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Topics Covered

- **India- Japan ties- old partners, new priorities**
- **What does the new online gaming Act outline?**
- **India, Fiji call for open Indo-Pacific region , agree to deepen defence ties**
- **Like other relics, India's fossils are at high risk of being sold abroad**

India- Japan ties- old partners, new priorities

Syllabus :

- **GS Paper 2 (International Relations)** India and its neighborhood relations

India-Japan ties — old partners, new priorities

P rime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Japan and China, that begins from August 29, comes at a time of flux in global geopolitics. While there is a tentative easing of tensions between India and China after years of strain, there is also growing uncertainty about New Delhi's ties with Washington as the Trump administration seems to be doing everything in its power to push India away. Thus, Mr. Modi's engagement in Tokyo carries weight well beyond the bilateral.

Japan's major investment plan

At the heart of the visit lies Japan's announcement of a ¥10 trillion (about \$68 billion) investment plan in India to be spread over the next decade. This pledge, among the most ambitious Tokyo has ever made to New Delhi, is designed to boost the infrastructure, manufacturing, clean energy, and technology partnership. It signals Japan's long-term stake in India's growth story at a time when many global investors remain cautious about China. The fact that Japan is also investing in the next-generation EIO series Shinkansen for the Mumbai-Ahmedabad high-speed rail corridor reflects economic collaboration alongside Tokyo's willingness to transfer cutting-edge technology to India.

On the strategic front, the two countries are expected to revise the 2008 Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation, reorienting their security and defence partnership in accordance with contemporary realities. The proposed Economic Security Initiative – it covers semiconductors, critical minerals, pharmaceuticals, and clean energy – anchors Japan more firmly within India's quest for diversified supply chains. Also significant is the upgrade of their digital partnership, which is now expected to cover artificial intelligence and startup ecosystems. These initiatives place India-Japan ties at the forefront of technological and security



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The Prime Minister's Japan visit highlights India's steady strategic intent, with signals to China and the U.S.

cooperation in Asia, reinforcing their shared commitment to a free, open, and rules-based Indo-Pacific.

The U.S. factor, a case of strategic balancing

The timing of the visit is important. After the Tokyo meeting, Mr. Modi is scheduled to attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit in Tianjin, China. Bilateral ties, though scarred by the 2020 Galwan clash, are demonstrating tentative signs of stabilisation with the resumption of direct flights, visa relaxations, and trade facilitation efforts. The visit, from Tokyo to Beijing in a single week, reflects a strategic balancing in many ways. First, it underscores India's ability to engage with a trusted strategic partner and a neighbouring competitor without allowing one relationship to dictate the other. Second, it signals that India can compartmentalise. With Tokyo, the focus is on advancing economic security, defence cooperation, and Indo-Pacific stability. With Beijing, the emphasis will likely be on managing tensions, exploring limited confidence-building measures, and keeping communication lines open.

The balancing becomes even more consequential against the backdrop of Mr. Trump's unpredictability, which has cast a shadow on the reliability of the United States as a steady partner. Mr. Trump stands to unravel years of careful effort invested in building the New Delhi-Washington partnership. Successive administrations on both sides, from George W. Bush to Joe Biden, worked to transform a once-fractious relationship into a cornerstone of Indo-Pacific strategy, anchored in defence cooperation, technology sharing, and growing people-to-people ties. So far, Trump 2.0 risks eroding this progress. The Quad (India, Australia, Japan, the U.S.) too, remains essential to India's Indo-Pacific vision, but its trajectory appears rocky as U.S. engagement turns episodic. The

grouping was conceived as a platform to pool capacities among like-minded democracies, yet its momentum has always depended on Washington's willingness to commit consistently. Under Mr. Trump's second term, signals of disengagement and a narrower view of alliances risk diluting the Quad's strategic coherence. For India, Japan and Australia, this raises pressing questions about sustaining the initiative's credibility and operational depth.

Beyond economics and defence, there is a broader political signal embedded in the visit. By stepping up its engagement with India, Japan is not just diversifying its economic footprint but is also reinforcing the idea that dedicated long-term cooperation can deliver tangible outcomes.

The message

The Tokyo visit is thus less about short-term diplomatic outcomes and more about signalling steady strategic intent – that India is willing to keep channels with Beijing open, prepared to navigate U.S. unpredictability, and determined to deepen enduring partnerships with like-minded powers in the region. Japan's commitments also reinforce India as one of its most reliable partners in navigating the challenges of the Indo-Pacific, from economic resilience to maritime security.

The visit will highlight one of the most enduring features of Indian diplomacy in recent years: flexibility without losing strategic clarity. In a phase of protracted geopolitical uncertainty, it is Japan that emerges as India's anchor partner. Washington's commitment is wavering under Trump's short-sightedness, while Beijing remains a competitor whose gestures of normalisation cannot yet ease underlying mistrust. Tokyo offers consistency, resources and a shared strategic outlook rooted in democratic values and a free and open Indo-Pacific. Therefore, the visit to Japan is not just about consolidating an old partnership. It is about recognising where India's most dependable ballast lies.

Key Takeaways from the Article

Why in the News ?

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Japan (Aug 29, 2025), followed by China visit, comes amid:
- Strategic **realignment in global geopolitics**.
- **Tentative easing** of India-China tensions after Galwan (2020).
- **Uncertainty in India-U.S. relations** due to Trump administration's unpredictability.
- Japan's announcement of a **¥10 trillion (~\$68 billion) investment plan in India over 10 years**, one of its most ambitious pledges.

Economic Partnership

- Japan pledges **¥10 trillion (~\$68 bn) investment** in India over the next decade.
- Focus areas: infrastructure, manufacturing, clean energy, technology.
- Next-gen **E10 series Shinkansen** tech transfer for Mumbai–Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail.
- Signals Japan's **long-term stake in India's growth** story at a time of global investor caution toward China.

Strategic & Security Cooperation

- ◆ Revision of **2008 Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation**.
- ◆ Proposed **Economic Security Initiative** covering:
 - ◆ *semiconductors, critical minerals, pharma, clean energy*.
- ◆ Upgraded **digital partnership** — Artificial Intelligence, start-up ecosystems, cyber & emerging tech.
- ◆ Shared commitment to a **free, open, rules-based Indo-Pacific**.

Geopolitical Balancing

- ◆ Modi's visits to Tokyo (trusted partner) & Beijing (competitor) in the same week show **strategic flexibility**.
- ◆ With **Japan** → focus on economic security, Indo-Pacific, defence cooperation.
- ◆ With **China** → limited CBMs, trade facilitation, managing tensions.
- ◆ India shows **compartmentalisation of ties** without one dictating the other.

U.S. Factor

- ◆ Trump 2.0's unpredictability risks **weakening India-U.S. partnership** built since 2005.
- ◆ Quad's momentum affected by **episodic U.S. engagement**.
- ◆ Raises questions on credibility & operational depth of Quad.

Political Signal

- ◆ Japan reinforcing idea of **long-term cooperation delivering results**.
- ◆ India projects itself as **flexible yet strategically clear** — willing to talk to China, balance U.S.
- ◆ unpredictability, and rely on Japan as an **anchor partner**.

Key Takeaways from the Article

Why in the News ?

- On **Aug 20–22, 2025**, Parliament passed the **Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Bill, 2025**, now law.
- Responds to **financial frauds, suicides, tax evasion** linked to Real Money Games (RMGs).
- Lok Sabha passed the Bill in just **7 minutes**, raising questions of scrutiny.
- **Government data**: Indians lose ~₹15,000 crore annually to RMGs.
- **WHO**: RMGs cause compulsive behavior, psychological distress, and family disruption.

Categorisation of Online Games

- **E-Sports**: Recognised under National Sports Governance Act, 2025. Registration + participation fee allowed. Eg: GTA, Call of Duty.
- **Social Gaming**: Recreational/educational purposes (puzzle, chess apps, casual multiplayer). Govt to promote through budget allocations.
- **RMGs (Real Money Games)**: Fee/stake-based games, whether skill or chance. Eg: Poker, Rummy, Fantasy Cricket, Ludo. → **Completely banned**.

Regulation & Penalties

- **Offering RMGs / fund transactions**: Imprisonment up to 3 years + fine up to ₹1 crore (or both).
- **Advertising RMGs**: Imprisonment up to 2 years + fine up to ₹50 lakh.
- Offences **cognisable & non-bailable** under BNSS, 2023.
- **CERT-In** to block/disrupt illegal platforms; Interpol may be used for offshore violators.
- No penal action prescribed **against individual players**.

Government's Justification

- **Consumer Protection**: Algorithms ensure users are net losers.
- **Financial Integrity**:
 - ◆ Terror funding links (Parliamentary Panel 2023).
 - ◆ **₹30,000 crore GST evasion** by gaming firms.
 - ◆ **₹2,000 crore tax evasion** flagged by FIU (2022).
 - ◆ **Chinese App FIEWIN** defrauded Indians of ₹400 crore.
- **Addiction & Social Harm**: 32 suicides in Karnataka (past 31 months).

Challenges & Criticism

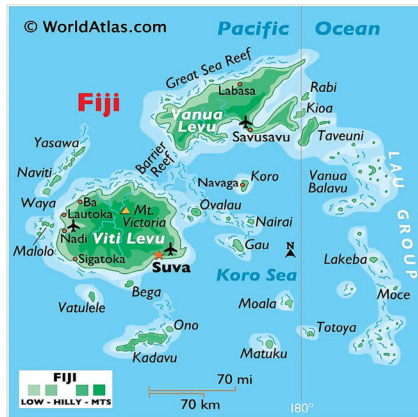
- **Legal Ambiguity**: No distinction between skill vs chance → contrary to earlier SC rulings.
- **Federalism Issue**: Regulation of betting/gambling is in State List (Entries 34 & 62).
- **Industry Impact**: 400+ companies, 2 lakh jobs threatened. Celebrities endorsing platforms (Dream11, RummyCircle, My11Circle, etc.).
- **Loopholes**: VPNs, offshore servers, “informational” apps may bypass ban.
- **Children's Safety**: Act silent on minors' access to esports/social gaming.

India, Fiji call for open Indo-Pacific region , agree to deepen defence ties

Syllabus :

GS-2 International Relations

India, Fiji call for open Indo-Pacific region, agree to deepen defence ties



Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

India will provide training and equipment to upgrade Fiji's maritime security, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Monday.

Welcoming visiting Fijian Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka, Mr. Modi said India and Fiji "strongly support a free, open" Indo-Pacific region as both sides declared that India would work to build capacity for the armed forces of Fiji.

"In our cooperation with the Pacific island nations, we see Fiji as a hub. Both our countries strongly support a free, open, inclusive, secure, and prosperous Indo-Pacific. We warmly welcome India's Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative," Mr. Modi said, announcing the collaboration between India and the Fijian military forces.

A joint statement issued at the end of consultation said the two sides emphasised the importance of their "shared interests in



Key meet: Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Fiji Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka in New Delhi on Monday. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

advancing regional peace, stability, and prosperity".

"Prime Minister Modi reaffirmed India's commitment to advancing the priority areas of cooperation outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding [MoU] on Defence Cooperation signed in 2017, and to supporting Fiji's strategic priorities in these areas," the joint statement said.

The two sides agreed to work together on UN peacekeeping operations, military medicine, the White Shipping Information Ex-

change, and capacity-building for Fijian military forces.

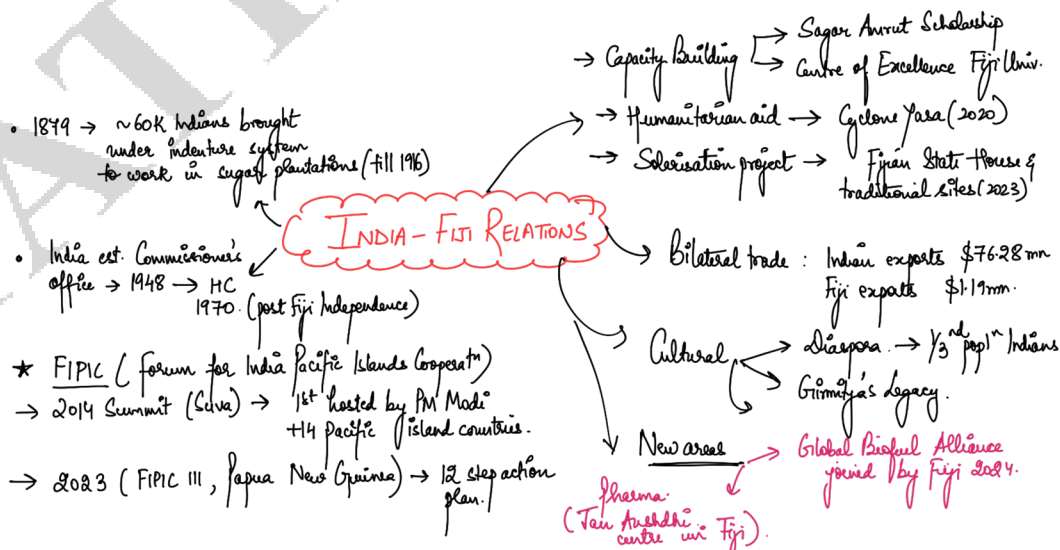
Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Rabuka emphasised the need to protect Fiji's Exclusive Economic Zone, and welcomed India's assurance to assist with Fiji's security needs. "Prime Minister Rabuka welcomed the planned port call by an Indian naval ship to Fiji which will enhance maritime cooperation and interoperability," the statement said.

During the talks at Hyd-

erabad House here, India and Fiji signed seven MoUs that included an agreement on building a super-specialty hospital in Fiji, and one on migration and mobility. Both the leaders agreed to strengthen cooperation against terrorism, and reiterated condemnation for the terror attack in Pahalgam. Mr. Modi announced the gifting of two ambulances to Fiji's military forces, and the opening of the defence wing in the High Commission of India in Fijian capital Suva. The countries also agreed to enhance cooperation in cybersecurity, and welcomed the setting up of a cybersecurity training cell in Fiji. Both sides agreed to collaborate on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

Mr. Rabuka had in July opposed China's reported plans to establish a naval base in the Pacific islands. As a signal to the Chinese side, the statement also called for a "free, open Indo-Pacific region".

Key Takeaways from the Article



Like other relics, India's fossils are at high risk of being sold abroad

Like other relics, India's fossils are at high risk of being sold abroad

Fossils once bound for labs are now advertised in storefronts and auction houses; ammonites, extinct sea creatures, once crowded ancient oceans; today, their fossilised remains are sold on the streets of Paris. Larger, rarer specimens fetch staggering sums from private collectors at auctions.

Anupama Chandrasekaran

In Western India, some of the country's richest fossil beds lie inside open coal mines. It is grueling work for paleontologists with long days under a haze of dust, the deafening humming of tools, and nights in small-town hotels with basic comforts. In 2014, paleontologist Sunil Bajpai reported that at one such dig, he and his team uncovered the fossilised vertebrae of *Isaia* indus. This ancient giant snake may have stretched as long as a football. But without a national repository or a secure, catalogued fossil locker like those abroad, the story remains of this 47-million-year-old serpent face an uncertain future.

"I worry about what will happen to these fossils after I retire in two years," said 63-year-old Mr. Bajpai, chair professor of vertebrate paleontology at IIT Roorkee. "Will they be preserved or fall victim to theft or vandalism?"

Around the world, fossils since bound for labs are now advertised in storefronts and auction houses. Ammonites, extinct sea creatures with coiled shells, once crowded ancient oceans. Today, their fossilised remains are sold on the streets of Paris. Larger, rarer specimens fetch staggering sums at auctions from private collectors.

In July 2014, Sotheby's auction house in New York sold a near-complete *Stegosaurus*, a plant-eating dinosaur with spikes, for \$44.6 million. It was the most expensive fossil ever auctioned. In California, luxury homes trumpet dinosaur skeletons as living-room showpieces.

Thomas Carr is a paleontologist at the Carthage Institute of Paleontology in Wisconsin in the U.S. He studies fossils of *Tyrannosaurus rex*, one of the largest meat-eating dinosaurs in history. In a study published this April titled "*Tyrannosaurus rex*: An Endangered Species", Mr. Carr reported that 71 scientifically important *T. rex* specimens are in private hands, just 64 of these finds are held by public institutions.

Commercial collectors have gathered more *T. rex* material than scientists have since the first specimen was discovered," Mr. Carr said over a phone call. "The rate of collection by commercial interests was the most surprising and the most alarming."

Heritage at risk
Over decades, India's cultural treasures have often vanished into private hands. In 1898, a British landowner unearthed hundreds of gems from a Buddhist stupa in Uttar Pradesh. The relics stayed in his family for generations before part of the collection was slated for auction at Sotheby's in Hong Kong in 2002. The Indian government blocked the sale. Scientists caution that fossils could be the next heritage lost to the auction block.

"The paleontological record of India, especially the Mesozoic age, is incredibly important to our understanding of the evolution of dinosaurs and other organisms," Mr. Carr said, referring to the age of reptiles when dinosaurs ruled the earth. "We can afford to lose it."

India's fossil record includes some of the earliest plant life, dinosaurs and even a skull of ancient humans. That wealth of



A panoramic view of the Parandhar lignite mine in Katk, Gujarat, showing the fossiliferous level (red arrow) where fossils of the 15-metre-long snake *Isaia* indus were found. A. Chandrasekaran/ANUPAMA

fossils is due to the subcontinent's prolonged isolation after splitting from the southern supercontinent Gondwanaland around 150 million years ago. After India collided with Asia 50 to 60 million years ago, ancestral horses and whales emerged along its coasts.

"As of now there are no laws governing fossils and there are huge concerns about vandalism and local sales taking place," Mr. Bajpai said. "If we don't move fast, we're going to lose a part of earth's history that you can never get back. Once a fossil is gone, it's gone forever."

Unsung custodians

Fossils can vanish without trace: misplaced in storerooms, crumbling from heat and rain or hidden away in private collections. One large cache of Indian fossils today lies with the Ranga Rao Chorghal Trust. It is a collection built by the late Indian paleontologist M.S. Ranga Rao and his late wife, the German paleontologist Friedhelm Obergraff.

The couple unearthed truckloads of fossils, including bones of a small, hoisted, land-dwelling herbivore called *Indohyus*. Dutch-American paleontologist Hans Thewissen examined the specimen in 2005 and spotted features that signalled that *Indohyus* was one of the earliest



A fossil of the Parandhar Ammonites Centre, RA photo

known whale ancestors. The private collection is now kept in a Dehliwadi home. Some fossils even lie exposed in the garden, according to Mr. Bajpai. The collection, built over decades, remains largely unsorted and unattended.

With no formal safeguards, some enthusiasts have turned custodians of India's deep history. Yashu Verma, a schoolteacher in Madhya Pradesh, spends weekends rescuing dinosaur bones and shells from riverbeds. The limestone and

hazak hills in his neighbourhood, formed 146.65 million years ago, cradle fossilised dinosaur nests and eggs. Ammonites, coiled like snails, slice of fossil wood and shards of reptile teeth fill every corner of Mr. Verma's home.

"We have to recognise the importance of these finds — they tell the story of our past, the story of earth," said Mr. Verma, speaking in Hindi. "There must be strict measures against misuse and vandalism. Fossils should be accessible to people, but they must also be protected."

In 2006, Mr. Verma stumbled upon hundreds of dinosaur eggs. He borrowed money to rent a truck and move some to a government museum in Mandla. But that wasn't enough to protect them. In 2013, some of the eggs were stolen and the rest were locked away from public view.

"One day they were on the shelf and the other day they weren't," said Ashok Sahni, a veteran Indian paleontologist of

the theft. "Well, when money comes into the picture, it's very difficult in a country like ours to safeguard anything because you can put guards and you can put wire and you can do everything. They did that at the Mandla museum and still, they lost some of the dinosaur eggs kept there and nobody knows how."

Fossils for sale

Fossils aren't just prey for vandals or roadside sellers anymore. A simple Google search can lead you to sites openly selling fossilised dinosaur eggs. They've also become trophies for the rich.

The *Stegosaurus* fossil that sold for a record \$44.6 million at Sotheby's last year went to hedge fund trader Kenneth Griffin. The fossil frenzy has even drawn Hollywood celebrities like Nicolas Cage and Leonardo DiCaprio, who once held a bidding war over a dinosaur skull. Sotheby's has further stoked the appetite, carving out a new department in 2013 selling fossils alongside space and cinema memorabilia.

A few years ago, a draft plan for a national fossil repository in India raised hopes. But that plan has barely progressed. Experts warn that in its absence, India's prehistoric treasures remain vulnerable to auction abroad.

"With no law to prohibit their extraction or sale, it's entirely possible that dinosaur eggs from India have found their way into overseas markets," Mr. Bajpai said.

For now, the 27 fossilised vertebrae Mr. Bajpai found of the *Isaia indus* rest in a box at IIT Roorkee. At an estimated 49 feet, the giant python-like snake would have been longer than the *T. rex* that paleontologist Mr. Carr found to be drifting into private hands. Only time will tell if this fossil will be safeguarded as a national treasure, safe from any auction block.

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