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THE HINDU
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Daily News Analysis

The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE

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Edition: International Table of Contents

On April 2, U.S. President Donald Trump declared a wide-ranging tariff hike under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA), targeting major U.S. trading partners including India, with tariffs up to 49%. India received a 27% tariff, despite ongoing bilateral trade negotiations. The move sparked global reactions, raising questions about the future of international trade and India's response.

India holds fire as Trump announces tariffs

- U.S. President announces tariffs ranging from 10% to 49%; India hit with 27% tariff
- India's Commerce Ministry 'examining the implications', will engage with stakeholders
- EU, China, Canada vow countermeasures; Japan, South Korea term tariffs regrettable

Jagriti Chandra
Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

U.S. President Donald Trump launched a full-scale trade war on Thursday, announcing massive "reciprocal tariffs", ranging from 10% to 49%, on U.S. imports from its trading partners around the world. India was not spared and was hit with a 27% tariff on its exports to the U.S. despite ongoing talks for a trade agreement.

The tariffs sparked warnings of reprisal from China and the European Union, though India's reaction was muted. Global markets plunged in response, from Japan's Nikkei which lost 4% and European markets that dropped more than 2% each, to India's Sensex, that shaved more than 300 points, while the Nifty dropped as well. In the U.S., the Dow Jones fell over 3% in the first hour of trading, while the Nasdaq crashed 4%.

Despite weeks of ongoing negotiations between U.S. Trade Representatives and Indian officials over a Bilateral Trade Agreement, Mr. Trump announced that India – which he claimed imposed duties of 52% on the U.S. – would face a "discounted" tariff of 27% on its exports to the U.S.

'Liberation day'

The tariff hikes, which Mr. Trump has said for weeks would herald April 2 as "Liberation Day" for the U.S., were considerably broader and higher than experts had predicted.

The U.S. President invoked his authority under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) of 1977 to address large and persistent U.S. goods trade deficits, which he called a "national emergency".

He announced a 10% baseline tariff on all countries, which will take effect from April 5. An individualised reciprocal higher tariff on the countries with which the U.S. has the largest trade deficits will also be imposed from April 9.

India's official response to the announcement was subdued.

An official statement issued on Thursday morning said that the Commerce Ministry is "carefully examining the implications of the various measures", adding that it is engaged with all stakeholders, including Indian industry and exporters, to assess the impact of the tariffs. It also said, however, that it was studying "opportunities that may arise due to this new development", noting that India "values its Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership" with the U.S., and will continue BTA talks aimed at raising bilateral trade to $500 billion by 2030.

India's comments were in contrast to other U.S. trading partners who had been slapped with tariffs. The European Union, China, and Canada threatened that there would be "countermeasures". Japanese Trade Minister Yoji Muto called the reciprocal tariffs "extremely regrettable".

South Korea's Acting President Han Duck-soo ordered support for the country's domestic auto industry, among the worst affected. Incidentally, Russia, which has minimal trade with the U.S. of just $3.5 billion, did not feature on the tariff list at all.

'Slight advantages'

In Delhi, officials pointed out that the U.S.'s penalty of 27% adjusted tariffs for India was lower than other Asian and South Asian countries that are Indian rivals for exports, including Vietnam (46%), Thailand (37%), Bangladesh (37%), Sri Lanka (44%) and Pakistan (30%), which could give India some "comparative advantages".

India's diamond and jewellery sector could be hit hard. The Gem & Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC) said that, given the tariffs, it will be a challenge to sustain India's current export volume of $10 billion to the U.S market. The United States accounts for more than 30% of India's annual gems and jewellery exports of $32 billion.

"We urge the Government of India to progress the Bilateral Trade Agreement between India and the U.S., as it would be crucial in navigating the tariff issues and securing long term interest of the sector," the Council said in a press statement.

Industries take stock

The auto industry, however, does not expect to face any significant impact from the reciprocal tariff as automobiles and auto parts were not covered by it.

The developments could exacerbate supply chain challenges for aerospace manufacturer Boeing, resulting in aircraft delivery delays.

In his remarks, Mr. Trump named India along with Thailand and Vietnam as examples of what he called "vicious attacks" on U.S. workers, using the tariffs on motorcycles as an example. In fact, the Modi government has lowered tariffs on foreign motorcycles down from 100% in 2017 in a series of cuts; in the latest Union Budget in February, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman reduced those tariffs from 50% to 30%.

In the executive order Mr. Trump signed shortly after the announcement, the White House said that "addressing trade imbalances" was a major priority, comparing India's simple average most-favored-nation (MFN) tariff rate of 17% with China's 7.5% and the EU's 5% as "significantly higher" than the U.S.'s 3.3%. It also criticised India, among other countries, for high tariffs on items like cars, network switches and routers, rice in the husk, and apples, citing the USTR's report on "Foreign Trade Barriers" released earlier this week that contained a particularly scathing chapter on India.

MORE REPORTS ON
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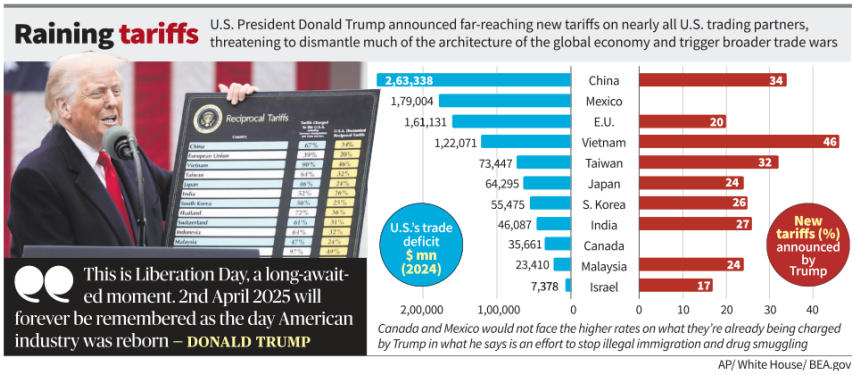

Nature and Scope of the Tariffs

- General 10% baseline tariff on all countries, effective from April 5.
- Higher reciprocal tariffs (up to 49%) targeting countries with significant trade surpluses with the U.S.
- Trump cited "national emergency" due to trade deficits as justification.
- India was hit with a 27% tariff, despite reducing its own tariffs on some U.S. goods like motorcycles.

India's Response: A Strategic Pause

- India's Commerce Ministry is "examining implications" and consulting stakeholders.
- Emphasized its desire to pursue a Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) with the U.S., aiming for $500 billion trade by 2030.
- India's calm reaction contrasts with EU, China, and Canada, who vowed countermeasures.

Impact on Indian Economy

1. Export Sectors Affected:

- Gems & Jewellery:
  - India exports over $10 billion annually to the U.S.; 30% of total jewellery exports.
  - Tariffs pose serious risks to volume and competitiveness.
- Automobiles & Auto Parts:
  - Not covered in this round, so minimal immediate impact.
- Aerospace Supply Chain (e.g. Boeing):
  - Potential delays in aircraft parts and deliveries due to disrupted logistics.

2. Trade Diversion Advantage:

- India's 27% tariff is lower than those on competitors:
  - Vietnam (46%), Thailand (37%), Bangladesh (37%), Sri Lanka (44%), Pakistan (30%)
- This may provide slight comparative advantages in select export categories.

Geopolitical & Strategic Implications

- Tariffs risk derailing the India-U.S. strategic partnership, especially amidst ongoing negotiations for deeper economic cooperation.
- Could force India to recalibrate its tariff structure to remain globally competitive.
- India's average MFN tariff (17%) is much higher than China (7.5%), EU (5%), and U.S. (3.3%), a point used to justify U.S. action.

Legal and Institutional Framework

- Trump invoked IEEPA of 1977, framing trade deficits as a "national emergency".
- USTR's "Foreign Trade Barriers" report targeted India for high tariffs on various goods (e.g., cars, electronics, agricultural produce).

Way Forward for India

1. Accelerate BTA Negotiations:
   - A comprehensive trade deal can institutionalize tariff relief and market access guarantees.
2. Diversify Export Markets:
   - Reduce over-reliance on U.S. by engaging more with EU, ASEAN, Africa, and Latin America.
3. Rationalize Domestic Tariffs:

- Align MFN tariff rates with global norms to avoid future retaliatory measures.

4. Export Incentive Reforms:
   - Strengthen PLI schemes, simplify customs procedures, and support vulnerable sectors like jewellery and textiles.
5. WTO & Multilateral Engagement:
   - Leverage WTO mechanisms to challenge arbitrary tariff hikes and build coalitions with like-minded nations.

Conclusion

India's restrained reaction to the U.S. tariff announcement underscores a mature trade diplomacy approach, prioritizing long-term strategic ties over short-term retaliation. However, it must address structural issues in its tariff regime and negotiate stronger bilateral trade frameworks to safeguard its economic interests in an increasingly protectionist world.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques :"India's measured response to the recent U.S. tariffs reflects its evolving trade diplomacy." Examine in the context of changing global trade dynamics. **(250 words)**

Kannadippaya, a traditional mat handcrafted by tribal communities in Kerala, has received the Geographical Indication (GI) tag. This recognition not only offers legal and market protection but also helps place tribal artisanal work on the global map, encouraging sustainable livelihoods and cultural preservation.

Kannadippaya gets GI tag, anchoring tribal handicraft on the global map

Sandeep Vellaram
IDUKKI

Kannadippaya, a unique tribal handicraft from Kerala, has received the Geographical Indication (GI) tag ensuring market protection and a global platform for this traditional product.

GI tag has been awarded to the Unarvu Pattikavargha Vividodesha Sahakarana Sangam, Venmani, and the Vanasree Bamboo Craft &Vanavibhava Shekarana unit, Uppukunnu, both in Idukki district. The recognition makes *kannadippaya* the first tribal handicraft product from Kerala to receive the GI tag.

The product derives its name (literally meaning mirror mat) from its reflective pattern.

Honouring tradition: *Kannadippaya* is the first tribal handicraft product from Kerala to receive a GI tag. JOMON PAMPAVALLEY

Unique properties

Made from the soft inner layers of reed bamboo, the mat stands out for its unique properties – providing warmth during winter and cooling effect in summer. The craft is preserved by the Oorali, Mannan, Muthuva, Malayan, and Kadar tribal communities and by the Ulladan, Malayarayan, and Hill Pulaya artisans in Idukki, Thrissur, Ernakulam, and Palakkad districts.

Former director Shyam Visvanathan of the Kerala Forest Research Institute and senior scientist A.V. Raghu played a key role in securing the GI tag for *kannadippaya*. Sunil P.V., member of Vanasree Bamboo Craft, expressed concern about the lack of a structured market for the product. C.R. Elsy, former head of the Intellectual Property Rights cell at the Kerala Agricultural University, who spearheaded the initiative emphasised the importance of reviving interest in the craft among younger generations. "Since eco-friendly products are in demand globally, this recognition will open international markets for *kannadippaya*," she said.

What is Kannadippaya?

- Literal Meaning: "Mirror Mat" – named for its reflective weaving pattern.
- Material: Made from the inner layers of reed bamboo, offering insulation properties:
    - Warmth in winter

    - Cooling in summer
- Communities Involved:
    - Tribes: Oorali, Mannan, Muthuva, Malayan, Kadar
    - Artisans: Ulladan, Malayarayan, Hill Pulaya
    - Located in districts of Idukki, Thrissur, Ernakulam, Palakkad

Significance of GI Tag

- First tribal handicraft from Kerala to receive GI status.
- Awarded to:
    - Unarvu Pattikavargha Vividodesha Sahakarana Sangam, Venmani
    - Vanasree Bamboo Craft & Vanavibhava Shekarana Unit, Uppukunnu
- Brings legal protection, brand identity, and exclusive marketing rights under the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999.

Cultural and Economic Relevance

1. Preserving Tribal Heritage

- Ensures documentation and revival of indigenous knowledge systems.
- Boosts intergenerational transfer of traditional skills among tribal youth.

2. Sustainable Livelihood

- Can become a source of income for marginalized forest-based communities.
- Encourages eco-friendly, handcrafted products aligned with global sustainability trends.

3. Market and Export Potential

- Growing demand for natural, biodegradable, and artisan-made goods.
- GI tag offers scope for integration into global handicraft value chains.

Challenges Highlighted

- Lack of structured market access or organized platforms for sale.
- Limited awareness and skill training among younger generation.
- Need for infrastructure support, design innovation, and marketing strategy.

Way Forward

1. Skill Development and Design Intervention
    - Partner with design institutes (e.g., NID, NIFT) for modern aesthetics and usability.
2. Institutional Support
    - Encourage tribal cooperatives and SHGs to scale production.
    - Use Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation (TRIFED) and Van Dhan Yojana for promotion.
3. E-commerce and Global Branding
    - Integrate Kannadippaya into online platforms like Tribes India, GeM, and Amazon Karigar.
4. Tourism and Cultural Promotion
    - Position Kannadippaya as part of eco-tourism circuits in Kerala.
5. Policy Push
    - Ensure convergence with Atmanirbhar Bharat, One District One Product (ODOP), and GI promotion schemes under DPIIT.

Conclusion

The GI tag for Kannadippaya is not just a recognition of craft but a validation of tribal cultural identity and sustainable development. It exemplifies how traditional knowledge systems, if supported through modern legal and market frameworks, can lead to inclusive growth, heritage preservation, and global recognition of India's grassroots innovations.

UPSC PrelimsPractice Question

Ques :With reference to Geographical Indications (GI) in India, consider the following statements:

1. A GI tag is a form of intellectual property right that is granted to a product that originates from a specific geographical area.

2. The Geographical Indications are registered under the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).

3. Kannadippaya is the first tribal handicraft from Kerala to receive a GI tag.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

A) 1 and 2 only

B) 2 and 3 only

C) 1 and 3 only

D) 1, 2 and 3

Ans : D)

Undersea cables form the backbone of global internet connectivity. Despite being a digital powerhouse, India lags behind in this critical infrastructure, exposing it to multiple vulnerabilities and bottlenecks. The recent landing of Airtel's 2Africa Pearls system and SEA-ME-WE-6 cable in Chennai and Mumbai highlights both progress and challenges in this domain.

Why are undersea cables important?

What are undersea cables? How do they connect internet networks globally? What is India's subsea cable ecosystem? What are some of the challenges in laying the cables in India? Why is India considered vulnerable to disruptions? How can it be improved?

EXPLAINER

Aroon Deep

The story so far:
India is getting new cable landing systems coming online gradually. The latest addition is Airtel's 2Africa Pearls system, which has investments from Facebook parent Meta, adding 100 terabits per second of capacity to India's international bandwidth. Earlier this year, the SEA-ME-WE-6 cable was also landed in Chennai and Mumbai.

What are undersea cables?
Undersea cables are the main link connecting the world's internet networks. They connect internet service providers and telecom operators everywhere with those in other countries. These cables are a few inches thick and are heavily padded to withstand the hostile environment of the sea floor. Inside, strands of fiber optic cable – similar to those that connect modern telcos' towers and routers – provide massive capacity for large volumes of data to quickly crisscross the earth.

At each "landing point," usually a manhole covered with a lid and then topped with sand, these cables make landfall and go further inland to connect to a "landing station," where they become accessible to major networks. These systems are critical to the modern information society. "There are about 600 cables, as per Goldman Sachs," said Amajit Gupta, CEO of Lightstorm, a network provider at the first Sub-Sea Cable Systems Conference in Delhi. "90% of data, 80% of world trade, and about $10 trillion of financial transactions, as well as secure government information, move through these cables. That's the impact this infrastructure has."

Each modern cable has several hundred gigabits per second of capacity, and can support thousands of telecom users. The other side of undersea cables

Powering up: More cables land in Singapore, a small city-state, than they do in all of India. FILE PHOTO

well-mapped network of cables and towers that bring connectivity from the coast to people.

Does India have enough undersea cables?
India has two major hubs of cable landing sites: Mumbai and Chennai. "Practically speaking, 95% of subsea today goes into a small six-kilometre patch in Versova, Mumbai," Mr. Gupta said.

Many of the cables connected to Chennai also land in Mumbai. In total, 17 cable systems land at some point in India. India also has two domestic cable systems – the Chennai Andaman and Nicobar Islands (CANI) cable to provide high-speed connectivity to the islands, and the Kochi Lakshadweep Islands project.

Cables take several months, even years, to plan out and lay, at a cost of millions of dollars. Most cables in countries with well-developed internet infrastructure are able to commission capacity years before it is required. As such, most international internet traffic in India is largely served by existing capacity.

Anil Tandan, the Director General of the Broadband India Forum, said that this may not hold forever. "Well, there are of the existing cable infrastructure's sufficiency. "The capacity may be adequate at this moment of time, but the way the data [traffic] is growing, one has to keep in mind that the capacity may not be adequate as we go along."

Aruna Sundararajan, a former Union IT and Telecom Secretary and current chairperson of the BIF, said, "It is significant to note that India's share presently constitutes around 1% and 3% respectively for cable landing stations and subsea cable systems" respectively.

What are some risks surrounding undersea cable deployment in India?
More cables land in Singapore, a small city-state, than they do in all of India, making India vulnerable to the consequences of cable cuts at sea. "If there is a disruption at the Red Sea, it pretty much brings down 25% of India's Internet in our estimate," Mr. Gupta said. "It's not a theory because it just happened about two years back." He was referring to the cuts that brought down subsea cables in the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait, likely caused by strikes by Houthi rebels in Yemen. That strait is a critical narrow passage through which dozens of subsea cables pass.

These cuts – some of which happened internet experience so far, thanks to excess capacity built into other networks. But that may not always be the case. If several cables in the Red Sea are damaged, large parts of the internet may stop working, and there is only so much data that can be rerouted through other cable systems.

"Traditionally, most subsea corridors strangely have followed the trade routes of the past," Mr. Gupta said. "Rarely have subsea routes been built which are different from shipping routes, because back in the day, it was easier to follow the trade routes to be able to lay down your cables and make it work."

What can be done to bolster India's subsea cable infrastructure?
For one, the companies laying subsea cables complain of excessive permissions needed to land a single cable in India. "By last count, about 51 permissions were needed, beyond just the Department of Telecom, including the Home Ministry, Department of Fisheries, the Environment Ministry, local municipalities," and so on, Mr. Gupta said.

"If I have an 8,000-mile point-to-point transoceanic system starting tomorrow, I can guarantee you where I'm going to spend 80% of my time and effort," said Scott Cowling, a senior Meta executive who manages the social media conglomerate's global network infrastructure. "And that's going to be in 24 miles of territorial waters at either end."

In addition to streamlining regulations, securing these cables is also important. "Fishing trawlers break my cables all the time," complained Rahul Vatts, Bharti Airtel's chief regulatory officer.

India depends on foreign repair vessels with long permission processes for them to begin work in Indian waters. "India currently does not have the requisite subsea cable repair ships and cable storage depot capacity that we need," Ms. Sundararajan said, calling for more domestic investment in cable repair

THE GIST

- India has 17 international cable systems, mainly landing in Mumbai and Chennai, along with two domestic cable systems connecting island territories. However, its share in global subsea cable infrastructure remains low.
- India's internet is highly dependent on a few key landing sites, making it vulnerable to disruptions such as Red Sea cable cuts. Fishing trawlers and the lack of domestic cable repair ships further threaten network stability.
- Laying undersea cables in India requires around 51 permissions from various authorities, delaying projects. Experts call for regulatory reforms, more cable landings, and local investment in repair and maintenance facilities.

What are Undersea Cables?

- Fiber-optic cables laid on the ocean floor, linking continents and facilitating global internet, voice, and data connectivity.
- Capable of carrying terabits of data per second across thousands of kilometers.
- Account for 90% of global data transfers, 80% of international trade, and over $10 trillion in financial transactions (Goldman Sachs estimate).

India's Subsea Cable Ecosystem:

- 17 international cable systems land in India, mostly in Mumbai and Chennai.
- Domestic projects:
  - CANI (Chennai-Andaman & Nicobar Islands)
  - KLI (Kochi-Lakshadweep Islands)
- Key Issues:
  - Heavily centralized: 95% landings occur in a small patch in Versova, Mumbai.
  - Low global share: India has just 1–3% share in global cable landing stations and systems.

Challenges in Laying Cables in India:

1. Bureaucratic Hurdles:
   - Requires ~51 clearances across ministries (DoT, MoEF, Fisheries, Home Ministry, etc.)
   - Delays increase cost and deter investment.
2. Geopolitical and Strategic Vulnerabilities:
   - Overdependence on limited routes and chokepoints like Red Sea (Bab-el-Mandeb Strait).
   - Cable cuts due to conflicts (e.g., Houthi attacks) could disrupt up to 25% of India's internet.
3. Physical Damage Risks:
   - Frequent cable damage from fishing trawlers, marine construction, and natural events.
   - No domestic cable repair vessels; dependent on foreign ships with delayed approvals.

Why is India Vulnerable?

- High concentration of landings → Single point of failure risk.
- Lack of redundancy in alternate landing sites.
- Insufficient domestic capacity in repair infrastructure and depot facilities.
- Dependence on foreign consortiums and capital for cable projects.

Way Forward: Recommendations

1. Regulatory Simplification:
   - Create a single-window clearance mechanism for faster approvals.
   - Establish a dedicated subsea cable authority under the DoT.
2. Infrastructure Diversification:
   - Develop additional landing stations along the east and west coasts.
   - Encourage tier-2 coastal cities like Kochi, Visakhapatnam, or Tuticorin as alternative hubs.
3. Strategic Investment:

- Build domestic cable repair ships and cable storage depots.
- Offer incentives to private players for investing in cable maintenance and landing facilities.

4. International Collaboration:
   - Participate in global subsea projects like 2Africa, SEA-ME-WE, and IAX/IEX.
   - Align with QUAD, IORA, and Indo-Pacific initiatives for digital connectivity.
5. Cybersecurity and Resilience:
   - Invest in real-time monitoring systems and AI-based threat detection.
   - Incorporate cable protection zones and legal enforcement against trawler damage.

Conclusion

India's digital economy is expanding rapidly, but its undersea cable infrastructure is yet to catch up. With growing geopolitical tensions and increasing data demand, India must act decisively to secure its digital lifelines. A robust, diversified, and resilient subsea cable network is essential not just for internet access, but for national security, economic growth, and strategic autonomy.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques : The undersea cable infrastructure is critical to India's digital sovereignty." In the context of recent developments, examine the challenges and suggest policy measures for strengthening this infrastructure. (250 words)

Hungary, under Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, has announced its intention to withdraw from the International Criminal Court (ICC) during a high-profile visit by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who is currently facing an ICC arrest warrant. This development has sparked global concern over the erosion of international justice mechanisms and highlights geopolitical alliances rooted in mutual populist ideologies.

Hungary welcomes Netanyahu, declares it is quitting ICC

Associated Press
BUDAPEST

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu arrived in Hungary's capital early Thursday to red carpet treatment despite a warrant for his arrest issued by the world's top war crimes court.

Hungary's government, led by its populist Prime Minister and Netanyahu ally, Viktor Orbán, used the occasion of the Israeli leader's visit to announce it will begin the procedure of withdrawing from the international tribunal that issued the warrant, the International Criminal Court.


Viktor Orbán

The two leaders were set to hold talks later on Thursday, and Mr. Netanyahu was also to meet Hungarian President Tamás Sulyok in the Presidential Palace.

Background: ICC and the Arrest Warrant

- The International Criminal Court (ICC) is a permanent judicial body established under the Rome Statute (2002) to prosecute individuals for genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and aggression.
- Recently, the ICC issued an arrest warrant against Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu in relation to actions taken during the Israel-Palestine conflict.
- Despite being a signatory to the Rome Statute, Hungary has now declared its intention to withdraw, aligning itself politically with Israel.

Significance of Hungary's Withdrawal

1. Erosion of Multilateral Institutions

- A founding EU member withdrawing from the ICC undermines the credibility and authority of international legal institutions.
- Sets a dangerous precedent for other countries to avoid accountability under international law.

2. Political Signaling and Alliances

- Hungary's red-carpet welcome for Netanyahu is symbolic of the Orbán government's alignment with nationalist and right-wing global leaders.
- Both Hungary and Israel have expressed criticism of international institutions, calling them biased or ineffective.

3. Strain on EU Unity

- Hungary's action may further isolate it within the European Union, where support for international justice and the ICC remains high.
- Could deepen the divide between Western European liberal democracies and Central/Eastern populist regimes.

Legal and Geopolitical Implications

- The ICC does not have its own enforcement mechanism and depends on member states for cooperation.
- Withdrawal by Hungary may embolden other states under scrutiny by the ICC to follow suit (e.g., Russia, Philippines, Sudan).
- Weakens the normative power of international criminal law and shrinks the jurisdictional reach of the ICC.

India's Perspective

- India is not a party to the ICC (has not ratified the Rome Statute), citing concerns about sovereignty, possible misuse of prosecutorial powers, and lack of accountability mechanisms within the ICC.
- Developments like this reinforce India's stance on cautious engagement with supranational legal bodies.
- However, India continues to support rule-based international order and peaceful conflict resolution through bilateral and multilateral diplomacy.

Way Forward

1. Global Dialogue on Reforming the ICC:
    - Enhance fairness, transparency, and non-selectivity in prosecutions to retain member trust.
2. EU Mediation and Pressure:
    - The European Union may need to engage diplomatically with Hungary to prevent further institutional drift.
3. Strengthen Domestic Legal Mechanisms:
    - Encourage states to prosecute international crimes under their own jurisdiction as complementary to ICC goals (principle of complementarity).
4. Balanced Role for International Justice:
    - Ensure international courts act without political bias while upholding justice and human rights.

Conclusion

Hungary's exit from the ICC and its support of a leader facing war crimes charges raise serious concerns about the future of international accountability. The development reflects a growing contestation between global legal norms and nationalistic politics, posing a significant challenge for multilateralism and global governance.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Ques :The Rome Statute, often seen in the news, is related to:

A) The establishment of the World Trade Organization

B) Regulation of space exploration activities

C) International civil aviation rules

D) Establishment of the International Criminal Court

Ans : D)

In News : Seaweed farming

Seaweed farming is gaining global recognition as a sustainable and profitable industry.

- **Why in the News?**
  - The Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) aims to boost India's seaweed production to 1.12 million tonnes over five years.
  - The $5.6 billion global seaweed industry is expanding rapidly, with India's contribution increasing steadily.
- **What is Seaweed?**
  - Seaweed is a marine plant that grows in oceans and seas.
  - It is nutrient-dense, containing 54 trace elements, vitamins, minerals, and amino acids.
  - It helps combat cancer, diabetes, arthritis, heart disease, and high blood pressure while also boosting immunity.
  - Unlike traditional crops, seaweed does not require land, freshwater, fertilizers, or pesticides, making it an eco-friendly and sustainable agricultural resource.

- Microscopic seaweeds, such as phytoplankton, form the foundation of marine food chains and play a key role in oceanic primary productivity.
- Large seaweeds, like giant kelp, create dense underwater forests that serve as biodiversity hotspots, offering shelter and food to a variety of species.
- Seaweeds contribute to oxygen generation and carbon sequestration, playing a significant role in climate regulation.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Ques :Which of the following are advantages of seaweed cultivation?

1. It requires no freshwater or arable land.

2. It helps in carbon sequestration and oxygen generation.

3. It reduces ocean acidification.

4. It requires high use of fertilizers and pesticides.

Select the correct answer using the code below:

A) 1 and 2 only

B) 1, 2 and 3 only

C) 2, 3 and 4 only

D) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Ans : B)

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Daily News Analysis

Page : 08 Editorial Analysis

The other space race — the geopolitics of satellite net

India still has regions where fiber optic cables have never reached and cellular towers remain sparse. SpaceX's recent partnerships with Airtel and Jio to expand Starlink services across India could be looked at as a fundamental shift in the conceptions of connectivity, national sovereignty, and economic power in the digital age.

It is not a zero-sum game for both sides. There are economic benefits for all. For Airtel and Jio, Starlink allows them to provide high-speed Internet to India's most remote regions without the infrastructure costs of terrestrial networks. For SpaceX, the deal opens up a huge market. It also takes care of India's complex regulatory landscape by channelling Starlink's technology through domestic players.

Yet, these arrangements are not just business strategy. There is a lot of geopolitics involved too. Communications infrastructure has always been intertwined with national security and sovereignty, a reality made even more pronounced when that infrastructure orbits 550 kilometres above earth. With the intertwining of business and political interests globally, it cannot be denied that there are fears that the United States-based Starlink network gives the U.S. an advantage in the competition for digital influence, particularly as China develops its rival GuoWang constellation. India's options were to wait for homegrown alternatives or partnering with other countries (potentially even China). But choosing Starlink could indicate a geopolitical realignment in the Indo-Pacific region. India chose a (seemingly) democratic alliance rather than an authoritarian one.

The monopolistic concerns surrounding Starlink cannot be dismissed. With around 7,000 satellites already in orbit, SpaceX enjoys first-mover advantages in the low earth orbit internet market. OneWeb, its closest competitor, operates fewer than 650 satellites, while Amazon's Project Kuiper remains very small. This is tending towards a monopolistic market structure. This also has its attendant economic problems of competition, pricing, and dependency. It runs the risk too of having private companies wield nation-state levels of influence over critical infrastructure, as was evident when SpaceX briefly cut Ukraine's Starlink access during critical military operations in 2022.

Economic value versus geopolitical control

Let us analyse these aspects of satellite Internet through a framework that captures both economic value and geopolitical control. The high economic value, high geopolitical control scenario can be called the "Digital Sovereignty" scenario, where nations have both profitable telecommunications and strategic independence. China's GuoWang constellation aims for this position, designing its system explicitly as a state-controlled asset. In the high economic value but low geopolitical control equation is the category of "Market Dominance", where Starlink currently operates, offering tremendous commercial potential but placing control largely outside the host nation's hands. This can be mitigated to some extent by routing it via domestic telecommunications companies, though this could be termed as just a face-saver, as effective control still sits with Starlink. The "Strategic Asset" scenario (low economic value, high geopolitical control) is where India's limited indigenous satellite capacity could be placed into (this strategically vital but economically suboptimal). Economically sub-optimal, it could be argued, is strategically useless, because it does not offer any leverage power.

Finally, the "Marginal Presence" context captures emerging players such as Amazon's Kuiper project – an example of still developing economic models while offering limited strategic leverage.

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It remains to be seen whether satellite Internet will lead to a promise of universal connectivity or strengthen existing digital divides in orbital form

Towards digital sovereignty for India

For India, the question now becomes whether this is a long-term strategic position. India's Space Research Organisation (ISRO) continues to develop indigenous satellite capabilities. The aim is obviously "Digital Sovereignty". However, it would require a lot of investment and time, both of which have their strategic tradeoffs.

The partnership model adopted by Airtel and Jio creates a buffer that preserves some measure of sovereignty. Technology transfer provisions and local data storage requirements could protect India's concerns and also enhance India's long-term capabilities. Additionally, having more options for domestic partners means India can maintain some amount of leverage against local monopolistic behaviour, though one could argue about its effectiveness. This model of managed dependency is worth exploring further.

One aspect that is intriguing in all of this is the absence of the Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) from these partnerships. BSNL could have helped reduce some of India's strategic concerns. As a state-owned enterprise with extensive rural presence, BSNL provides dual benefits: it provides Starlink with broader reach while giving the government more direct oversight of this critical technology. While BSNL is facing some financial problems, considering the strategic benefits of having BSNL involved also represents a lost chance.

A technology evolution, challenges

Could these partnerships establish a template for something such as global Internet governance that has geopolitical dimensions? As developing nations face the choice between American, Chinese, or indigenous satellite systems, the Starlink-India hybrid model tries to balance technological pragmatism with strategic autonomy.

For SpaceX and Elon Musk, these partnerships have benefits both in terms of commercial opportunity and political legitimacy. Indian regulatory concerns are assuaged. This natural evolution of technology from being disruptive to partnering with governments mirrors the trajectory of previous technological revolutions, from railroads to telecommunications.

The ultimate question remains whether satellite Internet will fulfil its promise of universal connectivity or simply reproduce existing digital divides in orbital form. If it remains too expensive for most of India's rural population, or requires significant government subsidies which would make it untenable for the Indian government, then it would be a bad deal. Some innovative sales techniques, such as tiered pricing models and package deals, would be needed in this scenario. The famed "innovation at the bottom of the pyramid" could surely help India, by packaging products in a way that are accessible, affordable, and valuable to low-income populations, while also being profitable to the companies involved.

With increasing attractiveness of satellite Internet, the governance challenges will only intensify. These will include orbital debris management, and space traffic control. Their transnational nature will require international governance cooperation even amid strategic competition. Without effective global governance, the promise of universal connectivity could be undermined by the tragedy of the orbital commons.

Orbital assets are going to become as strategic as terrestrial ones. For all stakeholders – nations, companies, and citizens – the challenge is to harness the connectivity revolution without surrendering autonomy.

Paper 03:Indian Economy

UPSC Mains Practice Question:"India's collaboration with foreign satellite internet providers poses both opportunities and strategic challenges." Discuss in the context of digital sovereignty and national security. (250 words)

Context :

The growing adoption of satellite-based internet services such as SpaceX's Starlink marks a shift in global connectivity infrastructure — with deep implications for national sovereignty, economic dependency, and geopolitical alignment. India's collaboration with private players like SpaceX, through Airtel and Jio, raises critical questions about balancing technological pragmatism with strategic autonomy in the era of the New Space Race.

The Context: India and Starlink

- India's digital divide remains stark, especially in remote and rural areas where fiber optic cables and cell towers are absent.
- Starlink, a low-earth orbit (LEO) satellite internet constellation by SpaceX, offers a promising solution, with support from Indian telecom giants Airtel and Jio.
- These partnerships route foreign infrastructure through domestic channels, mitigating some regulatory concerns.

Key Concerns and Dimensions

1. Geopolitical Realignment

- Choosing Starlink signals India's preference for democratic alliances in the Indo-Pacific over Chinese-led alternatives like GuoWang.
- It reflects a geopolitical shift towards alignment with U.S. tech infrastructure rather than authoritarian models.

2. Digital Sovereignty vs. Market Dependency

- Digital Sovereignty implies national control over digital infrastructure and data.
- India currently risks falling into a "market dominance" trap — benefiting from high-speed internet but ceding control to foreign tech giants.
- This parallels concerns seen in Ukraine, where SpaceX restricted access during military operations.

3. Monopolistic Trends in Space

- Starlink has ~7,000 satellites, far outnumbering rivals like OneWeb (~650) and Amazon's Kuiper (nascent).

- This first-mover advantage risks turning space infrastructure into a monopoly, impacting pricing, competition, and national leverage.

4. Strategic Neglect of Public Sector

- The absence of BSNL, a state-owned telecom giant, in Starlink partnerships is a missed opportunity for public sector integration into critical infrastructure.
- BSNL could have ensured direct state oversight and reduced strategic dependence on private players.

Economic vs. Geopolitical Value Framework

Scenario	Economic Value	Geopolitical Control	Example
Digital Sovereignty	High	High	China's GuoWang, aspirational for India
Market Dominance	High	Low	Starlink in India
Strategic Asset	Low	High	ISRO's limited indigenous capabilities
Marginal Presence	Low	Low	Amazon Kuiper, emerging players

India's Way Forward

Short-Term Measures

- Enforce technology transfer clauses, local data storage, and regulatory buffers.
- Create a framework for joint ventures between foreign satellite companies and public sector players (e.g., BSNL).

Medium to Long-Term Strategy

- Invest heavily in ISRO's satellite internet capabilities and public-private partnerships.
- Develop a national satellite constellation with indigenous production of LEO satellites.
- Foster domestic competition through startup incentives and FDI regulation.

International Collaboration

- Engage in global dialogues for space traffic management, orbital debris control, and satellite spectrum governance.
- Work with like-minded countries on open and inclusive internet governance frameworks.

Challenges Ahead

- Affordability: Satellite internet may remain inaccessible to rural populations unless tiered pricing models or government subsidies are designed innovatively.
- Orbital Commons: Without international regulations, space debris and traffic congestion may jeopardize long-term sustainability.
- Cybersecurity and data sovereignty remain at risk with foreign control over internet infrastructure.

Conclusion

The rise of satellite internet signifies more than just a technological leap — it marks a shift in digital geopolitics. For India, the goal should be to leverage private partnerships in the short term while strategically working towards indigenous digital sovereignty. Striking a balance between economic value and national control will define India's role in the emerging space-digital order.