

The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE

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—It's about quality—

The recent visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the U.S. included bilateral discussions with President Donald Trump in Washington.

India, U.S. to double bilateral trade by 2030

The two sides aim at negotiating the first part of the mega deal this year as they agree on a broad agenda for trade, defence and technology; Trump announces that his administration has cleared way for extradition of 26/11 accused Tahawwur Rana; he calls India's tariffs 'unfair' and a 'problem', agrees to negotiations to reduce the deficit

Sriram Lakshman
WASHINGTON DC

India and the U.S. agreed to negotiate the first segment of a trade agreement by the autumn of 2025, with India looking to increase energy purchases from the U.S. to address U.S. President Donald Trump's concerns about the U.S.'s trade deficit with India, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi met Mr. Trump for bilateral discussions in Washington.

Mr. Trump announced that his administration had cleared the way for the extradition of Tahawwur Rana, wanted in India in connection with the '26/11' terrorist attack in Mumbai, in 2008. The logistics of Rana's surrender and extradition to India are being worked out, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri told presspersons on Thursday evening at a briefing.

The U.S. President also offered to "help" India

with its border issue with China.

In terms of defence, the U.S. was "paving the way to ultimately provide India with F-35 stealth fighters", Mr. Trump said.

The delegates met for around four hours on Thursday. Attendees included External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri, National Security Adviser Ajit Doval and others.

The joint statement by the U.S. and India covered a range of topics: defence, trade, energy, technology, multilateral cooperation and people-to-people ties. The two sides agreed to more than double bilateral trade to \$500 billion by 2030, as part of 'Mission 500'. The Prime Minister and President first met at the Oval Office where they spoke of their friendship.

Mr. Modi told Mr. Trump that, like him, he kept the national interest



Power point: Prime Minister Narendra Modi with U.S. President Donald Trump during a meeting at the White House in Washington DC on Thursday. PTI

at the top of his mind, as he compared Mr. Trump's 'Make America Great Again (MAGA)' theme to his 'Viksit Bharat' (developed India) theme.

Standing beside Mr. Modi in the East Room at a joint press conference, Mr. Trump called India's tariffs "unfair" and a "problem". Earlier in the day, the President had announced a broad policy for reciprocal

tariffs, specifically citing Indian tariffs during the signing of the order.

Asked by *The Hindu* whether Mr. Trump would withhold reciprocal tariffs given that a trade negotiation has been announced, Mr. Misri did not have a definitive answer, saying he did not want to get ahead of the discussions.

At the joint press conference, Mr. Trump said the

U.S. pushes for more defence deals in India

NEW DELHI

The U.S. will be increasing military sales to India "by many billions of dollars" starting this year, President Donald Trump said on Thursday at the joint press conference with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while also offering the F-35 fifth generation fighter jet, to India. » PAGE 4

two sides had agreed to negotiations to reduce the deficit. Mr. Trump said the deficit could be made up with the sale of American oil and gas (LNG) to India.

To strengthen oil trade

"We will strengthen the oil and gas trade to ensure India's energy security. Investment in energy infrastructure will also increase," Mr. Modi said in

his opening remarks.

The Foreign Secretary suggested that India could increase its energy purchases from the U.S. from \$15 billion last year to \$25 billion "in the near future". The two countries also agreed to work on Small Modular (nuclear) Reactors for India.

The two countries announced a framework of cooperation, the U.S.-India COMPACT (Catalysing Opportunities for Military Partnership, Accelerated Commerce & Technology) for the 21st Century.

They also announced a decade-long framework to deepen defence cooperation, including the procurement of six additional P-8I Maritime Patrol aircraft for India for surveillance of the Indian Ocean Region.

While the joint statement finds no mention of the co-production of General Electric F-414 engines for India's Light Combat

Aircraft-MK2, a White House official confirmed for *The Hindu* that the U.S. "looked forward" to the conclusion of the deal between General Electric and Hindustan Aeronautics Limited on the engines.

The two sides will reopen negotiations for a Reciprocal Defence Procurement (RDP) agreement to align their procurement systems and reconsider their arms transfer regimes. Specifically, the U.S. would look into its International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR) rules to enable transfers of military technology.

The countries announced the scaling up of production and partnerships in the Indo-Pacific for underwater domain awareness technologies, under a new initiative called the Autonomous Systems Industry Alliance.

ENERGY PARTNERSHIP
» PAGE 4

- ➔ Their talks focused on trade, defence, energy cooperation, and strategic partnerships.

Trade Negotiations and Energy Cooperation

- ➔ India and the U.S. have agreed to negotiate the first part of a trade agreement by autumn 2025.
- ➔ India aims to increase energy purchases from the U.S. to address concerns about the trade deficit.
- ➔ The two countries have set a target to more than double bilateral trade to \$500 billion by 2030 under 'Mission 500'.
- ➔ India is expected to increase its energy imports from the U.S. from \$15 billion to \$25 billion in the near future.
- ➔ Both nations have agreed to collaborate on Small Modular (nuclear) Reactors to strengthen India's energy security.

Border Issue with China

- The U.S. President has offered to assist India in managing its border tensions with China.

Defence Cooperation and Military Sales

- The U.S. is working towards providing India with F-35 stealth fighter jets in the future.
- A new decade-long framework for defence cooperation has been announced.
- India will procure six additional P-8I Maritime Patrol aircraft to improve surveillance in the Indian Ocean Region.
- The U.S. and India will reopen talks on a Reciprocal Defence Procurement (RDP) agreement to align their defence procurement systems.
- The U.S. will review its International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR) to facilitate military technology transfers to India.
- The two sides announced the U.S.-India COMPACT (Catalysing Opportunities for Military Partnership, Accelerated Commerce & Technology) framework to strengthen cooperation in defence, commerce, and technology.

Technology and Indo-Pac Security Cooperation

- A new initiative, the Autonomous Systems Industry Alliance, has been launched to enhance underwater domain awareness technologies in the Indo-Pac.
- The U.S. and India will scale up joint production and partnerships in the Indo-Pac region.

Conclusion

- The bilateral discussions covered a wide range of topics, including defence, trade, energy, and technology.
- Both countries are working towards strengthening economic ties while addressing security and geopolitical concerns.
- The agreements mark a significant step in deepening India-U.S. cooperation for the future.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques : Evaluate the significance of India-U.S. cooperation in trade, defense, and energy for regional stability and global strategic balance. **(150 Words /10 marks)**

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar questioned the legal basis of the Chief Justice's role in appointing the CBI Director and emphasized the need to revisit executive-judiciary relations.

Vice-President questions involvement of Chief Justice in executive appointments

The Hindu Bureau
BHOPAL

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Friday questioned the legal rationale behind the Chief Justice of India being involved with executive appointments like that of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) Director.

Speaking at the National Judicial Academy in Bhopal, Mr. Dhankhar said, "How can in a country like ours or in any democracy, by statutory prescription, Chief Justice of India participates in the selection of the CBI director! Can there be any legal rationale for it? I can appreciate that the statutory prescription took shape because the executive of the day has yielded to a judicial verdict. But time has come to revisit. This surely does not merge with democracy."

He remarked that executive governance by a judi-



Jagdeep Dhankhar

cial decree is a "Constitutional paradox".

"Executive governance by judicial decree is a Constitutional paradox that the largest democracy on the planet cannot afford any longer. When institutions forget their bounds, democracy is remembered by the wounds this forgetfulness imparts. The Constitution envisions harmony, synergetic approach to be in sync, surely. A concert of chaos was never in the contemplation of the founding fathers of the Constitution. Constitution-

al consultation without institutional coordination is mere constitutional tokenism," he said.

He also said that the judiciary's public presence must be "primarily through judgements" and that any other mode of expression "avoidably undermines institutional dignity". "With the total command that I have, I exercise restraint to assert. I seek revisitation of the present state of affairs so that we get back to the groove, a groove that can give sublimity to our judiciary. When we look around the globe, we never find judges reflecting the way we see here on all issues," Mr. Dhankhar added.

He also raised concerns over the strength of Constitutional Benches of the Supreme Court, adding that there could be no "arrogation of authority" in the guise of interpreting the Constitution.

Arguments in Favour of the Chief Justice's Role in CBI Director's Appointment

- **Ensures Judicial Oversight:** The Chief Justice's involvement prevents arbitrary executive decisions, ensuring fairness in key appointments.
- **Checks and Balances:** This maintains a balance of power between the executive and judiciary, preventing excessive government control over investigative agencies.
- **Protects Investigative Independence:** A judicial presence safeguards CBI from political influence, ensuring impartial investigations.
- **Precedent-Based System:** The practice was introduced following judicial intervention to uphold transparency and fairness.
- **Democratic Safeguard:** In a democracy, multi-institutional participation prevents any one branch from overpowering others.

Arguments Against the Chief Justice's Role in CBI Director's Appointment

- **Separation of Powers:** Judiciary's involvement in executive decisions contradicts the principle of separation of powers.
- **Judicial Overreach:** It may lead to excessive judicial interference in administrative matters.
- **Accountability Issues:** The executive, not the judiciary, is directly accountable to the people for governance.
- **Delays in Appointment Process:** Legal complexities and judicial scrutiny can slow down the selection of crucial officers.
- **Global Practices Differ:** In most democracies, investigative agency appointments are handled solely by the executive or legislature.

UPSC Mains PYQ : 2023

Ques : Constitutionally guaranteed judicial independence is a prerequisite of democracy. Comment. **(150 Words /10 marks)**

Page 09 : Prelims Fact

The news highlights a bamboo variety named Konda Veduru and its importance to tribal communities of Andhra Pradesh.



Safeguarding cultural inheritances: (Clockwise) An elderly Konda Reddi woman hangs some freshly collected tender bamboo shoots to dry at Dumpapalasa village in ASR district of Andhra Pradesh; Konda Sambhu takes out a few dry bamboo shoots he saved to cook his favourite traditional fish curry; Bamboo shoots hung to dry in the verandah of a Konda Reddi household in Dumpapalasa; Pallala Boddu Reddi shows a fishing basket he crafted with bamboo. T. APPALA NAIDU

Guardians of 'green gold'

Konda Reddi women set out on a quest for tender shoots of a species of bamboo endemic to the Godavari Valley forests during the monsoon. *Konda Veduru*, known for its rich nutritional value, gained popularity post-COVID-19 when many started exploring healthy food options. However, the recipes of a myriad of delicacies made with the 'green gold' the tribe prepares to celebrate the onset of summer remains its well-kept secret, writes **T. Appala Naidu**

It's January 31, a Friday. As the clock struck eight, Konda Sambhu Reddy, 62, puts on his off-white dhoti and a wrinkled white shirt to go to the weekly shandy. He steps out of his wooden hut and checks the dried bamboo shoots hanging on a string in the verandah. The weakened current of the stream flowing close by his hut brings a smile on his face as he knows that it is an indicator of the onset of summer.

Sambhu brings home the best fish available at the shandy to cook and relish his tribe's ancient delicacy. "We welcome summer with the delicacy made of the fish caught in our stream and the dry bamboo shoots. This is our unique tradition, a cherished memory of our Konda Reddi tribe that has been passed on for generations," he says.

Nearly 50 Konda Reddi families live in Aluri Stararama Raju (ASR) district's Aaku Maamidhi Kota village, where the biggest weekly shandies on the tri-State border of Andhra Pradesh, Odisha and Chhattisgarh are held.

"Preparing dishes with bamboo shoots to welcome the summer is not a community affair. However, every family enjoys cooking and eating them the catch of fish and prawn are abundant in our stream at the beginning of the summer," says Sambhu's son Nag Reddy, 35.

"Our tribe collects and consumes the tender shoots of the *Konda Veduru* bamboo variety (*Dendrocalamus strictus*), which grows only on the hill plains," he says.

After dropping out of college in his final year of B.Sc., he assists his father in commercial agriculture, primarily cultivating Annato, a seed used in lipstick production.

The Konda Reddi tribe is a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) located in the Godavari Valley of Andhra Pradesh. Women in this tribe have a high fertility rate, with most having more than five children. As of 2024, a Konda Reddi woman from Muntha Maamidhi village in the Mare-dumilli Agency of Aluri Stararama Raju district, holds the record for the highest number of children—11 in total.

Sambhu lives in Aaku Maamidhi Kota village, nearly 27 kilometres deep inside the Mare-dumilli forest cover on the ancient Rampu Malkangiri tribal trade route, which is still a stronghold of left Wing Extremist (LWE) Groups in India's Red Corridor spreading along the Sabari-Sileru Godavari rivers.

A prized catch
The *Konda Veduru* is considered a prized catch by the Konda Reddis.

Native to South Asia, *Konda Veduru* occupies more than 52% of India's total area under bamboo. It is also extensively used by the Konda Reddi and Koya tribes of the Godavari Valley to make musical instruments.

Konda Veduru is the dominant species among the eight bamboo species spread over 2.25 lakh

hectares in the Valley. It spreads across more than half of the total area," says R. Srinivas, State Silviculturist of the Regional Forest Research Centre, Rajamahendravaram. Most of the area under *Konda Veduru* species grows naturally.

The Konda Reddis strictly adhere to one precaution: boiling bamboo shoots, fresh or dry, before adding them to any dish. "Boiling the bamboo shoots is a must. We can eat them by adding some red chilli and salt. This is the easiest recipe of *Konda Veduru*," says Pallala Santhia, an elderly woman and mother of five, from Perika Valasa, 15 km from Aaku Maamidhi Kota.

"Every season, we serve food made of bamboo shoots for all—children, pregnant women, and even lactating mothers in our families. We believe that *Konda Veduru* has various health and nutritional benefits. It is one of the staple foods naturally available in our forest," adds Bojjamma.

Classified as Non-Timber Forest Produce (NTFP), the tribals are entitled to collect any bamboo species in the Valley. They are also entitled to collect it from the Reserve Forests for their dietary, economic, and household purposes.

It is hard to find a Konda Reddi household that doesn't preserve bamboo shoots for consumption during winter and summer. "Our extensive search for bamboo shoots lasts eight weeks, between July and August. The shoots that come up during the first spell of rain are collected, and a large portion of the collection is consumed during the monsoon itself," adds Bojjamma, boasting that it is only the women in the tribe that venture into the forest and collect the bamboo shoots in the early hours to collect the shoots.

Gourmet meal
Renowned Anthropologist Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf has observed in his book, *The Reddis of Biron Hills (1945)*: "During the heavy rains of the south-west monsoon edible herbs spring up all over the jungle and are eaten boiled both in gruel and curries...the women cut larger quantities of the new shoots of bamboo and, peeling off the outer skin, grate the tender stem with a small knife before cooking". Haimendorf had stayed with the Konda Reddi tribes in the Godavari valley.

Eight decades after Haimendorf visited the Godavari Valley, despite the advent of many changes in their lifestyles and exposure to the mainstream, the Konda Reddis continue to consume bamboo shoots as they firmly believe in its health benefits.

Meanwhile, upon learning about its nutritional value and savouriness, other tribes and non-

tribes have also begun to consume *Konda Veduru*. The Konda Reddis prepare a range of dishes with bamboo shoots, commonly known as Kommu koota, in which shoots are mixed with daal, cereals, chicken, and mutton.

Konda Reddi woman Pallala Santhia, 40, of Perika Valasa village, says, "In summer, we treat our guests with dishes made with bamboo shoots as a mark of high regard for them, and they also enjoy the food and look forward to the next lunch invitation."

She adds that some portions of tender shoots are sent to non-tribal friends during the monsoon. "The nutritional value of the *Konda Veduru* has been evaluated by R. Nongdam and Leimipokpam Tikendin of the Department of Biotechnology, researchers from Manipur University. They published a paper: 'The Nutritional Facts of Bamboo Shoots and Their Usage as Important Traditional Foods of Northeast India'."

According to the paper, 100 grams of freshly harvested shoots of *Dendrocalamus strictus* contains 3.07 grams of amino acids, 2.69 grams of protein, 6.17 grams of carbohydrates, 0.33 grams of fat, 2.26 grams of fibre, 2.43 mg of Vitamin C, 0.58 mg of Vitamin E, traces of calcium, phosphorus and 2.19 mg iron.

The Indian Food Composition Tables (ICFT-2017), released by the National Institute of Nutrition (INI-Hyderabad) of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), has listed *Konda Veduru* as edible in the vegetable food category.

On the nutritional value and health benefits of *Konda veduru*, R. Ananthan, Scientist E, Food Chemistry and Nutrient Analysis Wing of the National Institute of Nutrition, Hyderabad, told *The Hindu*: "Bamboo shoots are widely consumed as edible food across North East India. It has a lot of nutritional benefits."

In the North East, the local communities cook bamboo shoots as vegetables and prepare pickles for preservation and consumption.

The bamboo species in South India may be different from those of the North East, and nutritional values of every species are different from the other," says Ananthan, one of the authors of

the ICFT-2017. Over the decades, the local tribes, Koya in particular, and tribes who migrated from neighbouring Odisha and Chhattisgarh and settled in the Godavari Valley have also adopted bamboo shoots in the cuisine. The Konda Reddis, however, have better access to the *Konda Veduru* variety as they inhabit the hills slopes and Biron Hill Range of the Eastern Ghats.

Embraced novelty
The Konda, who migrated from Odisha in the 1970s and the Murias (Gatti Koyas), who migrated from Chhattisgarh in the early 2000s, slowly began to collect and consume bamboo shoots. This escalated the demand for bamboo shoots among the tribals of the Godavari region.

Venkatesh Janturi, secretary of Jana Vikas Society NGO, says: "Post-COVID-19, however, the demand for bamboo shoots has increased manifold among non-tribals also as they learned about its nutritional and health benefits. During monsoon season, the Konda Reddis sell the bamboo shoots in the weekly shandies."

But the non-tribals have yet to find an authentic delicacy prepared with bamboo shoots. They are now asking tender bamboo shoots to their regular vegetarian dishes.

Bamboo spreads over 82,000 hectares in the Chittoor Forest Division, with *Konda Veduru* as the prime species as claimed by the Forest Department.

Along a non-tribe, we too, consume the bamboo shoots. However, the taste of the Konda Reddi delicacies prepared with bamboo shoots is unique," says Venkatesh.

"Today, a bundle of four bamboo shoots costs ₹20 in the tribal shandies of the Godavari region and Chhattisgarh's Kunta shandy, the biggest tribal shandy in Central India.

Commercial viability
In early February 2025, the Forest Department consented to collect and auction five-foot-long *Konda Veduru* sticks meant for curing, a post-harvesting stage in tobacco farming. Tobacco growers say the bamboo sticks will withstand heat above 100 degrees Celsius in this stage.

"In the first week of February, we have signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Virginia Tobacco Farmers Association (VTFA, Godavari Region) to supply an estimated two lakh bamboo sticks. It is an attempt to prevent the illegal felling of bamboo trees and check the unregulated trade of *Konda Veduru* bamboo sticks," says B.N.N. Murthy, Chief Conservator of Forest, Rajamahendravaram.

VTFA president Vivekananda Kakarla adds that the tobacco growers have struggled to procure the *Konda Veduru* variety sticks.

"We are collecting the bamboo sticks from our forest blocks with a condition that the VTFA should participate in the open auction as per the timber sale guidelines. If they won't participate, they are liable to pay the compensation as per the February agreement," Murthy explains.

Pallala Linga Reddy, newly elected vice president, Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA), Godavari Panchayat (Mare-dumilli agency) has said that the *Konda Veduru* stems are also in great demand from the banana farmers in the Godavari Delta. The sticks are erected to support the banana plants to withstand the gales during the monsoon.

"Even though it has a great market demand, our tribe is yet to explore the economic benefits of the *Konda Veduru*," says Linga Reddy. Meanwhile, Pallala Boddu Reddy of Aaku Maamidhi Kota, seen repairing his abandoned bamboo basket-shaped tool for fishing in the stream, worries that the intricate bamboo craft passed on for generations in his tribe is becoming extinct.

"We admire the *Konda Veduru* for the many benefits it offers. But, few can craft a fishing basket like this with bamboo sticks. I wish even the bamboo craft gets its attention, now that people are talking about edible bamboo," says the 55-year-old as he gently places the bamboo basket he made in the sun to dry.



Introduction

- Konda Veduru is a species of bamboo particularly found in the Godavari Valley of Andhra Pradesh.
- It is widely used by the Konda Reddi and Koya tribes for food, livelihood, and commercial purposes.

Why is it called green gold?

- Konda Veduru is called "green gold" due to its fast growth, high economic value, and multiple uses in construction, handicrafts, and paper production.
- Its eco-friendly nature and sustainability enhance its importance.

Habitat and Distribution

- Found in hill plains and forests, especially in the Godavari Valley.
- Covers over 53% of India's total bamboo area (about 2.25 lakh hectares in Andhra Pradesh).

Culinary Significance

- A staple food of Konda Reddi tribes.
- Used in making Kommu Kooru, a dish with bamboo shoots, cereals, and meat.
- Must be boiled before consumption to remove toxins.

Economic and Cultural Importance

- Used in tobacco curing and sold in tribal markets.
- A vital livelihood source for Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs).

Bangladesh has requested Elon Musk's Starlink satellite internet service to improve connectivity.

- ➔ This can benefit youth, rural women, and remote communities of Bangladesh.

Bangladesh in talks with Musk for rollout of Starlink service

Agence France-Presse

DHAKA

Bangladesh said on Friday it had asked tech billionaire Elon Musk to bring satellite Internet service Starlink to the South Asian country.

The world's richest man spoke on Thursday with Nobel peace laureate Muhammad Yunus over video

call.. Starlink provides Internet access to remote locations by low Earth orbit satellites, to Bangladesh.

The pair emphasised that the service would create new opportunities for "Bangladesh's enterprising youth, rural and vulnerable women, and remote communities", a statement from Yunus' media office said.

What is Starlink?

- ➔ **Satellite Internet Service:** Starlink is a satellite-based broadband internet service developed by SpaceX, the aerospace company founded by Elon Musk.
- ➔ **Low Earth Orbit (LEO) Satellites:** It uses a constellation of low Earth orbit satellites to provide high-speed internet access globally, especially in remote and underserved areas.
- ➔ **High-Speed Connectivity:** Starlink aims to deliver speeds of up to 250 Mbps, with low latency compared to traditional satellite internet.
- ➔ **Global Coverage:** It is designed to provide internet access in rural and geographically isolated locations where traditional broadband infrastructure is limited or unavailable.

Daily News Analysis

- **Growing Network:** As of 2025, Starlink has deployed thousands of satellites and continues to expand its coverage worldwide.
- **Affordable Access:** While initially expensive, SpaceX is working to make Starlink more affordable for widespread adoption.
- **Applications:** It can support education, emergency response, businesses, and government services in remote regions.



In News : GS 2 : US-India COMPACT

- The US and India launched the US-India COMPACT initiative to enhance strategic cooperation in defence, trade, and technology, with a focus on military sales, co-production, and countering regional security challenges.



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Analysis of the news:

Strengthening Strategic Ties

- The launch of the US-India COMPACT (Catalyzing Opportunities for Military Partnership, Accelerated Commerce & Technology) for the 21st Century marks a significant step in deepening bilateral relations across multiple domains.
- This initiative reflects mutual trust and aims for transformative change, particularly in defence and high-tech sectors.

Strategic Defence Cooperation

- The agreement underscores India's growing defence partnership with the US, particularly in countering China's assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific.
- Key components include increased military sales, co-development, and technology transfers.
- Discussions on the F-35 stealth fighter jets and the Autonomous Systems Industry Alliance highlight the focus on future defence capabilities.

10-Year Defence Framework

Daily News Analysis

- Both nations announced a new 10-year defence partnership framework, emphasizing interoperability, logistics, and joint manufacturing.
- Notable US-origin defence platforms integrated into India's arsenal include C-130J Super Hercules, P-8I Poseidon, AH-64E Apache helicopters, and MQ-9B drones.
- Plans to co-produce Javelin Anti-Tank Missiles and Stryker Infantry Combat Vehicles in India further strengthen indigenous manufacturing.

Technology & Procurement Reforms

- India's Major Defence Partner status and STA-1 designation facilitate access to advanced US military technology.
- To streamline defence trade, both nations plan to review arms transfer regulations (ITAR) and open negotiations for a Reciprocal Defence Procurement (RDP) agreement to align procurement processes and enhance bilateral defence supply chains.

Expanding Defence Technology Cooperation

- Recognizing India's role in the Quad alliance, both nations pledged to accelerate cooperation in air defence, space, missile technology, and undersea systems.
- The US is also considering policy changes to release fifth-generation fighter jets and advanced maritime defence systems to India, strengthening its strategic deterrence capabilities.

The problematic globalisation of medical education

Strange things are going on worldwide in the area of medical education. On the one hand, there appears to be a shortage of medical doctors, while at the same time governments, and in many cases also medical doctors themselves, oppose increased access to the study of medicine. As a result, there has been an increase in international mobility of medical students from high-, mid- and low-income countries. While once medical education was international, now it is nationally regulated, but at the same time becoming internationalised. Because of national and global health needs, it is worth examining this particular global medical environment.

No one knows how many international students are studying in medical schools outside their home countries, but a conservative estimate might put the number to be more than 2,00,000 – many of them in institutions and countries with questionable quality of medical preparation. To give an indication, Ukraine, before the Russian invasion, had 24,000 medical students from abroad, mainly, but not exclusively, from India.

The India crisis

India is an interesting example. The country has a severe shortage of doctors. The demand for places in medical colleges is considerable and, as a result, competition for places is intense. Annually, approximately 2.3 million students sit for the national medical school entry examination, but only one in around 22 successful candidates is able to enter the country's 700-plus medical colleges.

The fierce competition for medical seats in India has compelled many students to explore opportunities abroad. It is estimated that more than 20,000 Indian medical students go abroad to study. With limited government medical seats and high tuition fees in private institutions, studying medicine abroad has emerged as an "affordable" and practical alternative for Indian aspirants. Countries such as Russia, pre-war Ukraine, Kazakhstan, the Philippines, China, Mauritius, and Nepal have become attractive destinations.

Interestingly, some of the institutions in foreign

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The phenomenon of foreign medical education is widespread, almost completely unknown, and unregulated

countries are controlled by Indians. One such institution is the Manipal College of Medical Sciences in neighbouring Nepal, the country's first private medical college which was established in 1994. It is operated by the Manipal Education and Medical Group (MEMG), Bengaluru. The American University of Antigua (AUA) College of Medicine, a Caribbean medical school, is also a division of Manipal. This reflects a broader strategy of Indian education groups expanding their footprint overseas to meet the growing demand from Indian students.

However, studying medicine abroad comes with its own challenges, particularly for those who wish to practise in India. Indian students who complete their programmes from foreign institutions must clear the national licensing examination to qualify for medical practice in India. They are also required to complete a medical internship upon their return. Similarly, Indians wishing to practise medicine in other countries must satisfy licensing and other requirements of those countries – and one can find Indian doctors throughout the world. This illustrates that governments are aware of the varying standards of medical education around the world.

In a significant announcement during the Union Budget speech in February 2025, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman highlighted the government's achievements in medical education. She stated that the government had successfully added nearly 1.1 lakh undergraduate and postgraduate medical education seats over the past decade, an increase of 130%. She also revealed plans for further expansion in the medical education sector by announcing that an additional 10,000 seats would be introduced in medical colleges and hospitals in 2026. This initiative is part of a broader five-year goal to add 75,000 new seats, aimed at addressing the growing demand for qualified medical professionals.

Not just a Global South phenomenon

The case of medical education in India illustrates the problematic phenomenon of students leaving the Global South, in particular South Asia and

Africa, to study medicine in other mid-income countries – and often to remain abroad. But the trend is broader.

For many years, students from western countries such as France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Norway, have been going to neighbouring countries for their medical studies, due to a lack of access at home. Romania, where medical study is provided in French, Hungary, and Poland are common host countries. Hungary and Poland also receive medical students from the United States. Thousands of U.S. students study medicine in these two countries, as well as in Ireland, the Caribbean, and the United Kingdom.

Medical programmes in central and eastern Europe, as well as in Central Asia, cater to diaspora students and teach in English. The Medical University of Warsaw, for instance, has medical study programmes in both Polish and English. Currently, due to a lack of national funding for places at their home universities, about 3,000 Norwegian medical students receive scholarships to study abroad, mainly in central and eastern Europe.

In other words, the phenomenon of foreign medical education is widespread, almost completely unknown, and unregulated. Where entire medical schools are devoted to international enrolments, they are almost exclusively for-profit institutions. Medical schools established in non-English speaking environments, such as Poland and Ukraine, offer English-medium medical curricula to attract high-fee-paying international students.

Balancing demand and quality concerns

As the recent Budget speech shows, the government is starting to see the problem, but solutions are expensive and meet opposition from inside the medical establishment, which fears a deterioration of their privileges and elite status. Yet, with an aging population, the need for quality medical doctors will only increase. The growing number of students looking for medical education abroad illustrates a potential, but there is an overall lack of quality control. More attention is needed on this key challenge.

GS Paper 02 : International Relation

PYQ: (UPSC CSE (M) GS-2 2017): 'China is using its economic relations and positive trade surplus as tools to develop potential military power status in Asia', In the light of this statement, discuss its impact on India as her neighbour. (150 words/10m)

UPSC Mains Practice Question: Discuss the impact of China's trade restrictions on India's electronics manufacturing and suggest ways to reduce dependence on China. (250 Words /15 marks)

Context :

- In mid-January 2024, China restricted travel for its engineers and technicians working in Indian manufacturing facilities.
- Chinese workers already in India were recalled, and exports of specialized manufacturing equipment were halted.

Introduction

- These restrictions have severely impacted production, as China has a monopoly on certain high-tech manufacturing equipment.
- Taiwanese workers have been brought in to fill the gap, but the lack of specialized equipment is a major hurdle.

Geopolitical Competition and China's Strategy

- China is using economic tools to slow down India's manufacturing growth.
- By limiting the transfer of technical knowledge from Chinese workers to Indian workers, China aims to maintain its advantage.
- The restrictions on specialized machinery disrupt production, making it harder for India to establish itself as a global manufacturing hub.
- China's actions ensure that global companies remain dependent on its supply chains.

India's Role in the China Plus One Strategy

- Global companies are reducing reliance on China by diversifying production to other countries, including India, Vietnam, and Mexico.
- India has been a key destination for this shift, as its manufacturing sector is growing in a way similar to China's past development.
- China wants to limit India's rise as a competitor and remind global companies of its own critical role in production.

India's Efforts to Attract Manufacturing Investments

- The Indian government has actively supported the expansion of major smartphone manufacturers in South India.
- In 2023, advanced smartphone models were assembled in Indian factories.
- For the first time, a high-end smartphone model was assembled in India in 2024.
- State governments in South India have prioritized investments in smartphone manufacturing.

'Make in India' and Government Support

- Large-scale electronics manufacturing is a key part of the 'Make in India' initiative.
- The Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme has been increased to ₹8,885 crore (\$1.02 billion) in the Union Budget 2025, from ₹6,125 crore (\$0.70 billion) in the previous year.
- The Union Budget 2025 removed import taxes on key mobile components like printed circuit boards, camera modules, connectors, and lithium-ion battery manufacturing machinery.

India-China Relations and Economic Dependency

- India and China agreed on military patrolling rules in October 2024, after four years of tensions in eastern Ladakh.
- Despite diplomatic progress, China's economic actions show that geopolitical competition will continue.
- India still depends on China for manufacturing components and machinery, influencing negotiations.

India's Long-Term Strategy

- In the short term, India should work with global companies to negotiate with China.
- In the long term, India must focus on developing its own supply chains and technical expertise.
- Currently, India mainly does local assembly of smartphones; to become a full-scale manufacturing hub, local industries must grow.

Daily News Analysis

- The National Manufacturing Mission is a step forward but requires strong nancial support to build industrial clusters.
 - Skill development programs and on-site training should focus on industry-specic specializations.
 - Encouraging private investment will help create a strong network of Indian contract manufacturers for both foreign and domestic brands.
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