



Learn Beyond

KPR IAS Academy

Institute for IAS, IPS, IFS and TNPSC Exams

No. 5, AKS Nagar, Near Gandhi Park, Coimbatore - 641 001

General Studies – II (Governance, Constitution, Polity, Social Justice & International Relations)

1. LPG booking fall to 77 lakh, hinting let-up in panic-buying across States – 1

LPG bookings fall to 77 lakh, hinting let-up in panic-buying across States

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI

Bookings for liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) refills have declined to about 77 lakh on Saturday from 88.8 lakh the day before, indicating some easing of panic-buying, even as the government said there is no shortage of petrol, diesel, or cooking gas, and supplies remain stable despite the West Asia conflict.

All domestic “refineries are operating at high capacity and maintaining adequate crude oil inventories”, the Centre said on Sunday in its daily update on the impact of the West Asia situation. “The country remains self-sufficient



People queuing up with their LPG cylinders at a dealership in Patna on Sunday. ANI

in the production of petrol and diesel, requiring no imports of the fuels to meet domestic demand.”

Oil marketing companies have reported no dry-outs at fuel retail outlets or

LPG distributors, and petrol, diesel, and LPG supplies are being maintained regularly, it said.

An Indian-flagged crude tanker, *Jag Laadki*, sailed out safely from Fujairah in the UAE on Sunday morning after loading 80,800 tonnes of Murban crude oil, despite an attack on the oil terminal. All crew members of the India-bound vessel are safe, the government said.

Jag Laadki is the fourth Indian-flagged vessel to have come out of the war zone unharmed. The government said it continued to prioritise domestic consumers and ensure uninterrupted LPG supply, particularly for households

and priority sectors such as hospitals and educational institutions.

“Citizens are advised not to resort to panic buying as adequate stocks of petrol and diesel are available across the country,” the update stated.

Several States and Union Territories, including Bihar, Delhi, Haryana and Rajasthan, have issued orders for allocation of non-domestic LPG in line with government guidelines.

The State governments are undertaking measures to prevent hoarding and black marketing of petrol, diesel, and LPG.

CONTINUED ON

» PAGE 12

2. Oil prices reflect geopolitical risks, not only supply – 6

Oil prices reflect geopolitical risks, not only supply

In the aftermath of the war in West Asia, crude oil prices surged to as high as \$118 a barrel last week. Alongside rising tensions, this situation has been building for over two months. Since mid-December 2025, when Brent crude stood at \$57.56, prices have surged by more than 100%. They have, however, come down since then but remain in three digits, with no immediate sign of easing.

Historically, geopolitical shocks follow a predictable pattern. There is an immediate market overreaction that is followed by gradual stabilisation as trade routes adjust. However, the global oil market is once again operating under a profound geopolitical shadow.

What has changed in the development now

The developments in West Asia, intensifying strategic rivalries among major powers, and persistent conflict-driven uncertainty have brought geopolitics back to the centre of the energy discourse. Yet, the nature of this influence has shifted. Unlike previously, where regional conflicts rarely removed Gulf barrels from the global pool, the current disruptions have created tangible barriers to supply, fundamentally altering the costs, confidence, and conditions of the oil trade.

For major importing economies such as India, this shift has significant implications. Oil security is no longer just about physical access. It is also defined by exposure to the financial, logistical, and political uncertainties surrounding every shipment.

The vulnerability of global maritime arteries is stark. Around a fifth of global oil consumption is transported through the Strait of Hormuz, and roughly a tenth of seaborne crude passes through the Bab el-Mandeb and Suez corridor. The ongoing conflict involving Israel and Iran has effectively sidelined 20% of global supplies, even in the absence of planned production cuts. The market has reacted sharply to these signals. Over the past year, Brent crude has frequently fluctuated by 5%-10% within days of military or diplomatic developments, regardless of actual production volumes. Currently, however, the impact on physical supply is so drastic that prices continue to climb without a visible peak.

Tensions do more than just inflate the price of a barrel. They make maritime insecure. Chokepoints remain vital arteries of trade, but their significance today lies in making global machinery vulnerable. Even limited disruptions or attacks on commercial shipping can alter vessel routing and raise freight costs. These drive up freight rates; the world has seen daily rates for supertankers more than double), affect shipping



Pankaj Sharma

is a former Additional Director, Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell (PPAC), Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Government of India, and a former Chief General Manager, Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL), India

As tensions rise and oil volatility grows, importing nations will need adaptable energy and trade strategies

insurance premiums, and tighten vessel availability. Major container carriers have implemented emergency conflict surcharges or war risk surcharges. These escalations ripple through the supply chain, directly influencing landed import prices.

It is about politics

Furthermore, oil has been transformed from a mere commodity into a political instrument. The redirection of Russian crude following the Ukraine conflict illustrates this dynamic.

Although Russia maintained export volumes by pivoting to Asian markets, the shift introduced longer shipping routes, complex payment arrangements, and evolving compliance frameworks. What appeared stable in volume was highly volatile in operational and financial terms.

For importing countries, this creates a dual exposure. Price volatility is no longer driven solely by the supply-demand balance but by changes in geopolitical sentiment. Markets respond to diplomatic signals, military developments and regulatory announcements with a speed that often exceeds the pace of actual trade flows. This weakens the historical relationship between production levels and consumer prices.

The growing role of financial markets amplifies geopolitical sentiment, as oil is traded not only as a physical commodity but also as a financial asset through futures, options, and derivatives. During periods of stress, investors use oil as both an inflation hedge and a risk-sensitive instrument. This explains why speculative positions often expand even when physical inventories are comfortable – prices reflect expectations and portfolio behaviour rather than immediate scarcity.

Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPRs) have also evolved. Originally intended to address physical supply interruptions, they are now deployed to counter psychological volatility in the market. For instance, G-7 leaders have announced the release of 400 million barrels of oil in response to the war in West Asia (which is said to be about 20 days of the usual oil traffic through the Strait of Hormuz). The goal is to stabilise market sentiment as much as it is to provide physical barrels. The news of these discussions recently prompted a self-off, easing Brent and West Texas Intermediate gains to some extent.

Major powers shape this environment in different ways. The United States, now one of the world's largest producers of various petroleum products, influences markets through its strategic stock policies and diplomatic engagement with producers.

Meanwhile, Asia has become the primary centre of demand growth, accounting for the majority of incremental oil consumption over the past decade. Producer coordination through organisations such as the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries continues to influence supply management, but its impact now interacts with geopolitical risk premia embedded in prices.

The continuing relevance of oil

The energy transition adds another layer of complexity. While renewable energy and electric mobility are expanding, oil remains central to the transport, aviation and petrochemicals sectors/industries. Global oil demand still exceeds 105 million barrels per day, and petrochemicals account for a rising share of incremental consumption. This produces a segmented market: one part linked to declining fuel use, another tied to industrial growth. Thus, geopolitics continues to exert influence over a commodity whose strategic relevance is changing but not disappearing.

For India, where oil demand is not expected to peak soon and is projected to drive much of global growth, this environment highlights the need for adaptability rather than alarm. The ability to process diverse crude grades, source from multiple geographies and maintain strategic reserves provides buffers against instability. Equally crucial is building commercial and financial expertise to navigate complex trading arrangements. Energy policy, in this sense, must integrate diplomacy, maritime awareness and market analytics.

This evolving structure complicates the notion of energy security. It now requires resilience not only against supply disruptions but also against financial and logistical shocks. Payment systems, shipping insurance, and contract enforcement have become integral to the energy security architecture.

The broader lesson is that oil has entered a phase where risk is as significant as the resource itself. Geopolitics will continue to influence oil prices by shaping perceptions of safety, reliability, and continuity, as well as affecting the physical flow of oil. Understanding this transformation is essential for managing a vulnerable world. Stability now depends on preserving predictable trade mechanisms and avoiding diplomatic ruptures that amplify uncertainty. In the years ahead, the resilience of importing nations will depend both on the origin of their crude and on how effectively they manage the political and financial currents surrounding every barrel of oil.

3. Mandatory period leave sans parity in recruitment will hurt women – 6

Another barrier

Mandatory period leave sans parity in recruitment will hurt women

When considering a measure to address a work-related need, care must be taken to ensure that it does not inadvertently reduce the employee's opportunity to work. This was again made evident on March 13, when a two-judge Bench of the Supreme Court, headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, refused to entertain a petition seeking a law providing menstrual leave for women workers and students. The Court cautioned that mandatory menstrual leave could unintentionally hinder women's careers and deny them "big responsibilities". Instead, it encouraged "voluntary" initiatives by States. In Odisha, women government employees up to the age of 55 can take an additional day of leave each month, while Kerala grants menstrual leave to female trainees in ITIs and universities. Karnataka issued an order that entitles women in the public and private sectors up to the age of 52 to a day's menstrual leave a month, raising concerns whether private establishments might be disincentivised from hiring women. This government order has been challenged in the High Court. Such changes must come with safeguards, and the top court rightly suggested that the government come up with a menstrual leave policy in consultation with stakeholders – as it had done in 2024 as well.

Many women face debilitating menstrual pain and conditions such as endometriosis, PCOD and PCOS. But the Court's reasoning rests on another, more universal reality: women are already disadvantaged at work, facing systemic barriers such as unequal pay. In this context, mandatory menstrual leave could become a form of biological determinism, limiting opportunities, pay and promotions for women. In countries where menstrual leave policies exist, they are either poorly enforced or are not opted for by most women. In Spain, legislation enacted in 2023, and hailed as "... historic ... for feminist progress", saw few women exercising the right a year later. In Zambia, some women said it was being misused. In India, the female Labour Force Participation Rate rose from 23.3% in 2017-18 to 41.7% in 2023-24, driven largely by rural women entering work due to distress, insecure employment and unpaid household work. In this context, a blanket menstrual leave policy could be counterproductive: many women cannot afford to lose work-days, and in informal jobs, it may also be unenforceable. Providing free sanitary products and medicines at workplaces and allowing time off under existing leave provisions would be a way forward. That would be an acknowledgement of biological realities without turning such well-intentioned but poorly thought-out initiatives into yet another barrier to women's participation.

4. On the right to die with dignity – 7

On the right to die with dignity

On an evening in 2013, 20-year-old Harish Rana fell from the fourth floor of his PG accommodation and sustained critical injuries. His condition confined him to a bed while tubes kept him on life support. Owing to his Persistent Vegetative State (PVS), he responded to no stimuli around him and was largely nursed by his parents, with frequent visits to the hospital. Mr. Rana's closest friends and family, who fondly describe him as energetic and exuberant, were faced with the agonising pain of witnessing his stasis. His parents, along with the doctors, devoted 13 years in tending to Mr. Rana, but no improvement was seen. Confronted with such despairing circumstances, the parents moved the Supreme Court to withdraw life support, so that nature can be allowed to take its course. What followed was a pivotal discourse on the import of life under Article 21 of our Constitution.

A respectable death

The Constitution's tryst with 'Right to Life with dignity' was first laid down in *Gian Kaur vs State of Punjab* (1996) where the Supreme Court held that 'life' under Article 21 included the right to live with dignity. However, in *Gian Kaur*, the Court opined that Article 21 did not include the right to die.

Fifteen years later, a similar case reached the Supreme Court when a young Aruna Shanbaug, owing to a brutal sexual assault, was left in PVS. Pinki Virani, journalist, and human-rights activist, petitioned the Supreme Court as Aruna's friend for withdrawal of her life support. Although under its own circumstances, Virani's plea was rejected, it culminated in the crucial decision of *Aruna R. Shanbaug vs Union of India* (2011). The Supreme Court drew sustenance from foreign legal frameworks and recognised passive euthanasia in cases of patients with terminal illness and undergoing prolonged, but



Satvik Varma

is a senior advocate in New Delhi. With inputs from Shantanu Parmar, advocate

The right of refusal of medical treatment was held to be a manifestation of dignity intersecting with privacy, autonomy, and self-determination

ineffective treatment. Guidelines were framed to bridge the legislative gap, until Parliament promulgated on the subject. Additionally, the Law Commission in 2006 and 2012, entered into an in-depth examination of the above-detailed issues and made extensive observations. It reported that withholding life support from terminally ill patients should not attract criminal liability if done in pursuance of the "best interest of the patient."

The watershed moment on the subject was the 2018 Constitution Bench's decision in *Common Cause vs Union of India*. Armed with developing jurisprudence on the subject, the Supreme Court unequivocally recognised and permitted the withdrawal/withholding of medical treatment to fall within Article 21. The right of refusal of medical treatment was held to be a manifestation of dignity intersecting with privacy, autonomy, and self-determination. This judgment provided extensive guidelines and underwent certain modifications in a similarly titled 2023 decision. These are now cumulatively referred to as the 'Common Cause guidelines', which rest on two core principles: first, that the intervention in question must qualify as "medical treatment"; and second, that its withdrawal must be strictly in the patient's "best interest."

The Supreme Court embedded various safeguards to prevent misuse and a detailed procedure involving opinions of primary and secondary Medical Boards prior to undertaking such decisions. The legislative void was once again highlighted by the Court and one Judge expressed the "pious hope" for legislative intervention. This hope still lingers.

Case evaluation

The Harish Rana chronicle has now reached its end with the intervention by the Supreme Court. Speaking through two judges, who authored separate but concurring judgments, the Court allowed the withdrawal of life

support from Mr. Rana under the Common Cause guidelines. Since he relied on Clinically Assisted Nutrition and Hydration (CANH), the first question which required consideration was whether CANH qualified as 'medical treatment.' To answer this, the Court noted that the administration of CANH requires careful and experienced medical supervision. Since such skills are only available by drawing upon medical knowledge, and owing to its continuous periodic evaluation, emergency medical management and supervision, it was held to be 'medical treatment.' The second question was whether the withdrawal of CANH from Mr. Rana was in his best interests. It held that 'best interests' must be envisaged from the lens of the stakeholders, who are the next of kin and medical boards. It was rightly opined that a doctor's duty to perform treatment continues till it is capable of "conferring some therapeutic benefit." When recovery is impossible, the continuation of treatment merely prolongs biological existence de-hors any benefits. It led to the sole conclusion – withdrawal of treatment which was noted to be in Mr. Rana's best interests.

A definitive end

"For in that sleep of death what dreams may come, when we have shuffled off this mortal coil, must give us pause." Through his prose, the Bard cautioned that hesitation about death stems from the uncertainty of what comes after. However, what is definitive is that the ones who pass-on tend to live through us. Harish Rana will soon die. Yet, his contributions will forever be etched in history and in our constitutional jurisprudence.

And so, the advancement of constitutional morality is not only circumscribed to legislative actions which reach the country at large. It is also through addressing uncomfortable issues that advance the cause for humanity, even if they concern just an indiscernible minority.

5. Trump's tenure sees highest external attacks in a decade – 7

Trump's tenure sees highest external attacks in a decade

Contrary to President Donald Trump's promises, U.S. interventions resulted in at least a thousand fatalities in 2025

DATA POINT

Nitika Francis
Sambavi Parthasarathy

When U.S. President Donald Trump came into power for the second time in January last year, he claimed that his proudest legacy would be that of a "peacemaker and unifier". In the initial months after his inauguration, Mr. Trump also openly lobbied for winning the Nobel Peace Prize. Yet, contrary to his words, the legacy of Mr. Trump during his second tenure has seen an explosion in hostile actions, euphemistically termed 'coercive diplomacy', the 'Donroe Doctrine' etc. besides military operations that have exacerbated conflicts across the world.

Increase in attacks

In fact, data maintained by the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) show that Mr. Trump's second tenure has seen the highest number of external interventions by the U.S. forces and resultant casualties in the last 15 years. An analysis of external interventions by the U.S. shows that the first year of Mr. Trump's second term saw at least 663 military intervention events (air strikes, attacks, disruptions by weapons use) in other sovereign nations. In 2025 alone, the U.S.'s external attacks surged by almost 50% compared to 2024.

This is even higher than the number of such interventions recorded during his first presidential term between 2017 and 2021. While the final year of the Joe Biden administration also saw a high number of such interventions with 453 events, the numbers surged further under Mr. Trump, in stark contrast to his promises of ending foreign wars (Chart 1).

Data show that between 2011 and 2014, the highest share of U.S. involvement was seen in South Asia, specifically in Pakistan. Ho-

wever, in the last five years, the U.S.'s involvement increased dramatically in West Asia and eastern Africa, specifically in Yemen and Somalia (Chart 2). Yemen accounted for almost 60% of the U.S.'s external attacks in the last 10 years, resulting in more than 1,400 fatalities. While the U.S. began its attacks on Yemen in 2002, following the 9/11 attacks, the interventions increased after the collapse of the Yemeni government in early 2015.

In 2025, President Donald Trump initiated significant military strikes on the Houthis, marking the largest U.S. operation in the region since he took office. The U.S. vowed to continue these attacks as long as the Houthis conducted attacks on shipping lanes in the Red Sea.

The situation was more dire in Somalia, which accounted for close to 30% of the U.S.'s external attacks. Since 2015, the U.S.'s engagements have resulted in more than 4,000 fatalities.

In 2020, at the time of his first administration, Mr. Trump had ordered the Pentagon to withdraw most U.S. troops from Somalia, where they were deployed in an extended fight against the al-Shabab, an al-Qaeda affiliate. Mr. Biden, who took office after Mr. Trump, reversed this order in 2022. However, the current administration under Mr. Trump has not shown any indication of reverting to the earlier Trump order. The U.S. forces have engaged in more than 150 attacks in Somalia since 2025, almost half the total number of attacks carried out during Mr. Trump's entire first term.

In his inaugural speech last year, Mr. Trump said, "We will measure our success not only by the battles we win but also by the wars that we end and perhaps most importantly, the wars we never get into."

Bloody regime

Mr. Trump has only contradicted himself by getting the U.S. involved

in Israel's wars on Iran. Even Mr. Trump is unsure of how these hostilities will end.

An analysis by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies pointed out that though the recent U.S. military presence in West Asia is at its highest level since the 2003 invasion of Iraq, it is inadequate in the size and capabilities required for major combat or regime change. Last August, claiming credit for settling the India-Pakistan tensions, Mr. Trump said, "I love saving lives...And you know, when you save lives, you really end up having a peaceful world."

Data contradict this too. Mr. Trump's first year of his second term has left the country with more blood on its hands than any other President's term in the past 15 years.

Last year was the most severe in terms of fatalities, with at least a thousand people being killed by U.S.-led forces (Chart 3). This is significantly higher than the death toll due to interventions in each of the preceding four years. The U.S.'s joint attacks with Israel too have come at a severe human cost with reports stating thousands of casualties.

Domestic sensibilities

Mr. Trump's idea of peace is unpopular even among Americans. A Reuters poll found that more than 40% of Americans disapproved of Mr. Trump's attack on Iran.

A similar sentiment was observed earlier this year when American forces invaded Venezuela, the most dramatic U.S. intervention in Latin America since the 1989 Panama invasion, in which close to 200 American troops entered Caracas.

Earlier this year, Mr. Trump stated in an interview with *The New York Times* that his morality was the only limit to his power, and only his mind could stop him from exerting it. With data contradicting his many statements, this might be the one that still rings true.



CHART 1: Year-wise number of attacks engaged by the U.S. beyond its borders

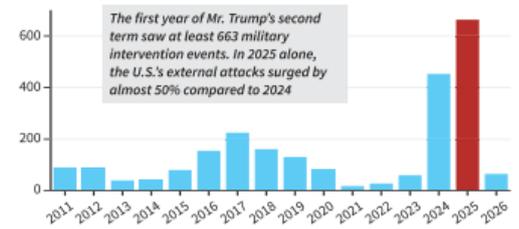


CHART 2: The region-wise number of attacks engaged by the U.S. In the last five years, the U.S.'s involvement increased in West Asia and eastern Africa

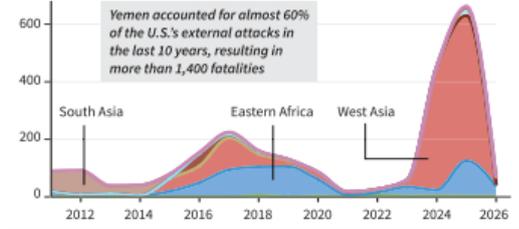
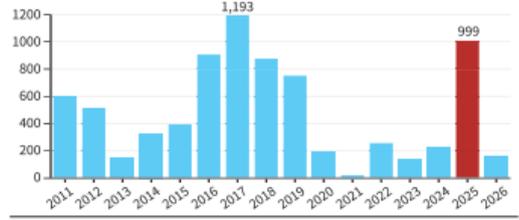


CHART 3: Year-wise number of fatalities in attacks engaged by the U.S. Last year at least a thousand people were killed by U.S.-led forces



6. Why is the U.S. investigating India? – 10

Why is the U.S. investigating India?

What allegations has the U.S. made on excess capacity and forced labour? How do the two Section 301 investigations relate to the current U.S. tariff regime? What issues are the U.S. investigations examining and why do industry experts see them as a pathway to new tariffs?

EXPLAINER

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan

The story so far:

Over the last week, the U.S. government has launched two investigations against India and several other countries in a bid to find some form of actions or policies that “are unreasonable or discriminatory and burden or restrict U.S. commerce”. These investigations will likely take a few months, but could eventually result in the return of tariffs.

What is the current situation on tariffs?

The U.S. Supreme Court on February 20 ruled against the validity of U.S. President Donald Trump’s use of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) to levy reciprocal tariffs on America’s trade partners. For India, these reciprocal tariffs had been 50% from August 2025 to February 6, 2026, after which Mr. Trump reduced them to 25%.

Following the court’s decision, Mr. Trump imposed a 10% tariff on imports from all countries for a period of 150 days under Section 122 of the Trade Act of 1974. He threatened to increase this to 15%, but has not done so.

However, he said the U.S. would use other sections of the Trade Act to levy additional tariffs.

What was the first investigation?

On March 11, the office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) said it had initiated investigations against 16 economies, including India, to see whether these economies were using excess manufacturing capacity to export to the U.S. in a manner that was hurting American businesses.

The order for investigation under Section 301(b) of the Trade Act included specific allegations against the economies



GETTY IMAGES

named – China, the European Union, Singapore, Switzerland, Norway, Indonesia, Malaysia, Cambodia, Thailand, Korea, Vietnam, Taiwan, Bangladesh, Mexico, Japan, and India.

In India’s case, the U.S. said the country had a bilateral trade surplus with it of \$58 billion in 2025. Indian government data, however, shows that India had a merchandise trade surplus of \$42.2 billion with the U.S. over this period.

“India’s global goods trade surplus sectors include textiles, health, construction goods, and automotive goods,” the U.S. order said. “For example, evidence suggests the solar module sector is plagued by excess capacity, including that India’s current module manufacturing is nearly triple annual domestic demand.”

It added that India has created “significant excess capacity” in petrochemicals, steel, and other industries.

What is the second investigation about?

A day later, the USTR announced the launch of a fresh investigation, this time

on 60 countries, including India. The fresh investigation was to look into whether these countries had taken “sufficient steps” to prohibit the import of goods produced with forced labour and how the “failure to eradicate” these practices impacts U.S. workers and businesses.

This investigation, too, was under Section 301(b) of the Trade Act of 1974.

Why is Section 301(b) significant?

Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974 is aimed at addressing unfair foreign practices affecting U.S. businesses. Notably, according to the website of the USTR, “Section 301 may be used to respond to unjustifiable, unreasonable, or discriminatory foreign government practices that burden or restrict U.S. commerce”.

According to trade and industry experts, this “response” that has been allowed in the law is the pathway through which the Trump administration could once again levy tariffs on imports from other countries once the 150-day window for his current 10% expires.

“While its [the investigation’s] impact on India’s exports will be clear only after

the investigation concludes, it seems the move is aimed at imposing a new tariff once the 150 days for the 10% global tariff expires,” Pankaj Chadha, chairman of the Engineering Exports Promotion Council of India, said.

How did the Indian government respond?

So far, it has not responded publicly. In contrast, the European Union has already spoken strongly about it.

“We will be seeking further clarity from the U.S. on how the opening of this section 301 investigation would interact with” the EU-U.S. agreement signed last year, European Commission spokesman Olof Gill said. “The commission would respond firmly and proportionately to any breach of the joint statement commitments,” he added.

How have Indian industries responded?

Mr. Chadha said that this fresh development comes over and above the existing tariffs that the steel, aluminium, auto, and auto components sectors still have to pay. The U.S. has implemented a separate 50% tariff on the import of these goods, including from India, which continues even after the Supreme Court’s order.

Similarly, the Confederation of Indian Textile Industry has said that the recent developments add further uncertainty to the textiles and apparel sector, which it said is already under significant stress due to the developments in West Asia and a lack of clarity over how the U.S. tariff situation will unfold.

Ravi Sam, the Vice Chairman of industry body Texprocil, however, said there is no need for panic as these investigations will be long, drawn-out processes and will not have any immediate impact. This sentiment was echoed by trade expert and former Director General of Foreign Trade Ajay Srivastava as well.

THE GIST

▼ The U.S. has launched two investigations under Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974 against India and other economies to examine practices that may be ‘unreasonable or discriminatory and burden or restrict U.S. commerce’.

▼ One probe examines whether countries, including India, are using excess manufacturing capacity to export to the U.S. in a manner that hurts American businesses, while another looks at whether countries have taken ‘sufficient steps’ to prohibit imports of goods produced with forced labour.

7. Why is Rajasthan's property Bill drawing scrutiny? – 10

Why is Rajasthan's property Bill drawing scrutiny?

How will the proposed law regulate property transfers in notified areas? What concerns has it triggered?

Saeed Pande

The story so far:

The Rajasthan Prohibition of Transfer of Immovable Property in Disturbed Areas Bill was passed by the Rajasthan Legislative Assembly on March 6 in a voice vote. The Bill seeks to regulate property transactions in areas that the government declares as "disturbed". However, the legislation has sparked debate over its constitutional validity, potential misuse, and its broader social and economic implications.

What does the Bill propose?

Under the proposed law, Section 3(1,2) states that the State government may declare any area within the State as a 'disturbed area' if it considers that communal violence, riots, or public disorder exist or are likely to occur.

According to Section 5(1,2), once a locality is notified, any transfer of immovable property, including land, houses or commercial establishments, would require prior approval from the

District Magistrate or Collector. This restriction applies to transfers by sale, gift, exchange, lease, etc. Property transactions carried out without such permission would be treated as legally invalid. Section 7 empowers the District Magistrate or Collector to conduct an inquiry to determine whether the proposed transfer is voluntary and genuine, or whether it involves coercion, intimidation or a distress sale.

Under Section 9, the law also provides penalties for property transfers carried out without the required permission. Section 10 includes provisions aimed at protecting tenants from forced or unlawful eviction in such sensitive areas. Violations of the Act (Section 12) are treated as cognisable and non-bailable offences, punishable with three to five years of imprisonment and a fine.

How does the Gujarat model compare?

The Rajasthan Bill draws comparisons with the Gujarat Disturbed Areas Act, which has its origins in a 1986 ordinance passed after severe communal riots in

Ahmedabad. The law was first enacted in 1991. It was later strengthened through amendments in 2020. The law was introduced to prevent distress sales of property by minorities who, after repeated communal riots in cities such as Ahmedabad and Vadodara, felt compelled to leave their neighbourhoods and sell property at low prices.

In Ahmedabad, a large share of the Muslim population is concentrated in Juhapura, often described as the largest Muslim ghetto in western Ahmedabad, limiting the community's geographical spread. In the context of the 2020 amendments, the then Chief Minister Vijay Rupani said publicly that the intent of the law was to ensure that Hindus and Muslims remain within their own areas and do not exchange property."

What are the legal and constitutional implications?

Even though the right to property was removed as a fundamental right by the 44th Amendment to the Constitution in 1978, it remains protected under Article 300A, which states that no person can be

deprived of property except by authority of law. The proposed legislation provides such authority by requiring government approval before property in notified "disturbed areas" can be transferred.

The Bill has also drawn attention in relation to Article 14, which guarantees equality before the law. Legal observers note that if the provisions disproportionately affect certain neighbourhoods or communities, the law could face scrutiny on grounds of arbitrary classification or discrimination.

What are the Opposition's concerns?

Congress questioned the Bill's communal bias. Moreover, real estate transactions in notified areas could slow down because each transfer would require administrative approval from district authorities. They also point out that vague terms such as "disturbed area" or "demographic imbalance" may leave room for broad administrative discretion. There are also concerns about the arbitrary classification of disturbed areas, the ghettoisation of communities, potential discrimination in government services, and the distortion of representation. As a result, the policy, though intended to prevent forced displacement, has been criticised for institutionalising residential separation and communal polarisation, while reinforcing existing communal boundaries in housing markets rather than promoting integration. (Saeed Pande is a freelance writer with a focus on politics, current affairs, international relations, and geopolitics)

THE GIST

▼
The Rajasthan Legislative Assembly has passed the Rajasthan Prohibition of Transfer of Immovable Property in Disturbed Areas Bill to regulate property transactions in areas declared 'disturbed'.

▼
While the government says the law will provide administrative oversight and prevent coercion or distress sales, critics warn it could increase bureaucratic oversight, allow arbitrary classification of disturbed areas, and reinforce communal segregation in housing markets.

General Studies – III (Technology, Economic Development, Bio-Diversity, Environment, Security & Disaster Management)

1. Building India's climate resilience with water at the core – 8

Building India's climate resilience with water at the core

Branded the “COP of Implementation,” COP 30, the 30th session of the United Nations Climate Change Conference, held in Belém, Brazil, in November 2025, marked a decisive shift in how adaptation is understood – not as an abstract promise of resilience, but as a measurable, accountable discipline grounded in systems that function under stress. At the centre of this shift is “water”, moving from the margins of infrastructure planning to the core of climate survival. For the first time, global adaptation indicators integrated water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) into climate accountability, reshaping the water-food-climate nexus with implications for all countries, including India.

Climate change felt through water

Climate change is experienced most viscerally through water. Floods submerge cities, droughts hollow out rural economies, glacial melt destabilises Himalayan river systems, saline intrusion contaminates coastal aquifers, and erratic monsoons disrupt food security. Agriculture alone accounts for roughly 40% of anthropogenic methane emissions, with rice cultivation, livestock systems, and organic waste at the centre of the challenge. So, water use efficiency, wastewater reuse, aquifer recharge, and resilient sanitation systems are now climate strategies as much as development priorities.

The 59 Belém Adaptation Indicators, under the UAE Framework for Global Climate Resilience, signal a new discipline in global governance. Two clusters stand out. The first focuses on climate-resilient water and sanitation systems: reducing climate-induced water scarcity, building resilience to floods and droughts, ensuring universal access to safe drinking water, and upgrading sanitation infrastructure to withstand extreme events. The second emphasises risk governance: universal multi-hazard early warning systems by 2027, strengthened hydrometeorological services, and updated national vulnerability assessments by 2030. Water security is no longer about asset creation; it



Girija K. Bharat

is Managing Director of Mu Gamma Consultants, Gurgaon



S.K. Sarkar

is Senior Advisor, TERI, New Delhi and a former Secretary, Ministry of Water Resources, Government of India

Guided by the Belém indicators, India can set an example for the Global South by making water systems resilient

is about whether systems continue to deliver when climate stress intensifies.

Not starting from scratch

India is building on existing foundations. The consolidation, in 2019, of water governance under the Ministry of Jal Shakti marked a shift toward integrated stewardship, while the Water Vision 2047 aligns with Belém's adaptation framework, emphasising sustainability, equity, and resilience.

Groundwater management illustrates this transition. The evolution of the National Aquifer Mapping and Management (NAQUIM) Programme 2.0 has moved from mapping aquifers to implementing aquifer-level management plans (hydrogeological knowledge to policy action), exemplifying the systems integration that global adaptation indicators now require.

River rejuvenation tells a similar story. The National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) has moved beyond sewage treatment to integrate biodiversity, digital monitoring, and international collaboration, making clean rivers a buffer against climate volatility.

Despite visible progress, three systemic risks threaten to slow momentum. First, water scarcity remains acute and unevenly distributed. Most climate disasters in India are water-related, and WASH systems often serve as the first line of defence. Ensuring rural and urban water supply during floods or prolonged droughts would require climate stress testing of infrastructure, diversification of sources, and redundancy in service delivery – not simply expanding coverage figures.

Second, adaptation finance remains fragile. While global rhetoric speaks of mobilising \$1.3 trillion annually by 2035, operational pathways remain uncertain. Without predictable and accessible flows of adaptation finance, post-disaster recovery will crowd out long-term resilience planning. Water projects need explicit classification and funding as climate investments, not mere sectoral costs.

Third, digital fragmentation persists. Despite India's vast hydrological and meteorological data, an Artificial Intelligence-driven real-time integration into planning, budgeting, and local governance systems remains limited.

A closer look at India's institutional landscape reveals that most global adaptation targets already have corresponding domestic missions. Drinking water coverage, sanitation expansion, irrigation efficiency, urban water reforms, and climate action plans exist across Ministries and States. Climate stress indicators must be embedded into mission dashboards.

Belém calls for convergence, not reinvention. India's strength in digital public infrastructure offers an opportunity to integrate hydrological data, crop advisories, insurance and financial flows into interoperable platforms for real-time decision-making.

Belém indicators guide climate survival

The Belém indicators are not a bureaucratic checklist; they are a dashboard for survival. If implemented with seriousness, they can transform adaptation from a peripheral conversation into the organising principle of development strategy. India stands at a pivotal moment. Its domestic water reforms, technological capabilities, and community-led initiatives position it not just as a participant in global climate negotiations but also as a potential leader in operationalising adaptation at scale.

Water must anchor climate action. Implementation must be swift, equitable, and technologically robust. Resilience should be measured not by infrastructure built, but by systems that continue to serve people when the next flood arrives, when the next drought lingers, and when the next climate shock tests the nation's preparedness. India has much of the blueprint in place. India should align its missions, metrics and money quickly enough to convert ambition into measurable resilience – and in doing so, lead the Global South by its exemplary performance.

2. What makes some locations on Google Maps look blurry or difficult to navigate? – 11

What makes some locations on Google Maps look blurry or difficult to navigate?

Several countries resist being clearly mapped on Google Maps because they fear that detailed satellite imagery could lead to the targeting of critical infrastructure or planning for potential attacks; better quality satellite and mapping data make navigation easier and safer for users

Sahana Venugopal

The experience of using Google Maps is different in certain locations. While you may get turn-by-turn driving instructions and street-level views with the tap of your finger in several countries, other locations may look blurry and are difficult to navigate by road. A user's Google Maps experience is often linked to regulations in particular countries that curtail the use of satellite imaging and geographic surveys. This raises a set of questions about security and transparency.

Which countries resist being mapped, and why?

Several countries that have hostile relations with their neighbours or militant groups tend to resist being clearly mapped on Google's navigation system. They fear that making detailed satellite imagery of their land easily available to users could lead to the targeting of critical infrastructure or planning for potential attacks.

Countries like India, Israel, and South Korea have, over time, changed their tone on mapping. And these changes date back to a couple of decades earlier.

For instance, in 2007, the BBC reported that India had asked Google to lower the level of detail in some Google Earth images, for security reasons. Nearly a decade later, in 2016, India resisted Google's request for ground-level photographs for its Street View offering. Street View only returned to the country in 2022. But, in late 2025, Google announced that it was boosting its Maps service with Gemini AI, allowing people to get personalised travel advice and ask questions. The company noted then that it had data for about 35 million places in India.

Israel is another country that poses a quandary to Google Maps users. Zoom

lightly into multiple parts of Israel and you are likely to be met by extremely blurry houses and out-of-focus manmade structures, or blurred out areas adjoined to far more discernible zones. Near Gaza, however, users can zoom in to clearly see the devastating aftermath of Israel's military action, such as the detailed rubble of the ruined Jabalia refugee camp market.

Israel's blurriness in Google Maps was previously due to a U.S. law known as the Kyl-Bingaman Amendment, which restricted the clarity of satellite images that show Israel and areas surrounding it. Enforced in 1997, it stipulated a resolution limit of two metres in Ground Sampling Distance (GSD), which measures how on-screen pixels translate to actual distances on the ground. In other words, a higher GSD value yields a less detailed and more blurry map, because less data is captured.

In July 2020, however, the U.S. Commerce Department published a Federal Register notice acknowledging that satellite imagery of Israel was available through other sources at a better resolution.

"The Department has therefore changed the existing resolution limit of 2.0 m GSD to 0.4 m GSD for U.S.-licensed satellite imaging of Israel," stated the notice. In essence, this meant more detailed data for satellite imagery—and a clearer look at Israel on the map.

Amnon Harari, who was the head of space programmes at Israel's Defence Ministry, was quoted by Reuters that month as saying that it was "always preferable to be seen blurred, rather than precisely."

Despite the change in regulations, multiple locations in Israel are still blurred on Google Maps, though not necessarily on other mapping/navigation platforms.

Several other countries have blurred out specific areas or particular landmarks

on Google Maps, largely for security reasons, such as Interpol in France. On the other hand, entire patches of central Greenland and Antarctica are also difficult to explore in detail on Google Maps, with reasons for this including their climate.

South Korea, meanwhile, has pushed back against Google's requests for better map data. In a translated statement from last year, the company noted that international tourists faced "great inconvenience upon entering the country," claiming that the directions function of Google Maps was not available in Korea. Travellers instead use a local offering like Naver, which is restricted to showing South/North Korea and parts of their neighbouring countries. However, Google claimed that it was only requesting "safe" data, or a "national basic map" on a scale of 1:5000.

Finally, after years of dialogue and negotiations, Google claimed its victory. In late February, it was announced that the internet giant would be allowed to export high-precision map data to servers located overseas.

Google's Vice President Cris Turner said the company looked forward to bringing a "fully functioning Google Maps to Korea," per media statements. However, Korea's government expects Google to fulfil its security conditions, such as blurring sensitive facilities, and not fully revealing the longitude and latitude coordinates for South Korean territory, reported Reuters. This easing of restrictions was a condition that the Trump administration had reportedly pushed for, per media outlets.

How does greater mapping freedom affect Google and its users?

Google has explained that it uses techniques, including photogrammetry, to create its satellite-view of Maps, or a process where it puts together (satellite) imagery sourced from external providers. These include state agencies, geological

survey organisations and commercial imagery providers, according to a Google blogpost from 2020.

From the company's perspective, better quality data of popular, frequently visited places – such as South Korea – makes navigation easier and safer for those using Google Maps in such locations. Accurate satellite data also plays a crucial role in journalism and activism; images of Gaza rubble from multiple platforms were used to raise international awareness about Israel's widespread bombing of civilian homes, even as the country insisted that it was targeting Hamas with precision.

Widening access to high-quality, verifiable satellite imagery is also helpful when detecting falsified images. Take the case of a satellite image published by *Tehran Times*, which claimed to show a destroyed U.S. base in Qatar, during the U.S.-Iran war this month. However, researchers soon identified this as an AI-edited fake image.

When Google Maps can obtain better satellite/mapping data, there is a definite benefit for its business as well. Once key cities and international hubs are mapped out in detail, this can ease the way for Google parent Alphabet to potentially deploy its Waymo robotaxis there while using its own navigational data, rather than depending on a third-party navigation company's technology.

However, some South Korean experts have raised antitrust concerns, noting that Google's enhanced access to Korea's map data could make it harder for local companies like Naver to compete and hold their own against an international giant.

As Google continues to juggle the navigational needs of billions of users with the security requests of their governments, the integrity of satellite images on Maps is not just a technology challenge, but an urgent geopolitical issue.

3. Diversify agriculture, encourage farmers to grow pulses: SC to government – 12

Diversify agriculture, encourage farmers to grow pulses: SC to govt.

Court tells Centre to revisit policy framework, convene a stakeholders' meeting to look into various issues, including absence of MSP for pulses

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has asked the Union government to revisit its existing policy framework and explore a better substitute under which farmers are incentivised to diversify from conventional crops such as wheat and paddy to pulses.

Besides a relook into policy and diversification of crops, the court asked the Centre to convene a meeting of different stakeholders to look into various issues.

These include the absence of an incentivised minimum support price (MSP), sufficient enough to cover the expenditure that small or medium level farmers incur in producing pulses; guaranteed timely sale of pulse products; and fixation of the cost price of yellow peas, which are currently being imported, so that it does not impact the home-grown pulses produced by farmers.

A Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya



Supreme Court of India

Kant said the Centre, through its Ministries of Agriculture, Commerce and Consumer Affairs, and with the aid of subject experts with ground knowledge, mould a framework which would make pulse cultivation worthwhile for farmers.

Constitute panels

“There should be a campaign to diversify agriculture. Diversification of paddy is the biggest challenge in North India... Do we require such a quantity of paddy? We may need for export purposes, but land can also be diverted for pulses. Please ask your Mi-

nistries to constitute a committee of people ... somebody who has worked at the ground level, who knows the psyche and compelling circumstances that drive the farming community,” Chief Justice Kant addressed Additional Solicitor-General N. Venkataraman, appearing for the Centre.

The court was hearing a petition filed by Kisan Mahapanchayat, an NGO, seeking curbs on the import of yellow peas.

Mr. Venkataraman submitted that there had been a steep decline in the production of pulses from 273 lakh tonnes in 2021-2022 to 242 lakh tonnes in 2023-2024 following a disease, which had led the Ministries to import yellow peas.

Chief Justice Kant said the government should realise the real problem lay in the lack of a guaranteed MSP for pulses. “You have MSP for wheat, rice paddy, millets. You have to make sure farmers would get a guaranteed price,” the Chief Justice addressed Mr. Venkataraman.

4. UPSC's new rule: SC nod must for delay in choosing State DGPs – 14

UPSC's new rule: SC nod must for delay in choosing State DGPs

Attorney-General says that there is no provision for UPSC to condone such inordinate delay and proceed as if no irregularity had occurred

S. Vijay Kumar
CHENNAI

The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) has revised the rules for the empanelment of State Director-General of Police and Head of Police Force.

The State governments will now have to get the consent of the Supreme Court for any delay in submitting the list of DGP-rank officers to the UPSC for empanelment.

While disposing of an interlocutory application moved by the Union Home Ministry, the Supreme Court had ruled that States should send their proposals in anticipation of the vacancies to the UPSC well in time – at least three months prior to the date of retirement of the incumbent on the post of DGP.

It also ordered that “none of the States shall ever conceive of the idea of appointing any person on the post of Director-General of Police on acting basis for there is no concept of acting Director-General of Police as per the decision in Prakash Singh's case”.

With many States delaying the process of sending



The UPSC has revised the rules for the empanelment of State Director-General of Police and Head of Police Force. GETTY IMAGES

proposals for shortlisting the names of three DGPs to the top post for various reasons and some appointing Acting DGPs, the UPSC sought legal opinion in the matter.

The UPSC said “it is observed that many States have been submitting the proposals for convening the Empanelment Committee Meeting in violation of the Supreme Court directions”.

Attorney-General R. Venkataramani opined that the delay by the State government in forwarding names for empanelment was “excessive”.

“On examining the applicable rules and precedents, I find no provision empowering the UPSC to

condone such inordinate delay and then proceed as though no irregularity had occurred, ultimately recommending a panel of DGP,” he said.

The State government should have first come to Supreme Court in case of any difficulty. The more appropriate course, therefore, would be to require the State to seek leave or clarification from the Supreme Court, he noted.

Amending its earlier orders, the UPSC said the States shall seek leave or clarification from the Supreme Court for delayed submission except death, resignation or premature relieving of DGP in accordance with the top court judgment.