through volunteer-driven movements.

4. Global Context

- Recognised alongside Shaahina Ali (Maldives) for environmental activism and Fr. Flaviano Villanueva (Philippines) for human rights work.
- Reinforces India's leadership role in grassroots social innovation in Asia.

5. Policy Relevance

- Complements government schemes like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan.
- Highlights the importance of NGO–Government–Community partnerships for social change.

Conclusion

The recognition of Educate Girls with the Ramon Magsaysay Award is not only a proud moment for India but also a reminder of the **transformative power of education in addressing gender inequality**. It shows that **community-driven, volunteer-based initiatives** can complement state efforts and bring long-lasting social change. Going forward, strengthening such grassroots models will be vital for ensuring that no child, especially no girl, is left behind in India's development journey.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Ques: Which of the following statements is correct regarding the NGO Educate Girls?

- (a) It was started in Maharashtra.
- (b) Its objective is to provide self-employment to rural women.
- (c) This NGO works to connect girls with education.
- (d) This NGO provides scholarships only for higher education.

Ans: (c)

In his recent Mann Ki Baat broadcast, Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasized the importance of adopting the “Vocal for Local” mantra to promote Atmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India). Against the backdrop of global trade tensions triggered by the U.S. tariffs on Indian goods, he urged citizens to prefer swadeshi products during the upcoming festive season, linking cultural pride with economic self-reliance.

Indians must follow ‘vocal for local’ mantra, says PM

In his monthly broadcast *Mann Ki Baat*, Modi calls for a self-reliant India, amid trade turmoil due to the U.S. tariffs; expresses anguish at the havoc caused by natural disasters in the country

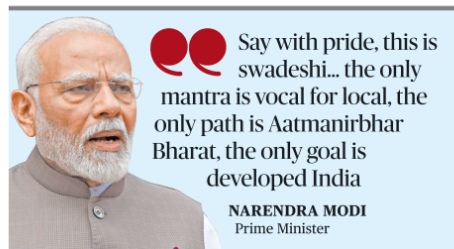
The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

P rime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday urged Indians to take pride in “swadeshi (made in India)” products as the festival season approaches. In his monthly radio address *Mann Ki Baat*, he stressed that India should follow one mantra, “Vocal for Local”; one path, “Atmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India)”; and one goal, “developed India”.

Everything that is needed in life should be swadeshi, he said, reiterating his recent appeal for the country to become self-reliant after U.S. President Donald Trump imposed a 50% tariff on Indian goods.

As different parts of the country celebrate Ganesh Chaturthi, and as Durga Puja and Deepavali approach, he said that people should not forget about swadeshi products during the festivals, while purchasing gifts, clothes, or decor items.

“Say with pride, ‘This is swadeshi’,” he said, repeating the phrase thrice. “The only mantra is vocal for local, the only path is Aatma-



nirbhar Bharat, the only goal is developed India,” he said in the concluding remarks of his monthly broadcast.

He also expressed his anguish at the havoc that natural disasters had wreaked during the rainy season. “This monsoon season, natural disasters are testing the country,” Mr. Modi said.

“At places, homes were destroyed; at others, fields were submerged; families were ruined in large numbers. Elsewhere, bridges were swept away by gushing water; roads were washed away; people’s lives were enmeshed in danger. These incidents have saddened every Indian,” he said.

The Prime Minister added that national and State emergency forces had

toiled day and night to help people. Modern technology and resources, such as thermal cameras, life detectors, sniffer dogs and drone surveillance, have been deployed in rescue and relief efforts, he said, adding that security forces, local populations, social workers, doctors, and the administration had made every possible effort in this hour of crisis.

J&K sports events

He highlighted two major events in Jammu and Kashmir amid the devastating natural calamity – the first day-night cricket match in Pulwama and a water sports festival in Srinagar.

“Not many people noticed these. But you will be happy to know about those achievements. A record number of people gath-

ered in a stadium in Pulwama... Pulwama’s first day-night cricket match was played here. Earlier this was impossible, but now my country is changing,” he said. “The second event that caught attention was the country’s first ‘Khelo India Water Sports Festival’, and that too held at Dal Lake in Srinagar. Truly, what a special place to host a festival like this.” Speaking to Mohsin Ali, who is from Jammu and Kashmir and won a gold medal, he said the youth of the region can bring glory to the country as they have so much potential.

Mr. Modi said love for the Ramayana and Indian culture was now reaching every corner of the world, noting that a 51-foot statue of Lord Ram was unveiled at Mississauga in Canada earlier this month.

A unique exhibition was held in Vladivostok, a very cold region of Russia, this month, in which paintings made by Russian children on different themes of the Ramayana were showcased. “It is indeed heartening to see the growing awareness of Indian culture in different parts of the world,” Mr. Modi said.

key Analysis

1. Economic and Strategic Context

- Rising protectionism in global trade (U.S. tariffs on Indian goods).

- Need to reduce dependence on imports and boost domestic production.
- “Vocal for Local” aligned with Make in India, Startup India, and Digital India initiatives.
- Aim: self-sufficiency + global competitiveness → pathway to becoming a developed India.

2. Cultural Dimension

- Festivals (Ganesh Chaturthi, Durga Puja, Deepavali) used as an opportunity to highlight swadeshi consumer choices.
- Emphasis on cultural pride: “Say with pride, this is swadeshi.”
- Projection of Indian culture abroad (Ramayana statue in Canada, art exhibitions in Russia).

3. Disaster Management Reference

- Modi expressed grief over the loss caused by recent monsoon floods and landslides.
- Acknowledged contributions of NDRF, SDRF, armed forces, doctors, local volunteers in rescue and relief.
- Highlighted use of modern technology (drones, thermal cameras, life detectors) in disaster response.

4. Youth and Regional Aspirations

- Recognition of sports events in Jammu & Kashmir:
 - First day-night cricket match in Pulwama.
 - Khelo India Water Sports Festival at Dal Lake.
- Message: J&K youth have immense potential to contribute to national pride.

5. Global Soft Power

- Indian traditions like the Ramayana gaining worldwide appreciation.
- Acts as a form of cultural diplomacy and enhances India’s soft power globally.

Conclusion

The Prime Minister’s call for “Vocal for Local” reflects a vision of linking economic resilience, cultural pride, and national self-reliance. By encouraging swadeshi consumption, India seeks to strengthen its domestic industries, reduce external vulnerabilities, and promote a sustainable growth path. At the same time, integrating youth empowerment, disaster resilience, and cultural diplomacy shows a holistic vision of a self-confident and globally respected India.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques : Explain the importance of Atmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India) in the backdrop of global trade tensions and rising protectionism. (150 Words)

Page 07 : GS 3 : Environment

Rising sea levels are a major consequence of global warming, posing serious threats to low-lying coastal areas and island nations. A recent study has revealed that the Maldives, Lakshadweep, and the Chagos archipelago are experiencing faster sea-level rise than previously believed, and that this acceleration began as early as the late 1950s, much earlier than conventional tide-gauge data had indicated.

Data show seas rising faster around Maldives, Lakshadweep than believed

Coral microatolls are disk-shaped colonies whose upward growth has become limited by the height of the lowest tide. As a result, the microatolls' upper surface closely reflects the lowest water levels in the area over time. These corals can survive for decades or even centuries, growing slowly in response to changing sea levels.

Neelanjana Rai

Rising seas are a major consequence of global warming, with many implications for low-lying coastal areas. Coral reefs, which are highly sensitive to their environment, are also particularly vulnerable to fluctuations in sea level. When the sea level rises, sunlight may no longer penetrate the water to reach a coral reef that it could reach before. This can lead to coral bleaching.

Changes in tide patterns and increasing coastal erosion can further stress reef ecosystems already bearing the brunt of warmer waters and ocean acidification.

Significant gaps

Monitoring sea-level rise across ocean basins has been an ongoing scientific priority. In the Indian Ocean, long-term efforts began during the Tropical Ocean Global Atmosphere programme in the Western Indian Ocean (1985-1994). These efforts were later incorporated into the Global Sea Level Observing System, which continues to support research in the region.

According to India's Ministry of Earth Sciences, the Indian Ocean's levels have been rising at around 3.3 mm/year on average, which is higher than the global average. The Ocean is also experiencing above-average warming, which can amplify changes in ocean dynamics and atmospheric circulation that in turn affect coral bleaching episodes.

This said, there are still significant gaps in sea-level records, especially in the central tropical Indian Ocean. A new study has now extended sea-level records in this region by 90 years, indicating water levels here may have started accelerating as early as the late 1950s, significantly earlier than data collected by conventional tide gauge records indicate.

Painstaking survey

In the study, a team led by Paul Kench, professor at the National University of Singapore, along with researchers from Nanyang Technological University, turned to coral microatolls, a natural structure that they found could provide high-resolution, long-term sea-level records.

Coral microatolls are disk-shaped colonies that grow sideways once their upward growth has become constrained by the height of the lowest tide. Because of this limitation, the upper surface of a microatoll closely reflects the lowest water levels in the area over time. These corals can survive for decades or even centuries, growing slowly in response to changing sea levels.



A Porites lutea microatoll off the island of Ritarun, 2009. PHILIPPE BOULON (CC BY SA)

The study was conducted on Mahitgalaa, a reef platform located in the Huvaadhoo Atoll in the Maldives. The team studied a Porites microatoll, measuring and sampling its structure to extract a sea-level history from 1950 to 2019.

The researchers painstakingly surveyed the coral's outer edge and surface elevation. Then they cut a slab from the outer edge to the centre of the microatoll and X-rayed the slab to reveal annual growth bands – much like tree rings. These bands provided a precise timeline of the coral's growth, including when it reached sea level and when it died. The team also used uranium-thorium dating to determine its historical elevation relative to the sea level.

Assumption challenged

The data the team reconstructed in this way showed that sea levels had risen by around 0.3 metres over the 90-year period. The rate of rise increased markedly over time: 14.84 mm/year in 1950-1959, 2.76-4.12 mm/year in 1960-1992, and 3.91-4.87 mm/year in 1990-2019.

Also, according to the team, sea-level rise in the region began in the late 1950s, decades earlier than previously believed.

This means the Maldives, Lakshadweep, and the Chagos archipelago have been experiencing significant rise for at least 60 years, with a total increase of 30-40 cm over the last half-century.

This data challenges the common assumption in climate change and adaptation that significant sea-level rise only began around 1990.

The new findings aim to refine projections of sea-level rise. For island nations the timing and magnitude of historic sea-level changes are essential for authorities to develop effective adaptation strategies

Since 1959, sea level in these areas has risen by about 3.2 mm/year, and over the last 20 to 30 years at around 4 mm/year.

Historical context

The coral microatoll also preserved environmental signals related to regional climate variability. Periods of slowed or interrupted growth were found to correspond with major El Niño and negative Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) events – climatic phenomena known to stress corals and lead to bleaching.

The data also revealed the influence of the 18.6-year lunar nodal cycle, where long-term oscillations in the moon's orbit affect the sizes of tides and sea levels.

The researchers noted that a critical factor in the success of its reconstruction exercise was that the study site was tectonically stable.

This stability ensures changes in the microatoll's elevation can be safely attributed to fluctuations in sea level rather than to vertical land movement.

According to Mr. Kench, while coral microatolls are not a substitute for tide gauges or satellite observations, they offer a valuable complementary approach. In remote or data-sparse regions, microatolls can provide historical context and

improve understanding of regional variability in sea-level behaviour.

Growing role

The study also highlighted notable differences in sea-level rise patterns across the Indian Ocean basin. While coastal locations have shown more recent acceleration, the central Ocean appeared to have experienced an earlier, more pronounced rise. This variation is thought to be driven by regional oceanic and atmospheric changes, including intensified Southern Hemisphere westerlies, increased ocean heat uptake, and potential shifts in the Intertropical Convergence Zone.

As research continues, coral microatolls are expected to play a growing role in helping scientists rebuild sea-level histories across tropical waters. Their potential to fill critical gaps in observational records is particularly relevant for the central Indian Ocean, "which remains one of the least-monitored basins despite its strategic and ecological importance," Mr. Kench said.

The new findings add to efforts aimed at refining projections of sea-level rise and improving preparedness in regions most at risk. For island nations, where communities and infrastructure are concentrated just above sea level, understanding the timing and magnitude of historic sea-level changes is essential for authorities to develop effective adaptation strategies.

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THE GIST

In the Indian Ocean, long-term sea-level monitoring began in 1985-1994. According to India's Ministry of Earth Sciences, the Indian Ocean has been rising at a rate of 3.3 mm/year, which is higher than the global average. The ocean is also experiencing above-average warming.

Researchers cut a slab from a microatoll and X-rayed it to reveal annual growth bands. The data showed that sea levels had risen by around 0.3 metres over 90 years.

According to the team, sea-level rise here began in the 1950s, decades earlier than previously believed.

The microatoll preserves signals on climate variability. Periods of slowed or interrupted growth corresponded with El Niño and negative Indian Ocean Dipole events. Data also revealed the influence of the lunar nodal cycle. Researchers noted that a critical factor was the tectonic stability of the site.

Main Analysis

1. Methodology: Coral Microatolls

- Researchers studied Porites microatolls, disk-shaped coral colonies whose upper growth is constrained by the lowest tide.
- The upper surface of these corals serves as a historical record of sea levels, similar to tree rings.

- Using annual growth bands and uranium-thorium dating, they reconstructed sea-level changes from 1930 to 2019.

2. Key Findings

- Sea levels rose by ~0.3 meters over 90 years in this region.
- The rate of rise increased over time:
 - 1930–1959: 1–1.84 mm/year
 - 1960–1992: 2.76–4.12 mm/year
 - 1990–2019: 3.91–4.87 mm/year
- Significant rise began in the late 1950s, challenging earlier assumptions that major rise started only around 1990.

3. Environmental and Regional Impacts

- Rising seas threaten coral reefs, coastal erosion, and island ecosystems.
- Microatolls recorded effects of El Niño and negative Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) events.
- Long-term lunar cycles (18.6-year nodal cycle) were found to influence tides and sea levels.

4. Scientific and Strategic Importance

- Central Indian Ocean is data-sparse, making microatolls crucial for long-term sea-level records.
- Provides historical context for climate adaptation and disaster preparedness in vulnerable island and coastal communities.
- Insights into regional oceanic and atmospheric changes, including ocean heat uptake and Intertropical Convergence Zone shifts.

Conclusion

The study highlights that sea-level rise in the Maldives, Lakshadweep, and Chagos has been ongoing for over six decades and is accelerating. Coral microatolls provide valuable historical data in regions where conventional monitoring is limited. Understanding the timing and magnitude of past sea-level changes is critical for effective climate adaptation strategies, coastal planning, and disaster resilience, particularly for island nations and low-lying coastal areas highly vulnerable to climate change.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques: Discuss the causes and impacts of accelerating sea-level rise in the Maldives, Lakshadweep, and Chagos Archipelago. How can this information aid in policymaking and disaster management? (150 words)

Page 10 : GS 2 : Indian Polity

The Supreme Court has recently sought a detailed response from the Union Government regarding the **restoration of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir (J&K)**. This follows the abrogation of **Articles 370 and 35A** in 2019, the reorganisation of J&K into a Union Territory, and the subsequent Legislative Assembly elections in 2024. The issue raises significant questions about **India's federal structure, constitutional provisions for state formation, and the balance of power between the Centre and States**.

The importance of India's federal design

What is the status of the demand to restore statehood to Jammu and Kashmir? What are the processes enshrined in the Constitution of India for creating States? How are States reorganised? Have Legislative Assembly elections been held in J&K?

EXPLAINER

C. B. P. Srivastava

The story so far:

The Supreme Court has recently sought a detailed response from the Centre on the issue of restoration of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir. Considering the significance of the principle of the separation of powers, the top court rightly said that it did not possess all the expertise and that there are some decisions to be made by the government. The court is hearing the plea in *Zahoor Ahmed Bhat versus UT of Jammu and Kashmir*. It has been argued that the failure to restore statehood to Jammu and Kashmir is affecting the rights of the citizens there. Another argument in this context is that it is also violating the essential features of federalism and thereby the basic structure of the Constitution.

How are States created?

There are three processes enshrined in the Constitution of India for creating States – admission, establishment and formation. For admission of a new State into the territory of India, the entity should have its own organised political unit. It is also required that admission through acquisition shall be guided by international law. This was the process by which Jammu and Kashmir was admitted into India's territory through the Instrument of Accession in 1947. By executing this Instrument under the provisions of the Indian Independence Act, 1947, the then ruler of Kashmir, Maharaja Hari Singh agreed to accede his State to India.

For establishing a new State, territory shall be acquired as per the definition of acquisition in international law. India acquired Goa and Sikkim and established them as States.

The process of forming a new State has been, in fact, the reorganisation of an



For the federation: Congress workers participate in a protest march demanding the restoration of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir, in Jammu, on July 20. PTI

existing State which led India to take its number of 14 States in 1956 to 29 States before the enactment of the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019. Article 3 of the Constitution provides for this process of reorganisation wherein Parliament may by law – form a new State by separation of territory from any State or by uniting two or more States or parts of States or by uniting any territory to a part of any State; increase the area of any State; diminish the area of any State; alter the boundaries of any State; or alter the name of any State. However, while the Union may diminish the area of a State, it cannot take it away by making it a Union Territory. This would be a step against the

federal features of India. Therefore, it is mandatory for the Union to restore the statehood of Jammu and Kashmir. It may wait for sometime depending upon the situation at the ground level.

What about India's federal design?

India has been made a Union of States which means that it is indivisible and that States have no right to secede. This provision in Article 1 may be interpreted in the sense that the word 'India' reflects a unitary federation while the word 'Bharat' is a cultural connotation which signifies that India has a composite culture and that there is unity in diversity. Despite being a two-tier system of

governance, the word 'federation' is not used but rather 'Union' is written expressly. The idea behind this unique feature is to ensure India's federal character and unitary spirit. This design is in tandem with the philosophy of the Constitution. While the express use of the word 'Union' makes the Centre strong enough to protect the unity and integrity of the nation, the federal character is created to equitably distribute the resources establishing India as a welfare state. This is the reason that India's federal character has been included in the Basic Structure of the Constitution. Without a federal design, India's union would lose its existence. Hence, the Rajya Sabha has been made a permanent House in Article 83 (1) which writes that it shall not be subject to dissolution. The States' representation must always be there at the Union level to maintain and sustain India's unitary federation. Thus, it is imperative that the statehood of Jammu and Kashmir be restored to protect the sanctity of federation.

What next?

To recall, on December 11, 2023, the Supreme Court upheld the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35 A, and also directed the Union Government to restore the statehood of Jammu and Kashmir and hold Legislative Assembly elections. Elections for the 90-member Assembly were held in October 2024, but there has not been any hint so far from the Government to restore the statehood as asked by the Court.

Critics may point out that restoration of statehood would definitely empower the elected government in Jammu and Kashmir and that the powers of the Lieutenant Governor would be curtailed affecting the present position of the Union over the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. If this is to be agreed, it would be inconsistent with the constitutional design of India and would definitely erode its federal features.

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THE GIST

The Supreme Court has recently sought a detailed response from the Centre on the issue of restoration of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir.

There are three processes enshrined in the Constitution of India for creating States – admission, establishment and formation.

Despite being a two-tier system of governance, the word 'federation' is not used but rather 'Union' is written expressly. The idea behind this unique feature is to ensure India's federal character and unitary spirit.

Main Analysis

1. Constitutional Processes for Creating States

- Admission: Integration of a new territory into India (e.g., J&K's accession in 1947 via Instrument of Accession).
- Establishment: Acquisition of territory according to international law (e.g., Goa, Sikkim).

- Formation/Reorganisation: Altering boundaries, merging, separating, or renaming States under Article 3 of the Constitution.
- Parliament may reorganise a State's territory but cannot unilaterally convert a State into a Union Territory, as this would violate federal principles.

2. Federal Design of India

- India is a Union of States (Article 1) — indivisible, with no right of secession.
- While the Constitution does not explicitly use the word 'federation,' the two-tier governance system ensures a federal character with a strong Centre.
- Features like the permanent Rajya Sabha (Article 83) guarantee State representation at the Union level, reinforcing federalism within a unitary framework.
- Federalism is part of the Basic Structure of the Constitution, making state autonomy essential to India's constitutional design.

3. J&K Statehood Issue

- Supreme Court upheld the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A but directed the restoration of statehood and Legislative Assembly elections.
- Legislative Assembly elections were held in October 2024; however, statehood has not yet been restored.
- Delay raises concerns over federal principles, citizen rights, and decentralisation of power.
- Critics argue that restoring statehood would reduce the powers of the Lieutenant Governor, empowering the elected government and ensuring constitutional federalism.

4. Significance for Governance

- Restoring statehood ensures constitutional fidelity, equitable resource distribution, and political representation.
- It also reinforces India's unique federal-unitary balance, preventing erosion of federal features while maintaining national unity.

Conclusion

The restoration of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir is not merely a political issue but a constitutional imperative to preserve India's federal design. By adhering to Article 3 and respecting the principles of representation, autonomy, and decentralisation, the Union ensures that federalism remains a core feature of governance, safeguarding both the unity and diversity of India. Failure to restore statehood risks undermining the constitutional balance and weakening the democratic voice of the people of J&K.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques: Discuss the constitutional processes for creating and reorganising States in India. How do these processes reflect the federal character of the Constitution? (150 words)

Page : 08 Editorial Analysis

India's economic churn, the nectar of growth

Indian civilisation has long believed that trial precedes triumph. Like the churning of the ocean, *Samudra Manthan*, where turbulence yielded nectar, our economic churns have always produced renewal. From the crisis of 1991 came liberalisation and from the COVID-19 pandemic came a digital surge. And, today, from the cacophony of doubters calling India a “dead economy” emerges the fact-rich story of resilience: faster growth, stronger buffers, and broader opportunity.

The economic data-energy security link

Consider the latest GDP numbers. Real GDP grew 7.8% in Q1 FY 2025-26, a five-quarter high. Crucially, this growth is broad-based: Gross Value Added is up 7.6%, with manufacturing 7.7%, construction 7.6%, and services approximately 9.3%. Nominal GDP expanded 8.8%. This is not an arbitrary spike – it reflects rising consumption, robust investment, and the payoff from steady public capex and logistics reforms that reduce costs across the economy.

India is now the world's fourth-largest economy, and the fastest-growing major one, outpacing even the first and second largest, the United States and China. On present trajectories, India is poised to overtake Germany and become the third-largest economy in market exchange terms before the decade ends. India's momentum matters globally; independent estimates show that India already contributes over 15% of incremental world growth. The Prime Minister has set a clear ambition – raising India's share toward 20% as reform deepens and new capacity comes online.

Markets and rating agencies have recognised this discipline. S&P Global delivered India's first sovereign rating upgrade in 18 years, citing robust growth, monetary credibility and fiscal consolidation. That upgrade lowers borrowing costs and widens the investor base. It also punctures the “dead economy” narrative: independent assessors of risk have voted with their ratings.

Equally important is who benefits. Between 2013-14 and 2022-23, 24.82 crore Indians moved out of multidimensional poverty. That shift rides on basic-services delivery at scale – bank accounts, clean cooking fuel, health cover, tap water – and on direct transfers that empower the poor to make choices. This scale of growth amid the world's most vibrant democracy and with remarkable demographic challenges is distinctive. India's model values consensus-building, competitive federalism, and last-mile delivery through digital rails. It is slower to announce, faster to implement, and built to last. When critics compare us to authoritarian sprints, they miss the point: India is building a marathoner's economy.

As India's Petroleum Minister, this writer can attest to how India's energy security supports this rapid growth. India, today, stands as the third



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largest energy consumer, fourth largest refiner, and fourth largest liquefied natural gas importer in the world. India operates over 5.2 million barrels per day of refining capacity, with a clear road map to expand beyond 400 million tonnes per annum by the end of the decade.

India's energy demand, which is projected to double by 2047, will account for nearly a quarter of incremental global demand, making India's success central to global energy stability. The government's approach has been to combine security with reform. Exploration acreage has expanded from 8% of sedimentary basins in 2021 to over 16% in 2025, with a target of covering one million square kilometres by 2030. The drastic reduction of so-called ‘No-Go’ areas by 99% has unlocked vast potential, while the Open Acreage Licensing Policy (OALP) ensures transparent and competitive bidding. New gas pricing reforms linking prices to the Indian crude basket and offering 20% premiums for deepwater and new wells have spurred investment.

A story of energy transition

India's energy story is not only about hydrocarbons; it is also about transition. Ethanol blending has surged from 1.5% in 2014 to 20% today, saving over ₹1.25 lakh crore in foreign exchange and paying more than ₹1 lakh crore directly to farmers. Over 300 compressed biogas plants are being rolled out under Sustainable Alternative Towards Affordable Transportation, with a 5% blending mandate targeted by 2028. Oil public sector units (PSU) are leading the charge in green hydrogen.

Much heat has been generated in some quarters about India's purchase of Russian crude. Let us separate fact from noise. Russian oil has never been sanctioned like Iranian or Venezuelan crude; it is under a G-7/European Union price cap system deliberately designed to keep oil flowing while capping revenues. There have been 18 rounds of such packages, and India has complied with each one. Every transaction has used legal shipping and insurance, compliant traders and audited channels. India has not broken rules. India has stabilised markets and kept global prices from spiralling.

Some critics allege that India has become a “laundromat” for Russian oil. Nothing could be further from the truth. India has been the fourth-largest exporter of petroleum products for decades – long before the Ukraine conflict – and its refiners process a basket of crudes from across the globe. Exports keep supply chains functioning. Indeed, Europe itself turned to Indian fuels after banning Russian crude. The volume of exports and refining margins – Gross Refining Margins or GRMs – remains broadly the same. There is no question of profiteering.

Equally important, India acted decisively to shield its citizens when global prices spiked after the Ukraine conflict. Oil PSUs absorbed losses of up to ₹10 per litre on diesel; the government cut

central and State taxes and export rules mandated that refiners selling petrol and diesel abroad must sell at least 50% of petrol and 30% of diesel in the domestic market.

These measures, at considerable fiscal cost, ensured that not a single retail outlet ran dry and that Indian households saw stable prices. The larger truth is this – there is no substitute for the world's second-largest producer supplying nearly 10% of global oil. Those who are pointing fingers ignore this fact. India's adherence to all international norms prevented a catastrophic \$200-per-barrel shock, aligning with its civilisational values of *Vasudheiva Kutumbakam*.

It is the same, ‘Made in India’ for the world vision that shapes the new industrial revolution taking shape in India. This spans semiconductors, electronics, renewables, defence and speciality chemicals powered by production linked incentives and the Pradhan Mantri Gati Shakti logistics backbone. The momentum in semiconductors is now reaching a new scale – a testament to policy seriousness and execution. The Cabinet recently approved four additional semiconductor manufacturing projects under the India Semiconductor Mission. The Prime Minister's visit to a semiconductor facility in Japan, on August 30, 2025, and renewed Japanese investment commitments, underline a shared road map for resilient, trusted tech supply chains.

The digital economy multiplies these gains. India leads the world in real-time payments; the Unified Payments Interface's ubiquity raises productivity for small businesses, and India's startup ecosystem is translating innovation into exports of services and solutions. When digital rails meet hard infrastructure, the effect is compounding – lower friction, higher formalisation, and a virtuous circle of investment and consumption.

India's scoreboard has the answers

The arc ahead is promising. Independent projections (EY) suggest that by 2038, India could emerge as the world's second-largest economy in purchasing power parity (PPP) terms, with a GDP above \$34 trillion. This trajectory rests on steady reforms, human capital and abundant, clean, reliable energy for every enterprise and household.

The test of a great civilisation lies in its crucible moments. When doubted in the past, India responded with Green Revolutions, IT Revolutions, and the quiet dignity of millions lifting themselves through education and enterprise. Today's moment is no different. India will keep its gaze steady, its reforms relentless, and its growth rapid, democratic, and inclusive – so that the benefits reach the most underserved. To the naysayers, the scoreboard is the answer. Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, Viksit Bharat is not an aspiration. It is a deliverable – and the numbers are simply the latest chapter in that larger story.

India's fact-rich story of resilience, growth and energy security will silence the ‘global doubters’ who call it a ‘dead economy’

GS. Paper 03- Indian Economy

UPSC Mains Practice Question: India has consistently turned crises into opportunities for growth.” In light of this, analyse India's economic resilience post-1991 and post-COVID-19. (150 words)

Context :

India's economy has consistently demonstrated resilience in the face of crises. From the 1991 liberalisation to the digital surge post-COVID-19, India has turned challenges into growth opportunities. Recent data shows that India is not only the world's fastest-growing major economy but also expanding inclusively, with strong buffers, energy security, and structural reforms supporting sustained growth.

Main Analysis

1. Current Economic Performance

- GDP Growth: Real GDP at 7.8% in Q1 FY 2025-26, the highest in five quarters. Broad-based growth: manufacturing 7.7%, construction 7.6%, services ~9.3%.
- Nominal GDP: 8.8% growth reflects rising consumption, robust investment, and returns from public capex and logistics reforms.
- India contributes over 15% of incremental global growth, expected to rise toward 20% as reforms deepen.

2. Energy Security and Infrastructure

- India is the third-largest energy consumer, fourth-largest refiner, and fourth-largest LNG importer globally.
- Expansion plans: refining capacity to exceed 400 million tonnes per annum by decade-end; exploration acreage doubled from 8% (2021) to 16% (2025).
- Energy transition initiatives: ethanol blending (1.5% → 20%), compressed biogas plants, green hydrogen projects.
- Policy ensures compliance with international norms while stabilising domestic prices, especially during global oil shocks.

3. Inclusive Growth and Social Impact

- Between 2013-14 and 2022-23, 24.82 crore people lifted out of multidimensional poverty.
- Growth supported by direct transfers, financial inclusion, health, energy access, and digital services.
- India's model focuses on consensus-building, competitive federalism, last-mile delivery, and long-term sustainable reforms rather than quick authoritarian-style interventions.

4. Industrial and Digital Transformation

- Industrial sectors: semiconductors, electronics, renewables, defence, speciality chemicals supported by PLI schemes and Gati Shakti infrastructure.
- Digital economy: UPI-led real-time payments, startup ecosystem boosting exports of services and solutions.
- Combined hard infrastructure and digital rails create a virtuous cycle of investment, consumption, and formalisation.

5. Global Recognition and Outlook

- S&P Global upgraded India's sovereign rating, lowering borrowing costs and expanding investor base.
- Projections suggest India could be the second-largest economy by PPP by 2038, exceeding \$34 trillion GDP.
- Growth is inclusive, sustainable, and democratic, ensuring benefits reach underserved populations.

Conclusion

India's economic journey reflects the Samudra Manthan philosophy — turbulence yielding renewal. Strong macroeconomic fundamentals, energy security, inclusive growth, digital adoption, and industrial transformation have positioned India as a resilient, fast-growing global economy. Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, Viksit Bharat is not a distant aspiration but an achievable reality, with data and reforms confirming India's rise on the global stage.
