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1. India's geopolitical vision should be larger

Context: Earlier this month, Russian President Vladimir Putin thanked world leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, for their “noble mission” to help stop the Ukraine-Russia war, bringing joy to many Indians. India has taken bold actions in regional conflicts, such as - 1971 Bangladesh War which helped stop a genocide and supported the birth of a new nation. India is a key contributor in initiatives like ‘Vaccine Maitri’, and alliances like the International Solar Alliance for climate action, etc.

Key points

- **Overview:** In a world influenced by 'Trumpian' dynamics, India should integrate economic development with geopolitics rather than viewing them as separate concerns.
- **India's Reticence in Global Conflicts:** *Economic Prioritization* - Fear that involvement in conflicts could impact trade and growth.
Bilateral Relations - Concern that intervention may strain diplomatic ties with key nations.
Regional Delegation - Belief that conflicts should be managed by regional powers or global actors.
West Asia Policy - India, despite high stakes, remains cautious, aligning with Gulf nations' stance on issues like Gaza.
- **Need for a Larger Geopolitical Vision:** While these reasons are valid, the global order is changing, and India's ambitions require a broader geopolitical role. Historically, India led the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) to empower developing nations. However, NAM was about supporting the Global South, while multi-alignment focuses primarily on India's own interests.
- **International Expectations from India:** As the 5th largest economy and a thriving democracy, India has growing global responsibilities. India aspires to - become a permanent UNSC member, Be a key power in a multipolar world, influence global decision-making beyond just taking a stance.
- **India's Risk of Losing Geopolitical Influence:** If India does not step up, it risks ceding diplomatic space to other countries in key conflict zones – like, Europe, west Asia, Africa, etc.
- **Global Power Shift & India's Strategic Response:** The U.S. and Europe shifting rightward, leading to possible U.S. disengagement from some regions. Fragmentation of trade and rising protectionism, making strategic alignments crucial.
India's key challenges - Adversarial relations with China are unlikely to improve. Trade deficit with China is growing due to closely linked supply chains.
- **The Importance of Expanding Alliances:** As the U.S. and China move toward a possible geopolitical "deal", power could be divided into spheres of influence. This could weaken the Quad (India, Japan, Australia, U.S.), reducing its strategic relevance.
- **Conclusion:** In a 'Trumpian' world, where big powers dominate and geopolitical fragmentation increases, India should not see economic development and geopolitics as separate issues. Instead, we must follow multi-alignment in all areas to maximize benefits. India should use the opportunity of Trump 2.0 to become a key global player by influencing the changing world order.

2. The New Reading and Writing

Context: During 1947, India's literacy rate was just 12%. Today, it exceeds 75%, a transformation in economy, global competitiveness and innovation. But literacy is evolving. Just as the industrial era demanded reading and writing, the AI era demands a new kind of fluency: AI literacy. Past generations prioritised literacy as a fundamental right and a strategic necessity. Now AI literacy must become an essential skill for the next generation of young Indians.

Key points

- **AI-The New Literacy:** AI literacy is positioned as the 21st-century equivalent of reading/writing, critical for shaping the future. Unlike past industrial-era skills, AI literacy is essential for navigating workplaces, education, finance, and governance.
- **Literacy vs AI Literacy:** *Traditional literacy* - Enabled economic mobility, focused on reading and writing, required universal education campaigns, it was a necessity of the industrial-era.
AI Literacy - It is critical for future competitiveness, it demands human-AI collaboration, critical awareness, and problem-solving, it requires nationwide; multi-stakeholder initiatives, it is an imperative of the AI-era.
- **Critical Perspectives:** *Ethical Imperatives* - Need for critical AI awareness to address bias, transparency, and accountability.
Equity Concerns - There is a risk of exacerbating inequality if AI access is limited to urban/elite groups.
- **Challenges:** *Narrow Focus* - India's current AI skilling is industry-centric, limited to IT-sector crash courses.
Access Gaps - Rural-urban, public-private divides in education and infrastructure.
Ethical Concerns - Risks of bias, fairness, and misuse in AI decision-making.
- **Opportunities:** *Demographic Dividend* - Young population offers a talent pool for AI-driven innovation.
Global Leadership - Potential to shift from service provider to innovator (e.g. generative AI breakthroughs).
Economic Growth - AI could add \$1 trillion to India's economy by 2035 (NASSCOM estimate).
- **Way Forward:** *National K-12 AI Curriculum* - Integrate AI into school education for all students (urban/rural, public/private).
Experiential AI Learning - Create AI maker labs and tinkering spaces for hands-on innovation.
Future of Work Preparedness - Reskill workforce for automation and evolving job markets. Emphasize data literacy.
Inclusive AI Literacy - Develop culturally sensitive micro-courses for non-technical professions and rural communities.
National AI Literacy Platform - Unite governments, businesses, educators, and civil society to drive mission.

3. Cabinet clears Rs. 23 k crore scheme for electronic components

Context: The Union Cabinet on Friday cleared a Rs. 22,919 crore incentive schemes for components, spread over a period of six years. The scheme aims to deepen India's presence in global value chains, while increasing domestic value addition in the country. According to the government at least 91,000 direct jobs will be created as part of the scheme and has tied participating entities yearly subsidies to the number of jobs they create. The scheme is expected to generate production of Rs. 4.56 crore and bring an incremental investment of Rs. 59,350 crores.

Key points

- **Overview:** The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has finalised an ambitious incentive policy to boost domestic manufacturing of electronic components.
- **Incentive Scheme for Electronic Components Manufacturing:** To enhance domestic value addition in the electronics sector, which remains low at 15-20%. The government hopes to raise this to 30-40% by promoting domestic manufacturing of electronic components.
Targeted components - The scheme will support the manufacturing of key electronic components such as – Display modules, Camera sub-assemblies, Printed circuit board assemblies, Lithium cell enclosures, Resistors, capacitors, ferrites, and more.
- **Types of Incentives:** *Operational Incentives* - Based on net incremental sales, like the PLI scheme. *Capital Expenditure Incentives* - Given on eligible capital expenditure to promote infrastructure investments.
- **Eligible entities for the scheme:** Both greenfield and brownfield investments can avail subsidies. Foreign companies can participate through technology transfer to Indian companies or through joint ventures with domestic firms.
- **Electronic Components Manufacturing Sector in India: Market size** - Valued at \$101 billion in March 2023. The sector aims to reach \$300 billion by 2025-26. Production Linked Incentives (PLI) schemes have boosted production and attracted major global players like Apple and Samsung.
Key Initiatives - Scheme for Promotion of Manufacturing of Electronic Components and Semiconductors (SPECS) and the Modified Electronics Manufacturing Clusters (EMC 2.0) scheme. These schemes focus on infrastructure and investment in high-value components.
- **Low Domestic Value Addition:** Despite success in localising smartphone assembly, value addition remains around 15-20%, with the aim to increase it to 40%.
- **Investment to Turnover Ratio:** For smartphones, every ₹1 of investment yields ₹20 in turnover, whereas for electronic components, it yields only ₹2-4.
- **Heavy dependence on Imports:** Electronics imports constitute nearly 75% of the total electronics production in India, making the country heavily dependent on foreign suppliers for critical components like integrated circuits.
- **Demand-Supply Gap:** Domestic demand is estimated to be \$100 billion, while the country's production capacity is only \$10.75 billion. The demand for components is expected to reach \$160 billion by 2028-29, with imports growing at 12% annually.

4. Over 150 dead as powerful quake hits Myanmar, Thailand aftershocks felt in Northeast

Context: A powerful 7.7-magnitude earthquake struck Myanmar on March 28, causing buildings to collapse in Mandalay and bringing down a skyscraper under construction in Bangkok. The quake, the strongest globally in two years, was followed by at least three aftershocks. Northeast India also felt this trans-boundary earthquake and aftershocks. The region has a history of M 7 and above quakes like 1956 (M 7.2) and in 1912 (M 7.5). At least four earthquakes of more than 4.0 magnitude were recorded in the Indo-Myanmar region on March 5.

Key points

- **Overview:** The quake, the strongest globally in two years, was followed by at least three aftershocks. The epicentre was 17.2 km from Mandalay at a shallow depth of 10 km.
- **Cause of the Myanmar Earthquake:** The Earth's lithosphere consists of tectonic plates that have been moving for billions of years. Earthquakes occur when these plates suddenly slip past each other, releasing stored energy as seismic waves, causing the ground to shake.
 - *Strike-Slip Faulting* - The Myanmar earthquake was caused by strike-slip faulting between the Indian and Eurasian plates, where the plates moved sideways against each other.
 - *The Sagaing Fault* - The earthquake occurred on the Sagaing Fault, a north-south fault line in Myanmar known for seismic activity. This fault marks the boundary between the Indian plate (moving north) and the Eurasian plate.
- **Impact of Recent Earthquake: Largest Quake in Decades** - The recent 7.7-magnitude earthquake was likely the strongest in Myanmar's mainland in 75 years. Previous significant quakes caused casualties but were less severe.
 - Shallow Depth Intensified Damage* - The quake occurred at a shallow depth of just 10 km, meaning the seismic shockwaves did not dissipate before reaching the surface. This resulted in stronger ground shaking and greater structural damage.
 - Widespread Impact Beyond Epicentre* - Experts emphasized that seismic waves radiate from the entire fault line, not just the epicentre, affecting a much larger area.
- **Preparedness of Myanmar: High Fatality and Economic Risk** - The USGS Earthquake Hazards Program estimated potential fatalities between 10,000 and 100,000, with economic losses possibly reaching 70% of Myanmar's GDP.
 - Infrastructure Not Built for Large Quakes* - Buildings, especially in densely populated Mandalay, were not designed to withstand such powerful tremors.
 - Geographic Factors* - Most earthquakes in Myanmar occur west of the Sagaing Fault, while this one struck the central region, which is less accustomed to high-magnitude quakes, further worsening the impact.