International Relations · GS - II

Examine the significance of a rules-based maritime order in the South China Sea. How can India contribute to ensuring freedom of navigation and peaceful resolution of disputes in the Indo-Pacific?

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
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MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

UNCLOS and international maritime law, freedom of navigation, rights of non-claimant states, strategic trade routes, ASEAN centrality, India's Act East Policy, QUAD, peaceful dispute resolution, maritime cooperation.

Model Answer

Introduction

The South China Sea is a strategically important maritime region connecting major economies through vital international shipping routes. Competing territorial and maritime claims have made it a significant challenge to regional stability.

Importance of a Rules-Based Maritime Order

UNCLOS provides the legal framework for maritime rights, navigation and resource utilisation. Respecting international law safeguards freedom of navigation, protects the interests of non-claimant states and prevents unilateral coercive actions. A rules-based order also promotes predictability in global trade and maritime security.

India's Role

India supports peaceful dispute resolution in accordance with international law, particularly UNCLOS. Through its Act East Policy, Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative and cooperation with ASEAN and QUAD partners, India can strengthen maritime domain awareness, capacity-building and regional dialogue. It can also advocate for an inclusive Code of Conduct that respects the rights of all states.

Conclusion

An open and stable Indo-Pacific requires restraint, international cooperation and adherence to UNCLOS. India can contribute through constructive diplomacy and a consistent commitment to a rules-based maritime order.

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