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CONTENT LIST

GS 2: POLITY, GOVERNANCE, SOCIAL JUSTICE, INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS/INSTITUTIONS			
	Topics	**Syllabus**	**Page No:**
1	Mission Accomplished	International relations (IE)	10
2	Masters of the Sea	International relations (IE)	11
GS 3: ECONOMY, ECOLOGY, SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY, DEFENCE, SECURITY AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT			
	Topics	**Syllabus**	**Page No:**
3	Dealing with China's weaponization of e-supply chains	Economy (TH)	6
4	The Teesta dam and the long shadow of climate change	Environment & ecology (TH)	6

GS 2: POLITY, GOVERNANCE, SOCIAL JUSTICE, INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS/INSTITUTIONS

1. Mission Accomplished

Context: The meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Donald Trump was marked by carefully managed outcomes and symbolic gestures, with India achieving its core objectives while navigating friction points. The visit emphasized deepening strategic ties in defence, trade, energy, and technology, with minimal public discord. The big friction points going into the meeting were trade and immigration, India's large trade surplus on the back of high tariffs and the status of illegal Indian migration to the US. In essence, the US avoided slamming India on tariffs policy. With trump, there is of course, always the unexpected, but the Indian side can come away with a sense that it was largely mission accomplished but the road ahead suggest finding a way to reduce trade agreement which is to be concluded by the fall of 2025.

Key points

- **Overview:** The Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi met U.S. President Donald Trump which was a high-profile diplomatic engagement that successfully managed potential friction points.

- **Trade Surplus:** *Issue* - India's $20–25 billion trade surplus with the U.S. and high tariffs.
  Outcome - U.S. avoided public criticism of Indian tariffs. Goal to reduce surplus via a multisectoral trade agreement by 2025.
- **Immigration:** *Issue* - Illegal Indian migration and visa restrictions.
  Outcome - Joint pledge to aggressively combat illegal migration networks (U.S. priority). U.S. assurance to continue student visas, H-1B visas, and legal migration pathways (Indian priority).
- **Gurpatwant Singh Pannun Case:** *Issue* - U.S. concerns over alleged assassination plot.
  Outcome - Indirect acknowledgment in joint statement: Commitment to address "elements threatening sovereignty and security." No public confrontation, signalling resolution through private diplomacy.
- **Defence Partnership:** 10-year defence roadmap to be signed in 2024.
  - *Procurements* - Javelin anti-tank missiles, Stryker combat vehicles, P-81 patrol aircraft.
  - *Co-production* - AI-enabled unmanned underwater systems.
  - *Potential F-35 Sale* - Trump hinted at considering India for F-35 fighter jets.
- **Energy Cooperation:** *Oil and Gas* - Commitment to increase Indian imports from 15B to 15B to 25B.
  Nuclear Energy - India to adjust civil liability framework to enable U.S. collaboration on small modular reactors.
- **Strategic Minerals Recovery:** *Initiative* - Extract critical minerals (e.g. from aluminium, coal, oil industries) to reduce reliance on China.
  Significance - Critical for economic and military supply chains.
- **Symbolic and Strategic Outcomes:** *Public Optics* - Modi received a warm welcome, with high-profile engagements (Elon Musk, Tulsi Gabbard, Vivek Ramaswamy).
  No Tariff Escalation - Immediate tariffs on Indian goods deferred, though likely in the near term.
  Balanced Diplomacy - India secured assurances on visas and trade while addressing U.S. security concerns discreetly.
- **Conclusion:** PM Modi's visit achieved symbolic goodwill and substantive progress in defence, energy, and tech. The visit reinforced India's ability to navigate Trump's transactional diplomacy while advancing long-term strategic interests.

Q. Discuss the key outcomes of the meeting between Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and former U.S. President Donald Trump. Analyse how the agreements on defence, trade, energy, and technology reflect the strategic priorities of both nations. (ভাৰতৰ প্ৰধানমন্ত্ৰী নৰেন্দ্ৰ মোদী আৰু আমেৰিকাৰ প্ৰাক্তন ৰাষ্ট্ৰপতি ড 'নাল্ড ট্ৰাম্পৰ মাজত হোৱা বৈঠকৰ গুৰুত্বপূৰ্ণ ফলাফলসমূহ আলোচনা কৰক। প্ৰতিৰক্ষা, বাণিজ্য, শক্তি আৰু প্ৰযুক্তি সম্পৰ্কীয় চুক্তিসমূহে কেনেদৰে দুয়োখন ৰাষ্ট্ৰৰ কৌশলগত অগ্ৰাধিকাৰসমূহ প্ৰতিফলিত কৰে বিশ্লেষণ কৰক।)

GS 2: POLITY, GOVERNANCE, SOCIAL JUSTICE, INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS/INSTITUTIONS

2. Masters of the Sea

Context: India, with its Indian Ocean partners like Singapore and Oman, is hosting the Eighth Indian Ocean Conference (IOC) in Muscat. Oman, the host, like India, has been a major seafaring nation and has maintained linkages with India for over five millennia. Both countries are strategic partners and work closely in many areas of development in the region. The Indian Ocean made India the leading economic power in the first millennium. Its economic decline coincided with its decline in maritime power.

Key points

- **Indian Ocean Conference (IOC):** IOC is an annual international conference that focuses on the geopolitical, economic, and strategic importance of the Indian Ocean region. The first edition of the Conference was held in Singapore in 2016. The seventh edition of IOC was organised in 2024 in Perth, Australia.
- **Indian Ocean's Historical Significance:** Unlike the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, which were named based on mythology and physical characteristics, the Indian Ocean derives its name from India's civilizational influence over millennia. This vast ocean connects 26 countries and serves as a vital trade and cultural link for landlocked nations like Nepal and Bhutan.
- **India's Maritime Dominance and Decline:** India's decline in naval strength coincided with its economic downturn. The British, despite their naval prowess, neglected to develop India's maritime capabilities, a strategic oversight that persisted even after Independence. As a result, India fell behind in shipbuilding and maritime influence, ranking 20th globally in shipbuilding with a mere 0.06% market share.
- **Revival of India's Maritime Strategy:** Today, 70% of global container traffic and 90% of India's energy trade pass through these waters, reinforcing their critical role in global trade and India's economic security.
- **Emerging Challenges in the Indian Ocean Region:** The region faces several security and environmental challenges, including-
    - Piracy and sea-borne terrorism threatening maritime trade.
    - Illegal fishing, human trafficking, and arms smuggling.
    - Climate change-induced issues such as rising sea levels and extreme weather events.
    - Growing digital infrastructure competition, with undersea cables now a battleground for influence between European firms and China's Huawei.
- **Significance of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR):** *Geopolitical Importance* - Due to its geographical location, it serves as a major transit route for global trade, including oil and gas shipments. It is home to several important chokepoints, such as the Strait of Malacca and the Bab-el-Mandeb strait.

  Economic Importance - The region is rich in natural resources, including oil, natural gas, and fisheries, and is a major destination for foreign investment. It shares 64% of the global population and 60% of the global GDP.

  Security Importance - The IOR is also a region of great security importance, with several countries in the region facing threats from terrorism, piracy, and maritime security challenges.

  Environmental Importance - The IOR is home to several important marine ecosystems, including coral reefs and mangrove forests, that are vital for maintaining biodiversity and supporting local communities.
- **Conclusion:** The Indian Ocean is a crucial strategic space in today's globalized world. Effective management of the region's challenges and opportunities requires integrated efforts by regional stakeholders. The IOC serves as a vital platform for shaping a future where the Indian Ocean is a region of peace, stability, and shared growth.

Q. Discuss the strategic importance of the Indian Ocean for India in terms of trade, security, and geopolitical influence. How has India's approach towards maritime strategy evolved over time, and what challenges does it face in asserting its dominance in the region? (বাণিজ্য, নিৰাপত্তা আৰু ভূ-ৰাজনৈতিক প্ৰভাৱৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত ভাৰতৰ বাবে ভাৰত মহাসাগৰৰ কৌশলগত গুৰুত্বৰ বিষয়ে আলোচনা কৰক। সময়ৰ লগে লগে সামুদ্ৰিক কৌশলৰ প্ৰতি ভাৰতৰ দৃষ্টিভংগী কেনেদৰে বিকশিত হৈছে, আৰু অঞ্চলটোত নিজৰ আধিপত্য বজাই ৰখাত ই কি প্ৰত্যাহ্বানৰ সম্মুখীন হৈছে?)

GS 3: ECONOMY, ECOLOGY, SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY, DEFENCE, SECURITY AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT

3. Dealing with China's weaponization of e-supply chains

Context: Recently China imposed restrictions on the movement of its engineers and technicians working in Foxconn's Indian facilities, along with curbs on exports of specialised manufacturing equipment. These developments not only threaten India's aspirations of becoming a global manufacturing powerhouse but also reveal China's strategic efforts to maintain its dominance in the electronics supply chain. Amid these developments, it is crucial to analyse the underlying factors, economic consequences, and the long-term strategies India needs to adopt in response to these challenges.

Key points

- **China's Geopolitical Strategy and Supply Chain Domination:** China's recent actions appear to be part of a broader strategy to exert economic pressure on India by leveraging its dominant position in high-tech manufacturing. The restrictions on Chinese engineers aim to prevent the tacit transfer of knowledge to their Indian counterparts, thereby slowing the development of India's manufacturing expertise.
- **India's Strategic Investments through the PLI Scheme:** India's commitment to strengthening its electronics manufacturing industry is evident in the continued focus on the Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme. In 2025, the allocation rose to ₹8,885 crore ($1.02 billion), up from ₹6,125 crore ($0.70 billion) in 2024.
- **Dependence on China for Components and Machinery:** Despite the growing investments in India's electronics manufacturing sector, the country still faces a critical challenge: its heavy reliance on China for essential components and machinery. China remains the world's largest producer of high-tech manufacturing equipment, including machinery for assembly lines, components like printed circuit boards, camera modules, sensors, and connectors, and critical materials for mobile phones.
- **Role of Foxconn and Apple in India's Manufacturing Ambitions:** Foxconn, a key contract manufacturer for Apple, has been instrumental in helping India meet its manufacturing goals. India's southern states, such as Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, have emerged as critical hubs for this manufacturing push, hosting Foxconn's largest production facilities. By the fiscal year ending in March 2024, India had assembled approximately $14 billion worth of iPhones through Foxconn and its partners, including Pegatron and Tata Electronics.
- **Way Ahead:** *The Need for Diversification and Localized Production* - The current strategy relies heavily on assembling finished products, but for India to become a true manufacturing powerhouse, it must focus on developing its own domestic supply chains. This includes encouraging the growth of local component manufacturers and reducing the reliance on Chinese imports.
  Strategic Collaboration with Apple and Foxconn - India's response to China's restrictions could also involve deeper collaboration with Apple and Foxconn, both of which have significant stakes in India's manufacturing success. India, therefore, must ensure that its relationship with Apple and Foxconn remains strong, facilitating the growth of both companies' operations while simultaneously building its own indigenous manufacturing capacity.
- **Conclusion:** While India's efforts to develop a competitive electronics manufacturing sector are commendable, its dependence on China for key components and machinery remains a significant obstacle. For India to reduce its dependency on China and build a more self-sufficient manufacturing ecosystem, it must prioritise local component production, deepen collaboration with foreign companies like Apple and Foxconn.

GS 3: ECONOMY, ECOLOGY, SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY, DEFENCE, SECURITY AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT

4. The Teesta dam and the long shadow of climate change

Context: The recommendation to rebuild the Teesta-3 dam in Sikkim, following its destruction by a Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF) in October 2023, has sparked intense debate. While the project was previously deemed successful and commercially viable, its reconstruction raises critical environmental, geological, and socio-economic concerns. Therefore, it becomes imperative to examine the factors that led to the Teesta-3 dam's destruction, expert concerns regarding risk assessment, and the broader implications for sustainable infrastructure planning in a rapidly changing climate.

Key points

- **The Destruction of Teesta 3 - Causes and Consequences:** The Teesta-3 hydroelectric dam was destroyed when a moraine on the South Lhonak lake's flank suffered a slope failure, leading to a catastrophic flood. Satellite data revealed that approximately 50 billion liters of water spilled into the valley, triggering multiple landslides and extensive downstream damage. The disaster underscored the risks posed by glacial lake expansions, particularly in the context of climate change and regional geological instability.
- **Climate Change and the Growing Threat of GLOF:** Global warming and increasing particulate pollution, especially black carbon or soot, have accelerated Himalayan glacier melt. This process has led to the formation and expansion of glacial lakes, increasing the risk of GLOFs. According to a 2024 report by the Central Water Commission, the number of glacial lakes and water bodies in the Himalayan region grew by 10.8% between 2011 and 2024, with their combined surface area increasing by 33.7%.
- **Expert Concerns and Limitations of Risk Assessment:** *Insufficient Model for Capturing the GLOF Dynamics* - The expert committee recommending the dam's reconstruction justified its decision based on the previous facility's success and the largely intact condition of its power-generating equipment post-GLOF. The new design incorporates several improvements, including a fully concrete structure, a spillway nearly three times larger, and an early-warning system.
  Risk Assessment Limitations - A 2025 assessment by an international team of scientists from institutions such as IIT Bhubaneswar and IISc Bengaluru highlighted critical gaps in existing flood models. Given these uncertainties, many environmental activists and hydrogeologists have raised concerns about the wisdom of rebuilding Teesta-3 in an earthquake- and landslide-prone region.
- **Necessary Measures:** *Balancing Energy Needs and Climate Risks* - India's growing energy demand necessitates an expansion of power production, and hydroelectric projects like Teesta-3 offer a renewable energy source. However, climate change multiplies risks, making the siting of such projects a crucial concern.
  A Sustainable Approach to Infrastructure in the Himalayas - The debate surrounding Teesta-3 aligns with broader discussions on infrastructure sustainability in disaster-prone areas. If the risks associated with an area continue to rise, either the area itself must be abandoned, or the costs of maintaining infrastructure must increase significantly.
- **Conclusion:** The decision to rebuild the Teesta-3 dam highlights the complex intersection of energy needs, environmental risks, and socio-economic considerations. While the project promises renewable energy and economic benefits, its location in a geologically unstable, climate-sensitive region raises serious concerns. As climate change continues to amplify risks, infrastructure planning must evolve beyond commercial viability to prioritize resilience, risk reduction, and sustainability.