

# The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE

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India–U.S. relations have evolved into a comprehensive global strategic partnership rooted in shared democratic values, converging strategic interests, and robust people-to-people ties. However, the recent imposition of additional tariffs by the U.S., under President Donald Trump's administration, citing India's purchase of Russian oil, has introduced friction into the otherwise steady trajectory of ties.

- The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) is poised to brief the Parliamentary Committee on External Affairs, highlighting the "flawed assumptions" underlying U.S. decisions and reaffirming India's commitment to constructive engagement.

# External Affairs Ministry set to brief House panel on India-U.S. relationship

The Ministry is expected to tell the panel that the imposition of additional tariffs by Trump is a result of 'flawed assumptions' and that India remains 'committed to engaging constructively' through 'dialogue and mutual respect'; it will also highlight the bipartisan nature of India-U.S. relationship

**Suhasini Haidar**  
**Kallol Bhattacharjee**  
NEW DELHI

U.S. President Donald Trump's imposition of additional tariffs on India is a result of "flawed assumptions" and New Delhi is being dragged into a geopolitical tug of war in which it does not intend to participate, officials of the External Affairs Ministry are poised to tell the Parliamentary Committee on External Affairs on Monday.

The officials may also highlight the bipartisan nature of India-U.S. relationship and argue that ties prospered under "both BJP and Congress-led governments".

The meeting of the Committee on External Affairs is being convened after the U.S. administration

cited India's purchase of Russian oil as a trigger for additional tariffs.

## Pragmatic approach

The Ministry's team at the meeting is expected to have a pragmatic approach to the latest challenges to the relation and inform the MPs that despite difficulties, India remains "committed to engaging constructively" with the United States about the issues through "dialogue and mutual respect".

It is learned that the committee will be told that the U.S. decisions do not "reflect the realities of global energy markets or India's sovereign choices" and that India considers the tariffs as "unilateral, punitive measures" that hurt global trade norms.

The official team from the Ministry is expected to



**Friendly terms:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi with U.S. President Donald Trump during a meeting at the White House in February. PTI

provide the Indian assessment of the motivation behind the U.S. President's actions. Officials believe that the White House regards Russia's military campaign against Ukraine as an "ongoing threat to

U.S. national security and foreign policy" that requires "strengthened measures".

## 'Double standards'

Prior to the Executive Order signed by Mr. Trump

on August 6, 2025, India and the U.S. had been in negotiations for a "fair, balanced and mutually beneficial bilateral trade agreement".

The Ministry is expected to tell the MPs about what is perceived as "double standards" in the U.S. policy regarding trade with Russia.

The committee will also receive a detailed presentation on the historical nature of India-U.S. relation with an emphasis on "shared democratic values, open societies, converging strategic and economic interests and robust people to people ties".

Officials are likely to provide an overview of the "bipartisan" nature of the relationship and how under both BJP and Congress-led governments the relation has been nurtured and

"deepened". Similar consensus between the Republicans and the Democrats in the U.S. are also expected to be in focus during the discussion.

The members are also likely to hear about the support Mr. Trump has provided to India's core concern of cross-border terrorism from Pakistan, especially after the April 22 terrorist attack in Pahalgam. In this regard, the U.S. President's approval of extradition of 26/11 attack-linked Tahawwur Rana to India is also likely to be part of the presentation.

A similar mention of the declaration of The Resistance Front (TRF) as a Foreign Terrorist Organisation (FTO) and Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT) is expected during the discussion in the committee.

## Key Developments

- Trigger for Tariffs: U.S. alleges India's Russian oil imports undermine its sanctions regime linked to the Ukraine conflict.
- Indian Position:

## Daily News Analysis

- Tariffs viewed as unilateral and punitive.
- Decisions “do not reflect global energy realities” or India’s sovereign choices.
- India unwilling to be drawn into geopolitical tug-of-war.
- Bipartisan Nature of Ties: MEA to underline that relations have prospered under both BJP and Congress-led governments, and similarly under both Republican and Democratic U.S. administrations.
- Accusations of Double Standards: U.S. approach to Russia-related trade seen as inconsistent, with selective enforcement against partners.

### Strategic and Economic Context

#### 1. Trade and Economic Cooperation:

- Negotiations for a fair and balanced trade agreement were ongoing before the August 6, 2025 tariff order.
- Tariff escalation may impact bilateral trade, supply chains, and investment flows.

#### 2. Geopolitical Considerations:

- U.S. sees Russia’s Ukraine campaign as a national security threat; India emphasizes strategic autonomy and diversified energy sourcing.
- Balancing relations with multiple power centres remains a hallmark of India’s foreign policy.

#### 3. Security and Counterterrorism Cooperation:

- U.S. support for India’s concerns on Pakistan-based terrorism remains intact.
- Positive steps include approval for the extradition of Tahawwur Rana and designation of The Resistance Front as an FTO and SDGT.

### Implications for India–U.S. Relations

- Short-term friction over trade could be mitigated by high-level dialogue.
- Long-term convergence in strategic, defence, and technology cooperation remains likely, given bipartisan political support in both nations.
- Managing differences without derailing broader cooperation is key for minilateral and multilateral engagements like QUAD and I2U2.

### Conclusion

The present tariff episode underscores the complexity of India–U.S. relations—marked by both strategic convergence and policy divergences. While unilateral U.S. measures challenge India’s trade and energy policies, the bipartisan nature of the partnership, mutual security concerns, and shared democratic values provide a resilient foundation. The way forward lies in pragmatic diplomacy—maintaining dialogue, protecting national interests, and strengthening cooperation in areas of mutual benefit despite episodic disagreements.

### UPSC Prelims Practice Question

**Ques: Consider the following statements:**

1. The recent additional tariffs imposed by the U.S. on India are primarily due to India's purchase of Russian oil.
2. India-U.S. relations have strengthened only during Republican administrations in the U.S.
3. India has declared The Resistance Front (TRF) as a Foreign Terrorist Organisation (FTO).

**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

- (A) 1 only
- (B) 1 and 3 only
- (C) 2 and 3 only
- (D) 1, 2 and 3

**Ans: (B)**

### UPSC Mains Practice Question

**Ques:** India-U.S. relations reflect both strategic convergence and policy divergences. Examine this statement in the context of the recent U.S. tariff policy. **(150 Words)**



India's trade relations with ASEAN, governed by the ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA) signed in 2009, are under review as officials from both sides meet in New Delhi from August 11-14, 2025. The talks gain urgency in the backdrop of recent U.S. tariff hikes on Indian goods and India's widening trade deficit with ASEAN, prompting a push for recalibrating trade terms to address market access asymmetries.

# Indian, ASEAN officials to begin fresh round of talks to review trade agreement today

**Suhasini Haidar**  
**T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan**  
NEW DELHI

As India braces for the impact of U.S. tariffs of 25% that went into effect from August 7, the government is seeking to shore up other trade negotiations, including with ASEAN countries beginning on Monday in New Delhi.

A delegation of the 10-nation ASEAN, or the Association of South East Asian Nations, will meet Commerce Ministry officials from August 11 to 14, sources confirmed, for the next round of talks on a review of the ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA). The talks come two months after Commerce and Industries Minister Piyush Goyal called the 2009 agreement "silly" as it gave India's Asian competitors easy access to its markets, a comment that led to speculation that India was planning to pull out of the agreement. The comment



Malaysian PM Anwar Ibrahim, left, greets ASEAN Secretary-General Kao Kim Hourn at the ASEAN Headquarters in Jakarta. AP

also caused some outrage among ASEAN members, as he referred to them as the "B-team of China", referring to India's concerns over Chinese goods flooding the market via these countries.

However, in July, after a meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Malaysian counterpart, Anwar Ibrahim, who is chairing the ASEAN Summit this year, as well as a meeting between Mr. Goyal and Malaysian Minis-

ter for Investment, Trade and Industry Tzafrul Aziz, the two sides agreed to "fast-track" the AITIGA review to be completed by the end of this year. In addition, officials are preparing for a possible visit by Mr. Modi to Kuala Lumpur for the ASEAN-India Summit and East Asia Summit, at the end of October. On Friday, Mr. Ibrahim announced that he "looks forward to welcoming" ASEAN leaders and dialogue partners, inclu-

ding U.S. President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping, although China normally attends ASEAN Summits at the level of Premier.

## U.S. tariffs loom large

The push for a quick end to AITIGA review talks, among a number of other trade agreement negotiations the government is pursuing with the European Union, Australia, and New Zealand, has been given further impetus by the imposition of 25% additional penalties on India by the U.S. last week.

Sources said that although nine rounds of talks in the past year with ASEAN officials have not produced a breakthrough yet, they are hopeful of some movement this week. "We are trying to address the fact that, under the existing deal, our imports have grown far in excess of our exports to these countries," a source said.

Data with the Com-

merce and Industry Ministry show the trade balance between India and ASEAN has been turning increasingly unfavourable for India. In 2017-18, the earliest year for which the Ministry has made data available, India's exports to the ASEAN countries stood at \$34.2 billion while imports were \$47.1 billion, leading to a trade deficit of \$12.9 billion. As of 2024-25, India's exports to the ASEAN countries had grown at an average annual rate of 1.7%, to \$39 billion, while imports had grown at 7.5% on average every year, to \$84.2 billion. As a result, the trade deficit had swelled to \$45.2 billion.

ASEAN countries comprising Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam also led the effort for the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, a 15-nation FTA, which India walked out of in 2019.

## Background

- **AITIGA Signed (2009):** Provided preferential access, reducing tariffs on a large number of goods.
- **Criticism:** Indian industry and policymakers argue it disproportionately benefits ASEAN, enabling indirect Chinese goods entry.

## Daily News Analysis

- **Recent Political Context:**

- Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal's "B-team of China" remark in June raised tensions.
- Diplomatic reset followed in July via meetings between PM Modi and Malaysian PM Anwar Ibrahim, and ministerial-level talks.
- Agreement to "fast-track" review by end of 2025.

### Current Trade Scenario

- **Trade Imbalance:**

- 2017–18: Exports \$34.2 bn; imports \$47.1 bn; deficit \$12.9 bn.
- 2024–25: Exports \$39 bn (+1.7% CAGR); imports \$84.2 bn (+7.5% CAGR); deficit \$45.2 bn.

- **Structural Issues:**

- Limited diversification of India's export basket.
- Non-tariff barriers and Rules of Origin loopholes enabling third-country imports.

### Strategic and Economic Significance

1. **Diversification Post-U.S. Tariffs:** With 25% additional U.S. duties in force from Aug 7, ASEAN markets gain importance as alternative export destinations.
2. **Geoeconomic Positioning:** ASEAN is central to Indo-Pacific strategy, connecting India's Act East Policy with supply chain diversification.
3. **Balancing RCEP Exit:** India's 2019 withdrawal from RCEP necessitates strengthening other regional FTAs to avoid marginalisation in Asia-Pacific trade architecture.

### Challenges in Negotiations

- **ASEAN Sensitivities:** Earlier remarks strained trust; diplomatic handling is essential.
- **Divergent Interests:** ASEAN seeks to preserve tariff concessions; India demands stricter Rules of Origin and safeguards against import surges.
- **Competitiveness Gap:** India's manufacturing and logistics constraints vis-à-vis ASEAN peers.

### Way Forward

- **Revised Rules of Origin:** To curb trans-shipment of non-ASEAN goods (esp. Chinese).
- **Balanced Tariff Reductions:** Protecting sensitive sectors like agriculture, steel, electronics.
- **Export Promotion Measures:** Targeted incentives, market intelligence, and trade facilitation for ASEAN-specific demand.
- **Deepening Strategic Ties:** Linking trade talks with cooperation in digital economy, resilient supply chains, and maritime security.

### Conclusion

The AITIGA review is a test case for India's ability to renegotiate trade pacts to correct structural imbalances while maintaining strategic goodwill. With ASEAN central to both economic and Indo-Pacific security frameworks, a calibrated mix of assertive trade diplomacy and cooperative engagement can turn the deficit-laden partnership into a mutually beneficial growth engine—especially crucial as India navigates a shifting global trade order marked by U.S. protectionism and China's assertive regional presence.

### UPSC Prelims Practice Question

**Ques: Which of the following statements is/are correct?**

1. The ASEAN–India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA) was signed in 2015.
2. All 10 ASEAN member states are also part of the RCEP.
3. India decided to withdraw from the RCEP negotiations in 2019.

**Select the correct answer using the code given below:**

- (A) 1 and 2 only  
(B) 2 and 3 only  
(C) 1 and 3 only  
(D) 1, 2 and 3

**Ans: (B)**

### UPSC Mains Practice Question

**Ques:** In the context of the review of the ASEAN–India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA), discuss the major reasons behind the trade imbalance between India and ASEAN, and suggest strategies to address it. **(150 Words)**

Quantum computing is expected to solve problems far beyond the capacity of classical computers, especially in cryptography, material science, and complex simulations. A key challenge in building practical quantum systems is creating large, defect-free arrays of qubits. Recently, Chinese researchers reported a major advance by using artificial intelligence (AI) to rapidly and reliably assemble large arrays of neutral atom qubits using laser-based optical tweezers.

### Background

- **Qubits:** Fundamental units of quantum information, capable of existing in superposition states.
- **Neutral Atom Qubits:** Atoms like rubidium, trapped and manipulated using highly focused laser beams ("optical tweezers").
- **Problem:** Atoms load into traps randomly, often leaving vacant sites; moving atoms one by one is slow and error-prone.

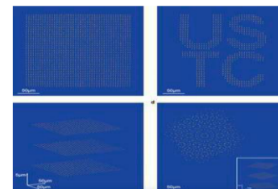
### Key Innovation

- **AI-Driven Assembly:**
  - Used a convolutional neural network (CNN) trained on simulated holograms.
  - Implemented the Hungarian algorithm to optimally map loaded atoms to target positions with minimal travel distance.
- **Multi-Step Movement:** Atoms moved in ~20 small steps to avoid heating and loss.
- **Laser Holograms:** Generated in real-time to control both position and phase of light, reducing disturbances.
- **Scalability:** Rearrangement time (~60 milliseconds) remains constant for 1,000–10,000 atoms.

### Significance

1. **Scalability:** Demonstrated defect-free 2D arrays of up to 2,024 atoms—much larger than typical lab experiments.
2. **Speed:** Orders of magnitude faster than traditional stepwise assembly methods.
3. **Error Reduction:** Smooth, simultaneous atom movement minimizes loss, essential for quantum error correction.
4. **Path to Complex Architectures:** Enables creation of 3D and patterned arrays for specific quantum simulation tasks.

### Applications



Clockwise from top-left: nearly defect-free 2D square array with 2,024 atoms; 2D pattern of the letters 'U' and 'C' with 723 atoms; trilayer cuboid array with 1,077 atoms; trilayer twisted graphene structure with 752 atoms. ARXIV:2412.14647

### *In a shot for quantum computing, AI shepherds qubits with lasers*

Vasudevan Mukunth

Quantum computing holds the promise to revolutionise science and technology by solving problems currently beyond the limits of classical computers. A critical step to building practical quantum computers is assembling large arrays of qubits — or quantum bits — with no defects. On August 8, researchers from China reported significant progress on this front by developing a way to rapidly and reliably create large arrays of neutral atoms. Their findings were published in *Physical Review Letters*.

Neutral atoms, like rubidium atoms, can be trapped and controlled by small laser beams called optical tweezers. These atoms serve as qubits for quantum computing and simulations. Creating arrays with thousands of atoms positioned precisely is vital because it allows for complex quantum operations and error correction. However, placing atoms perfectly in large arrays is a major challenge because atoms are loaded randomly and often with missing sites. Traditionally, strategies to assemble defect-free arrays involve moving atoms one by one or row by row using movable optical tweezers. This process takes longer with the number of atoms.

**The AI model generated a hologram with the optical tweezers that moved all atoms simultaneously. The hologram also controlled where each atom moved and the phase of the light**

The new work has reported overcoming this challenge using artificial intelligence (AI). The AI model quickly calculated the best way to move thousands of atoms simultaneously with precise control of their positions and phases using laser holograms. The process began with an initially random array, where some sites were occupied by single atoms. Then, using an algorithm known as the Hungarian algorithm, the AI found the ideal pairing between loaded atoms and the target positions, minimising the total distance atoms needed to move while avoiding collisions.

Instead of moving atoms directly in one step, each movement was split into about 20 small steps to prevent heating and atom loss.

At each step, the AI model generated a hologram with the optical tweezers that moved all atoms simultaneously and smoothly.

This hologram also precisely controlled both where each atom moved and the phase of the light, which is crucial to avoid disturbances.

In this method, the total time to rearrange atoms was roughly the same no matter if the array had 1,000 atoms or 10,000 atoms.

In their experiments, the scientists assembled two-dimensional arrays of up to 2,024 atoms free of any defects in about 60 milliseconds, substantially faster and more scalable than previous methods.

The AI model was a convolutional neural network that had been trained on simulated laser holograms. It could quickly produce highly accurate holograms that guided the atoms in smooth movements with minimal loss. [mukunth.v@thehindu.co.in](mailto:mukunth.v@thehindu.co.in)



## Daily News Analysis

- **Quantum Simulation:** Modelling complex materials and chemical reactions.
- **Quantum Error Correction:** Larger, defect-free arrays are crucial for redundancy and reliability.
- **Fundamental Physics:** Testing quantum many-body dynamics.
- **Secure Communication:** Integration into quantum networks for cryptography.

### Challenges Ahead

- **Decoherence:** Qubits remain sensitive to environmental noise.
- **Integration:** Linking these arrays into operational quantum processors.
- **Hardware Complexity:** Scaling to millions of qubits will require further breakthroughs in control electronics and optical systems.

### Conclusion

This AI-guided neutral atom assembly marks a leap toward practical, large-scale quantum computers. By combining precise laser control with intelligent algorithms, researchers have addressed one of the most persistent bottlenecks in the field—fast, scalable creation of defect-free qubit arrays. Such innovations strengthen the technological race in quantum computing, with implications for computing power, national security, and global scientific competitiveness.

### UPSC Prelims Practice Question

**Ques: With reference to neutral atom quantum computing, consider the following statements:**

1. Neutral atoms like rubidium can be trapped and manipulated using optical tweezers.
2. The Hungarian algorithm is used to find the optimal mapping of atoms to target positions.
3. Increasing the number of atoms in the array increases the total rearrangement time proportionally.

**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

- (A) 1 only  
(B) 1 and 2 only  
(C) 2 and 3 only  
(D) 1, 2 and 3

**Ans: (B)**

### UPSC Mains Practice Question

**Ques:** Discuss the recent advances in neutral atom-based quantum computing using artificial intelligence for defect-free qubit assembly. How can such innovations influence India's strategic and economic interests in emerging technologies? **(150 Words)**



Language has long been a politically sensitive and educationally significant issue in India. The recent decision of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka to reinforce or adopt a two-language formula—local language plus English—contrasts with the three-language policy promoted by the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The debate reflects deeper tensions between cultural identity, federalism, and practical needs of education in a globalised economy.

### Background

- **NEP 2020:** Advocates a three-language formula—local/regional language, Hindi, and another Indian/foreign language (often English).
- **Tamil Nadu:** Continues its long-standing two-language policy (Tamil + English).
- **Karnataka:** Commission recommends mother tongue/Kannada + English as compulsory, up to Class 5 as medium of instruction, preferably till Class 12.
- **Political Sensitivity:** Hindi promotion is often seen in non-Hindi states as an attempt at cultural imposition, triggering resistance.

### Key Issues in the Debate

#### 1. Medium of Instruction & Learning Outcomes

- Early education in mother tongue improves comprehension and retention.
- English proficiency is a strong demand across states, including in Hindi-speaking regions, due to economic and career opportunities.

#### 2. Federalism and Autonomy

- Education is in the Concurrent List, but states assert control over language policy in line with their socio-political context.
- Central push for Hindi can be perceived as encroachment on state rights.

#### 3. Developmental Priorities in Education

- Critical needs: public education quality, teacher training, curriculum modernisation, digital literacy, and inclusion of marginalised groups.
- Language disputes risk diverting attention and resources from these priorities.

#### 4. Equity and Inclusion

- Policies in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka include focus on first-generation learners, tribal students, and persons with disabilities.
- Local language plus English approach may better bridge socio-economic divides.

### Language lessons

The obsession with Hindi is diversion from the needs of school education

**T**amil Nadu and Karnataka are planning to implement a two-language formula for school education, as opposed to the push for a three-language policy in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Both States are inclined towards primacy for local languages, Tamil and Kannada, respectively, and then English in school education. Tamil Nadu has already unveiled its State Education Policy (SEP) while a commission has submitted its recommendations for Karnataka's SEP. Tamil Nadu has merely reiterated its existing two-language policy, but Karnataka is set to discontinue its three-language policy. The commission has proposed that Kannada or the child's mother tongue should be the medium of instruction up to Class 5, and preferably till Class 12. Kannada or whatever is the mother tongue and English will be the two compulsory languages. If implemented, this will replace the model that includes Hindi as a third compulsory language. Other recommendations include moving away from NCERT textbooks and developing a Karnataka-specific curriculum and bilingual teaching methods. The Tamil Nadu SEP, which was announced by Chief Minister M.K. Stalin recently, makes Tamil compulsory up to Class 10 across all boards. The NEP proposes a third language which should be Hindi or another Indian language, seen as an attempt to impose Hindi.

The Tamil Nadu SEP also commits to promote critical thinking, digital literacy, climate education, and social justice. Apart from a STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics) approach, the State also wants to offer special support for tribal students, first-generation learners, and students with disabilities. The government has pledged more support for public education. In fact, uniform high quality public education should be the biggest priority of school education policy for all States and the Centre. The Centre's ill-advised focus on language turns unproductive and controversial even though it does not insist on promoting Hindi on paper. The three-language policy is also in disregard for the demand for English language learning, and as a medium of instruction across States, including in the Hindi-speaking regions, and Gujarat and Maharashtra. Education policies have been a major driver of the development outcomes in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, and any attempt to forcibly alter them by central policies would do no good to anyone. Tamil Nadu is fighting for the release of ₹2,152 crore in education funds from the Centre that is rightfully its. There is no harm in learning Hindi or any other language, but when perceived as a political project of domination, its promotion causes resistance. The Centre must give up its language obduracy and focus on several critical challenges in school education. It must work with State governments to tackle them.

## Way Forward

- **Respect for Federal Diversity:** Let states decide language policies suited to local realities.
- **Multilingual Flexibility:** Encourage learning of multiple languages without making them compulsory through coercion.
- **Focus on Core Quality Issues:** Shift from political symbolism to strengthening infrastructure, pedagogy, and access.
- **Promote English & Regional Languages Together:** For both global competitiveness and preservation of linguistic heritage.

## Conclusion

Language policy must serve the twin goals of preserving cultural identity and empowering students for the future. While Hindi or any other language can be learned voluntarily, imposing it in education risks alienating states and undermining cooperative federalism. The Centre should work with states like Tamil Nadu and Karnataka to improve educational quality, leaving the choice of instructional language to local stakeholders.

## UPSC Prelims Practice Question

**Ques:** With reference to the language policies in Indian states, consider the following statements:

1. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 mandates Hindi as a compulsory subject in all schools across India.
2. Tamil Nadu follows a two-language formula in its State Education Policy.
3. Karnataka's State Education Policy commission has recommended Kannada or mother tongue as the medium of instruction up to at least Class 5.

**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

- (A) 1 and 2 only  
(B) 2 and 3 only  
(C) 1 and 3 only  
(D) 1, 2 and 3

**Ans: (B)**



**UPSC Mains Practice Question**

**Ques:** The obsession with language policy often distracts from the core needs of school education in India. Discuss in the context of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka's stance on the two-language formula. **(150 Words)**

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The Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project (KLIP) in Telangana, hailed as the world's largest multi-stage lift irrigation scheme, was envisioned to transform agriculture and water supply in the State. However, allegations of faulty design, cost escalation, and political unilateralism—coupled with structural failures—have turned it into a case study in infrastructure planning pitfalls. The recent judicial commission report has intensified the debate over accountability and prudent resource management.

# What is Telangana's Kaleshwaram project?

Where has the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project been built? Why was the location of the project suddenly shifted from Tummidihatti to Medigadda? Why did the piers of the Sundilla barrage sink? Who did the one-man judicial commission question regarding the project?

**EXPLAINER**

M. Rajeev

**The story so far:**

**T**he Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project (KLIP), billed as the lifeline of Telangana by the previous Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) government, is mired in controversies over the manner in which it has been executed. A barrage forming a major component of the project suffered damages within three years of its inauguration, while two others constructed upstream developed cracks resulting in the charge that the KLIP was a colossal waste of public money.

**What is the KLIP?**

The KLIP is a multi-purpose irrigation project on the Godavari river in Kaleshwaram of Bhupalpally in Telangana. Billed as the world's largest multi-stage irrigation project, Kaleshwaram's upstream influence is at the confluence of Pranahita and Godavari. It utilises a canal network of more than 1,800 km. The project was conceived by the BRS government, headed by K. Chandrasekhar Rao, to provide irrigation facilities to over 16 lakh acres in 13 districts of Telangana, besides stabilising the existing ayacut. It aims at storing and distributing 240 thousand million cubic feet (tmc ft) of Godavari water of which 169 tmc ft is proposed to be allocated for irrigation, 30 tmc ft for drinking water to Hyderabad, 16 tmc ft for miscellaneous and industrial uses and another 10 tmc ft for drinking water to villages en route.

**Where was it built?**

The government has constructed barrages across Godavari at Ramadugu, Medigadda, Sundilla and Annaram. The water is stored there to cater to drinking water and irrigation needs. The project was conceived at a cost of ₹71,000 crore initially. The cost escalated to close to over ₹1 lakh crore over a period of time.



**Bad planning:** Water levels of the Medigadda barrage of the Kaleshwaram project in 2024. FILE PHOTO

Finishing works is likely to take few more thousands of crores.

**What is the controversy?**

The project has been mired in controversies right from the beginning as the then government shifted the location from Tummidihatti to Medigadda even after reportedly receiving hydrology clearance for the former location. The shifting of the site was made on the pretext of non-availability of water at Tummidihatti, but an inquiry revealed that the Central Water Commission had estimated the water availability at Tummidihatti to be over 200 tmc ft.

A major allegation that has surfaced in the construction of the project was that the barrages were constructed on

permeable foundations rather than strong foundations that can withstand the inflow of heavy quantum of water. The shifting of location, from Tummidihatti to Medigadda, too came under criticism as almost 30% of the works at Pranahita Chevella Sujala Sravanti (PCSS) project, started in united Andhra Pradesh in 2008, at Tummidihatti costing over ₹11,000 crore were completed by then. Another major charge against the BRS Government was that the decision to go ahead with the project was taken solely by Mr. Chandrasekhar Rao. It was alleged that he had not obtained the consent of the State Cabinet before launching work on the project.

The faults in the Kaleshwaram project were exposed during the BRS regime

when the piers of the Sundilla barrage sunk, substantiating the claims that the barrage was constructed on permeable foundation. Two other barrages, Annaram and Sundilla, too developed cracks as the government impounded and stored huge quantities of water against technical advice.

**Was an inquiry ordered?**

The constitution of a judicial commission to probe the lapses in the Kaleshwaram project was an election promise of the Congress. Subsequently, Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy constituted a one-man judicial commission headed by Justice Pinaki Chandra Ghose for a thorough inquiry into the process. Justice Ghose examined over 110 witnesses during the course of his 15 month inquiry and those examined included former CM K. Chandrasekhar Rao, former Ministers T. Harish Rao (Irrigation) and Eatala Rajender (Finance) of BRS government, the latter especially for releasing funds adopting a "negligent and indifferent attitude". The judicial commission submitted its report on July 31, and subsequently the Telangana government decided to take up a discussion on the Kaleshwaram project in the legislature during the monsoon session. The government plans to explain the lapses to the people in detail and to elicit views of all political parties, including the BRS, on the future course of action.

**How has the BRS reacted?**

The BRS on its part appears to be guarded in its response to the accusations. Mr. Harish Rao, however, defended the project claiming that the project received approvals from several statutory bodies, including the CWC. It also had the approval of the Cabinet, the papers of which have not been revealed by the government. The project was also ratified by the Assembly when Chief Minister Chandrasekhar Rao had made a power point presentation, the first of its kind, on the Kaleshwaram project, elaborating on its salient features.

**THE GIST**

▼ The KLIP is a multi-purpose irrigation project on the Godavari river in Kaleshwaram of Bhupalpally in Telangana.

▼ A major allegation that has surfaced in the construction of the project was that the barrages were constructed on permeable foundations rather than strong foundations that can withstand the inflow of heavy quantum of water.

▼ The constitution of a judicial commission to probe the lapses in the Kaleshwaram project was an election promise of the Congress.

## Background

- **Location:** On the Godavari River, at Kaleshwaram (Bhupalpally district), near the confluence of the Pranahita and Godavari.
- **Objective:** Irrigate 16+ lakh acres across 13 districts, supply drinking water to Hyderabad & villages, and support industry.
- **Capacity:** Store and distribute 240 TMC ft—169 TMC ft for irrigation, 30 for Hyderabad drinking water, 10 for rural drinking water, and 16 for industrial/miscellaneous use.
- **Components:** Barrages at Medigadda, Annaram, Sundilla, Ramadugu, with over 1,800 km canal network.
- **Cost:** From ₹71,000 crore initial estimate to ₹1 lakh+ crore.

## Controversies & Issues

### 1. Shift of Location

- Originally at Tummidihatti (part of Pranahita-ChevellaSujalaSravanti project).
- Moved to Medigadda citing inadequate water availability, despite CWC estimating 200 TMC ft availability at Tummidihatti.
- Nearly ₹11,000 crore worth of work already completed at Tummidihatti rendered redundant.

### 2. Engineering & Structural Failures

- Sundilla barrage piers sank; Annaram&Sundilla developed cracks.
- Allegation: Built on permeable foundations instead of solid rock.
- Water impounding beyond technical advice aggravated damage.

### 3. Governance & Decision-Making

- Alleged unilateral decision-making by then CM K. Chandrasekhar Rao, bypassing full Cabinet consent.
- Former Finance Minister EatalaRajender accused of negligent fund releases.

### 4. Cost & Financial Oversight

- Massive escalation beyond original estimates.
- Questions over due diligence, DPR approval process, and prioritisation.

## Judicial Commission Inquiry

- Headed by Justice Pinaki Chandra Ghose.
- Examined 110+ witnesses including ex-CM KCR, ex-Irrigation Minister T. Harish Rao, and ex-Finance Minister EatalaRajender.
- Aimed at uncovering procedural lapses, structural faults, and fiscal irregularities.
- Report submitted 31 July 2024; Telangana govt to discuss in Monsoon Session and consult all parties on next steps.

## BRS Response

- Maintains that KLIP had CWC & statutory approvals, Cabinet sanction, and Assembly ratification (with CM's detailed presentation).

- Calls current accusations politically motivated.

## Way Forward

1. **Technical Audit:** Engage independent engineering experts to assess repair feasibility and redesign needs.
2. **Financial Accountability:** CAG & legislative committees to review expenditure patterns and sanction processes.
3. **Policy Reform:** Mandate multi-layered approvals and public disclosure for mega projects.
4. **Environmental Safeguards:** Incorporate long-term hydrological and soil studies before site selection.
5. **Political Consensus:** Large irrigation projects should have cross-party buy-in to ensure continuity and avoid perception of partisanship.

## Conclusion

The Kaleshwaram episode highlights the risks of haste, political unilateralism, and inadequate technical vetting in large-scale public infrastructure. While Telangana's irrigation needs are undeniable, sound engineering, fiscal discipline, and transparent governance are non-negotiable for sustainable water security. KLIP may remain a lesson in how mega projects can turn from lifelines to liabilities without robust planning and oversight.

## UPSC Prelims Practice Question

**Ques: Consider the following statements regarding the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project (KLIP):**

1. The project is located on the Godavari River, at the confluence of the Pranahita and Godavari rivers.
2. It is the world's largest multi-stage lift irrigation scheme.
3. The original location of the project was Medigadda, which was later shifted to Tummidihatti.

**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

- (A) 1 and 2 only  
(B) 2 and 3 only  
(C) 1 and 3 only  
(D) 1, 2 and 3

**Ans: (A)**



**UPSC Mains Practice Question**

**Ques:** The Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project (KLIP) has been considered an engineering achievement, but allegations regarding design flaws, cost escalation, and governance lapses have emerged. Review the causes and suggest measures to ensure accountability, transparency, and technical soundness in large infrastructure projects. (150 Words)

**Page : 08 Editorial Analysis**

*The difficult path for Trump's 'one big budget bet'*

**T**he most debated government downsizing reform that has been implemented in recent history has been the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) initiative under the Donald Trump administration in its second term. The initiative aims to reduce U.S. federal spending, deficit, debt and interest burden, streamline government operations, and enhance government efficiency. The initiative was much in the news with the appointment of Elon Musk, to advise and guide the government on the initiative, and his declaration that the overall goal is to achieve a leaner government by cutting the deficit and reducing the number of federal agencies from over 400 to 99.

**Root cause of deficit and debt**

The need for a smaller government was felt by the Trump administration due to enormous government spending and deficits. The size of the U.S. government, measured by public expenditure as a percentage of GDP, on average, was 36.49% from 2001 to 2024. Surprisingly, this was the smallest among the seven major advanced economies (MAE). France (56.53%) had the largest government, followed by Italy (49.81%), Germany (46.64%), Canada (41.24%), the United Kingdom (41.09%), and Japan (37.56%). The size of the government in the U.S. has remained the smallest among the MAE for most of the last 25 years.

Yet, overall fiscal balance and government debt have been higher in the U.S. when compared to the MAE. In the triennium ending (TE) 2024, the U.S. had a fiscal balance and debt burden of (-)6.0% and 119.5% of GDP, respectively, compared to the figures of (-)4.1% and 108.6%, respectively, for the MAE. The underlying reason is the lower revenue collection in the U.S. The total revenue of the U.S. government as a percentage of GDP on an average was the lowest (30.55%) during the period 2001-2022 compared to France (51.48%), Italy (45.93%), Germany (44.93%), Canada (39.92%), and the U.K. (36.63%).



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Boosting government revenues is pivotal to reducing America's deficit and debt through DOGE-style expenditure reforms

Between 2001 and 2022, the U.S. has clocked the lowest tax-GDP ratio of 19.27% as against 28.59% for Italy, 28.12% for France, 27.99% for Canada, 26.89% for the U.K., 22.70% for Germany, and 32.74% for OECD countries.

**Initiatives and outcomes**

The several expenditure reforms the DOGE has implemented are the termination of unused federal government office space leases, cancellation of wasteful contracts, recovery of misallocated funds, federal workforce optimisation involving initiatives such as hiring restrictions, workforce reduction, and offering voluntary buyouts, deregulatory measures aimed at ensuring lawful governance and reducing red tape. There is also Artificial Intelligence-based monitoring of federal employee activity, productivity assessment, and detection of inefficiencies, identifying and consolidating overlapping functions across departments, and cutting down overseas humanitarian and development spending.

DOGE follows a transparent communication strategy by publicly sharing updates (on X or DOGE's portal) on the outcomes. The total estimated expenditure savings from contract/lease cancellations and renegotiations, grant cancellations, fraud and improper payment detection and elimination, asset sales, employee reductions and regulatory changes have been \$190 billion, which amounts to \$1,180 per taxpayer. DOGE has made the distribution of government grants transparent through a payments portal, which allows citizens to see recipient-wise payments of federal grants.

DOGE's Workforce Portal provides information on the agency-wise size of the U.S. government civilian workforce.

To streamline layoffs, it has implemented the "Workforce Reshaping Tool", a modernised version of the Pentagon's Automated Reduction in Force (AutoRIF) software, which assists in terminating federal employees based on criteria

such as seniority and performance. So far, approximately 2,60,000 federal employees have been laid off, retired early, or accepted buyouts. Several federal regulations were repealed and modified, with a cost savings of \$30.1 billion due to reduced regulatory compliance; also, 1.8 million words have been deleted from the rules of several Federal regulations. DOGE publishes a unique unconstitutionality index (UI) measuring the extent of bureaucracy's role in shaping federal policy. As per UI, for every law passed by Congress in 2024, there were about 19 rules created by the bureaucracy.

**The path ahead**

However, DOGE's journey has seen an unexpected turn after Elon Musk publicly disagreed with U.S. President Donald Trump over the provision incorporated in the much-debated One Big Beautiful Bill (OB BB) for removing tax credits offered to purchase electric vehicles. The OB BB is a legislative extension of the DOGE reform, as it aims to embed multiple fiscal priorities and DOGE-style government efficiency reforms into a single federal law. Ironically, by opposing OB BB, Mr. Musk contradicted his initiatives as an adviser to DOGE. However, the bigger challenge facing the DOGE initiative is that its extended form, the OB BB, is unlikely to resolve the U.S.'s deficit and debt problem, as the tax cuts proposed in the OB BB far exceed the spending cuts, leading to an addition of \$3.2 trillion to the U.S. national debt over the next decade.

Currently, the U.S. has the lowest and below-OECD-average corporate tax rates among the MAE, lower effective tax rates on the rich, and tighter secrecy laws that enable tax evasion by wealthy individuals and corporations. Therefore, unless efforts are made to boost government revenues, Mr. Trump's 'One Big Budget Bet' of reducing America's deficit and debt through DOGE-style expenditure reforms is unlikely to pay off.

**GS. Paper 03 Indian Economy**

**UPSC Mains Practice Question:** The U.S. DOGE shows administrative efficiency and technology can save costs, but OB BB risks fiscal stability via unbalanced tax cuts. Discuss the importance of balancing expenditure rationalisation and revenue mobilisation in public finance, and lessons for India's fiscal consolidation strategy. (150 words)



## Context :

The U.S. Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), launched in Donald Trump's second term, seeks to downsize government, reduce federal spending, and enhance efficiency. Guided initially by Elon Musk, the reform's high-visibility measures—agency reduction, AI monitoring, workforce downsizing—reflect a bold attempt to tackle America's fiscal deficit and debt. However, the larger legislative push, the One Big Beautiful Bill (OBBB), risks undermining these aims due to mismatched tax cuts and revenue constraints.

## Background & Context

- **DOGE Initiative:**
  - **Objective:** Cut deficit, debt, interest burden, and streamline operations.
  - **Measures:** Contract cancellations, asset sales, workforce optimization, deregulation, AI-based monitoring, transparency portals.
  - **Savings:** \$190 billion (~\$1,180 per taxpayer).
  - **Workforce reduction:** ~2.6 lakh employees retired early, laid off, or bought out.
  - **Deregulation:** \$30.1 billion in compliance savings; 1.8 million words removed from federal regulations.
- **OBBB Bill:** Legislative extension of DOGE-style reforms, bundling fiscal priorities and efficiency measures into one law.
- **Controversy:** Musk opposed EV tax credit removals in OBBB, clashing with Trump.
- **Fiscal Criticism:** Proposed tax cuts in OBBB exceed spending cuts → projected \$3.2 trillion debt addition over the next decade.

## Economic Context

- **Government Size vs. Fiscal Health:**
  - **U.S. public expenditure:** 36.49% of GDP (2001–2024 average), smallest among major advanced economies (MAEs).
  - Yet, fiscal deficit (-6.0%) and debt (119.5% of GDP) worse than MAE average.
  - **Root cause:** Low revenue collection.
    - **Avg. total revenue:** 30.55% of GDP vs. France's 51.48% or Italy's 45.93%.
    - **Tax-GDP ratio:** 19.27% vs. OECD average 32.74%.
  - **Contributing factors:** Low corporate tax rates, lenient taxation on the rich, secrecy laws aiding tax evasion.

## Analysis

### 1. Strengths of DOGE

- Operational efficiency gains and cost transparency.
- Public visibility via portals, enhancing citizen trust.
- Technology use (AI monitoring) in public administration.

## Daily News Analysis

### 2. Weaknesses & Risks

- **Fiscal imbalance:** Spending cuts insufficient to offset tax cuts in OBBB.
- Political pushback: Stakeholder resistance (e.g., Musk's EV tax credit dispute).
- Limited focus on revenue augmentation.

### 3. Key Lesson

- Sustainable fiscal reform requires balanced approach: efficiency + adequate taxation.
- Pure expenditure reduction without revenue strengthening is inadequate for debt stabilisation.

### Way Forward

- Combine expenditure rationalisation with progressive tax reforms.
- Close loopholes enabling tax evasion by corporates and the ultra-rich.
- Preserve strategic public investments while trimming waste.
- Ensure bipartisan political consensus for long-term fiscal discipline.

### Conclusion

The DOGE initiative shows that administrative efficiency, transparency, and technology can deliver measurable cost savings. However, Trump's "One Big Budget Bet" risks fiscal backfire if paired with aggressive tax cuts and weak revenue mobilisation. For true debt reduction, expenditure control must go hand-in-hand with structural tax reforms—a principle equally relevant to India's own fiscal consolidation path.