



AS ITS CHANGING

Typical Viewpoint 2026



IMPULSE

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01.01.2026

Nimesulide over 100 mg banned, cough syrup counter sale may stop

ICMR recommended that nimesulide **not be used in pregnant, lactating and women planning for pregnancy, patients with kidney or liver impairment**

In News

- This comes in the wake of at least 22 children dying in Madhya Pradesh after consuming contaminated cough syrups.
- There have also been instances, including one in Rajasthan, where children given cough syrups not meant for them have died.

Govt's measures

- The government has banned the manufacture, sale and distribution of nimesulide, a common pain and fever medication, in **all oral "immediate release" formulations above the dosage of 100 mg**, saying it poses a health risk.
- Simultaneously, the Ministry also released a draft notification removing cough syrups from the list of over-the-counter medicines.

Schedule K,	the list of medicines exempted from the requirement of a prescription by a registered medical practitioner.
	Lozenges, pills or tablets for cough continue to remain on the list.

- ✓ Nimesulide is known to cause **liver toxicity** in some cases.
- ✓ The drug be used only as a **second line of treatment** when other drugs fail to work or cannot be prescribed.
- ✓ The drug is **already banned for children under the age of 12.**

Behind **copper's record rally in 2025**, Trump's tariffs, supply disruptions, AI demand

The surge in copper prices comes when global economic growth is steady but far from strong. What is pushing copper prices to record levels this year?

Brief

- Recorded a fresh all-time high in December
- The metal has surged over 35% this year, marking its biggest annual jump since 2009.
- Although copper has been on an **upward trajectory** for much of the year, its spike in recent weeks has pushed prices beyond most market forecasts for 2025.

Price behaviour algorithm

- Copper is essential to the modern economy, with uses ranging from housing and manufacturing to power grids, clean energy, artificial intelligence and defence.

Thus, it is often seen as a barometer of economic health.

A **rise** in copper prices is considered a signal of robust economic growth,

while **falling** prices tend to raise concerns about an economic slowdown.

- This is why the latest rally has raised eyebrows. The surge is coming at a time when global economic growth is steady **but far from strong**.

What is pushing copper prices to record levels this year?

Impact of Trump's tariffs

- ✓ Tariff @ 50% to be implemented from Aug 1
- ✓ That resulted into aggressive buying ...stockpiling before
- ✓ Tariff pause/exclusion on refined copper - brief respite - but renewed speculation about new tariffs.
- ✓ These tariff expectations have also created arbitrage opportunities in the market.

Tightening supply, growing demand

- ✓ Disruptions at some major copper mines worldwide.

A series of accidents in major mines in – Indonesia, – Chile, and – the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)	has curtailed global output.
---	------------------------------

- ✓ Demand:

- AI
- EV (use more than twice the amount used by conventional cars)
- Power grid infrastructure expansion and the energy transition

Diverging forecasts

- ✓ Apart from supply constraints,
 - **Expectation of Federal Reserve's interest rate cut next year (i.e. 2026)**will be resulted into weakening dollar.....will reduce dollar's appeal, causing it to weaken against other currencies Since copper is priced in US dollars, expectations of a weaker dollar tend to push up dollar-denominated copper prices..... a weakening US dollar and interest-rate cuts by the Federal Reserve further enhance the metal's attractiveness, drawing in stronger investor inflows,

UPSC's pick

What is Arbitrage Opportunity?

- An arbitrage opportunity arises when the same commodity is priced differently in two markets.
 - e.g :-

Copper is traded on multiple exchanges, including the London Metal Exchange (LME) and US markets such as COMEX.	
When prices are lower in one market and higher in another,	traders can buy copper in the cheaper market and sell it simultaneously in the more expensive one,
	profiting from the price gap.

02.01.2026

India, Pakistan exchange list of nuclear facilities as part of longstanding pact

- The agreement was **signed** on December 31, **1988** and **entered into force** on **January 27, 1991**.
- Gets exchanged on the first of January of every calendar year.
- This is the **34th** consecutive exchange of such lists between the two countries, the **first one** having taken place on January 1, **1992**.
- Continuing an over three-decade-long practice, India and Pakistan **exchanged a list of their nuclear installations under a bilateral pact that prohibits the two sides from attacking each other's atomic facilities.....** as per the provisions of the Article-II of the *Agreement on Prohibition of Attacks against Nuclear Installations and Facilities*.
- The exchange of the list took place simultaneously **through diplomatic channels** in New Delhi and Islamabad under the provisions of the agreement, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said.

🕒 In a parallel exercise, the countries also exchanged lists of civilian prisoners and fishermen held in each other's custody under the **2008 Agreement on Consular Access**.

Prolonged fog and dry spell leaves December 5th driest over India in 124 years : IMD

No-rain December over Delhi, only second occasion since 2016

- December 2025 ended being the *fifth driest month over India since 1901* and **lowest since 2001**.
- The **all-India rainfall** last month stood at 4.9mm, which was **69% below normal**.
- Northwest and north India usually experiences rainfall and snowfall in December, but it was an exceptionally dry December this time.
- Delhi did not receive any rainfall last month, the IMD rainfall data stated.
 - During **2016 – 2025**, Delhi experienced **dry December only** on one previous occasion (**2023**).

- ▽ There were multiple factors that resulted in a no-rain December,
 - feeble western disturbances,
 - no strong easterly winds,
 - no wind interactions over central India region and
 - the Madden-Julian Oscillation (MJO), a global weather phenomenon, was unfavourable.
 - ▽ Due to below normal rainfall activity, there were **above average fog conditions** prevailing for 15 to 26 days of December, was **resulted into drop in visibility**.
 - ▽ **Winter rainfall and snowfall** are particularly key for **water recharge** along places located along the higher altitudes.
 - ⌚ **El Nino**, the warmer than usual temperatures prevailing over the **equatorial Pacific Ocean**, is likely to emerge during the later half of 2026.
 - Multiple global models have indicated that the existing La Nina conditions are expected to last till March this year and will be followed by El Nino Southern Oscillation (ENSO) neutral conditions likely to prevail till July.
 - ⌚ It is early to confirm the emergence and predict the intensity of El Nino, and the picture will be clear after the spring barrier fades after February,
-

In Iran, another protest brings a new moment of reckoning

The protests are reminiscent of a dark and recent chapter in Iran's post-1979 history when it faced a moment of reckoning over the custodial death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini, who had been accused of violating dress codes by the notorious morality police

- If the many trends that came to **define 2025**, one stood out: **People's power**. The year witnessed a remarkable string of protests **across Asia and Africa** — the **uprising in Bangladesh in July-August 2024 was the first** — as grievances over authoritarianism and living standards spilled onto the streets. As the “year of the protest” drew to a close, demonstrations erupted in another country that is no stranger to mass unrest: **Iran**. Beginning December 28, there have been agitations in response to

soaring inflation,
rising food prices, and
a sharp depreciation of the rial,

which have spread from Tehran to major cities like Isfahan, Shiraz, and Mashhad. Over the past five days, the demands of the protesters have expanded beyond economic troubles to calls for freedom and the overthrow of the theocratic state.

- The protests are reminiscent of a dark and recent chapter in Iran's post-1979 history when it faced a moment of reckoning over the custodial death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini, who had been accused of violating dress codes by the notorious morality police. While the people's movement in 2022, like the one before it in 2019 sparked by rising fuel prices, was brutally suppressed with at least 550 people killed, it severely eroded the legitimacy of the Ali Khamenei regime. The current turbulence is the largest since then and **challenges a government already weakened by renewed Western sanctions and the fallout from a brief but damaging 12-day conflict with Israel last year.** Reports indicate that shopkeepers, workers, pensioners, teachers and even bazaar traders have joined the protests. The government will find it hard to sweep them under the usual spectre of a “foreign hand”.
- Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said in a social media post that he had asked the interior minister to heed the “legitimate demands” of the protesters. A spokesperson said that a dialogue mechanism would be established. **The problem is that the Islamic regime has treated all dissent as a threat to its survival, not as a challenge that demands a political and policy response.**

✂ It remains to be seen whether the government will course-correct or resort to a crackdown again. History shows that the latter option will

only further undermine, in the people's eyes, the credibility of the Khamenei regime.

Own curiosity:

The rats ate the ganja, Your Honour

Rats appear to have tunnelled their way to a victory in Jharkhand, where they supposedly ate 200 kg of ganja that was part of the evidence in a drugs case

There is a faraway country where every silence is punctuated by the sound of man's best friend chewing dutifully on man's child's homework notebook. Where everyone has an infinite number of dead grandmothers. Where every adult gets food poisoning on Monday morning. This country has its own currency, called the "doctor's note". The justice system there faces a serious challenge: Police stations are besieged by legions of rodents in cahoots with criminal gangs, seeking to eat the evidence.

The rats appear to have tunnelled their way to a victory in Jharkhand, where they supposedly ate 200 kg of ganja that was part of the evidence in a drugs case. Acquitting the accused last month, a court referred to a station diary entry noting the gnawing of the ganja. "This casts a suspicion on the very seizure of the case and its handling by the police," the court said. However, there are precedents. In Mathura in 2022, the rats reportedly destroyed more than 500 kg of confiscated cannabis according to the police. In Houston, Texas, the police realised in 2024 that "the rats were the only ones enjoying" the marijuana they had in storage. A report quoted the CEO of the Houston Forensic Science Centre as saying, "Think about it, they are drug-addicted rats. They're tough to deal with."

If drug-addicted rats are a menace, they have to be weeded out. But the facts must first be established. There have surely been canines who enjoyed a well-written essay, so there's a case to be made here. Or perhaps it's a tale from that other country.

03.01.2026

comes under
Department of Commerce

BOARD OF TRADE MEETING

Exports hurt: States flag facility and testing gaps

Exporters say raw materials 15-20% more expensive
than global prices

- It's not just high US tariffs that are hurting exports.

Costlier raw materials,

shortage of testing facilities to ensure products
meet global quality standards, and

lack of adequate shipping containers

are all leading to loss of competitiveness of goods exports.

- These challenges were flagged by exporters in a meeting of the **Board of Trade** chaired by **Union Commerce and Industry Minister** Piyush Goyal on November 25.

→

The BoT is an **advisory body** and

suggests measures related to

*foreign trade policy
and*

*procedural
simplifications
to boost trade.*

- The Indian Express had sought the details of the BoT meeting in its RTI application.
- The BoT meeting happened in the backdrop of slowing exports due to the steep US tariffs of 50 per cent, and both countries failing to conclude a trade deal till the fall of 2025. India was one of the first countries to initiate trade talks with the US when Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Washington in February last year.

7 of world's **rarest frogs** presumed dead, study blames rise in photo tourism

According to the study, a group of seven galaxy frogs vanished, all likely to be dead, **after multiple photographers descended on their habitat**, causing disturbances and behavioural changes that could have disrupted their feeding and breeding success.



A galaxy frog (**Melanobatrachus indicus**)

In News:

- ✓ Galaxy frogs (*Melanobatrachus indicus*) are one of the rarest and most dazzling amphibians in the world that **live exclusively under rotten logs in Kerala's Western Ghats**. However, the elusive species is now disappearing.

Features:

- ✓ **No bigger than a fingertip** (2 cm – 3.5cm), but it appears to carry the cosmos on its back.
- ✓ Its **shiny black skin is dotted with pale blue speckles**, resembling a clear night sky studded with stars.
- ✓ There are also **dashes of orange patterns**, reminiscent of luminous supernova explosions.
- ✓ Don't produce sounds.....use their spots to communicate
- ✓ The frogs are already listed as **vulnerable to extinction** by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Threats:

- Among major threats to these creatures are the
 - ✓ **conversion of forest areas to farm land,**
 - ✓ **firewood collection and**
 - ✓ **landslides.**
- However, in recent years, **photo tourism** has emerged as a new danger to galaxy frogs, especially after they were designated as the flagship species of **Kerala's Mathikettan Shola National Park** in 2021.

Perils of wildlife photography:

- Frogs **use their skin for respiration.**
 - They keep their skin moist by secreting a slimy secretion called mucus to breathe through the skin.
 - If their skin becomes dry (which can happen due to heat transfer while handling frogs or using flash to photograph them),
 - their activity will be hampered, as they will not be able to breathe comfortably.
 - Capturing frogs with **bare hands can also pose a risk of pathogen transfer** from humans to amphibians, exposing them to lethal diseases.
-

Indore tragedy points to rot in urban governance

The **74th Constitutional Amendment** gave an expansive mandate to **municipalities** – from planning and land regulation to water supply, sanitation, environmental protection, and slum improvement. More than 30 years later, urban governance bears little resemblance to the vision of the landmark legislation

- ▽ The tragedy unfolding in Indore is disquieting. At least eight people have lost their lives, and more than 200 are in hospital after drinking contaminated water supplied by the city's municipality. The state government has taken disciplinary action against officials and instituted a

probe. However, it intervened only after the crisis assumed grave proportions. In fact, Madhya Pradesh Urban Administration Minister Kailash Vijayvargiya's derisive response to a journalist's query on the incident betrays a shocking evasion of accountability — he described the question as useless. **Municipal water is governed by Bureau of Indian Standards norms, and supplies must be monitored continuously to make sure no pathogen seeps in. Drinking water pipes and sewage lines must be segregated carefully.** By all accounts, these fundamentals of urban governance were flouted in Indore, otherwise regarded as India's best-governed municipality — **it has topped the Swachh Survekshan Index for eight consecutive years.** The bacterial contamination responsible for the outbreak stemmed from a breach in the water pipeline in the city's Bhagirathpura area. The residents had flagged this health hazard over two months ago. But officials did not heed the warnings, including those of the local corporator.

- ▽ *Water contamination has been a longstanding concern in Indian cities.*
 - ✓ In November, students of the Vellore **Institute of Technology in Bhopal** went on a protest against contaminated water supply after a **jaundice outbreak** on the campus.
 - ✓ **Three people died in Chennai in December 2024** due to the consumption of **contaminated piped water**.
 - ✓ Disease outbreaks due to **waterborne bacteria** have also been reported in **Bengaluru, Noida, and Kochi** in the past two years.
- ▽ They are a grim reminder that piped supply is not an assurance against contamination. Water supply in a large number of cities continues to rely on pipelines laid in colonial times or in the immediate years after Independence. **Indore's water supply network, for instance, is 120 years old.**
- ▽ The 74th Constitutional Amendment gave an expansive mandate to municipalities — from land regulation to water supply, sanitation, and environmental protection. More than 30 years later, urban governance bears little resemblance to the landmark legislation's vision. **Finances are often a problem for local bodies, but even some of India's richest municipalities — Delhi or Mumbai, for example — have faltered in performing basic civic functions.** The local bodies must own a large share of the blame for the growing water and air pollution crises in large parts

of the country. Indore's tragedy illustrates that municipal inertia dogs attempts to modernise infrastructure even in India's cleanest city. A rapidly urbanising country deserves better.

Telecom sector needs a larger number of strong players

Vodafone Idea has been in a precarious financial position. As of December 2024, its total debt was around Rs 2.3 lakh crore, comprising AGR dues and spectrum liability

- ▽ **Telecom and aviation** were amongst the most robust success stories in the **post liberalisation era**, transformed by the **entry of several new private players**.
 - ✧ But today, both sectors are characterised by market concentration. The **aviation sector** in India is dominated by two players — **IndiGo and Air India**.
 - ✧ In the **telecom sector**, two strong private players — **Jio and Airtel** — account for around **75% of the market**.
 - ✓ **Vodafone Idea**, which is a financially **weak third player** and partly owned by the government, occupies **16.5% of the market**,
 - ✓ while state-owned **BSNL** accounts for just **8%**.
- ▽ As recent events in the aviation sector have also shown, **this degree of market concentration has unhappy consequences**. It underlines the need to facilitate healthy competition in sectors across the economy. In this context, reports pointing to the possible government exit from Vodafone Idea are welcome.
- ▽ Vodafone Idea has been **in a precarious financial position**.
 - ✓ As of December 2024, its **total debt** was around **Rs 2.3 lakh crore**, comprising AGR dues and spectrum liability.

- ✓ Its **subscriber base** has fallen from 213 million in September 2024 to 203.5 million in September 2025. (**9.5 million loss in a year**)
 - ✓ A few days ago, the **Union cabinet approved a relief package** for the beleaguered telco, **freezing its AGR dues** (adjusted gross revenue) and **rescheduling their payment over a 10-year period ending in FY41**.
 - ✓ Alongside providing clarity over its dues, as per a report, the government is also **exploring the option of bringing in an investor**, who could eventually take majority control.
 - ✓ A new investor could infuse money into the telco to ensure its long-term viability. This is much needed.
- ▽ The sector would benefit from the presence of a larger number of financially strong players, and better serve consumer interest.
- ▽ The importance of ensuring a level playing field cannot be emphasised enough. The rules of the game should be applied fairly, and to all. The telecom sector forms the backbone of the digital economy, the government needs to proceed carefully.
-

Scallops, pineapples and the bitter aftertaste of geopolitics

gastrodiplomacy

Piqued by Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi signalling support for Taiwan in the event of Chinese military action, Beijing has banned the import of seafood from Japan

- ▽ Harvested from the cold, pristine waters off Hokkaido island, the **Yesso scallop** is no mere mollusc. It is a prize of the culinary world, sought after for its **sweet, buttery flesh**. Chinese gourmands, in particular, are so partial to Hokkaido's famous scallops as to have made their country the top destination for the Japanese delicacy. This, unfortunately, has also made the bivalve a soft target: Piqued by Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi

signalling support for Taiwan in the event of Chinese military action, Beijing has banned the import of seafood from Japan.

▽ The humble scallop may seem like an unlikely pawn on the chessboard of diplomacy but history has shown that food can be a sensitive topic in international relations.

✧ In **2021**, the **pineapple** was at the centre of a diplomatic row, which started with **China banning imports of the fruit from Taiwan**.

✓ The support that Tokyo showed to Taiwan that year — ordering a record 19,000 tons of the rebranded “**freedom pineapples**” — was repaid in November **2025** when Taipei took up “**sushi diplomacy**” as a response to China’s strongarm tactics against Japan.

✧ **India**, too, is not unfamiliar with the pains and pleasures of gastrodiploacy: Thorny as **Bengalis’ favourite ilish maachh** (hilsa) is, Bangladesh’s periodic suspension of supply to India has been harder to swallow.

▽ Of course, the complex problems of geopolitics are best left to the experts. Much as humans have an instinct for commensality, wars are rarely resolved over the breaking of bread, and when the stakes are high, even the most delicious scallop makes for a weak bargaining chip. But when the squabbles of nations descend from the high table to the dining table, statecraft — no matter the high principles or noble ideals it may be built on — leaves a bitter taste that is hard to ignore.

UPSC's pick:

▪ **Yesso scallop** is a species of **cold water marine bivalve mollusks** in the family Pectinidae, the scallops. Its name Yesso/Ezo refers to its being found **north of Japan**.

▪ In **Japan**, it is known as **hotate-gai**, and the adductor muscle is **eaten raw** as sashimi and sushi.

- In **China**, it is sometimes **dried** to make *conpoy*, usually described as "Japanese *conpoy*".



Making money from methane emission reductions in paddy fields

Earning carbon credits can be a new revenue source of India's rice farmers, while being water-saving and climate-smart as well.

Brief

- It isn't easy to get farmers to buy into cutting greenhouse gas emissions and other climate action goals, especially when this requires investing in *new machinery* (**Happy Seeders, balers and straw choppers to manage and not burn crop stubble**) or *results in yield loss* (**replacing urea with organic fertilisers**).
- The difficulty is more in countries like India, which has over **86% farmers with small or marginal holdings of 2 hectares (5 acres) or less**.
 - That's where transformative "**low effort, high impact**" **agricultural practices** can make a difference.
 - One such practice, *specific to rice cultivation*, is **Alternate Wetting and Drying (AWD)**.

Traditional practice

- Conventional rice farming involves **preparing nurseries** where the paddy seeds are sown and raised into young plants.

Total
Avg 4
months

These seedlings are **then uprooted and replanted 25-30 days later** in the main field, which is about 10 times that of the nursery seedbed area.

The **normal crop duration after transplantation is 90-100 days**, going up to **120 days and more** in some varieties.

Over a typical 90-100-day cropping period, the field **is kept under flooded conditions for the first 65 days or so.**

- The **continuous flooding** – maintaining a **water depth of 4-5 cm** – is done **mainly to suppress weeds.**

The standing water creates an **anaerobic environment**, depriving the weed seeds of oxygen to germinate and grow.

The need for such flooding reduces after 65 days,

- when the paddy crop's vegetative growth and tillering stage is completed, and
 - the panicles (flower clusters from which the grains develop) start forming inside the stem.
- While flooded paddy fields help control weeds, the resultant anaerobic (oxygen-free) soil environment is also suitable for **methanogenic microbes – archaea and bacteria** – that decompose the plant organic matter.

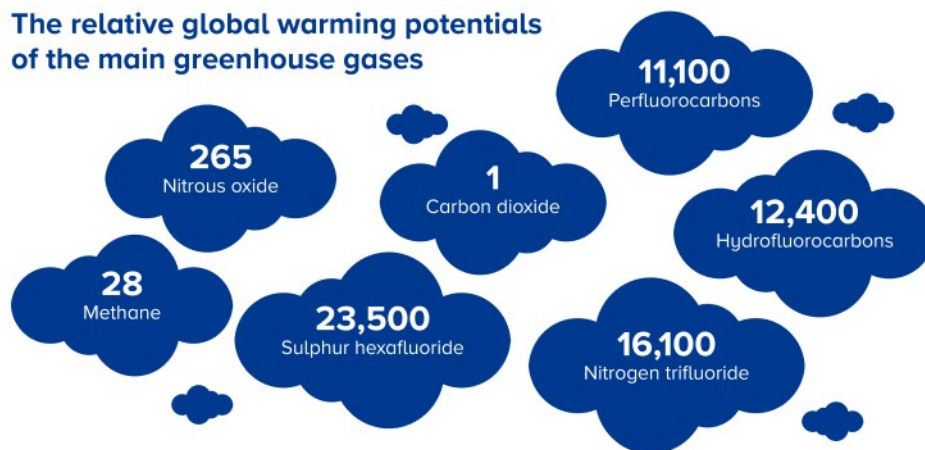
○

This reaction,	
of the carbon from organic matter	with hydrogen from water,
ends up producing methane.	

- ⌚ Methane is a **potent greenhouse gas**, with **28 times** the global warming potential of carbon dioxide (**CO₂**) over 100 years.



The relative global warming potentials of the main greenhouse gases

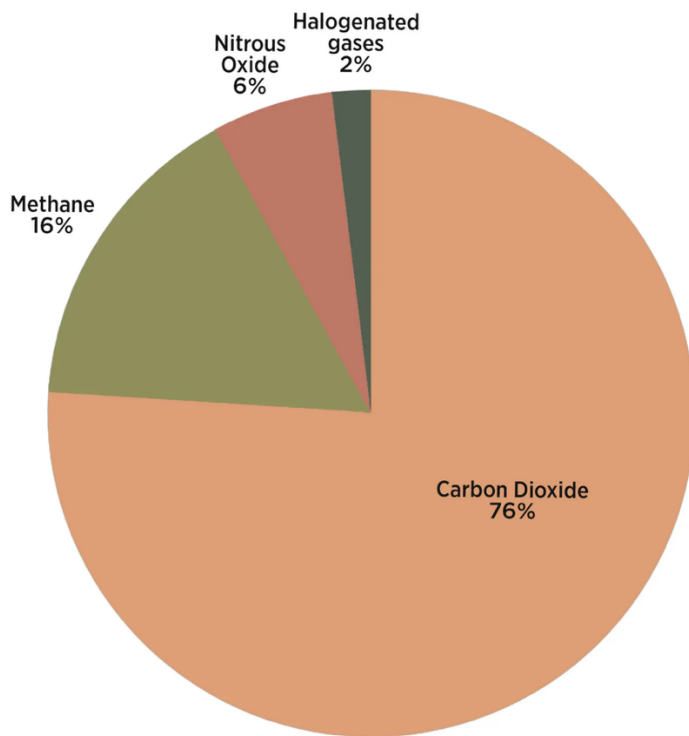


(Data: GWPs given for 100 year time horizon, IPCC 2021)

Greenhouse Gas (GHG)	Lifetime	Global Warming Potential over 100 years
Carbon dioxide (CO ₂)	several thousand years	1
Methane (CH ₄)	11.8 years	27.9
Nitrous oxide (N ₂ O)	109 years	273

GWPs of methane and nitrous oxide in reference to CO₂

**Global Greenhouse Gas Emissions
(Weighted by Warming Impact)**



An alternative practice : AWD

That's where AWD comes in.

- Under AWD, the paddy fields, *instead of being kept constantly flooded, are periodically dried out before re-flooding.*

The idea is **to disrupt the waterlogged anaerobic conditions conducive to methane-producing microbes.**

farmers to flood their fields for the first 20 days .	
But for the next 45 days (from the 21st to the 65th), they should dry it out for 12 days in two phases.	Recommendation: two such dry-downs of six days each (for draining out the water to 10-15 cm below the soil surface) within the 45-day window,

- **AWD is like turning off the tap while brushing your teeth.** It is a low-effort, yet highly effective method of conserving water and mitigating climate change without affecting crop yields.

The carbon opportunity

How can it be used as a source for farmers to earn carbon credits?

Direct measurement

- Generating methane emissions data based on direct measurement, through

placement of chambers in individual farmer fields and	sending the samples collected in vials to accredited laboratories for gas chromatography analysis.
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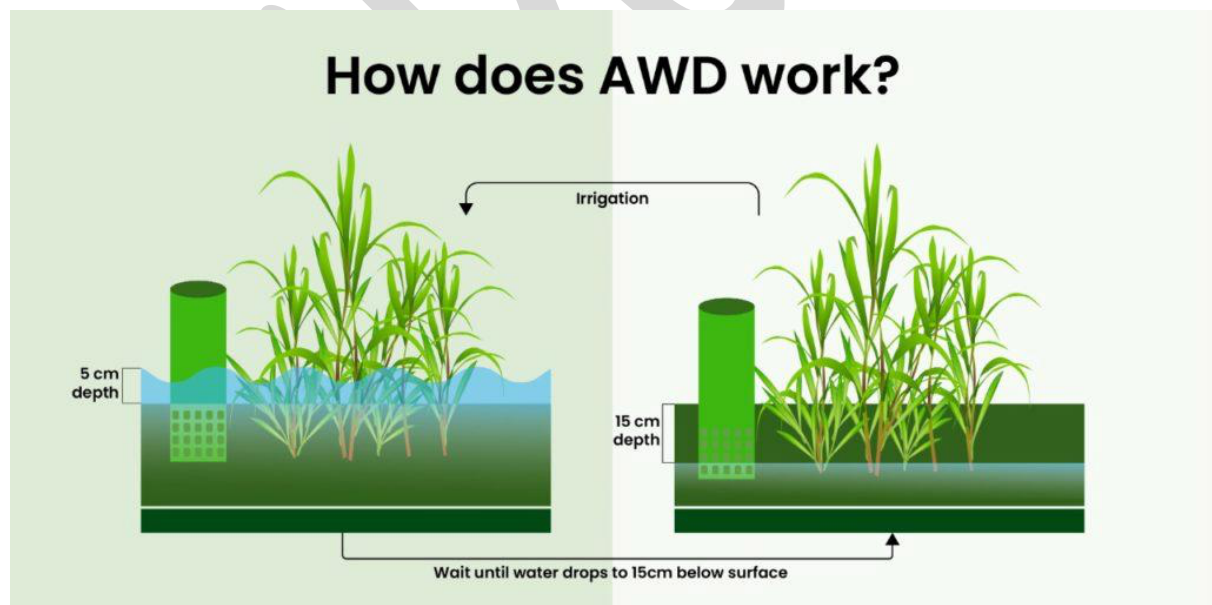
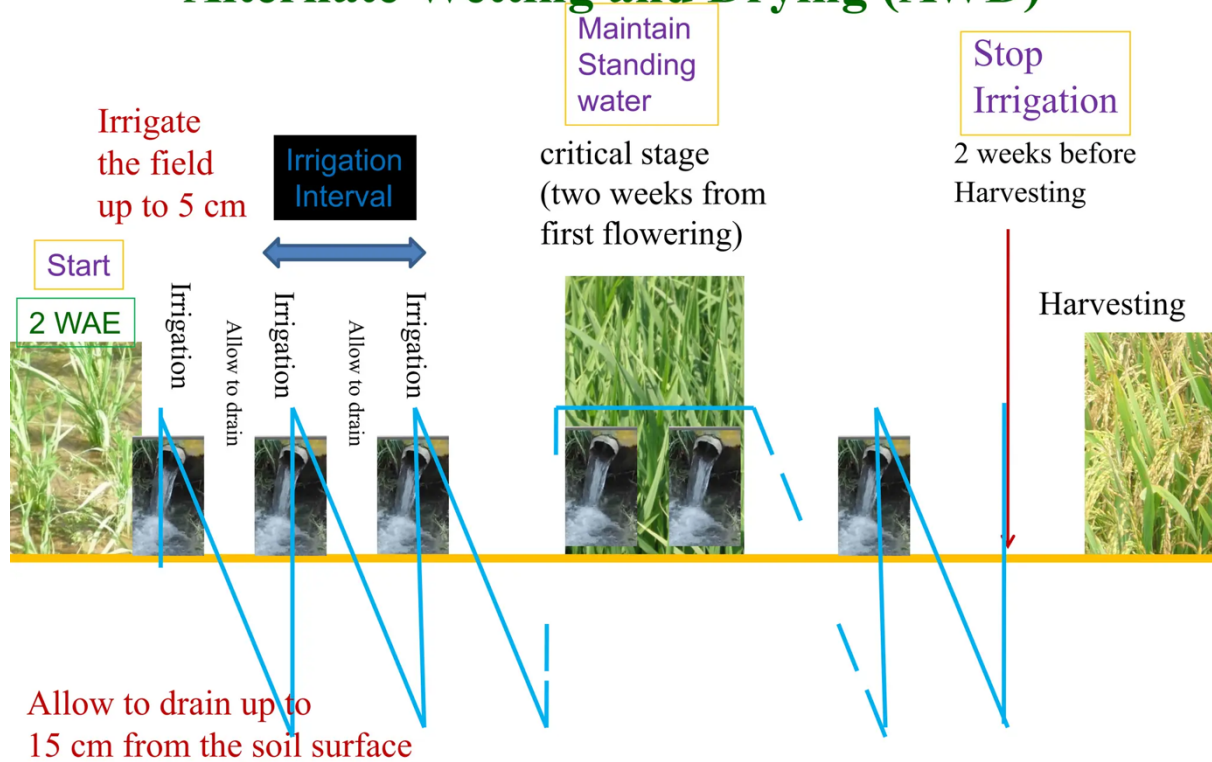
Sale

- Such real, verified and **location-specific reductions (in CO2 equivalent)** can be used as carbon credits for **sale in domestic and international markets.**
 - The buyers of carbon credits are **data centre operators, airlines and other massive energy- and water-consuming industries**. They purchase these credits in order to offset their own emissions and achieve “net zero-carbon” targets.

Ongoing price

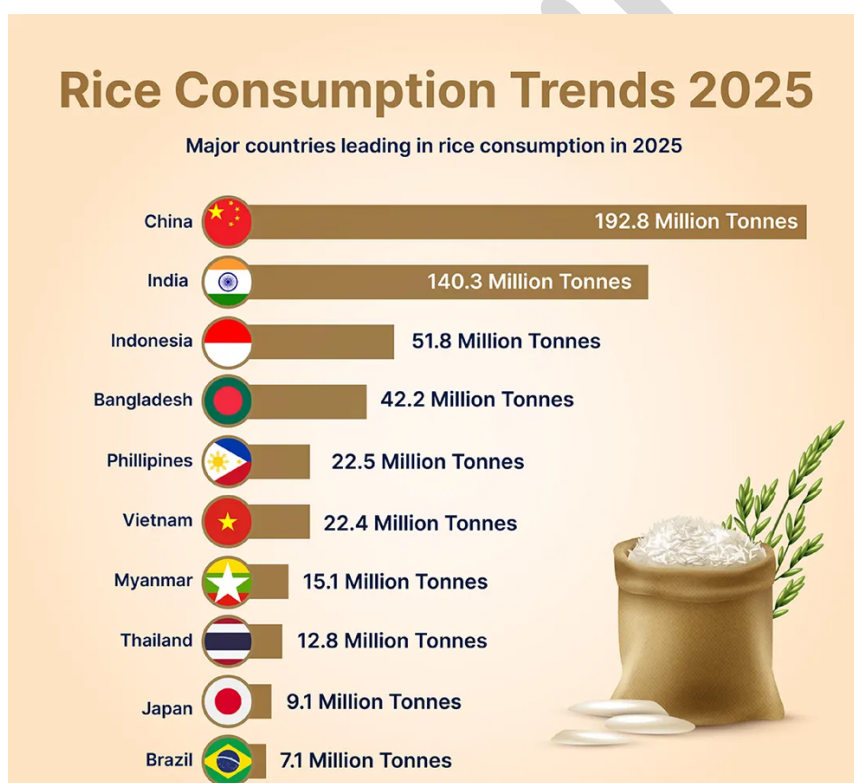
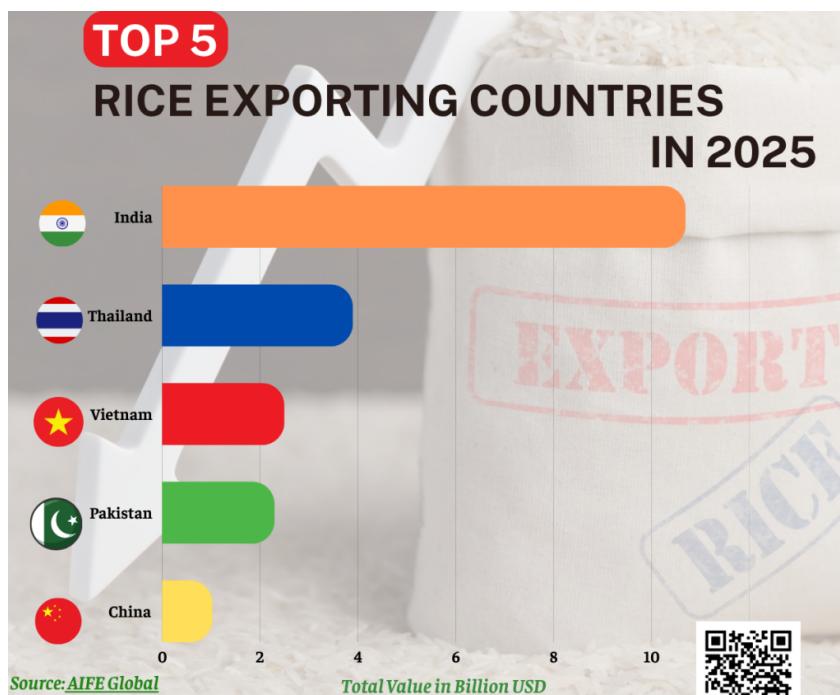
- Carbon credits from methane abatement are now **trading at \$15-25 dollars per tonne** of CO2 equivalent.

Efficient utilization of water in rice fields - Alternate Wetting and Drying (AWD)



World's Largest Rice Producers





06.01.2026

2020 DELHI RIOTS CASES: BENCH CITES 'HIERARCHY OF PARTICIPATION'

No bail for Umar & Sharjeel as SC makes distinction; five get relief

• DELHI RIOTS CASE: KHALID, IMAM DENIED BAIL

In bail denial, SC creates a hierarchy of offenders

SC used framework of differentiated roles of alleged conspirators, making a distinction between the 'architects' of the plot and its 'facilitators'

• HOW THE RIOTS CASE UNFOLDED

MARCH 2020: FIR is filed under the IPC for rioting and criminal conspiracy after the Northeast Delhi riots.

SEPT 2020: Chargesheet is filed, recasting the violence as a premeditated conspiracy linked to anti-CAA protests; UAPA provisions invoked.

JULY 2021: Umar Khalid files his first bail plea before Karkardooma Sessions Court; plea withdrawn due to objections over maintainability under UAPA.

SEPT 2021: Khalid files second bail plea before the same court.

MARCH-APRIL 2022: Court rejects bail for multiple accused, ruling that the material discloses a prima facie case under UAPA.

APRIL 2022: Khalid moves Delhi HC, appealing against dismissal of his bail plea.

OCT 2022: HC rejects his bail plea and dismisses his appeal, holding that the bar under Section 43D(5) of UAPA applied.

APRIL 2023: Khalid moves Supreme Court (SC); files a special leave petition against HC's failure to grant bail; no substantive hearing takes place.

OCT 2023: HC's Justice Siddharth Mridul, one of the two judges hearing Khalid's plea since 2022, gets transferred, preventing the pronouncement of orders and a rehearing of the appeal.

FEB 2024: Khalid withdraws his SC bail plea, citing "changed circumstances"; returns to the trial court.

MAY 2024: Sessions Court rejects bail again, holding that prolonged incarceration can't override the statutory bar under UAPA.

JULY 2024: Khalid moves Delhi HC again, challenging Sessions Court's fresh rejection.

SEPT 2025: Delhi HC rejects bail, ruling that riots were the outcome of a planned conspiracy.

SEPT-OCT 2025: SC begins hearing bail appeals of all accused together.

JAN 2026: Applying an "accused-specific" test, SC denies bail to Khalid and Sharjeel Imam, holding them to be on a "qualitatively different footing"; grants bail to five co-accused, subject to stringent conditions.

COMPILED BY AMAAL SHEIKH



Supreme Court's bail order in Delhi riots case raises deep concerns

The Supreme Court's decision to deny bail to Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam in the Delhi riots case, **more than five years after their arrest, is an alarming retreat from the Court's own dictum that bail is the rule and jail is the exception**

- ▽ The grant of bail under the stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act is already fraught with challenges.
 - The law sets a high bar for the accused.
 - Disturbingly, the 142-page bail order **further raises this bar.**
- ▽ The fact that five co-accused have been granted bail is a welcome and overdue affirmation that years of **pre-trial incarceration cannot become the norm, even under a harsh statute.**
- ▽ Yet the very reasoning that frees them is used to construct a questionable distinction, in which Khalid and Imam are placed on a “higher footing in the hierarchy of participation” on a “qualitatively different basis”.

What the court said

The SC ruled that road blockades designed to disrupt public order and international events prima facie attract the definition of a terrorist act.



The court also said that a delay in the trial cannot automatically trump the statute.

SC's departure from own dictum

A key exception to bail under UAPA is when the accused has undergone a prolonged pre-trial incarceration.

- The SC has previously underlined that **even in terror cases, the rigours of bail must “melt down” where there is no reasonable likelihood of a timely trial.**
- Now, in a case that is emblematic of the justice system's delays, the Court concedes that Khalid and Imam's pre-trial incarceration is “substantial,” but it says it is yet to cross the **“threshold of constitutional impermissibility.”**
- The Court says that the accused are at liberty to move for bail again “upon the expiry of a period of one year from the date of this order” — as if they have fallen short by a year to cross the constitutional threshold.
- The SC also lends its weight to the claim that Khalid and Imam played a “central and formative” role while others had “merely conspiratorial association”.

- It is troubling that the Court does this not on the strength of the evidence it examined but on the flimsy narrative of the prosecution.
- At several points, the Court reminded itself that a **bail application is not the stage for a “mini-trial.”** However, in categorising the accused and examining the depth of the roles, the Court effectively does the job of a trial court and gives the prosecution the benefit of the doubt.

Is this really constitute terrorism act ingredients?

At the heart of the Delhi riots case is the question of what constitutes a terrorist act.

- **Section 15 of the UAPA** envisages terrorist acts through the use of bombs, explosives, firearms or “any other means”.
- The prosecution dangerously lumps creation of WhatsApp groups, calls for non-violent protest, road blockades as “any other means”.
The SC quietly accepts this expansion.

Conclusion

In a democracy, this wide and loose framing — that threatens to criminalise dissent and peaceful protest — is disquieting. It must be reconsidered.

What the court said

The SC ruled that road blockades designed to disrupt public order and international events prima facie attract the definition of a terrorist act.

•
The court also said that a delay in the trial cannot automatically trump the statute.

Colombia, Cuba, Mexico: What's behind Trump's threats?

Trump directly threatened action against Colombia and Mexico, if they failed to reduce the flow of illicit drugs into the US, while Cuba, a close ally of Venezuela, 'looks like it's ready to fall' on its own without American intervention



Differing reasons, similar threats

- Trump's wish to annex Greenland appears mainly driven by strategic interests. The island is located near emerging shipping lanes in the Arctic.
- In case of Latin America, the threats appear to be borne out of not just a strategic doctrine, but a mixture of reasons such as drugs, ideology and immigration.

Brief

- It's not just the 19th-century Monroe Doctrine, which asserts the western hemisphere as a zone of US influence, that's behind these threats. A mixture of factors such as ideology, drugs, immigration and strategic partners is also behind Trump's ire.
- In a joint statement, the governments of **Spain, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Uruguay** said that the US actions "constitute an extremely dangerous precedent for peace and regional security and endanger the civilian population".

COLOMBIA

- Colombia has traditionally been a major ally of the US and its closest security partner in South America over the past 25 years.

→ Since the US-Colombia **FTA** was passed in 2012, the **US has been Colombia's largest trading partner**, accounting for 34% of the country's total trade.

→ Exports to USA:

- Crude oil
- Coffee
- Roses

- However, Colombia is best known today as the leading global producer of the **illicit drug cocaine, as well as the coca plant from which it is derived.**
- It accounts for over **two-thirds of the total production of the drug, and the plant.**

- In the past, the US has helped Colombia with **financial assistance to fight the war on drugs.**
- This has yielded **mixed success** –
 - while incidents of political violence have largely reduced and the country was able to demobilise extremist groups,
 - production of coca and cocaine has grown since 2013.

→ 1/4th South American **immigrants** are from Colombia.

→ **Leftist Regime :** Bilateral relations have been strained ever since Gustavo **Petro** became **Colombia's first-ever leftist president**, seeking to distance the country from the US.

🕒 **Biden's tenure :** Designated Colombia as **a major non-NATO US ally** in 2022,

- ✓ Petro has been unwilling to cooperate with **US-backed drug policies,**
- ✓ expressed an interest in joining the **BRICS+ grouping,** which is regarded as a prominent critic of Western hegemony, and
- ✓ decided to **break ties with Israel,** a major US ally.

🕒 **Trump's tenure** : these relations have **devolved further**.

- ✓ In January 2025, his administration threatened major repercussions against Colombia after initially refusing to accept US military aircraft carrying Colombian deportees.
- ✓ Trump's move to cut US foreign assistance,
- ✓ tariff announcements and
- ✓ the recent US military build-up in the Caribbean Sea have all earned Petro's consternation.

➤ Over the weekend, Petro called the US attacks on Venezuela an "assault on the sovereignty" of Latin America that would lead to a humanitarian crisis.

MEXICO

▪ Trade :

The US and Mexico share a chequered history over centuries, but today, they share deep economic ties.

- ✓ Mexico was the US's largest trading partner in 2023, accounting for \$798.9 billion in total goods.
- ✓ The implementation of the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) in 2020 has helped to boost bilateral trade.

▪ Border issues:

- The 3,145-km border, however, has posed significant challenges, most notably the movement of **undocumented immigrants and illicit drugs**.
- Mexico also leads in the **global production and trafficking of fentanyl**, a highly potent synthetic drug, which has contributed to a rise in drug overdoses in the US.

🕒 **Trump – 1st :** Trump's first presidential campaign succeeded in part because of

- ✓ his promise to erect a border wall between the US and Mexico, promising that Mexico would fund its construction. This was a bust.
- ✓ Subsequently, the two nations agreed to curtail the flow of illegal immigrants into the US with a stricter asylum programme.

🕒 **Trump – 2nd :** On returning to the White House last January,

- ✓ Trump sought to revive construction on the wall.

- ✓ He also announced punitive tariffs against Canada, China and Mexico for failing to curb fentanyl trafficking.
- ✓ He also designated eight Latin American criminal organisations have been **designated as Foreign Terrorist Organisations**, and threatened to launch drone strikes into Mexico to combat drug trafficking.
- ✓ His proposal to allow American troops into Mexico to fight suspected Mexican drug cartels last April was rebuffed by Mexican president Claudia Sheinbaum.

CUBA

- **Troubled past :** Unlike the other two countries, the **US has historically had a troubled relationship with Cuba.**

→ Today, Cuba remains dependent on **Venezuela for oil**, and has received large-scale **foreign investment from China and Russia.**

Today

**Venezuela, China,
Russia**

- With the fate of the Venezuelan economy uncertain, Cuba may turn to Russia, building on their increased military and economic cooperation in recent years.

→ During the Cold War, a group of revolutionaries led by Fidel Castro seized control of Havana, the capital, and overthrew Fulgencio Batista's US-backed government. Following the Cuban revolution, the new regime sought to distance itself from the US – deepening ties with the Soviet Union, nationalising American-owned properties and placing tariffs on US imports.

→ The US responded in kind, imposing economic sanctions and strict travel restrictions, despite recognising Fidel Castro as the new leader. During this period, the US attempted to invade Cuba to unseat Castro in the infamous Bay of Pigs invasion, failing to do so. This result proved to be a decisive point in the Cold War, pushing Castro closer to the Soviet Union and its leader, Nikita Krushchev.

Cold War era

Fidel Castro regime....overthrowing US-backed Batista govt...proximity with USSR...nationalization and tariff over US product...failure of Bay of Pigs invasion...resulted into Castro becoming closer to Krushchev...Regan's imposition @ 1982...Cuban GDP declined

→ Subsequent US administrations bolstered the American sanctions and trade embargo, with US President Ronald Reagan designating Cuba a state sponsor of terrorism in 1982. As a result, the Cuban GDP declined by 35% between 1989 and 1993.

🕒 **Obama reversal @ 2008 onwards :**

- ✓ It was only in 2008 that the first real efforts at normalising bilateral relations would be made, under President Barack Obama, who eased the travel restrictions and allowed Cubans in the US to send remittances back home.
- ✓ A full restoration of diplomatic ties in 2014 meant the removal of Cuba's terrorism sponsor designation.
- ✓ The two nations reopened their embassies and signed a series of bilateral agreements.

🕒 **Trump's reverting back to past :** However, any progress thus made was completely reversed by Trump's ascent to the White House.

- ✓ In his first term,
 - doubled down on the goods embargo, and reintroduced sanctions on Cuba over its growing proximity to Venezuela.
 - sought to limit oil exports from Venezuela into Cuba,
 - banned Cuban officials from entering the US and
 - **redesignated Cuba as a state sponsor of terrorism.**
- ✓ In his second term, Trump reversed Biden-era initiatives, which had restored Obama-era normalisation measures.
 - Additionally, Trump introduced sanctions **targeted towards Cuba's tourism industry,** a major driver of the Cuban economy, which **contributed 10% of GDP before the Covid pandemic.**

Since 2020, Cuba has been in an economic recession, with its	GDP contracting 1.1% and
	inflation at 24% in 2024.

➤ **Challenges ahead for Cuba:**

With the ouster of Maduro, who provided the Caribbean island with subsidised oil, the economy will find more backlash.

Red flags over Greenland:

Why US wants to annex the territory

Brief

- Following the capture of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, US President Donald Trump repeated his threat to annex the autonomous Danish province of Greenland, even expressing willingness to use force.
- He said the **US “absolutely needs” it “for defence”**, while his aides posted provocative “SOON” maps of the island draped in the American flag.

Here is why the US wants Greenland

Resource rich

Counter
China
influence

Rich in

Mineral
Rare Earths

China's 11%
investment in
mineral sector

1) Australia
2) US

- Trump's interest in Greenland also appears to be driven by a desire to counter the rising influence of China in the region.
- Greenland has large reserves of not just traditional resources — gold, nickel and cobalt — but also some of the biggest reserves of Rare Earth minerals. Rare Earths are used extensively in critical consumer technologies such as phones and electric vehicles as well as in new military applications.
- **China is currently the leading supplier of Rare Earths.**
 - Crucially, China too has entered Greenland in a big way. Chinese companies are actively involved in prospecting, mining and processing these mineral resources.
 - They account for **11% per cent** of the investments in the mineral sector in Greenland, just behind Australia and the US, data from the island's mineral department shows.

The China shadow

- The Chinese presence is **not limited to the mineral sector in Greenland**.
 - It has also been involved in **creation of new infrastructure**, aimed at **facilitating greater usage of Arctic sea routes**.
 - In 2018, it released a white paper on its Arctic policy, in which it unveiled plans of creating a ‘Polar Silk Road’.

- **The US, with its defence assets in Greenland, is unnerved by these developments,** and has even tried to dissuade Denmark from allowing too many Chinese companies in the island. The US has many motivations to control Greenland, but China's footprint seems to be a big reason.



07.01.2026

How Haryana turned around sex ratio at birth, now close to national average

▽

Concerted action against illegal abortions,	☐ monitoring of ultrasound centres, ☐ special IDs to pregnant women, ☐ law enforcement measures ☐ inter-state raids and ☐ incentives to informers	help state reach <u>923</u>
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▽ In the **2011 Census**, the state ranked among the **worst** performers in terms of sex ratio at birth, at **834** girls per 1,000 boys.

▽ In **2025**, this stood at **923**, close to the

national average of 933

and a big jump from **910** in 2024.

→ The 2024 numbers, which marked an eight-year dip, had set alarm bells ringing.

▽ **More than 65,000 girls have been “saved”** on account of the push to **improve sex ratio since 2015**, officials say (an estimation of the number of girls who may have been killed due to foeticide otherwise).

▽ The **top three districts** as regards sex ratio at birth are

Panchkula	971
Fatehabad	961
Panipat	951

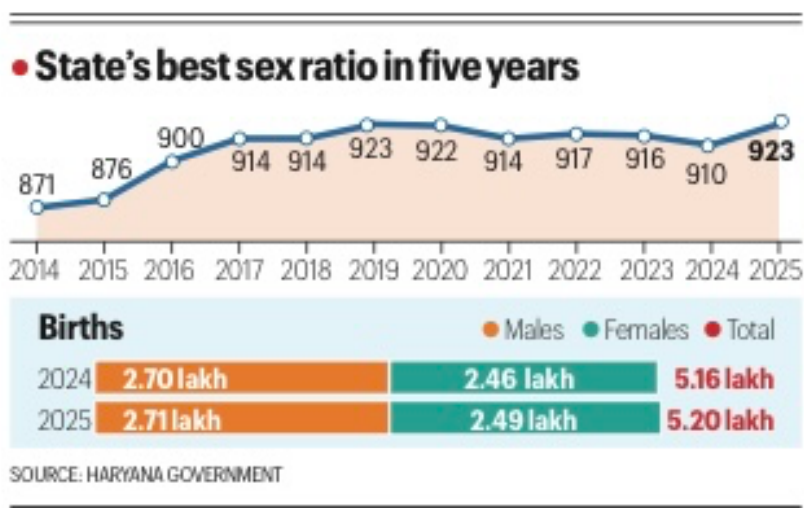
▽ Continue to have sex ratios **below the state average**

Faridabad	916
Gurugram	901
Sonipat	894

▽ Law to counter with (FIRs filed under)

PNDT (Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques) Act

MTP (Medical Termination of Pregnancy) Act



Sex Ratio of India 2011 State-wise

Sex Ratio 2011 India in 11 shows an upward trend compared to the Census 2001 data. The 2001 Census recorded 933 females per 1000 males. The Sex Ratio of India 2011 State-wise are as follows;

State/UT Rank	Name of State or Union Territory	Sex Ratio (as per Census 2011)
1.	Kerala	1084
2.	Puducherry	1038
3.	Tamil Nadu	995
4.	Andhra Pradesh	992
5.	Chhattisgarh	991
6.	Manipur	987
7.	Meghalaya	986
8.	Odisha	978
9.	Mizoram	975
10.	Himachal Pradesh	974
11.	Karnataka	968
12.	Goa	968

13.	Uttarakhand	963
14.	Tripura	961
15.	Assam	954
16.	Jharkhand	947
17.	West Bengal	947
18.	Lakshadweep	946
19.	Nagaland	931
20.	Madhya Pradesh	930
21.	Rajasthan	926
22.	Maharashtra	925
23.	Arunachal Pradesh	920
24.	Gujarat	918
25.	Bihar	916
26.	Uttar Pradesh	908
27.	Punjab	893
28.	Sikkim	889
29.	Jammu & Kashmir	883
30.	Andaman & Nicobar islands	878
31.	Haryana	877
32.	NCT of Delhi	866
33.	Chandigarh	818
34.	Dadra and Nagar Haveli	775
35.	Daman and Diu	618
	India	933

State Wise Sex Ratio of India 2025 NFHS-5

State Wise Sex Ratio of India 2025 NFHS-5 (National Family Health Survey) are as follows;

State / Union Territories	Sex Ratio of India 2025 Estimated (NFHS-5) (Sex Ratio Female Per 1000 Men)	Indication
Kerala	1,084–1,121	Highest in India, driven by high literacy and gender equity.
Rajasthan	1,099	Strong improvement, per NFHS-5 projections
Bihar	1,090	Significant progress has been made in recent years.
Tamil Nadu	1,088	Consistent high sex ratio, especially in rural areas.
Manipur	1,066	Above the national average, stable trend.
Odisha	1,060	Improved due to education and policy efforts.
Jharkhand	1,053	The positive trend in tribal regions.
Telangana	1,045–988	Stable, with a child-sex ratio of 933.
West Bengal	1,045	Notable increase (9.82% from 2001–2011).
Andhra Pradesh	1,045	Strong performance, especially in rural areas
Chhattisgarh	961–964 (Child Sex Ratio)	High child-sex ratio, but the overall ratio is lower.
Mizoram	971 (Child Sex Ratio)	High child-sex ratio, stable overall ratio
Meghalaya	970 (Child Sex Ratio)	Strong child-sex ratio, but overall data is limited

Arunachal Pradesh	972 (Child Sex Ratio)	The highest child-sex ratio among states
Assam	950 (estimated)	Increased by 10.34% from 2001–2011
Uttar Pradesh	943 (estimated)	Close to the national average, slow improvement
Delhi	866–956	Low among UTs, improved by 13.02% from 2001 – 2011.
Punjab	846–879 (Child Sex Ratio: 846)	Low, with persistent gender bias issues.
Haryana	877-926	Lowest among states, with SRB slipping to 910 in 2024.
Puducherry (UT)	1,037	Highest among UTs
Andaman & Nicobar (UT)	968 (Child Sex Ratio)	High child sex ratio, overall 900+.
Lakshadweep (UT)	900+	Above average among UTs.
Daman and Diu (UT) 618 Lowest in India	618	Lowest in India

CBAM is a trade barrier.

Government must lend exporters a hand

On the face of it, the move is designed to push the world towards cleaner production systems that cut down emissions and slow down climate change. While that is a worthy goal, penalties like the CBAM put an inordinate and unfair onus on developing countries such as India to reduce emissions

- ▽ The year has started on a negative note for exporters in India as the European Union has extended its Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) to imports into the EU.
- ▽ The CBAM is a **tax on companies**, based on the level of carbon emissions generated during production.
 - Companies that use cleaner and more efficient methods find themselves more favourably placed while those that don't do so get penalised.
 - **Starting 2026**, Indian exporters **selling steel and aluminium** to the EU will come under the scope of the CBAM, and experts suggest that this will **result in a hefty tax liability — between 16% and 22%** — because Indian firms use processes that emit more carbon.
 - For Indian exporters of steel and aluminium, the **EU accounts for 22% of overall exports**.
 - The net result will be that either firms take a hit on their profit margins matching the tax liability or risk losing out to exporters from other countries.
- ▽ On the face of it, the move is designed to push the world towards cleaner production systems that cut down emissions and slow down climate change.
 - While that is a worthy goal, penalties like the CBAM put an inordinate and unfair onus on developing countries such as India to reduce emissions.
 - The CBAM essentially applies developed (read rich) country levels of carbon taxation on poorer countries.

- In fact, many have argued that the main purpose of the CBAM is not to achieve a reduction in carbon emissions but to **work as a trade barrier.**
- Studies by independent organisations such as the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development estimate that the **EU's carbon tax would reduce global carbon emissions by merely 0.1 per cent** even as it substantially impedes the exports of developing countries.
- Notably, when it comes to trade, steel and aluminium have become two of the most protected sectors across countries.

▽ This is not a story about two specific sectors or just one trading partner.

- The CBAM rules cover other commodities as well, such as **cement, fertilisers, electricity, hydrogen** etc, with the provision to add other sectors in the future.
- The **UK also plans to introduce** a similar system of carbon taxation.

⌚ Given that both carbon taxation (for addressing climate change) and trade protectionism (for boosting domestic industries) are global realities, the Indian government can ill afford to ignore this issue.

⌚ It should provide help, be it in the form of seeking carve-outs in the ongoing negotiations for a free trade agreement with the EU, or in the shape of domestic policies that help Indian firms transition to cleaner technologies.

On misuse of its AI tools, **Big Tech can't pass the buck**

AI can be transformative. Soon, it may even become indispensable. But the rapid scaling of technology must not come at the cost of users' safety and privacy

- ▽ The new year began on a jarring note for many women on X (formerly Twitter) whose photographs were manipulated into sexually explicit images using the **AI chatbot Grok**. In the days since, the flood of objectionable content — including of minors — has done little to ease concerns about the misuse of this technology. Alarmed by the proliferation of non-consensual images, authorities worldwide have urged X to take action. These include the Government of India, which warned the company over its “serious failure” on enforcement of safeguards and about the violation of provisions of the IT Rules, 2021 and the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023. X's response to the widespread outrage has been far from adequate. It posted on Sunday that “anyone using or prompting Grok to make illegal content will suffer the same consequences as if they upload illegal content”, virtually shrugging off any responsibility for a tool that can so easily be turned into a weapon of harassment.
- ▽ This is, however, a problem that goes beyond one company. The creation of non-consensual, sexually explicit imagery predates AI, certainly. But what once required sophisticated software and at least some technical skill is now accomplished with a mere prompt. In October 2025, this newspaper reported on the existence of several accounts on X and Instagram that routinely share deepfake videos of celebrities, particularly women. In the case of Grok, which is integrated with X and therefore able to access information and share content in real time, the problem is magnified because of the ease with which such images can spread. While companies like Meta and Google have some form of AI labelling on their platforms, enforcement has been patchy. Most measures, including the taking down of flagged content, are reactive, and far too dependent on reporting by individual users.
- ▽ AI can be transformative. Soon, it may even become indispensable. But the rapid scaling of technology must not come at the cost of users' safety and privacy. The “move fast and break things” attitude that has long characterised

Silicon Valley is not compatible with the difficult task of building public trust. As it continues to seek “safe harbour protections”, Big Tech must ensure that stronger safeguards are built into a technology that is rapidly getting integrated into the daily life of users. Until then, calls for legal immunity and public confidence will ring hollow.

08.01.2026

Supreme Court reproach should be a wake-up call for pollution watchdog

AQI data show that Delhi's poor air burden is not a seasonal aberration but a round-the-year challenge that varies in intensity across months, weeks, days, even hours

▽ The sources of Delhi's air pollution are well-known. Studies have shown that vehicular exhaust, industrial emissions, and dust from construction sites combine with the fumes from seasonal farm fires to create the national capital's chronic public health hazard.

→ Consensus has, however, been elusive on pinpointing which pollutant contributes how much, and at what time of the year, to the crisis. This lack of clarity has often come in the way of targeted interventions.

→ The **Commission for Air Quality Monitoring (CAQM), set up in 2020**, was tasked to plug this breach. The persistence of the poor air problem is a testament to the failure of the agency of the Union environment ministry to deliver on its mandate.

- On Tuesday, the Supreme Court pulled up the Commission for “**failing**” to identify “**the definite causes of the worsening AQI or their long-term solution**”.

▽ AQI data show that Delhi's poor air burden is not a seasonal aberration but a round-the-year challenge that varies in intensity across months, weeks, days, and even hours. Addressing the high base pollution level requires a

decisive regulator with unwavering attention towards the capital's emission hotspots — industrial sites, areas with congested traffic, construction sites, and unpaved roads. Such monitoring is not only necessary for swift policy response, it's also a precursor to generating real-time, granular data that can identify emerging trends before they escalate into an emergency. Continuous data streams can help align responses across agencies, including traffic police, transport authorities, municipal bodies and pollution control boards.

→ But the lack of a coordinated approach has often been the Achilles' heel of pollution control in the country. In the five years since its inception, the CAQM hasn't stepped up adequately to this imperative.

- The agency has largely followed the tired, reactive approach of its predecessor, the Supreme Court-appointed Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority, in imposing bans and punitive measures.
- Even here, the CAQM has been found wanting at times, largely because the execution of its directives rests with state pollution boards, municipal bodies and law-enforcing authorities. Accountability has been the biggest casualty of this fragmented approach, which is also lacking in urgency.
- In September last year, for instance, the SC called out the CAQM because its subcommittees had met only once in three months.

▽ On Tuesday, the SC's two-judge bench asked the CAQM to quantify emissions by each polluting source and then plan long-term solutions. The Court's reproach should be a wake-up call to the pollution watchdog. It should also be a message to the Centre to address the agency's structural infirmities.

NEW BOSS TO FIGHT BAD AIR



BEFORE CENTRAL BODY, WHO?

EPCA

- > Supreme Court-backed Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority on the job since 1998
- > Mandated to protect and improve quality of environment
- > Assisted SC in matters related to noise pollution, hazardous waste, etc, too
- > Drew power from the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, and implemented various mitigation measures through CPCB

OTHERS

- > Several committees and task forces - both at Centre and NCR states - dealt with air pollution
- > Union environment ministry worked as a coordination body
- > High-level task force, led by principal secretary to PM, reviewed action taken

EPCA and all such committees now stand dissolved with the ordinance

The issue will now be handled by a powerful statutory authority - Commission For Air Quality Management in NCR and Adjoining Areas

COMMISSION TO ADDRESS THREE BROAD ISSUES

- Monitoring of air pollution
- Research and innovation
- Enforcement of laws after such monitoring

COMMISSION TO HAVE CHAIRPERSON PLUS 17 MEMBERS

Key Functions | Take mitigation measures through central/state agencies

Entertain complaints for protecting and improving air quality	Regulate or prohibit activities that may cause or increase air pollution	Lay down parameters for air quality and for emissions or discharge of pollutants	Restrict industrial operation that may cause air pollution
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CPCB AND SPCBS WILL CONTINUE TO DEAL WITH AIR POLLUTION. HOWEVER, THE COMMISSION'S ORDERS PREVAIL IN CASE OF CONFLICT

PENALTY PROVISIONS

- > Non-compliance punishable with a jail term up to 5 years or fine up to Rs 1 crore, or both
- > Appeal can be made only before NGT

DIRECT CLOSURE OF POLLUTING INDUSTRIES

STOP OR REGULATE SUPPLY OF WATER OR ELECTRICITY TO ERRING INDUSTRIES

About	• a statutory body • established under the Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region (NCR) and Adjoining Areas, Act 2021.	
Mandate	☐ Better coordination, ☐ research, ☐ identification, and resolution of problems surrounding the air quality index and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.	
Areas	Delhi-NCR & Adjoining Areas Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh.	
Composition 1+5+3+3	Chairperson:	☐ a government official of the rank of Secretary or Chief Secretary. ☐ 3 years term /70 years, whichever is earlier

	Ex- officio members	☐ 5 ☐ who are either Chief Secretaries or Secretaries in charge of the <u>department</u> dealing with environment protection in the States of Delhi, Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh.
	Full time technical members.	☐ 3 ☐ from Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) , and NITI Aayog
	members from non-government organisations.	☐ 3



STAGE 1 (AQI 'POOR' - 201 TO 300)



Stopping all construction and demolition activities with plot size of 500 sqm or more which have not been registered on dust mitigation monitoring portals

- Mechanised sweeping, water sprinkling on roads
- Enforcing guidelines on use of anti-smog guns at construction site
- Enforcing ban on open burning of waste and PUC

- for vehicles
- Discords to minimise power supply interruptions in NCR
- Encourage offices to start unified commute for employees to reduce traffic



STAGE 2 (AQI 'VERY POOR' - 301 TO 400)



Stopping use of diesel generator sets except for essential and emergency services (hospitals, railways, metro, airports, water pumping stations, 'projects of national importance')

- Not allowing coal/firewood in tandors at hotels
- Enhance parking fees to discourage private transport
- Augment CNG/ electric



bus and metro services by procuring additional fleet and increasing the frequency of service



STAGE 3 (AQI 'SEVERE' - 401 TO 450)



Ban on construction and demolition activities except railway, metro, hospitals, sanitation projects etc, linear public projects like highways, roads, flyovers

- Closure of industries that have PNG supply and are not running on approved fuels. In industrial areas that don't have PNG supply, industries not running on approved fuels

- will operate only for five days a week
- State governments in NCR may impose restrictions on BS III petrol and BS IV diesel four-wheelers



STAGE 4 (AQI 'SEVERE +' - MORE THAN 450)



State govts can consider closing schools; odd-even vehicle system; decide on letting public, pvt offices to work on 50% strength, rest to work from home

- Stop entry of truck traffic (except essentials, CNG, e-trucks). Ban on plying of Delhi-registered diesel medium- and heavy-goods vehicles, except essentials
- Ban on plying of four-

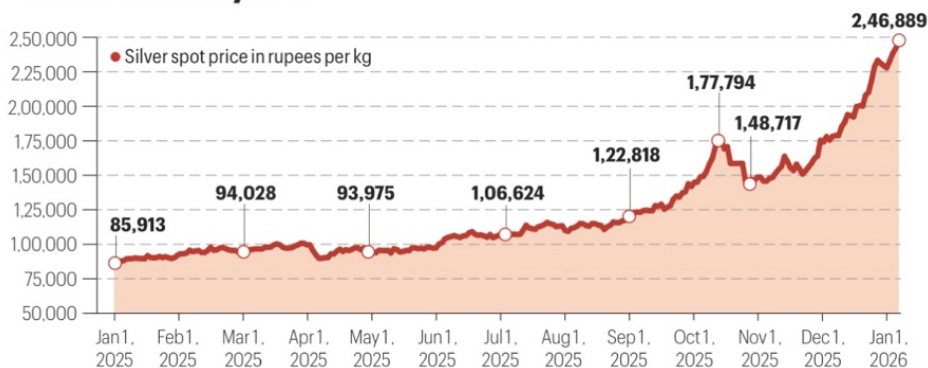
- wheeler diesel vehicles, except BS-VI and vehicles for essential services
- Ban C&D activities in linear public projects such as highways, roads, flyovers

(Actions under Stages II, III and IV will be invoked three days in advance of AQI reaching the projected level)

Why silver prices surfed a 160% wave in 2025

Unlike gold, silver is a key component in manufacturing of items like batteries, which are crucial for humanity's future

• Silver's steady rise



SOURCE: MULTI COMMODITY EXCHANGE OF INDIA LIMITED

Supply shortage

The shortage of physical silver in London by October 2025 led to prices skyrocketing.

• Last year, the price of copper also increased and crossed the \$12,000-a-tonne mark for the first time in December.

New GDP data from next month

This first advance estimate will have a short shelf life because GDP data released February 27 onward will be as per a new series with a base year of 2022-23 as against 2011-12 now. Updating the base year is key to a correct picture of economy.

Base Year

GDP : 2022-23

IIP : 2022-23

CPI : 2024

Who decides Base Year

Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoS&PI)

09.01.2026

Don't count faith to kill a college, lot at stake

The latest NMC decision unabashedly short-circuited due process — there was no show-cause notice to the college, no room for appeals.

- ▽ A medical college in Katra that got the National Medical Commission's green signal to run an MBBS course just four months ago is now asked to shut it down, four days after an inspection conducted in haste. The latest NMC decision unabashedly short-circuited due process — there was no show-cause notice to the college, no room for appeals. The volte-face tells a dismal story of prejudice and intolerance — and the pandering to it — in defiance of the Constitution, which guarantees the right to equality and protects against discrimination.
- ▽ While the NMC justifies its action by pointing to a *shortage of tutors, library resources and lecture theatres*, it is clear that the real reason lies elsewhere. The Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Institute of Medical Excellence (SMVDIME) had become the staging ground for protests ever since **44 of the first batch of 50 students in its MBBS course turned out to be Muslim.** This was the result of a national exam administered fairly and freely. But for a group of nearly 60 pro-RSS and pro-BJP organisations, this wasn't the result they wanted — these groups argue the college was set up with donations to the Vaishno Devi shrine by Hindu pilgrims from across the country. And this should reflect in the faith of the incoming class.
- ▽ That these groups should ask for the ouster of students of a particular religion from the classroom, and that the statutory regulatory body for medical education and practice in the country should take heed of their perverse demand and discontinue the course entirely, is enormously disturbing. The cost of the NMC's cave-in will be borne by the students, of course, and by the faculty at SMVDIME.

→ **But there is a greater price to be paid.** Ever since the abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019, the BJP-led government at the Centre has spoken of a “**Naya Kashmir**”, more intimately integrated with the larger India story, and less weighed down by its turbulent history. In their speeches, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah have underlined that promise. The NMC decision poses a question mark against those assurances. It threatens to stoke distrust among the people of Kashmir.

▽ The institution needs to knock on the court’s door before more damage is done. The NMC needs to read the Constitution. It makes space for the establishment of minority educational institutions to preserve a language or religion (Art 30), but for the rest, there can be no headcount, no discrimination and no exclusions, in the classroom. To scatter these students in other colleges is a violation of their rights — you cannot be equal if you are kept separate. What is happening in the Katra college goes against the constitutional letter and spirit, it’s a stain not only on the idea of “Naya Kashmir” but also on that of the nation. The sooner it is reversed, the better.

10.01.2026

US withdraws from 66 Global Organizations, including Several UN Bodies and International Solar Alliance, leaving door open for China

Brief

- President Donald Trump has withdrawn the US from 66 international organisations, including UN bodies and the **International Solar Alliance**

led by India and France, saying these institutions were "redundant" and "contrary" to his country's interests.

- Signing a memorandum titled 'Withdrawing the United States from International Organisations, Conventions, and Treaties that Are Contrary to the Interests of the United States', Trump directed all executive departments and agencies to take immediate steps to put into effect the US withdrawal from these organisations "as soon as possible".

US exit can open up climate governance

- ▽ Immediately after assuming office, Donald Trump signalled that climate denialism would be a more pronounced feature of his second stint at the White House. After withdrawing his country from the Paris Climate Pact, the US President threatened to diminish America's engagement with global environmental compacts and treaties. The Presidential Memorandum announcing the US's pullback from 66 international organisations, including premier UN agencies for climate negotiation and research — the **UNFCCC and IPCC** — is, therefore, not surprising. Its exit from the UNFCCC will remove the US from international climate diplomacy, and the absence of American scientists in IPCC could deprive the agency of state-of-the-art knowledge generated in the country's institutions. This would make global warming mitigation tougher. However, climate negotiations are testimony to undercommitment from the country that has spewed the greatest amount of GHGS. American withdrawal from environmental treaties should, therefore, be seen as a chance to reimagine the climate governance architecture.
- ▽ The first task now should be to calibrate the deficits caused by US withdrawal. The Green Climate Fund and the Adaptation Fund were in poor health even before Trump's presidency. The recently operationalised Loss and Damage Fund is yet to get its act together. The US has been a **historic defaulter**, though Joe Biden's presidency did salvage Washington's reputation to an extent. The contributions of other developed countries have also rarely matched their economic clout. Several Western European countries have slashed their aid budgets considerably in the last few months.

The problem is also that middle-income countries tend to be the greatest beneficiaries of climate finance. In the aftermath of the US withdrawal, a serious introspection on mobilising funds and devising mechanisms to direct finances to countries that need them most should be the UNFCCC'S priority.

- ▽ Middle-income countries have the institutional capacity to execute major climate projects. But that means multilateral organisations need to find ways to mitigate the disadvantages of other nations in the Global South. In recent years, India has spoken of using the International Solar Alliance (ISA) to build capacities in poor countries. The US has exited the ISA, but it never gave any assistance to the alliance. The churn in climate architecture is an opportunity for the grouping to come into its own.

The two baskets

The 66 global bodies likely to be impacted by the US exit are in two major baskets: one with the climate and environment groupings, and another of economic and rights bodies. These will now be grappling with funding and leadership challenges.

What is the **China-plus-one strategy**?

Brief

- **China+1 is a strategy aimed at getting businesses to reduce reliance on China and expand their investment fields to other countries.**
- The term was coined back in 2013 after witnessing an overconcentration of global businesses in China, largely driven by the country's low manufacturing costs.

- In simple terms, the strategy aims to have businesses add at least one more country apart from China to their investment pool.
- According to an earlier Business Standard report, a grouping of 18 global economies, including India, had come together under this supply-chain diversification strategy.
 - Other countries seen as popular +1 destinations are Thailand, Vietnam and Indonesia, among others.

Pros and Cons of the China Plus One Approach

The China Plus One strategy offers numerous advantages but also comes with certain challenges. Here are pros and cons of this approach:

Pros

- 1) **Reduced Risk and Diversification:** By expanding operations to another country, businesses reduce their reliance on China. This diversification helps mitigate risks related to geopolitical tensions, trade tariffs, or supply chain disruptions.
- 2) **Cost Efficiency:** Rising labor costs in China have eroded its traditional cost advantage. For instance, average manufacturing wages in China have more than doubled in the past decade, prompting companies to seek lower-cost alternatives like Vietnam, India, and Bangladesh.
- 3) **Access to Emerging Markets:** Establishing operations in other countries allows businesses to tap into emerging markets. These regions may offer new growth opportunities, enabling businesses to increase their global presence and cater to local demand more efficiently.
- 4) **Supply Chain Resilience:** A diversified supply chain is less vulnerable to disruptions in one region. In the event of natural disasters, political instability, or pandemics, having alternative production sites allows companies to maintain steady production and meet demand without major delays.
- 5) **Improved Trade Relationships:** By spreading operations across multiple countries, businesses can take advantage of favorable trade agreements or regional free trade zones. For example, exporting from Southeast Asia may provide better access to the ASEAN market or the European Union through trade agreements like RCEP (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership).

Cons

- 1) **Increased Complexity:** Managing operations across multiple countries introduces added complexity. Coordinating supply chains, production schedules, and logistics can become more challenging, requiring businesses to invest in better management systems and local expertise.
 - 2) **Higher Upfront Investment:** While long-term savings can be significant, setting up manufacturing or sourcing operations in a new country often requires substantial upfront investment. This includes costs related to establishing infrastructure, hiring local staff, and navigating regulatory environments.
 - 3) **Cultural and Regulatory Differences:** Operating in a new country means dealing with different business practices, languages, and regulations. The learning curve can be steep, and any mistakes made in compliance or cultural missteps can lead to delays, fines, or damage to the brand's reputation.
 - 4) **Supply Chain Disruptions:** While diversifying production helps reduce the risks of relying on a single country, it also introduces new risks. Managing multiple suppliers and production sites can lead to unforeseen disruptions in one of the regions, which could affect overall supply chain efficiency.
 - 5) **Intellectual Property Risks:** Expanding operations into countries with weaker intellectual property protections can expose companies to the risk of counterfeiting or intellectual property theft. It's important for businesses to consider the strength of IP laws in their new market and take steps to protect their designs and products.
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13.01.2026

• SPACE

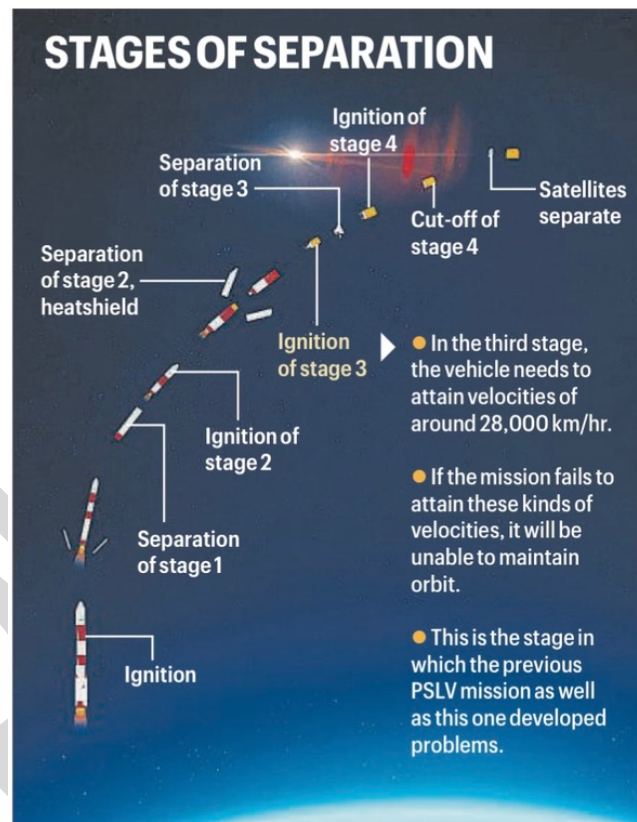
For second straight time, ISRO sees third-stage issue

The previous PSLV launch in 2025 also ran into trouble in the third stage. The latest problem could raise questions over the rocket's reliability

What happened last time

In the May 2025 mission, the third-stage engine's combustion chamber saw a drop in pressure.

Because of this, the rocket was unable to attain the required velocities.



Behind ISRO rocket's second straight failure is a third-stage problem

The Indian space agency's PSLV rocket failed to reach its intended orbit after running into trouble in the third stage. Something similar happened with the previous PSLV launch in **May 2025**.

- ▽ The Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) first launch of the year ended in failure on Monday, January 12.
- ▽ The **PSLV-C62** mission — carrying 16 satellites, including seven from foreign countries — did not reach its intended orbit.

- ▽ This is the **second straight failure** (PSLV-C61 -- May, 2025) for a rocket that has served as ISRO's main launch vehicle for more than three decades.
- ▽ On both occasions, the rocket took off successfully and completed the first two stages before developing trouble in the third stage.
 - **was attributed to an unexpected drop in the combustion chamber of the engine,**
- ▽ During the third stage, the rocket needs to rapidly accelerate to maintain its orbit around the Earth (note that this is not the final orbit). If pressure drops in the combustion chamber, the force required to attain the necessary acceleration drops as well.

PSLV stages

1 st	Solid fuelled	▪ The first stage involves the lift-off. ▪ This is a near vertical journey till an altitude of about 50-60 km. ▪ <u>This is the stage that requires the most work because the rocket has to fight gravity as well as atmospheric drag.</u> ▪ For this reason, this stage needs a very heavy engine and lots of fuel. ▪ After the fuel is spent, this part of the rocket becomes deadweight. So, it is jettisoned. ▪ It detaches from the main body of the rocket, and falls off, passing the baton to the second stage.
2 nd	Liquid fuelled	▪ Vikas Engine Vikas, is a derivate of France's Viking engine ▪ The second stage in the PSLV involves the famous, indigenously developed Vikas engine and a liquid fuel. ▪ This stage takes the vehicle to about 220-250 km from Earth's surface before burning out. ▪ By the time the second stage gets separated, the weight of the mission falls to about 10-20 per cent of the launch weight.

		During this stage, the vehicle attains a very high speed — around 14,000 km an hour
3 rd	Solid fuelled	- In the third stage, the vehicle is moving almost entirely horizontally, going around the Earth in an orbit, or rather a sub-orbital trajectory. <i>To maintain this trajectory, and avoid falling towards the Earth, it needs to travel at very high velocities, usually 26,000 to 28,000 km per hour.</i> - The third stage is, therefore, about rapid acceleration. - The PSLV rocket burns solid fuel to achieve this.
4 th	Liquid fuelled	- The fourth stage, the uppermost stage of PSLV, comprising of two Earth storable liquid engines. <i>The vehicle begins to go around the Earth at very high speeds, but does not yet reach its designated orbit. → → That happens in the fourth stage, which involves precisely placing the satellite in the intended orbit.</i> - A suitable low-earth orbit for the satellite can be at any altitude between 250-2,000 km from the Earth. → → The satellite has to be manoeuvred into that slot through guidance from the fourth-stage engine, which, in the case of PSLV, again uses liquid propulsion. - The different payloads are eventually placed in their intended orbits. → → By this time, all four stages of the rocket have separated, having accomplished their jobs.

Third stage : where it is lacking

- The third stage is tricky. If a rocket is unable to attain the required velocity, it will be unable to maintain orbit around the Earth and get pulled

down due to gravity. That is what seems to have happened with the PSLV-C61 mission last year.

- This is how this stage works.

The solid fuel in the third stage is burned and converted into gas.
This gas causes an increase in pressure in the combustion chamber.
The gas is then released through a small nozzle to provide the thrust required to propel the rocket to higher speeds.

- In general, **the higher the pressure, the greater is the thrust provided, and higher is the acceleration that can be attained.**
 - ✓ But if there is a leak, or the pressure drops in the combustion chamber owing to any other reason, the vehicle will not be able to attain the kind of acceleration and speed that is necessary to maintain the orbit.
- The reason for the pressure drop in last year's failure has been reported to be a manufacturing defect, which allowed some amount of leakage.

PSLV	
Function	Medium-lift launch system
Manufacturer	ISRO
Country of origin	India
Cost per launch	At about Rs 130 cr
Stages	4
Launch History	
Launch sites	Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota, AP
Total	64
Successes	59
Failure	4
Partial failure	1
Carries passengers or cargo	▪ Chandrayaan-1 ▪ Mars Orbiter Mission ▪ AstroSat ▪ SRE-1 ▪ NavIC ▪ Aditya L1 ▪ PROBA-3

First launch	2009
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🕒 Chandrayaan-2 → launch vehicle → GSLV-Mk III

Iran's street is speaking, do not hijack the voice

Tehran has warned that it will retaliate if attacked by the US. This comes less than a year after Iran's 12-day war with Israel last June, during which US forces bombed Iranian nuclear facilities.

- ▽ There was always a disturbing inevitability to the ongoing protests in Iran. Now in its second week, **the unrest driven by a cost-of-living and currency crisis is spreading from the capital and bazaars to towns.** Despite early assurances that the government would engage with the public, a brutal crackdown has followed. The internet has been snapped, and given the state's tight control over mass media, the extent of casualties is difficult to assess. Even so, reports from a US-based human rights monitor indicate that at least 538 people have been killed in the repression unleashed by an autocratic regime that treats dissent as an existential threat. The scenes are familiar: Hundreds died during the 2022 protests over Mahsa Amini's killing and the 2019 unrest triggered by fuel prices. The Ali Khamenei regime's default response is to resort to force and denounce protesters as enemies of the Islamic Revolution. Even the elected reformist president, Masoud Pezeshkian, has evaded accountability, blaming Israel and the US. But given the scale and intensity of the current movement, the usual defence of "foreign agents" is unlikely to give cover to Khamenei.
- ▽ Even then, US President Donald Trump's threats — perhaps emboldened by his recent operation in Venezuela — that he will "shoot at Iran" if protesters are attacked have added another layer of complexity. **History offers enough cautionary examples.** The Iranian Revolution, nearly half a

century ago, was propelled by an anti-US movement that toppled the Washington-backed Pahlavi dynasty. Trump may be right in saying that the protesters need support. But any US intervention short of a total overthrow would only entrench the Khamenei regime and reinforce its long-standing narrative that the unrest is the product of a foreign conspiracy. Any US military action could thus undermine a movement already devoid of leadership. Foreign intervention could hand the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps a ready pretext for more repression. **Trump should, therefore, resist the temptation to exploit the grievances of the Iranian people for his own ends — whatever they may be.** A destabilised Iran would please few more than Israel's Benjamin Netanyahu.

- ▽ Tehran has warned that it will retaliate if attacked by the US. This comes less than a year after Iran's 12-day war with Israel last June, during which US forces bombed Iranian nuclear facilities. That exchange may have degraded Iran's military capabilities, but it did little to weaken the state's grip on power. Regime change remains unlikely, even though the protesters show no sign of backing down. Unless the Khamenei regime calls off the crackdown, the deadlock will only deepen. It must listen to voices of sanity.

14.01.2026

Delhi and Berlin seek common ground

Strengthening people-to-people ties was also a key focus of the **Modi-Merz meeting**, particularly in the area of skilled labour mobility, given **Germany's labour shortage and rising demand for healthcare professionals amid a shrinking workforce and ageing population.**

- ▽ India and Germany may differ on several issues, not least in their respective approaches to Russia in the wake of its 2022 invasion of Ukraine. Yet amid the geopolitical disruptions unleashed by the American president nearly a

year into his tenure, both New Delhi and Berlin recognise the need to find common ground.

➤ For Germany, the challenges range from phasing out its energy dependence on Russia to the US role in Europe's security architecture vis-à-vis Ukraine.

➤ India, meanwhile, has to contend with

- ✓ high US tariffs,
- ✓ sustained Western pressure to curb its purchase of Russian oil, and
- ✓ the problems posed by China in the neighbourhood and with respect to critical minerals and supply chains.

⌚ Against this backdrop, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz's visit to India this week, his first official trip to Asia, and the agreements signed during his bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi highlight the importance both countries attach to the strategic partnership.

Germany is India's largest trading partner within the EU but its trade volume with China is at least five times larger.

▽ In their joint statement, PM Modi and Chancellor Merz reiterated their **support for concluding the India-EU Free Trade Agreement** at the upcoming EU-India Summit to be held on January 27.

→ With an India-US trade deal still uncertain, an India-EU FTA would strengthen India's diversification and strategic depth across supply chains, services, the green transition and technology transfers.

→ The joint statement also sets out, in detail, **plans to deepen defence and security cooperation between the two countries.** The timing could hardly be more consequential: Faced with an emboldened Vladimir Putin, Merz has pledged to make Germany Europe's dominant military power, while India confronts terrorism and the China-Pakistan bloc.

→ Another challenge for India is the follow-up. For example, a deal with the Germany company Thyssenkrupp for six diesel submarines with air-independent propulsion has been plagued with delays.

▽ **Strengthening people-to-people ties** was also a key focus of the Modi-Merz meeting, particularly in the area of skilled labour mobility, given Germany's labour shortage and rising demand for healthcare professionals amid a shrinking workforce and ageing population.

→ In this context, the **Joint Declaration of Intent on the Global Skills Partnership** is a welcome development. At a time when the US is increasingly tightening even legal pathways for skilled immigration, Germany — along with other EU countries — offers an attractive alternative.

✂ It is clear that India and Germany are determined to deepen their partnership, even as differences over Russia persist. The real test, however, will be implementing what is on paper effectively.

• Key outcomes

VISA-FREE TRANSIT for Indian passport holders for transiting through Germany

SETTING UP TRACK 1.5 Foreign Policy and Security Dialogue

BILATERAL DIALOGUE mechanism on Indo-Pacific

ADOPTION OF WORK PLAN of India-Germany Digital Dialogue (2025-2027)

EUR 1.24 BN for priority projects in renewable energies, green hydrogen, PM e-Bus Sewa

LAUNCH OF BATTERY Storage Working Group under India-Germany Platform for Investments in Renewable Energy Worldwide

15.01.2026

On climate, India, China are doing their fair share

As the International Energy Agency has underlined, meeting clean energy goals depends largely on how developed economies overcome the recent barriers to climate change mitigation.

▽ In recent years, India and China have often been unfairly painted as the villains of the climate change story. Their advocacy of a larger carbon budget for countries that have historically had a low GHG footprint is often seen as an impediment to eliminating fossil fuel use.

→ This criticism overlooks the progress made by these countries in achieving their developmental goals through the use of green technology.

→ The **global watchdog Carbon Brief's** latest data, released earlier this week, shows that India and China stewarded the world's renewable energy (RE) expansion in 2025.

- **Record-breaking RE capacity additions**

led to a fall in coal power generation

in the two countries for the first time in 50 years.

China achieved this feat even as its <u>electricity demand increased</u> approximately five times compared to 2024,	while India is on track to become the <u>second-largest renewables market in the next five years.</u>
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▽ The fine print on global RE data reveals positives and negatives.

→ Power generation from green sources grew 71 TWh last year.

→ However, **fossil fuel-generated electricity in the EU increased by more than 10 per cent in the first half of 2025** when **unstable wind conditions and drought** underlined the precarity of RE installations.

- While some decarbonisation initiatives did make a comeback in the second half of the year, the EU's solar capacity additions dropped for the first time in a decade.

→ **Geopolitical uncertainties, energy shocks and a cost-of-living crisis** seem to have dampened the impetus to address climate change on the continent. A large part of its ageing grid was designed for a predictable flow of power, not for a variable-input system like solar or wind.

→ Across the Atlantic, Trump's blithe dismissal of climate science threatens to undo the decarbonisation gains outside his country. **In a reversal of a trend that began in 2005, the US spewed more heat-trapping gases last year compared to 2024.**

▽ For India and China, sustaining the decline in fossil-fuel use will require addressing challenges. **Grids will have to be revamped, investments in energy storage systems upscaled to manage RE's intermittency.** However, the Carbon Brief data is sure to give the two emerging economies more heft in advancing their principled positions in global climate negotiations. In fact, as the International Energy Agency has underlined, meeting clean energy goals depends largely on how developed economies overcome the recent barriers to climate change mitigation.

Carbon Brief

- ✓ is a UK-based website
- ✓ covering the latest developments in climate science, climate policy and energy policy.

20.01.2026

U.S. PRESIDENT SENDS INTRIGUING MESSAGE TO NORWAY PRIME MINISTER

Trump links Greenland threat to Nobel Prize snub



“ Dear Jonas:
Considering your
Country decided not to
give me the Nobel Peace
Prize for having stopped
8 Wars PLUS, I no longer
feel an obligation to think

purely of Peace, although it will always be
predominant, but can now think about
what is good and proper for the United
States of America...”

DONALD TRUMP, PRESIDENT, UNITED STATES,
IN HIS TEXT MESSAGE TO NORWAY PM JONAS GAHR STORE

REUTERS

US claims on Greenland

- Apart from the potential of rare earth minerals' deposits, lying under the icy sheets, there is a geopolitical aspect to Trump's assertions.
- While he has claimed that Russia and China are positioning themselves around the island, their actual presence is said to be near Alaska.

AFCON 2025

- ✓ **Senegal** won the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations by **beating Morocco** 1-0 in the final
- ✓ Host : **Morocco**
- ✓ Used to take place every two years since 1968.....from 2028 – every four years

Let us take some learning :-

Play the game straight, oddities hardly matters, fight till the last

- Deep into second-half stoppage time, Morocco were awarded a penalty following a VAR check for a foul on Brahim Diaz, which prompted Senegal head coach Pape Thiaw to order his players from the pitch in protest.
- Eventually, they returned to the field, only for Senegal goalkeeper to save the awarded penalty.
- 90 minutes over (normal time) → Goalless → Extra time started → **Senegal pumped the ball into the net → silenced whole stadium → Senegal now the champion of AFCON 2025.**

23.01.2026

Two big speeches, what got lost in between

▽ At the World Economic Forum in Davos, leaders of two countries that have benefited from the so-called “**rules-based order**” gave the world starkly different frames of its demise.

→ **Mark Carney**, Prime Minister of Canada, made an unflinching assessment of the current moment, which he described as **one not of transition but of rupture.**

- While recognising the hard realities presented by **America’s unilateralism**, Carney suggested a possible roadmap for **middle powers.**

→ US President Donald Trump, speaking just hours after Carney, confirmed the crisis.

- He glorified colonialism and spoke of American interests and hegemony, especially in the Western Hemisphere, as paramount.

- He denigrated non-western nationalities and people, even as he congratulated himself on ending hostilities.

□ The Davos chattering class instantly framed the two speeches as this versus that. A few things got lost.

▽ Carney's "values-based realism" draws from a particular context. As the Canadian PM acknowledged, "For decades, countries like Canada prospered under what we called the **rules-based international order**. We joined its institutions, praised its principles, and benefited from its predictability. We could pursue values-based foreign policies under its protection." long before the American-led order, "developed" countries benefited from centuries of imperialism at the expense of those that are still "developing". This context forms the backdrop of Carney's call for middle powers to, in essence, forge minilaterals to increase their negotiating power.

➤ Trump, for his part, was clear about turning back the clock. But parse through his rambunctious rhetoric, and there was some pragmatism, too.

- He made it clear that the US would **not use force to take over Greenland** (before claiming a deal was on the table hours later).
- He also sought to **draw a line between the West and the rest**, the people dying in Ukraine "who look like us" and the "criminal" migrants and those who made Europe "unrecognisable". (read brown, black, non-christian).

▽ It is to Carney's credit that he called the bully by his name. He is also right to leverage his country's considerable resources — the Arctic economy, critical minerals, energy reserves, "the most educated population in the world".

- But the burden on India, and other countries that have been at the receiving end of a "rulesbased order" they had little role in shaping, is more complex.

⌚ Pulling people out of poverty and ensuring they have opportunity is, for many in the Global South, the place where values and realism coincide and collide.

- ⌚ Canada, and like-minded countries, must keep that perspective in mind as they build new solidarities. And perhaps, in Washington, the realisation may dawn that power that is sustainable is rarely belligerent.

Eye on Greenland

The US President came up with the idea of purchasing Greenland during his first term in 2019.



He is now a step closer to securing the rights of military expansion and mining natural resources on the Danish territory.

'Peacemaker'

● Trump repeated his long-standing claim of having ended eight wars, including the conflict between India and Pakistan last May. However, his list includes diplomatic disputes (Egypt vs Ethiopia) and on-going conflicts (DRC vs Rwanda).

● He acknowledged China as a major competitor in artificial intelligence. He said China makes lots of wind turbines, and erroneously claimed : "I haven't been able to find any windfarms in China".

Made in India & Made in Europe

▽ After several rounds of talks, India and the EU have finally concluded negotiations on an enormously consequential free trade agreement — **a deal that creates a trade zone of regions that are home to around 2 billion people and account for 25 per cent of global GDP.**

- The “**mother of all deals**” underlines Delhi’s desire to seek **deeper global integration** within a predictable rules-based framework at a time when US President Donald Trump has taken a wrecking ball to the trading system.
- Though the formal signing will take place only after the legal scrubbing is finished, this pact will help **facilitate the diversification of India’s export markets** — critical when the country faces a 50 per cent tariff levy on exports to the US.
- The relationship with the EU is deepening beyond trade as well, with the signing of a **Security and Defence Partnership** that will facilitate greater collaboration in areas of maritime security, counterterrorism and cybersecurity.

▽ Under the agreement,

India has received preferential access to the European markets across 97% of tariff lines,

while for the **EU**, India has offered tariff liberalisation on 92.1% of tariff lines.

→ Some tariff lines will see immediate reductions, while in certain cases the duty reductions will be implemented in a phased manner. Others are subject to tariff-rate quotas.

- › For India, **labour-intensive sectors** are likely to get a boost. For instance, the FTA creates a more even playing field in accessing the **EU’S ready-made garment market**, which is pegged to reach \$105 billion as per Careedge Ratings. This will create tremendous opportunities for exporters.

- › And while India has stuck to its **red lines — such as dairy** — it has also secured commitments across 144 services subsectors, including **IT/ITES, education and professional services**.
 - › At a time when there are issues regarding H-1B visas in the US, the EU FTA puts in place a mobility framework that “**eases the movement of employees of Indian corporations**”.
- ▽ The political will in pushing through this long drawn out agreement — **talks for the deal had begun in 2007** — along with the spate of recent trade agreements, signals a desire to embrace freer trade, and points to protectionist impulses in retreat. While the deal with the US hangs in limbo, the government should look to sustain the movement and push to join other larger trade groupings.

SECURITY AND DEFENCE PARTNERSHIP, MOBILITY FRAMEWORK AMONG 13 PACTS

India and EU seal the deal

• WHO GAINS WHAT, WHAT NEXT



FOR INDIA

	Before FTA	After FTA
Marine sector	up to 26%	0%
Chemical	up to 12.8%	0%
Leather & footwear	up to 17%	0%
Plastic & rubber	up to 6.5%	0%
Textile & apparel	up to 12%	0%
Base metal	up to 10%	0%
Gems & jewellery	up to 4%	0%
Railway, aircraft, ships	up to 7.7%	0%
Furniture & light consumer goods	up to 10.5%	0%
Toys	up to 4.7%	0%
Sports goods	up to 4.7%	0%

FOR EU

	Before FTA	After FTA
Motor vehicles	110%	10% (quota of 250k/yr)
Wine	150%	20% (premium); 30% (medium)
Spirits	up to 150%	40%
Beer	110%	50%
Olive Oil	up to 45%	0%
Kiwis & pears	33%	10% (in-quota)
Machinery & electrical equipment	up to 44%	0% for most products
Aircraft & spacecraft	up to 11%	0% for most items
Iron and steel	up to 22%	0% for most items
Pharma	11%	0% for most items
Processed food (bread, biscuit, pasta, chocolate, pet-food)	up to 50%	0%

- India's labour-intensive annual exports worth \$35 billion benefit immediately
- Signing of the deal expected later this year
- Legal scrubbing to take 4-5 months

- Deal expected to come into effect by early next year
- India will receive same flexibility as US on EU's carbon tax



SOURCE: COMMERCE & INDUSTRY MINISTRY, EUROPEAN UNION

India, EU sign security, defence pacts, condemn terror in all forms

● JOINING HANDS

- Implement India-EU Security and Defence Partnership (SDP)
- Annual EU-India Security and Defence Dialogue
- India-EU Security of Information Agreement
- Set up an industry-led India-EU Defence Industry Forum
- Enhance cooperation to counter terrorism in all its forms including cross-border terrorism
- Countering terrorist propaganda and online radicalisation
- Strengthen law enforcement cooperation between CBI & Europol
- Connecting India to Europol's Secure Information Exchange Network Application

Towards 2030: Tech, innovation to power ties

The initiatives

- Promote collaborative research focused on AI, quantum, advanced semiconductors, clean tech and biotech.
- Set up India-EU Innovation Hubs to support dialogue, knowledge exchange and joint projects in critical emerging technologies
- Establish an India-EU Startup Partnership in collaboration with the European Innovation Council, Start-up India, and Member States, to promote cross-border investment, co-creation, and



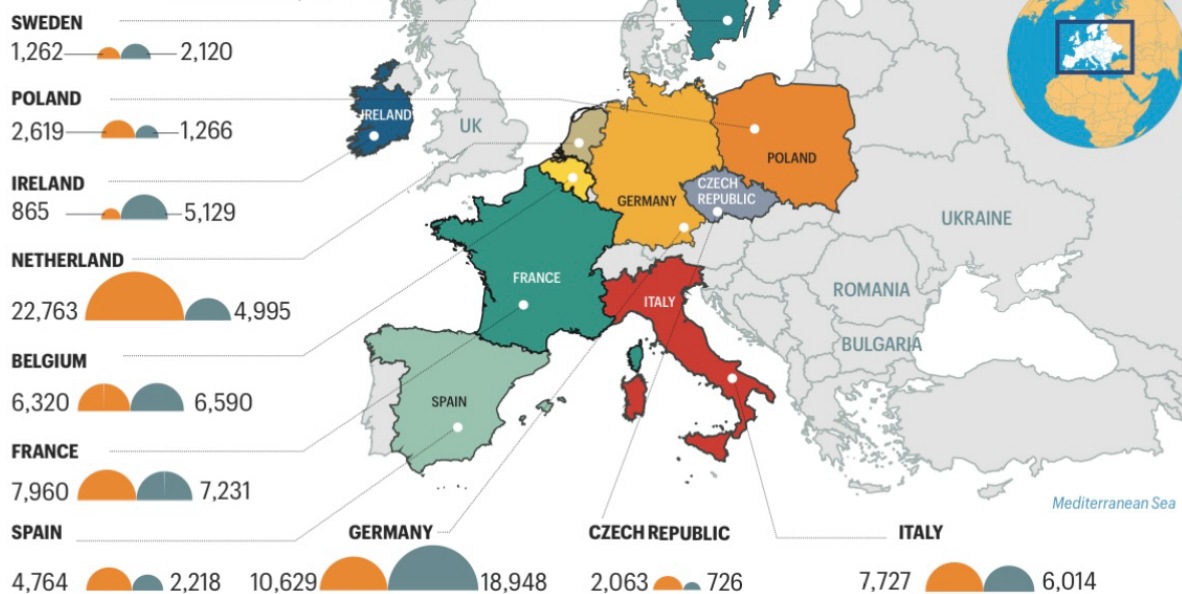
deep-tech scale-ups

- Deepen cooperation, through the India-EU Space Dialogue, in space technology including on earth observation, satellite navigation, space surveillance, and communication

de winds nudged cross finish line

INDIA'S TOP EU TRADE PARTNERS

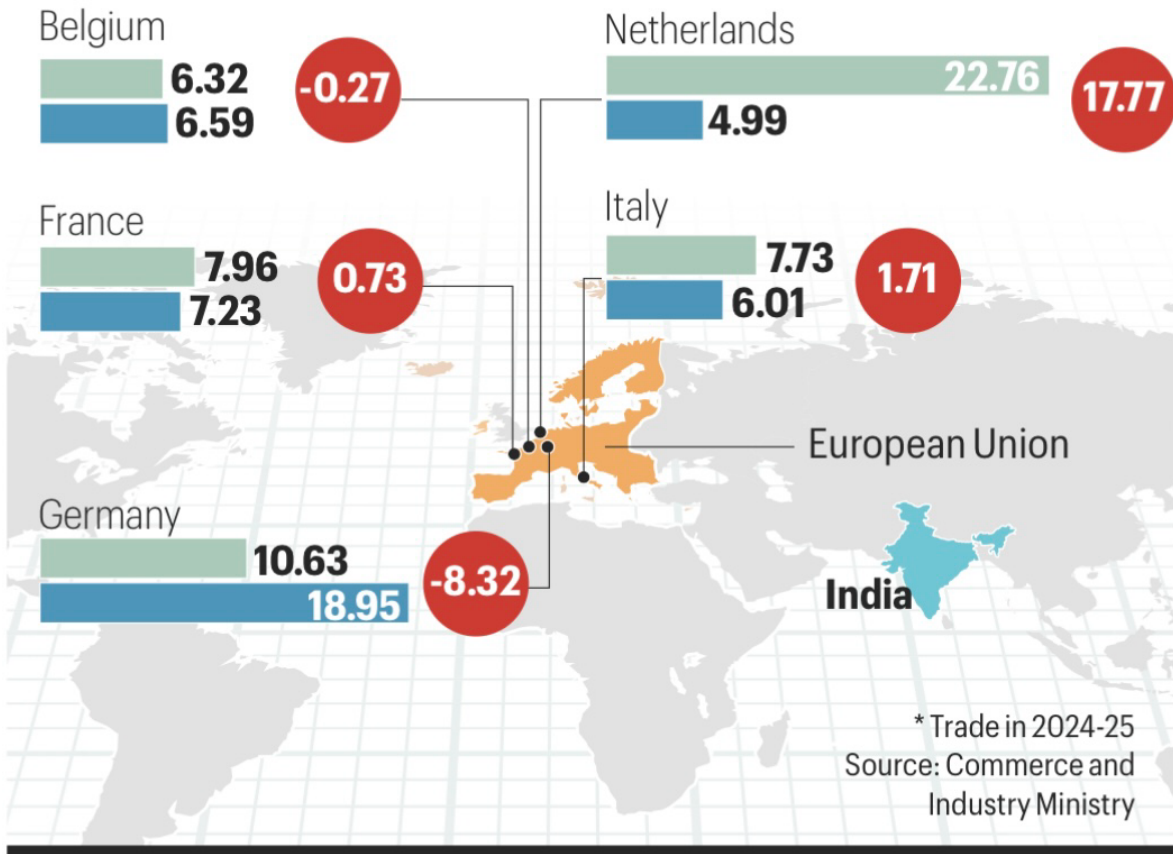
India's exports India's imports All figures in \$ mn, FY25



Exports	Imports
1) Netherlands	1) Germany
2) Germany	2) France
3) France	3) Belgium
4) Italy	4) Italy
5) Belgium	5) Ireland
	6) Netherlands

• INDIA'S LARGEST TRADE PARTNERS IN EU

● Exports (\$bn) ● Imports (\$bn) ● Trade Balance (\$bn)



• INDIA-EU TRADE DEAL

Most European luxury cars won't get cheaper in India

Tariffs will come down from 110% to 10%. But this doesn't apply to cars assembled in India, which make up over 90% of European cars sold here

Hot wheels

The cars that might see some price cuts are ultra high-end offerings from brands like Lamborghini or Ferrari.



They aren't made or assembled in India, but are imported.

India-EU trade deal: What it means for pharma sector

Medical devices likely to cost less

It eliminates tariffs on nearly all EU pharma products and over 90% of optical, medical, and surgical equipment, aiming to reduce healthcare costs and boost trade. The tariff removal is expected to lower the costs of advanced medical equipment

Brief

- Given that Indian healthcare delivery is significantly dependent on high-end medical, surgical, and diagnostic equipment imported from Europe, the elimination of tariffs under the India-EU trade agreement will meaningfully
 - › reduce input costs for hospitals,
 - › enable wider adoption of advanced technologies,
 - › improve clinical out-comes, and
 - › ultimately translate into more affordable and higher-quality care for patients,

Need for caution

- If we evaluate the deal from an Indian perspective, opening the medical devices imports might be helpful in a few cases.

□ However, flooding of the market by second hand pre-used devices is a reality.

→ India imports between 70% and 90% of its medical devices.

And while these products may have regulatory certifications in EU countries, the reality is that a considerable number of them are not covered by domestic regulation.

→ For the over **Rs 30,000-crore imports of medical devices** there exists no local regulation or quality checks, save some products that are governed by the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board for radiation safety.

- Only 23 devices

are regulated by the Ministry of Health		
through its	Central Licensing Authority and State Licensing Authorities	under the <i>Drugs and Cosmetics Act,</i> 2019
Devices are engineering products, not drugs or medicines.		
As a result, patient safety concerns have compounded in the absence of a regulatory framework that is clearly defined for medical devices.		

Lack of
domestic
regulatory
certification

- In India, most implantable devices are **unregulated, including pacemakers, defibrillators, continuous monitoring glucose monitors.**

Standalone
Regulation
required

- A standalone legislation for regulation of medical devices is the need of the hour.
- The present regulation is by an amendment to the Drugs and Cosmetics Act in 2019, delinking devices from drugs. Since 80% of the devices are imported, standalone legislation has an important role to play in creating a level playing field for domestic and foreign manufacturers.

- The EU deal may actually **slow down the growth of indigenous production.**

• ENVIRONMENT

US quits Paris deal, but has chosen to remain in some climate bodies

US dominance

- The US has withdrawn from IRENA, but not from IEA.
- IRENA focuses on deployment of renewable energy. IEA has largely focused on ensuring security of oil supplies.
- IEA is governed by 30-odd countries including US. The US has no structural advantage in 170-member IRENA.

29.01.2026

UGC's new equity norms are much needed, there should be safeguards against their misuse

The backlash against the regulations cannot mask the reality that had forced an overdue recognition in the Mandal moment. The fact is that privilege reproduces itself through access, language and cultural capital, that inequality is often not a matter of accident but of historical exclusion.

▽ The University Grants Commission's new regulations against discrimination in higher education — the **UGC (Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions) Regulations, 2026** — are significant and welcome.

→ They have **sparked protests on the grounds of overreach** and there are accusations that it **ignores upper-caste concerns**.

→ Yet, the context that produces them shows why they are ***much needed.***

› UGC data provided to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education in 2025 shows that over the last five years, the number of reported complaints of caste-based discrimination on educational campuses has gone up exponentially — from 173 in 2019-20 to 378 in 2023-24.

› It makes the regulations, which **replace those from 2012**, both urgent and necessary.

378 (2023-24)
173 (2019-20) ↑

2012	Recognition	2026	Recognition + Redressal
If the 2012 regulations officially recognised social discrimination,		the new ones call out caste discrimination in classrooms by its name and move the needle by	

	institutionalising mechanisms of redress.
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Challenges

▽ Certainly, the framework they put in place is not beyond critique. Despite Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan's assurance that misuse will "not be allowed against anybody", there will be challenges.

Inclusion of OBCs

✓ The inclusion of Other Backward Classes (OBC), while welcome, will need to be addressed with rigour.

--False complains
--Prescribed timelines

✓ Concerns have also been raised about the possibility of false complaints of discrimination, and over the feasibility of timelines prescribed for inquiries, which may strain under-resourced institutions.

Causing anxieties

✓ The threat of punitive action for non-compliance, including derecognition, has stoked anxieties.

For the regulations to succeed,	checks and balances and safeguards against misuse,	and a commitment to due process,	will be critical.
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▽ The backlash against the regulations, however, cannot mask the reality that had forced an overdue recognition in the Mandal moment. The fact is that privilege reproduces itself through access, language and cultural capital, that inequality is often due to historical exclusion. **Ever since the implementation of affirmative action, classrooms have become more diverse. But caste prejudice still operates in covert and less recognisable registers.** The UGC's new regulations are not perfect, but they force a reckoning with that reality. Addressing entrenched inequities always provokes discomfort. But pretending they no longer exist would mean shirking the constitutional obligation of equality for all.

Strong measures

The UGC (Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions) Regulations, 2026, were notified on Tuesday

■ Discrimination has been defined as “any unfair, differential, or biased treatment or any such act against any stakeholder, whether explicit or implicit, on the grounds only of religion, race, caste, gender, place of birth, disability, or any of them”

■ Caste-based discrimination means “discrimination only on the basis of caste or tribe against the members of the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes”



■ The new rules specify punishments, which can range from being debarred from offering degrees or programmes, for non-compliance

Quick facts:

- ✂ The idea of a national higher education system originated from the **Sargeant Report, 1944**.
- ✂ A University Grants Committee was formed in **1945** to supervise Aligarh, Banaras, and Delhi universities
- ✂ The UGC was **formally inaugurated in 1953** by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad.
- ✂ It became a **statutory body in 1956 under the UGC Act, 1956**.
- ✂ The UGC is headquartered in **New Delhi**.
- ✂ *Consists of :-*

a Chairman,
a Vice-Chairman
10 members appointed by the Central Government.

- ✂ Main functions :-

- ✓ grant allocation,

- ✓ advising on higher education reforms, and
- ✓ maintaining academic standards.

30.01.2026

ASKS GOVT TO SET UP PANEL OF TOP JURISTS TO STUDY ISSUE

Supreme Court stays new UGC rules on caste bias: 'Will divide society'

SC: Menstrual health is a part of fundamental right to life

- a fundamental right under **Article 21** of the Constitution,
- SC directed all States and Union Territories to put in place

Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) measures,	
including <i>gender-segregated toilets</i> and <i>free sanitary napkins</i> ,	
in all government	as well as private schools .

- Ensure **compliance within three months**.
 - › Citing provisions of the Right to Education Act, the court also warned of stringent consequences for noncompliance, including

the derecognition of private schools and	holding state governments directly accountable for failures in public institutions.
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Economic Survey predicts bright India, increasingly darker world

FY26 Survey raises medium-term growth outlook to 7% from 6.5% Survey tabled in Parliament puts FY27 growth range at 6.8%–7.2% Grim outlook for global economy could pose risks to India, it says

Risk analysis

The Economic Survey outlined three scenarios for the world economy that could unfold in 2026



Spelling out strategy: Chief Economic Adviser V. Anantha Nageswaran addressing the media in New Delhi on Thursday. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

SCENARIO 1

The best-case

Probability:
40%–45%

- Described as “business as in 2025,” where global conditions remain integrated but become less secure
- Existing frictions do not lead to a total collapse, but create **volatility**
- Minor shocks will **require governments to intervene** to stabilise market expectations
- High levels of **policy uncertainty** will persist

SCENARIO 2

Multipolar breakdown

Probability:
40%–45%

- **Systemic breakdown** is no longer just a “tail risk”
- Strategic rivalry prevails and the **Russia-Ukraine conflict** remains unresolved
- Trade becomes explicitly coercive, leading to a **proliferation of sanctions** and counter-measures
- **Supply chains** are realigned under political pressure

SCENARIO 3

The worst-case

Probability:
10%–20%

- A major **correction in AI-infrastructure** investments occur
- The correction triggers intense **risk aversion**
- If this coincides with geopolitical escalation, it could **weaken capital flows** and contract global liquidity
- The macroeconomic fallout could be **worse than the 2008 global financial crisis**

INDIA A VICTIM OF GEOPOLITICS, SAYS CEA

Survey flags drying up of FDI/FII flow, Re stability

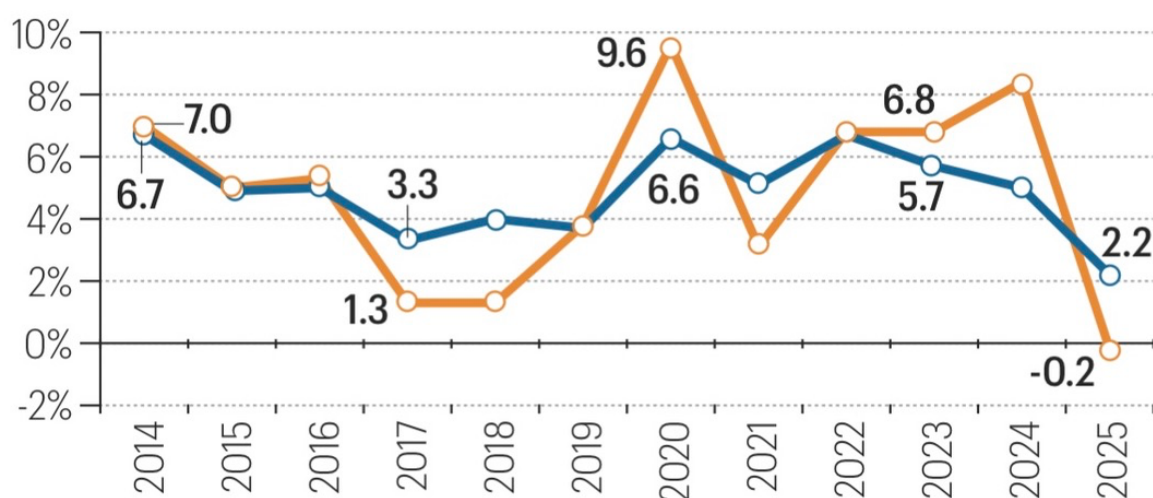
2024 AS BASE YEAR FOR CPI

New inflation series: Food's weight to fall to 37% from 46%

● Food inflation drives India's headline inflation

● CPI inflation (%)

● CPI food inflation (%)

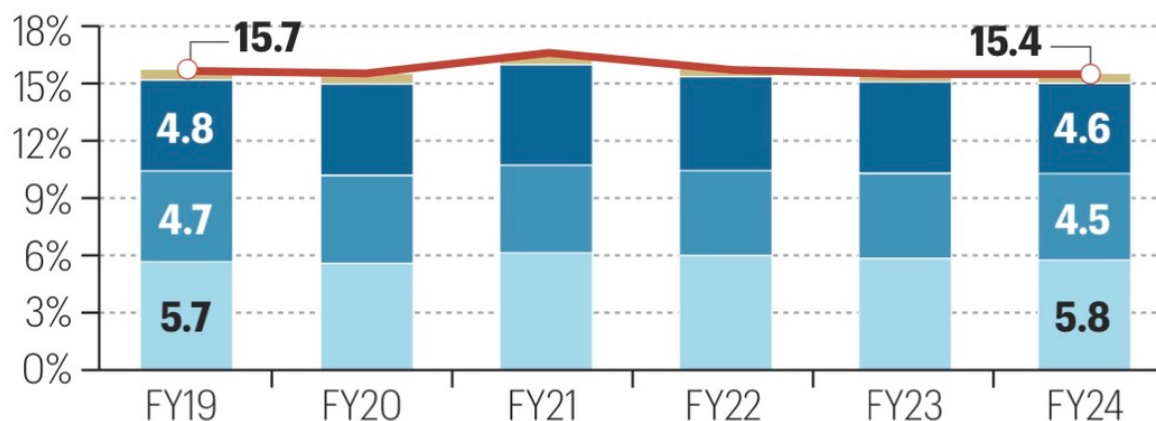


NOTE: INFLATION DATA IS AVERAGE FOR EACH CALENDAR YEAR; SOURCE: MoSPI

States' fiscal populism, cash transfers risk crowding out productive capex

● Composition of States' Total Expenditure

- Grants in aid and contributions
- Non-developmental expenditure
- Economic services
- Social Services
- Total expenditure



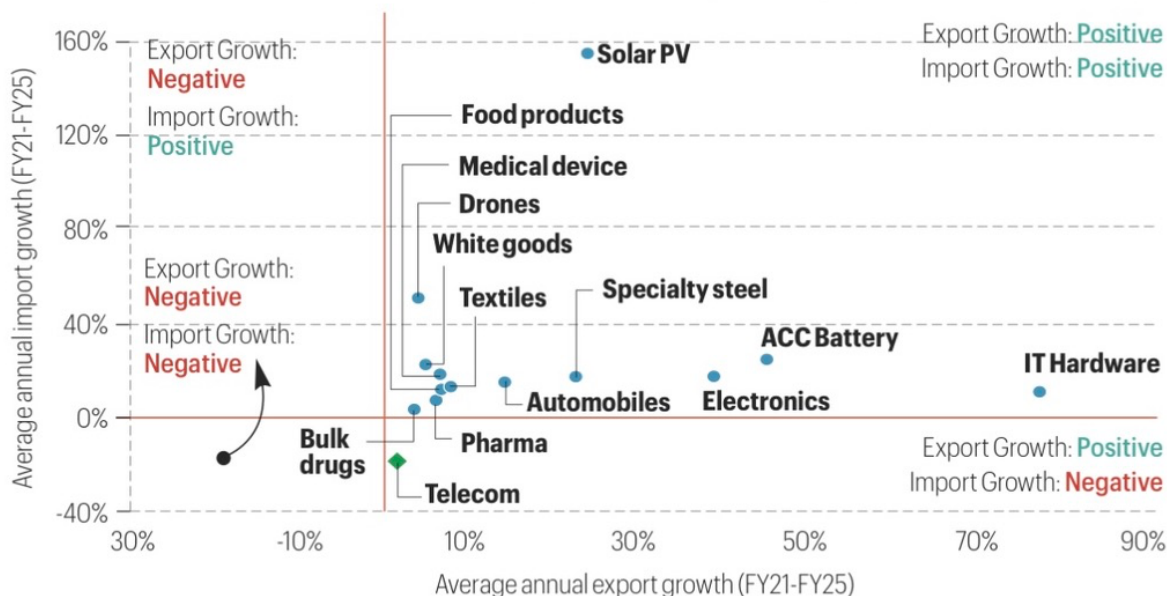
Source: RBI eSTATES database, States' Budget, Documents and MoSPI

% of GDP

Note: Total expenditure excludes loans and advances disbursed by States

● TRADE PERFORMANCE OF PLI SECTORS

In FY21-25, the average annual growth rate of exports from the 14 PLI sectors was 10.6%, while imports' was 12.6%. IT hardware and electronics were among sectors with high export growth. This was accompanied by an increase in imports indicating a scaling up of production capacity.



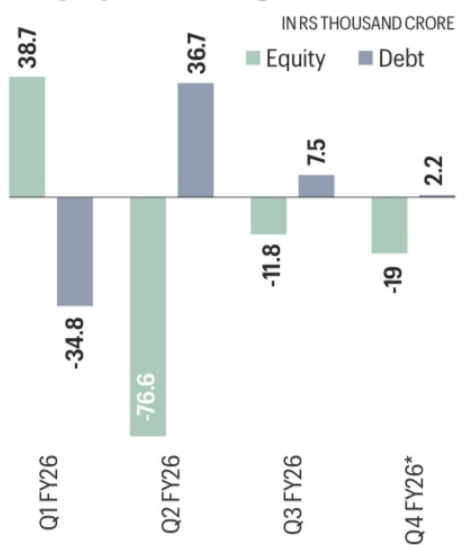
Source: Department of Commerce, Economic Survey 2025-26

Why rupee's challenges are primarily external

India depends on inflows of foreign capital to maintain a healthy balance of payments. When they taper off, rupee stability 'becomes a casualty'

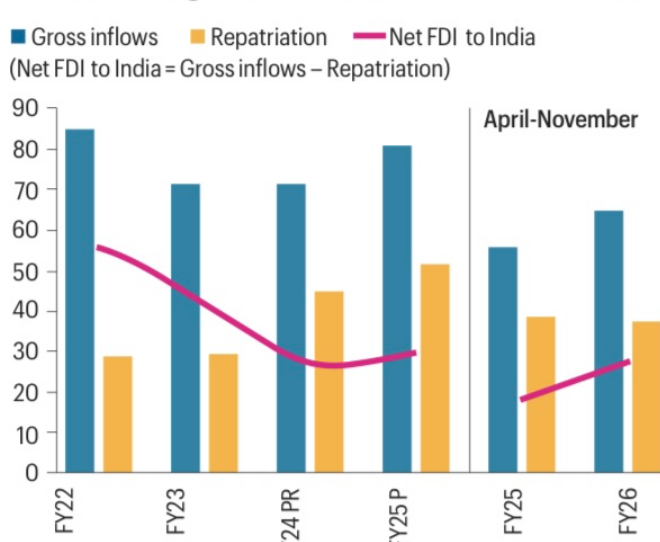
• HOW FOREIGN CAPITAL INFLOWS HAVE FARED

Net Foreign Portfolio Investments in equity and debt segments



Q4 FY26* AS OF 13 JANUARY 2026; SOURCE: NSDL

Trends in Foreign Direct Investments



NOTE: P=PROVISIONAL; PR=PROVISIONALLY REVISED.
SOURCE: DBIE, RBI

US tariff pressure

The Survey's observations come at a time when exports could come under pressure due to the steep 50% US tariffs.

While the impact has been limited so far, exporters have said fresh orders from the US have stopped coming in.

Nominal GDP

When it comes to the Budget, it's the nominal GDP growth that counts.

India's nominal GDP growth rate has been decelerating for years.

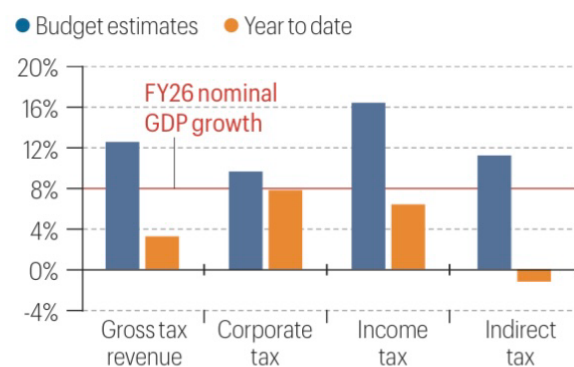
• CONCERNING SIGNALS

Chart 1: Decelerating nominal GDP growth rate



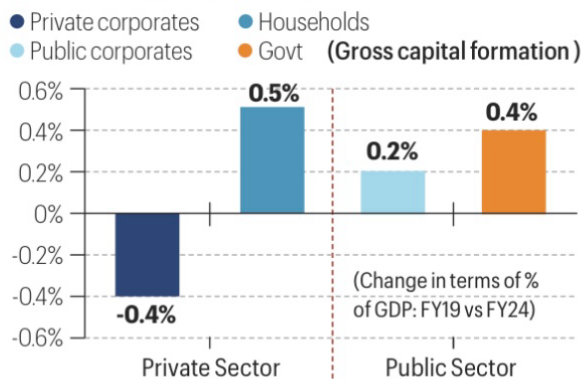
SOURCE: CENTRE FOR MONITORING INDIAN ECONOMY

Chart 2: Underwhelming tax collections



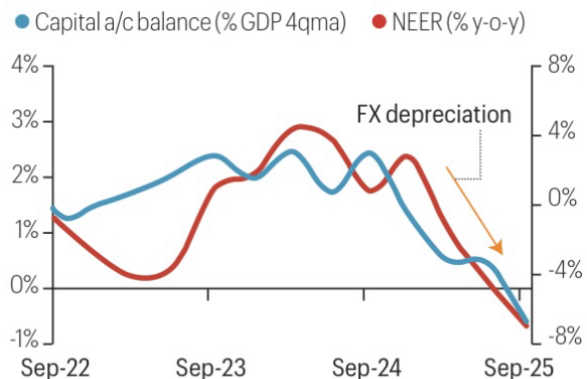
SOURCE: CEIC, HSBC

Chart 3: Lagging pvt. corporate investments



SOURCE: CEIC, HSBC, BLOOMBERG; NOTES: 4QMA: 4-QUARTER MOVING AVERAGE; NEER: NOMINAL EFFECTIVE EXCHANGE RATE

Chart 4: Declining capital inflows



Economic Survey

flags the key problems, SOLUTIONS AWAIT

▽ The backdrop against which the Economic Survey 2025-26 has been presented is arguably complicated.

Bright spots

- On the macroeconomic front, **growth** has been healthy and **inflation** has remained muted.
- Both **corporate and bank balance sheets** are healthy.
- **GST rates** have been rationalised, **trade deals** have been signed, and **a slew of reforms** have been announced.

Bleak spots

- ✧ Yet, there are questions over **household consumption**, signs of a broad-based revival in the **private investment** cycle are few, and **merchandise exports** are sluggish.
- ✧ Another oddity alongside the strong macroeconomic performance is **foreign investors pulling out of the markets and a falling rupee**. The paradoxes confronting the country have been flagged by the Economic Survey.

▽ The Survey rightly notes that the **economy relies upon capital inflows to maintain a healthy balance of payments**. But, “when they run drier, rupee stability becomes a casualty”. The rupee is currently hovering around 92 against the US dollar. **While a weaker currency does impact export competitiveness**, the Survey argues that the currency’s valuation “does not accurately reflect India’s stellar economic fundamentals”. **But it influences investors**. In the current global environment, when India does not seem to offer a compelling AI story, and money is also pouring into safe-haven assets (such as gold), this warrants closer attention.

→ As the Survey puts it, “**India needs to generate sufficient investor interest and export earnings in foreign currency.**”

→ Another equally critical issue highlighted by the Survey is that of “**fiscal populism**”.

✓ In recent years, several state governments have announced **unconditional cash transfers** — as per ICRA, the combined cash transfers of 11 states added up to Rs 1.5 lakh crore in 2025-26. **These schemes have impacted the fiscal space available for more productive forms of expenditure.**

Committed expenditure

✓ As per the Survey, **committed expenditures — salaries, pensions, interest payments and subsidies** — account for **62% of states’ revenue receipts**. The trade-offs are pretty apparent.

▽ The Survey has projected the Indian economy to grow in the range of 6.8 to 7.2 per cent in 2026-27. This comes after the **first advance estimates had pegged growth at 7.4 per cent in 2025-26**. **Achieving this, and sustaining growth at 7 per cent over the medium term, in an uncertain global environment, will be challenging.** The Survey does provide a sense of how

the Centre is looking at the economic environment. The question now is whether these issues raised find reflection in the coming Union Budget.

RTI disclosure isn't ideal curiosity, it enables good governance

The law's roles in exposing major scams – the Vyapam scam and the Adarsh Housing Society scam, for instance – is a testimony to its role as a governance enhancer. The Act has also been used to question the RBI during the banking scams

▽ The Economic Survey has done a commendable job in underlining the country's resilience in an increasingly uncertain world. It has highlighted the deficits that could stall the growth momentum and rightly pointed out that increasing innovation, scaling up the country's manufacturing ecosystem, and enhancing export competitiveness will require the government to become an enabler — not a heavy-handed controller.

→ The Survey, however, **is misplaced in interpreting civic scrutiny of governance as antithetical to the entrepreneurial spirit.**

- ✓ It calls for a **re-examination of the Right to Information Act**, particularly the provisions related to the disclosure of deliberations that inform policymaking.
- ✓ The observation that **such disclosures “unduly constrain governance”** is a narrow reading of administrative efficiency.
- ✓ Public access to documents illuminates the evolution of a policy and provides a context for why certain ideas were accepted or rejected.
 - They are a precious tool for citizens to force the bureaucracy to share information concerning public policy and the delivery of services and goods.

- A transparent bureaucracy is, in turn, fundamental to a stable, predictable, and fair economic environment.

▽ By reducing information asymmetry between citizens and state, the RTI has redefined the relationship between the two. The argumentative ethos fostered by the disclosure provisions has been critical to keeping bureaucrats on their toes. They are not “tools for ideal disclosure”, as the Survey notes.

RTI's significant role playing testimony

→ The law's roles in exposing major scams — the **Vyapam scam and the Adarsh Housing Society scam**, for instance – is a testimony to its role as a governance enhancer.

→ The Act has also been **used to question the RBI during the banking scams.**

→ The financial probity catalysed the **Supreme Court's verdicts in the Girish Mittal (2021) and Jayantilal Mistry (2016) cases**, wherein the SC held the Central Bank must disclose names of willful loan defaulters and details of Non-Performing Assets of public sector banks.

Govt's effort to evade public scrutiny

⌚ At the same time, however, the Act's enabling provisions have been substantially attenuated in recent years.

✓ The **Digital Personal Data Protection Act**, which came into force last year, **exempts from disclosure “information which relates to personal information.. which has no relationship to any public activity or interest”.**

✓ The government has reportedly also tried to **evade public scrutiny by claiming it does not have data on migrant workers who died during Covid , paper leaks in competitive exams and on farmers' suicides.**

✂ The Economic Survey does acknowledge that the RTI Act is a “powerful tool for reform”. The government would do well to go by the Survey's overall governance-centred ethos, and not heed the suggestion to re-examine RTI.