



No one can argue with me on tariff structure: Trump

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



Former U.S. President Donald Trump stated in a Fox News interview that he had informed Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi that India would not be exempt from Washington's reciprocal tariffs. Announced on February 13, the policy aims to impose equivalent tariffs on trading partners to counter non-reciprocal trade practices. Trump emphasized that India has high tariffs on U.S. imports, particularly in the automobile sector, where tariffs reach 100%. He insisted on applying the same tariffs to Indian goods, asserting that this approach is fair and non-negotiable. During Modi's visit, Trump had previously criticized India for having some of the highest trade barriers in the world.

U.S. SEC set to 'serve complaint' on Adanis despite Trump's 'reprieve'

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) has requested assistance from Indian authorities to serve a complaint on Adani Group founder Gautam Adani and his nephew Sagar Adani over alleged securities fraud and a \$265 million bribery scheme. Despite former U.S. President Donald Trump's executive order pausing the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act for 180 days, the SEC's legal action continues, suggesting the order did not have a retrospective effect. The SEC alleges the Adanis misrepresented information related to Adani Green Energy Ltd's 2021 debt offering. Indian authorities may delay action or request further proof before serving the complaint. Meanwhile, Adani group stocks fell in the market, impacting small investors. Prime Minister Narendra Modi stated that his recent discussions with Trump did not include the Adani case, as it was an "individual issue."

Trump tells 'dictator' Zelenskyy to move fast for peace or lose Ukraine

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



Former U.S. President Donald Trump criticized Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, calling him a "dictator without elections" and urging him to secure peace quickly or risk losing Ukraine. Zelenskyy responded by dismissing Trump's remarks as influenced by Russian disinformation, while Ukraine's Foreign Minister reaffirmed the country's determination to defend itself. Zelenskyy's term was extended under martial law, preventing elections amid Russia's invasion. Meanwhile, Trump hinted at a potential meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin, though the Kremlin suggested it would take time to arrange. Putin stated Ukraine was not barred from peace talks but emphasized the need for improved trust between Moscow and Washington.

Manipur is in need of 'greater common good' politics

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

On February 13, 2025, Article 356 was invoked in Manipur, placing the state under President's Rule while keeping the Assembly in "animated suspension" to allow the ruling BJP time to resolve internal conflicts. The move was triggered by Chief Minister N. Biren Singh's resignation and the failure to convene an Assembly session by the constitutional deadline. Despite 20 months of unrest since May 2023, the decision was driven more by political factors than law and order concerns.

Manipur's history of political instability—now under President's Rule for the 11th time—stems from its ethnic diversity, with 33 Scheduled Tribes, Meiteis, Muslims, and other non-tribal groups. The political landscape is influenced by different types of populism, including majoritarian, inclusionary, and divisive politics, which have fueled communal tensions, particularly between the Meiteis and Kuki-Zo tribes.

Biren Singh's policies on forest encroachment, poppy cultivation, and illegal migration, pursued insensitively, escalated ethnic strife. His populist rhetoric and opposition forces' competitive polarization deepened communal enmity. While President's Rule may be short-lived, long-term challenges remain. Future governance must balance security concerns with sensitivity, regulate cross-border migration effectively, and shift politics from populism to consensus-building for lasting stability in Manipur.

Manipur's worsening humanitarian crisis

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

The India-Myanmar borderlands, including Manipur, remain a data-deficient region despite ongoing conflict and displacement. The lack of reliable information hampers understanding of the humanitarian crisis, with misinformation further complicating the issue. Approximately 58,000 people are displaced in relief camps, while thousands more have fled to neighbouring states. Many affected individuals, including students and patients seeking medical care, remain unaccounted for.

The conflict has severely disrupted healthcare, particularly in Kuki-Zomi-dominated hill districts, where medical access is limited. Displaced populations in Imphal Valley struggle with healthcare costs, leading to untreated illnesses, malnutrition, and rising mortality rates. Reports document deaths due to medical inaccessibility, suicides, and widespread mental health issues among displaced persons.

After two years, relief camps still lack essential services like food, water, and shelter. Over 22,000 children are impacted, and unsanitary conditions, water shortages, and inflation have worsened the crisis. While violence has decreased, displacement remains a critical issue.

To mitigate the crisis, external humanitarian support must be expanded, access to clean water improved, and humanitarian corridors established for medical evacuations. Restoring supply chains between valley and hill districts is crucial to easing inflation and ensuring access to essential commodities.

Closer than ever

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The visit of Qatari Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani to India after a decade reaffirmed strong bilateral ties. While India and Qatar do not always share the same geopolitical views, they recognize each other's strategic importance. India values Qatar as a Gulf power and a major LNG supplier, while Qatar sees India as a key regional player with a large expatriate workforce contributing to its economy. The visit led to the elevation of ties to a strategic partnership, along with agreements on trade, taxation, and investments, including Qatar's \$10 billion pledge in India's infrastructure and manufacturing sectors.

The visit also carried geopolitical significance amid tensions in the Gulf due to the Israel-Gaza conflict and U.S. President Donald Trump's controversial plan to relocate Palestinians. While the India-Qatar joint statement acknowledged their differing views on the Israel-Hamas issue, it did not specify details. The summit provided an opportunity for both countries to strengthen ties despite these differences, committing to a forward-looking partnership while aiming to double bilateral trade by 2030.

Russia reset

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The U.S. and Russia held their first major diplomatic talks since the Ukraine war in Riyadh, signalling a shift in relations. Led by U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, the discussions focused on restoring embassy staffing, economic cooperation, and initiating talks to end the Ukraine war. U.S. President Donald Trump has indicated he may meet Russian President Vladimir Putin soon to finalize the deal, marking a sharp departure from the previous Biden administration's policies, which supported Ukraine militarily and imposed sanctions on Russia.

Trump's approach reflects a strategic realignment, prioritizing stability with Russia while focusing on countering China. He views Russia as a diminished threat and believes Ukraine's war effort is unlikely to succeed. Consequently, he opposes further U.S. aid to Ukraine and has shifted security responsibilities to Europe, leaving Ukraine excluded from key negotiations. While great power diplomacy often sidelines smaller nations, Trump's reset risks undermining Ukraine's future and Europe's security. A lasting settlement should involve all stakeholders, including Ukraine and European nations, to ensure a fair and stable resolution.

President's Rule and the road ahead

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

The imposition of President's Rule in Manipur on February 13, after 21 months of unrest, reflects the BJP government's last resort to avert a constitutional crisis. The move highlights the erosion of trust in the state government, which was seen as complicit in the violence and aligned with majoritarian agendas. The crisis has undermined the legitimacy of the Indian State and its institutions, requiring a shift towards impartial governance and the rule of law.

Restoring normalcy demands more than law enforcement; it requires addressing structural inequalities between the valley and hill tribal communities. Outsourcing law and order to armed groups and furthering divisive nationalist politics must end. The state must act neutrally, ensuring justice, fair representation, and resource distribution across all communities. Some propose declaring Manipur a "hill state" to counter the Kuki-Zomi-Hmar demand for separate administration, but such a move risks undermining existing constitutional protections under Article 371C and further alienating tribal groups.

President's Rule should be used to decentralize power, strengthen sub-state constitutional asymmetry, and promote inclusive governance. Any attempt to dissolve tribal protections or enforce a dominant community's rule could deepen divisions and fuel further conflict. A long-term solution requires a negotiated political settlement that upholds fairness, justice, and mutual recognition among Manipur's diverse communities.

On building resilient telecom infrastructure

DISASTER MANAGEMENT

The Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) released a report assessing the vulnerability of Indian telecom networks to disasters and recommending ways to enhance their resilience. Telecom networks are crucial during emergencies as they enable rapid communication for disaster response. However, they are highly susceptible to damage from high winds, cable disruptions, and power failures, especially in coastal areas where undersea cables connect India to the global internet.

The primary issue affecting network outages during disasters is power supply disruption. Maintaining or restoring power to telecom towers and network operating centers is key to keeping communication systems online. Measures such as fuel provisions for telecom operators and real-time monitoring of network damage help mitigate disruptions.

The CDRI report suggests several long-term solutions, including better data collection, improved coordination among stakeholders, robust power infrastructure, and stronger cell tower designs to withstand extreme weather. The "dig-once" policy encourages simultaneous underground infrastructure development to prevent damage. Additionally, commercial solutions like parametric insurance could financially support telecom operators in disaster-proofing their networks.

Even small interventions, such as elevating diesel generators above potential flood levels, can significantly enhance telecom resilience. A combination of strategic investments and practical solutions is essential to ensure uninterrupted communication during disasters.

Did the iron age on Indian soil start from Tamil Nadu?

ART & CULTURE

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin, citing a new archaeological report, claimed that the iron age began on Tamil soil around 5,300 years ago (4th millennium BCE), emphasizing Tamil Nadu's significance in Indian history. Earlier research suggested iron usage in India began around 700-600 BCE, but later studies pushed this back to the 16th century BCE. Excavations in Uttar Pradesh, including Malhar and Raja Nala-ka-tila, provided evidence of large-scale iron smelting by the 13th century BCE.

In Tamil Nadu, excavations at Mayiladumparai in 2022 suggested an iron age dating back 4,200 years, coinciding with the copper/bronze age in northern India. The latest report, *Antiquity of Iron: Recent Radiometric Dates from Tamil Nadu*, further pushes this back to between 3,345 BCE and 2,953 BCE, indicating that Tamil Nadu may have entered the iron age earlier due to the scarcity of copper.

While these findings highlight Tamil Nadu's early advancements in iron technology, scholars caution against concluding that the iron age originated there. The discoveries open new avenues for research into Tamil history and culture.

First-time MLA Rekha Gupta to be Delhi CM; swearing-in today

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

Rekha Gupta, a first-time MLA from Shalimar Bagh, has been chosen as the new Chief Minister of Delhi by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) following its legislature party meeting. At 50, she becomes the fourth woman to lead the Union Territory.

Her selection comes 10 days after the BJP's return to power in Delhi after 26 years, winning 48 out of 70 Assembly seats. A three-time municipal councillor with a background in student politics, Ms. Gupta was a surprise choice, beating other contenders like Parvesh Verma, Vijender Gupta, and Satish Upadhyay.

Lieutenant-Governor V.K. Saxena invited her to form the government after she staked her claim, accompanied by senior BJP leaders. The oath-taking ceremony will be held at Ramlila Maidan, attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and NDA Chief Ministers.

Her selection was approved by consensus, with nine proposals supporting her. In her statement, Ms. Gupta pledged to work with honesty and dedication for Delhi's development. She secured her Assembly seat by defeating AAP's Bandana Kumari by 29,595 votes.

Legal system should evolve to respect adolescent love: HC

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

The Delhi High Court has emphasized a compassionate approach towards adolescent love, advocating for a legal system that protects young individuals' rights while ensuring their safety.

The observation was made in a case where a man was accused of sexual assault under the POCSO Act by the father of a 16-year-old girl. Justice Jasmeet Singh upheld the trial court's 2020 acquittal of the man, noting that the girl had willingly consented to the relationship.

While acknowledging that the POCSO Act does not distinguish between consensual adolescent relationships and exploitation, the judge stressed the need for evolving legal perspectives that respect young individuals' rights to form romantic relationships, as long as they are consensual and free from coercion.



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