23rd+24th January 2026: DSC

Board of Peace

Why in News?

Emergence of a New Peace Architecture

At the World Economic Forum in Davos (2026), former U.S. President Donald Trump formally launched the **"Board of Peace"**, positioning it as a new mechanism to supervise ceasefire arrangements in the Israel–Gaza conflict. The initiative has been projected as a possible alternative to existing global peace and security institutions.

Relevance

- **GS Paper I:** Evolution of the post–Cold War international order, changing nature of global institutions, West Asian geopolitics
- **GS Paper II:** UN reforms, multilateralism, India's foreign policy, international peace and security, global governance mechanisms

Structure and Participation

Although the U.S. has claimed endorsement from **59 countries**, actual participation at the launch was limited to representatives from **only 19 states**, highlighting a credibility and representation gap.
Countries such as **Pakistan, Türkiye, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE** attended, while **India**, despite an invitation extended to its Prime Minister, chose not to participate and has not issued a formal position.

Immediate Geopolitical Context

The Board's first operational task involves **managing the Israel–Gaza ceasefire**, including the announcement of a **U.S.-supervised Palestinian governance committee**.
The proposed reopening of the **Rafah border crossing between Gaza and Egypt** further signals Washington's intent to directly oversee humanitarian access and political transition processes.

Strategic Intent Behind the Initiative

Trump described the Board as an institution meant "for the world, not for America," openly suggesting that its success could rival or even replace the United Nations.
This reflects growing dissatisfaction with **UN-led conflict resolution**, particularly in the Middle East, and indicates a shift toward **coalition-based, U.S.-centric peace enforcement mechanisms**.

Legitimacy and Structural Concerns

- Absence of broad physical participation weakens claims of global legitimacy
- No treaty-based authority, universal membership, or enforcement mechanisms
- Unlike the UN Security Council, the Board lacks formal accountability structures

Implications for Global Governance

The creation of ad hoc institutions outside established frameworks risks **fragmenting the multilateral order**, encouraging selective participation and forum-shopping.

Peacekeeping may increasingly shift from **rule-based internationalism** to **power-driven arrangements**, privileging geopolitical alignment over neutrality.

India's Strategic Assessment

India's absence reflects its:

- Commitment to UN-centric multilateralism
- Emphasis on strategic autonomy
- Concerns over legitimacy, mandate, and precedent

India has consistently advocated **reforming existing global institutions**, not creating parallel, personality-driven alternatives.

Regional Dynamics

Participation by Saudi Arabia and the UAE suggests pragmatic regional calculations prioritising stability and humanitarian access.
However, externally imposed governance structures in Gaza raise concerns over **sovereignty, local legitimacy, and long-term peace sustainability**.

Comparison with the United Nations

- **UN:** Universal membership, legal mandate, peacekeeping experience, normative legitimacy
- **Board of Peace:** Limited participation, no legal base, executive-driven, politically selective

Way Forward

For credibility, the Board would require:

- A clear legal foundation
- Transparent decision-making processes
- Complementarity with UN mechanisms rather than substitution

India is likely to pursue **selective, issue-based engagement** while continuing to push for multilateral reform.

Core Insight

The Board of Peace reflects stress within post-war multilateralism, but without inclusiveness and rule-based authority, it risks deepening global fragmentation rather than delivering durable peace.

Trump's Greenland Push, Arctic Geopolitics and the Future of NATO

Why in News?

Renewed U.S. Assertiveness in the Arctic
Following a U.S. military action in Venezuela, Donald Trump renewed calls for acquiring **Greenland**, terming it an "absolute necessity" for U.S. national security. The statement has

reignited debates on Arctic geopolitics and raised fundamental questions about NATO's future.

Relevance

- **GS Paper I:** Arctic geography, climate change and emerging geopolitical spaces
- **GS Paper II:** NATO, alliance politics, U.S. foreign policy shifts, collective security

Greenland and NATO's Internal Contradiction

Greenland is an autonomous territory of **Denmark**, a NATO member. Article 5 of NATO treats an attack on one member as an attack on all.
Trump's unilateral proposal undermines this principle, signalling a shift away from alliance-based security toward **unconstrained unilateralism**.

Strategic Drivers of U.S. Interest

Greenland's location offers strategic control over **Arctic airspace and maritime routes**, essential for missile defence, early warning systems, and emerging polar shipping lanes.

Arctic Sea Routes

Two routes define Arctic geopolitics:

- **Northern Sea Route (Russia)**
- **Northwest Passage (Canada)**

Greenland does not directly control the Northwest Passage, raising questions about the strategic logic of outright sovereignty acquisition.

Resource Competition

Greenland's reserves of **rare earth elements, hydrocarbons, and minerals** have increased its attractiveness amid global energy transition and resource nationalism.

Arctic Governance Reality

The Arctic already has established governance frameworks involving Arctic states.
Unlike Russia—which has heavily invested in Arctic ports and nuclear icebreakers—the U.S. has historically underinvested in Arctic infrastructure.

Russia's Strategic Calculation

Russia remains the dominant Arctic power. A weakened NATO benefits Moscow, but a stronger U.S. Arctic presence would intensify long-term U.S.–Russia competition.

NATO and European Security

Trump's posture erodes trust in U.S. security guarantees, alarming smaller NATO states. Europe's long-standing dependence on U.S. defence capacity limits its ability to compensate quickly, even with increased military spending.

MAGA Worldview and Alliance Fatigue

Trump's approach reflects an ideology that views alliances as burdens, rejecting the U.S. role as global security guarantor.

Western Hemisphere Doctrine

The Greenland push aligns with a broader vision of consolidating U.S. influence in the Western Hemisphere rather than sustaining global alliance networks.

NATO's Future

Europe may seek accommodation to prevent alliance rupture, but NATO's survival ultimately depends on sustained U.S. political commitment.

Core Takeaways

- The Arctic is emerging as a key geopolitical frontier
- Assumptions of U.S. benevolence can no longer be taken for granted
- NATO faces an inflection point, highlighting Europe's need for strategic autonomy

World Malaria Report 2025

Why in News?

Assessment of Global Malaria Elimination Efforts
The **World Health Organization** released the *World Malaria Report 2025* in December, reviewing worldwide progress at a critical midpoint before the **2030 malaria elimination target**. The report points to regional successes but flags deep structural and financial vulnerabilities.

Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Public health governance, WHO's role, global health cooperation, India's health commitments
- **GS Paper III:** Human capital formation, economic burden of disease, health technologies

Global Malaria Trends

The **Asia–Pacific region** recorded a decline in estimated malaria cases from **9.6 million (2023)** to **about 8.9 million (2024)**, driven by improved outcomes in **10 of the 17 malaria-endemic countries**.

Country-Level Progress

Pakistan achieved the **largest absolute reduction** in malaria cases. Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Vietnam reported **historic lows for the second consecutive year**, demonstrating that elimination is achievable with sustained intervention.

Drug Resistance: A Systemic Risk

The report identifies growing resistance to **artemisinin-based combination therapies (ACTs)** as one of the most serious threats to malaria elimination.
The **Greater Mekong Subregion** stands out as a success case, having curbed resistance through early detection, strict treatment protocols, and cross-border coordination.

Role of APLMA

The **Asia Pacific Leaders Malaria Alliance (APLMA)** brings together **22 governments** committed to eliminating malaria by 2030, strengthening political ownership and regional cooperation. However, it warns that progress is uneven and fragile.

Financing Constraints

In 2024, only **around 42% of global malaria financing needs** were met. Further funding reductions in 2025 have widened the gap, forcing countries to scale back proven interventions and increasing the risk of resurgence.

India's Elimination Trajectory

India aims to achieve **zero indigenous malaria cases by 2027**, ahead of the global deadline. While significant declines since 2015 show feasibility, recent trends reveal **plateauing progress and localised rebounds**, indicating that India is off-track without corrective action.

Strategic Shifts Required

- Transition to **real-time, case-based surveillance**
- Focused action on **residual hotspots**, especially in five States and the North-East
- Treat malaria elimination as a **time-bound national mission** with assured funding and accountability

Artemisinin Resistance and Vaccines

Artemisinin resistance is **not yet established in India**, due to strict diagnostics, combination therapy use, and surveillance.
New tools such as **RTS,S and R21 vaccines** offer promise and are being evaluated as complements to surveillance and vector control.

Core Insight

Malaria elimination is technically achievable but highly vulnerable. Sustained financing, resistance management, and last-mile execution will determine whether India's **2027 target** and the global **2030 goal** remain attainable.

Social Media Ban for Under-16 Users

Why in News?

State-Level Policy Experimentation
Andhra Pradesh became the first Indian State to constitute a **ministerial committee** to examine the feasibility of restricting social media access for children **below 16 years**, citing rising digital harm and global precedents.

Relevance

- **GS Paper I:** Social change, youth behaviour, technology and society
- **GS Paper II:** Governance, child rights, federalism, freedom of expression
- **GS Paper III:** Cyber security, platform regulation, digital risks

Rationale Behind the Proposal

Authorities highlighted increasing cases where children are either **victims or offenders** in crimes linked to social media exposure, including cyberbullying, online grooming, misinformation, and behavioural harm.

International Context

Australia recently enacted a **nationwide social media ban for under-16 users**, supported by mandatory age verification and platform liability, prompting Indian policymakers to explore similar safeguards.

Andhra Pradesh's Initiative

The ministerial panel has been tasked with:

- Studying global best practices
- Analysing crime and child safety data
- Examining legal, constitutional, and technological feasibility

Legal and Constitutional Concerns

India legally defines a child as **below 18 years**, raising questions about the rationale for a **below-16 threshold**.
A ban also intersects with **Article 19 (freedom of expression)** and existing child protection frameworks, which emphasise regulation rather than prohibition.

Centre–State Jurisdiction Issues

Digital platforms are governed by central legislation such as the **Information Technology Act** and the **Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023**, limiting unilateral State-level enforcement.

Technology and Enforcement Challenges

Effective implementation would require robust **age-verification systems**, raising concerns about:

- Privacy intrusion
- Data security risks
- Exclusion errors due to weak documentation

Arguments For and Against

In favour:

- Protection from harmful content and exploitation
- Reduced psychological stress and addiction

Against:

- Risk of digital exclusion and learning loss
- Migration to unregulated platforms

- Over-reliance on prohibition instead of digital literacy

Way Forward

A **graduated regulatory approach**—combining parental controls, platform accountability, age-appropriate access, and digital literacy—may offer better protection without constitutional overreach.

Core Insight

The Andhra Pradesh initiative reflects genuine child safety concerns, but effective digital governance requires balance between **protection, rights, feasibility, and cooperative federalism**, not blanket bans.

Vehicle-to-Vehicle (V2V) Technology

Why in News?

Technology as a Road Safety Intervention
A series of fatal highway accidents in early 2026—linked to fog, low visibility, and high speeds—renewed attention on **Vehicle-to-Vehicle (V2V) communication technology** as a preventive road safety solution.

Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Public policy and road safety governance
- **GS Paper III:** Intelligent Transport Systems, emerging technologies

India's Road Safety Challenge

India records over **1.5 lakh road fatalities annually**, with highways accounting for a disproportionate share due to overspeeding, delayed driver response, and poor visibility.

What is V2V Technology?

V2V enables vehicles to **wirelessly exchange real-time data**—such as speed, braking status, position, and direction—within a range of about **200 metres**, extending situational awareness beyond the driver's line of sight.

Operational Mechanism

Each vehicle is equipped with an **Onboard Unit (OBU)** that continuously broadcasts and receives safety messages, warning drivers about:

- Sudden braking ahead
- Stopped vehicles beyond visibility
- Wrong-way or slow-moving traffic
- Blind-spot risks

Technological Backbone

V2V uses **Dedicated Short-Range Communication (DSRC)** or **Cellular V2X (C-V2X)** protocols, designed with **privacy-by-design**, ensuring anonymity and non-trackability.

Advantages Over Conventional Safety Tools

Unlike cameras or radars, V2V functions **without visual contact**, making it especially effective in fog, curves, night driving, and dense traffic conditions.

Limitations

V2V cannot:

- Prevent pedestrian accidents
- Control reckless driving behaviour
- Deliver full benefits without widespread adoption

Implementation Challenges

- Cost of around **₹5,000 per vehicle**
- Mixed traffic conditions (cars, trucks, two-wheelers, tractors)
- Absence of regulatory mandates and spectrum standards

India-Specific Applications

Highest impact is expected in:

- Fog-prone highway corridors
- Accident black spots
- Mountain roads and freight routes

Early adoption by **commercial vehicles** could yield disproportionate safety benefits.

Way Forward

A **phased rollout** is required:

- Mandate V2V for new commercial vehicles
- Pilot high-risk corridors
- Develop national V2X standards and integrate with Intelligent Transport Systems

Core Insight

V2V technology is not a substitute for enforcement or road engineering, but a powerful **preventive overlay** that can significantly reduce collision risks when deployed at scale.

24th January Daily MCQs

Q1. With reference to the World Malaria Report 2025, consider the following statements:

1. The Asia–Pacific region recorded a consistent decline in malaria cases across all endemic countries between 2023 and 2024.
2. Artemisinin-based combination therapies remain the cornerstone of global malaria treatment.

3. The Greater Mekong Subregion is cited as a failure in containing antimalarial drug resistance.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

A. 2 only
B. 1 and 2 only
C. 2 and 3 only
D. 1, 2 and 3

Answer: A

Explanation:

- **Statement 1 – Incorrect:** Decline was reported in *10 of 17* endemic countries, not all.
- **Statement 2 – Correct:** ACTs remain frontline treatment globally.
- **Statement 3 – Incorrect:** Greater Mekong Subregion is a **success story**, not a failure.

Q2. Which of the following factors best explains why malaria elimination becomes more expensive if progress plateaus during the final phase?

A. Rising cost of vaccines
B. Increased vector adaptability to insecticides
C. Risk of resurgence requiring emergency response cycles
D. Decline in international donor interest alone

Answer: C

Explanation:

- UPSC-relevant insight: **Delay causes resurgence**, forcing repeated emergency interventions that cost more than sustained elimination-phase funding.
- Vaccines and donor fatigue are contributory but not the core economic logic.

Q3. With reference to proposals for banning social media access for children below 16 years in India, consider the following statements:

1. Digital platforms fall exclusively under the legislative competence of State governments.
2. The Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 mandates a complete ban on social media use by children.
3. Age-verification mechanisms raise privacy and exclusion concerns.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

A. 3 only
B. 1 and 2 only

C. 2 and 3 only
D. 1, 2 and 3

Answer: A

Explanation:

- **Statement 1 – Incorrect:** Digital platforms are governed by **central laws** (IT Act, DPDP Act).
- **Statement 2 – Incorrect:** DPDP Act requires **verifiable parental consent**, not a ban.
- **Statement 3 – Correct:** Age verification raises privacy, data security, and exclusion risks.

Q4. Vehicle-to-Vehicle (V2V) technology differs fundamentally from camera- or radar-based systems because it:

A. Operates independently of any wireless spectrum
B. Relies on satellite navigation rather than terrestrial communication
C. Enables non-visual, real-time communication between vehicles
D. Eliminates the need for driver intervention entirely

Answer: C

Explanation:

- V2V works **even without visual contact**, making it effective in fog, curves, and night driving.
- It still requires spectrum and does not eliminate driver responsibility.

Q5. Consider the following statements regarding the adoption of V2V technology in India:

1. V2V delivers maximum safety benefits even when adopted by a small fraction of vehicles.
2. Mixed traffic conditions pose a unique challenge to V2V deployment in India.
3. V2V technology can replace traditional road-safety measures like speed enforcement.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

A. 2 only
B. 1 and 2 only
C. 2 and 3 only
D. 1, 2 and 3

Answer: A

Explanation:

- **Statement 1 – Incorrect:** V2V benefits increase only with **network effect** (large adoption).
- **Statement 2 – Correct:** India's heterogeneous traffic complicates standardisation.
- **Statement 3 – Incorrect:** V2V is a **complement**, not a replacement, for enforcement and road engineering.

Mains: Evaluate the constitutional and federal challenges involved in imposing age-based restrictions on social media platforms in India. (250 words)