



Modi, Vance see progress in bilateral trade talks

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and U.S. Vice-President J.D. Vance met in Delhi and welcomed significant progress in Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) negotiations. They formally announced the finalisation of the Terms of Reference for further talks, with another negotiation round set to begin in Washington. The meeting included senior officials and was followed by a dinner hosted by Mr. Modi for Mr. Vance and his family. However, the expected launch of the TRUST Technology Partner-



ship did not take place.

Trump's visit

Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed anticipation for U.S. President Donald Trump's upcoming visit to India later this year, during which the Quad Summit with the U.S., India, Japan, and Australia will be held. Both Mr. Modi and U.S. Vice-President J.D. Vance highlighted the progress in negotiations for a Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA), which aims to boost opportunities for workers, farmers, and entrepreneurs, and enhance trade and supply-chain integration.

While the leaders hailed the BTA talks as mutually beneficial, the PMO statement did not address contentious issues such as U.S. tariffs or the Trump administration's stricter student visa policies. The agreement, initially proposed during

Modi and Trump's meeting in February, is expected to see its first phase concluded during Trump's visit. This phase may include tariff reductions, although key disagreements remain unresolved, particularly around agricultural market access and India's digital taxation policies.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and U.S. Vice-President J.D. Vance discussed a joint India-U.S. roadmap aligning Trump's "Make America Great Again" vision with India's "Viksit Bharat 2047" development goals. The meeting, attended by key officials including NSA Ajit Doval and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, also covered regional and global issues, emphasizing dialogue and diplomacy, though specific conflicts like Ukraine or Gaza were not mentioned.

The visit faced brief uncertainty due to the sudden death of Pope Francis, whom Mr. Vance had met the previous day. Despite this, the schedule continued as planned, with Mr. Vance expressing condolences online. He arrived in Delhi with his family and a U.S. delegation on Monday morning, and was received by Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw.

Pope Francis, a cheerful reformer, dies aged 88

PERSONALITY IN NEWS

Pope Francis, aged 88, passed away on Monday, a day after appearing before worshippers at Easter Mass. He died of a stroke that led to a coma and irreversible heart failure, following a recent battle with double pneumonia.

Appointed in 2013, Pope Francis was the first Jesuit and the first Pope from the Americas, known for his reformist spirit, compassion, and efforts to create a more inclusive Church. Cardinal Kevin Farrell announced his death, praising his lifelong service to the Church. World leaders paid tribute to his moral and spiritual leadership, and global preparations began to honour his passing.

Following Pope Francis' unexpected Easter Sunday appearance, news of his death left many visitors at St. Peter's Square in tears. His passing initiates traditional Vatican protocols, including the gathering of a conclave to select a new pope.

Over the next few days, cardinals will decide on the funeral date, while the Vatican's administration will be overseen by Cardinal Kevin Farrell, the Camerlengo. In his will, Pope Francis requested a simple burial in the Basilica of Saint Mary Major in Rome, without elaborate decoration, marked only by his papal name in Latin.

World leaders, including King Charles, paid tribute to his commitment to social justice and migrant rights, praising his dedicated service to the Church.

Maoist leader carrying ₹1 crore bounty among 8 killed in Jharkhand encounter

INTERNAL SECURITY

Eight suspected Maoists, including top leaders with high bounties, were killed in an encounter with the CRPF and Jharkhand police in Bokaro district on Monday. The operation, led by the CRPF's CoBRA unit and state police, began early in the morning in Lugu Hills. Among those killed were central committee member Prayag Manjhi alias Vivek (₹1 crore bounty), Arvind Yadav alias Avinash (₹25 lakh), and Sahebram Manjhi alias Rahul Manjhi (₹10 lakh). Weapons including



AK-series rifles, INSAS rifles, an SLR, and country-made guns were seized. No security personnel were injured.

'Significant success'

Union Home Minister Amit Shah praised the security forces for their continued efforts in eliminating Naxalism, calling the recent encounter in Bokaro a major success. Jharkhand DGP Anurag Gupta stated that Maoist presence in the north Chotanagpur region has been wiped out, with only the Chai-basa region remaining. He announced plans to redeploy forces, including CRPF, Jharkhand Jaguar, and Jharkhand Armed Police, to the Saranda area with the goal of eliminating the remaining Maoist squads within 15–20 days, or before the monsoon season.

Won't directing Centre to 'protect' Bengal from violence amount to 'judicial incursion', asks SC

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

The Supreme Court responded to a plea requesting the Union government to invoke emergency powers under Article 355 to protect West Bengal from violence, questioning whether such an action would overstep judicial boundaries into the Executive and Legislature's domains. The plea, made by advocate Vishnu Shankar Jain, cited communal violence and deaths during protests against the Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025. The Court instructed Jain to file the plea for an urgent hearing on Tuesday.

T.N. Governor case



You want us to issue a writ of mandamus to the Union government to deploy paramilitary forces... Will it not be interfering with the Legislative and Executive domains? As it is, we are being accused of interfering with parliamentary and Executive functions

JUSTICE B.R. GAVAI
Supreme Court judge

Justice B.R. Gavai, who has been recommended as the next Chief Justice of India, addressed criticism of the judiciary overstepping into government and parliamentary matters, referencing the Tamil Nadu Governor case judgment. In response to a plea for emergency intervention in West Bengal, Justice Gavai questioned whether such actions would interfere with the Legislative and Executive functions, especially given recent accusations of judicial overreach. Additionally, his Bench instructed a lawyer to seek Attorney-General R. Venkataramani's permission to initiate contempt proceedings against BJP MP Nishikant Dubey for comments criticizing the Supreme Court and Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna following the April 8 judgment.

A Supreme Court Bench headed by Justice Surya Kant saw petitioner-advocate Shashant Shekhar Jha withdraw his

petition for a Special Investigation Team and court-monitored probe into the violence in West Bengal. The court questioned Jha's sources and the validity of the allegations, pointing out that the individuals named in the petition had not been parties to the case, making it difficult to examine the claims. Justice Kant urged Jha to file a properly verified petition. Another petitioner, Vishal Tiwari, also withdrew his petition on the same issue. Both were allowed to amend their petitions.

India, China at 75 — a time for strategy, not sentiment

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

As India and China mark 75 years of diplomatic ties, we find ourselves not merely at a commemorative milestone but also at a pivotal juncture in Asian and global geopolitics. The relationship, once rooted in idealistic visions of Asian solidarity, has become a tightrope walk across a landscape defined by contested borders, strategic rivalry and deep mistrust. Yet, it is also a relationship layered with opportunities for cooperation, economic interdependence and a shared responsibility for regional stability.

The 'China lens', the challenge

China plays a central role in shaping India's foreign policy, influencing decisions across border infrastructure, trade, and defence cooperation. India faces a complex challenge in balancing deterrence with dialogue, sovereignty with economic interdependence, and competition with coexistence. The 1962 war and the 2020 Galwan Valley clash have deeply impacted India's China policy, and the tense, militarized Line of Actual Control (LAC) remains a source of vulnerability. Despite efforts to reduce dependence on China, including restrictions on Chinese apps and investments, India's trade imbalance with China reached nearly \$100 billion in 2024-25, and economic ties, especially in sectors like pharmaceuticals and electronics, remain strong. Full decoupling from China is not feasible in the short term.

India's strategy toward China has evolved into "competitive coexistence," balancing competition in defence, infrastructure, and regional influence with economic engagement. India cooperates with China on platforms like BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), while partnering with democracies in the Quad to promote a free Indo-Pacific. In South Asia, China's growing presence challenges India's traditional role, with projects like the Hambantota Port in Sri Lanka and infrastructure loans in the Maldives. India must shift from reactive diplomacy to proactive, long-term engagement, focusing on building trust and influence. Recent remarks by Bangladesh's interim leader about India's northeast being land-locked highlight the need for India to close infrastructure gaps and strengthen regional partnerships.

The America factor

India's position on China is complicated by the return of Donald Trump to the White House, as his second term has intensified U.S.-China rivalry and revived unilateralism. India may face pressure to align more closely with the U.S., particularly in defence and Indo-Pacific security, but must balance this with its commitment to strategic autonomy. Prime Minister Modi's remarks on the Lex Fridman podcast in March 2025 hinted at a subtle shift, emphasizing "healthy competition" and mutual growth with China. This approach is seen as strategic messaging—reassuring Beijing of India's openness to engagement, signalling independent judgment to Washington, and reassuring domestic audiences of stable leadership.

China responded positively to Prime Minister Modi's recent remarks, with its Foreign Ministry and state media welcoming his "pragmatic approach." Signs of a tentative thaw include the resumption of verification patrolling along the LAC, upcoming hydrological data-sharing talks, and discussions on reopening the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra and direct flights. However, serious concerns persist, particularly over China's planned dam on the Yarlung Tsangpo near Arunachal Pradesh. With no water-sharing treaty and limited transparency, this raises fears of ecological harm and potential water weaponisation, adding a new layer of complexity to India-China relations.

The framework of a China policy

India's China policy should be anchored on four key pillars: military preparedness, economic diversification, diplomatic engagement, and narrative control. The approach requires balance—deterring China without escalation, trading without over-dependence, and negotiating strategically. Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri emphasized the "three mutuals" — mutual respect, sensitivity, and interest — as guiding principles. The proposed model of "competitive coexistence" aims to responsibly manage rivalry and reduce dependence on U.S. leadership by fostering a regional security framework. As India and China mark 75 years of ties, the focus must shift from sentiment to strategy, using this challenge as an opportunity to define India's global role.

WE AIM TO INSPIRE YOU

New pathways for India's creative economy

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

India has a rich legacy of innovation across diverse fields such as arts, science, metallurgy, and medicine. As the nation aspires to become a \$5 trillion economy, fostering creativity and innovation at all levels is essential. Globally, the creative economy is booming — in 2022, creative services exports reached \$1.4 trillion and creative goods hit \$713 billion, together generating over \$2 trillion annually and supporting around 50 million jobs.

According to UNCTAD's Creative Economy Outlook 2024, the key contributors to the global creative economy in 2022 were software services (41.3%), R&D (30.7%), and advertising, market research, and architecture (15.5%). India's creative economy has also made strong strides, with 2019 exports totaling \$121 billion—\$100 billion from creative services alone. The design sector accounted for 87.5% of creative goods exports, and arts and crafts about 9%. By 2024, India's creative industry is valued at \$30 billion, employs 8% of the workforce, and saw a 20% export growth in the previous year, generating over \$11 billion.

Creativity in creative economy

Despite rising investments in India's traditional creative sectors, more needs to be done to foster creativity and innovation at the grassroots level to boost local economies. Creativity, which precedes innovation, can be classified into four types—based on whether it is deliberate or spontaneous, emotional or cognitive—and can originate internally or externally. Most local innovations fall under deliberate and spontaneous cognitive creativity. While creativity can be individual, innovation requires institutional support for scaling. In India, although creative potential is abundant, it often doesn't translate into innovation. Bridging this gap needs targeted investments. Initiatives like the Grassroots Innovations Augmentation Network (GIAN) have helped spotlight numerous grassroots creative ideas.

An example from Indonesia

The Antrodam Project by students of Binus School in Indonesia exemplifies creative problem-solving inspired by nature to address flooding. Drawing from the water-directing tunnels of Indian Harvester ants and structures like rose petals, coral, and water-resistant animals, the students designed a bio-inspired flood protection system. This innovation highlights the need for investment to scale such creative solutions globally. Similarly, in India, grassroots innovations like the Mitticool clay refrigerator, pedal-powered washing machines, and amphibious bicycles showcase creativity but require scaling, commercialization, and intellectual property protection to reach broader markets and impact.

Investing in creativity and innovation

India must increase investments in creativity across all levels — from grassroots to high-tech innovations. Grassroots innovations need capital support to move beyond proof of concept. Intellectual property (IP) protections, especially for informal innovations, should be strengthened through policy reforms. A proposed "one district one innovation" initiative could mirror the success of the "one district one product" model. Despite significant funding for climate tech in 2023, grassroots creativity receives minimal investment. Allocating even a small share of climate funds to local, creative solutions could greatly enhance climate resilience. A balanced, well-funded ecosystem is essential to boost India's creative economy.

Landmark agreement

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

After over three years of negotiations, WHO member-states have finalized a draft Pandemic Agreement to strengthen global preparedness and response. Set for adoption in May, the deal—though less ambitious than originally proposed—is seen as a key step toward global health security. Negotiations were marked by disagreements: developed nations resisted binding commitments on sharing medical resources, while developing countries were reluctant to share pathogen data without guaranteed access to resulting treatments. These tensions mirror past disputes, such as Indonesia's concerns over unfair vaccine access during the H5N1 outbreak.

The finalized WHO Pandemic Agreement includes key commitments, notably the protection of healthcare workers and a major breakthrough on pathogen access and benefit-sharing. Developing countries sharing samples and genome data are guaranteed access to resulting diagnostics, treatments, and vaccines. Pharma companies will donate 10% of their output to WHO and offer another 10% at affordable prices. The COVID-19 vaccine inequity influenced these decisions. A key issue—technology transfer—was resolved with countries agreeing it will occur on "mutually agreed terms" rather than being merely voluntary. The treaty emphasizes equitable access and encourages sharing of technology and know-how to help developing countries produce their own vaccines.

Elusive truce

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The Trump administration's frustration over the lack of progress in ending the Ukraine war was evident in Secretary of State Marco Rubio's remarks, warning that the U.S. might "move away" if no progress was made soon. Despite Trump's promise to end the war quickly, diplomatic efforts have faltered. The U.S. has ruled out NATO membership for Ukraine and proposed a 30-day ceasefire, but the Kremlin insists any ceasefire must be part of a broader peace agreement addressing Russia's security concerns. The U.S. is considering a proposal that would recognize Crimea as Russian territory, freeze the conflict along current front lines, and exclude Ukraine from NATO. However, Russia maintains its maximalist demands, rejecting security guarantees for Ukraine and insisting on its demilitarisation.

Wars rarely end through maximalist positions. While Russia has gained territory, it has also suffered significant costs, and Ukraine, supported by the West, is determined to continue fighting. Europe has also committed to backing Ukraine regardless of U.S. involvement. For lasting peace, Russia's legitimate security concerns must be addressed, but its demands to restrict Ukraine's defence partnerships and military capabilities are unacceptable for a sovereign nation. Trump should focus on finding common ground among the U.S., Ukraine, Europe, and Russia to achieve durable peace, rather than favouring one side.

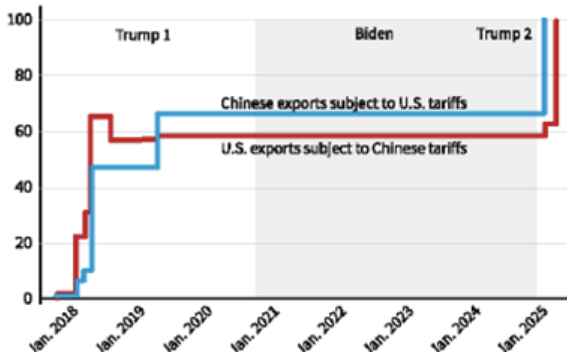
U.S. tariffs: China had rerouted exports to stay on top till 2023

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Tariff impact on China

Chart 1 was sourced from the Peterson Institute for International Economics. Data for charts 2,3 and 4 were sourced from the United Nations Comtrade database

Chart 1: The chart shows the share of exports from the U.S. that were subject to tariffs from China and vice-versa from 2018 to 2025



Despite facing tariff challenges from the U.S., China has managed to increase its global export share from 13% to 15% between 2018 and 2023. Although U.S. imports from China decreased following tariff escalations, China compensated by finding new markets and increasing exports to other trade partners. The U.S. tariffs on Chinese products rose significantly, from 3% in January 2018 to around 20% by the end of Trump's first term, maintaining that level under Biden. In 2023, U.S. tariffs on Chinese products peaked at 145%, while China retaliated with tariffs of 125% on U.S. goods.

With the tariffs reaching very high levels, it remains to be seen whether China will be able to retain its dominance in world trade. In fact, by April 2025, all the commodities exported by the U.S. to China and vice-versa were subjected to some level of tariffs (**Chart 1**). This was not the case during former U.S. President Joe Biden's term, with tariffs being applied on around 60-70% of the products.

Chart 2 shows the share of China's top five export destinations from 2014 to 2018 (before escalations) and 2019 to 2023 (after). The U.S. remained the largest importer of Chinese products by a wide margin in both the periods, though the share did come down significantly in the 2019-2023 period. Before escalations, 9.7% of Chinese exports went to the U.S.; after escalations, this reduced considerably to 8.1%.

The decline in China's exports to the U.S. becomes even more evident in **Chart 3**. During the five years prior to the tariff escalations (2014-2018), China's exports to the U.S. grew by 35.5% when compared with the previous five-year period (2009-2013). However, in the five years following the escalations (2019-2023), export growth slowed significantly, rising by only 20% relative to the 2014-2018 period.

Chart 2: The share of China's top five export destinations from 2014 to 2018 (before tariff escalations) and 2019 to 2023 (after)

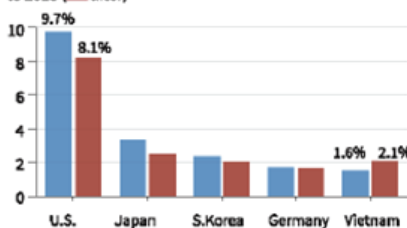


Chart 3: The chart shows China's export growth in two 5-year periods: 2014-2018 and 2019-2023, to nations other than the U.S. and to the U.S.

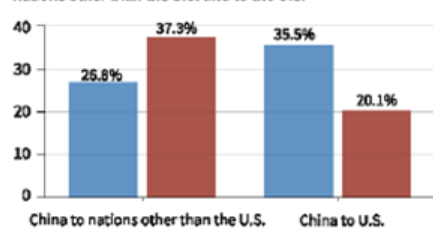


Chart 4A: Change in the U.S.'s share across China's major export items between 2019-2023 and 2014-2018 (in %)

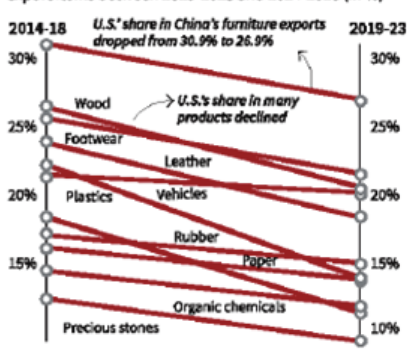
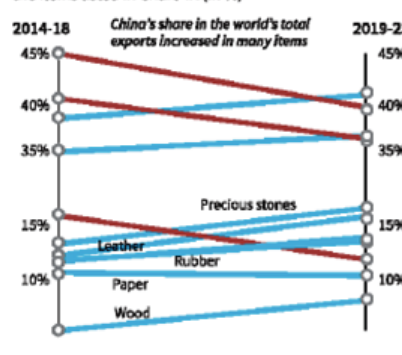


Chart 4B: China's share in the world's total exports of all the items listed in Chart 4A (in %)



China was able to offset this decline by boosting exports to non-U.S. markets. While exports to non-U.S. countries grew by only 26.8% in the 2014-2018 period, they increased by 37.3% during the 2019-2023 period, effectively compensating for the drop in exports to the U.S.

Chart 4A shows the fall in the U.S.'s share across China's major export items between 2019 and 2023 compared with the 2014-2018 period. The U.S.'s share in many of China's major exports fell in the period. In other words, China had to look elsewhere to bridge the gap.

Chart 4B shows that China managed to find newer markets for most of these items. The chart shows China's share in the world's total exports of all the items listed in Chart 4A. In the post-escalations period, China's share in the world's total exports increased in electrical machinery, furniture, plastics, vehicles, organic chemicals, rubber and paper. In other words, for these major export items, despite the decline in the U.S.'s share, China continued to dominate world trade.

A reminder to the President and Governors

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

The Supreme Court's judgment in *State of Tamil Nadu v. Governor of Tamil Nadu (2025)* lays down the correct constitutional position and is unassailable. However, some people have questioned the judgment. My answer to them is that the Constitution has created a parliamentary democracy.

A parliamentary system

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar highlighted that the Indian Constitution favors the Parliamentary system of government, prioritizing responsibility over stability. Unlike the U.S. Presidential system, where the President is the executive head, the Indian President is the ceremonial head of state, similar to the British monarchy, and acts on the advice of the Council of Ministers. This principle is reinforced in Articles 52, 153, 74, and 163 of the Constitution, which establish the roles of the President, Governors, and their respective councils of ministers, emphasizing that they must act according to the advice given by their ministers.

In 1949, the draft Constitution initially proposed Schedule IV, which would have outlined an "Instrument of Instruction" for Governors. However, the Drafting Committee decided to delete it, despite protests from members. T. T. Krishnamachari justified the deletion, suggesting that such matters should be left to convention rather than be included in the Constitution. Dr. Ambedkar supported this decision, noting that there was no constitutional provision to ensure that the Governor would faithfully carry out such instructions, and that the Governor's discretion was limited, particularly in matters like selecting Cabinet members, which must be done on the advice of the Prime Minister.

During the drafting of the Indian Constitution, K.T. Shah proposed that the President of India be called the "Chief Executive and Head of the State," which he justified by arguing that the President represents the sovereignty of the people and the state. However, Dr. Ambedkar opposed this proposal, stating that it would introduce the American presidential system, which grants the President executive power. He clarified that under the Indian Constitution, the President would be the head of the executive but would act on the advice of the Council of Ministers, following the Parliamentary system, not the U.S. presidential system.

The Constitutional Bench in *Shamsher Singh v. State of Punjab (1974)* affirmed that the President is the formal head of the Union and exercises powers only on the advice of the Council of Ministers. This position was upheld in the *Nabam Rebia v. Deputy Speaker (2016)* case as well.

A timely reminder

The President and Governors must exercise their powers in accordance with the Constitution and within a reasonable time. If they fail, the Writ Court can intervene. Both take oaths to protect the Constitution and serve the people. While President Droupadi Murmu upholds her office's dignity, some Governors have acted contrary to the Constitution, leading the Supreme Court to remind them to respect the Constitution and act in the public interest.

WE AIM TO INSPIRE YOU



START YOUR JOURNEY WITH THE
BEST

INDIA'S TOP MOST CIVIL SERVANTS FOR COACHING

Judiciary's place atop the pyramid

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar recently raised certain issues with respect to the independence of the judiciary, its powers of judicial review and the judgment prescribing timelines to the President and Governor for their actions.

What is the current context?

The Vice-President recently shared his views on several judiciary-related issues. He questioned the transparency and legality of a judge-led inquiry into cash recovery at a Delhi High Court judge's residence. He also commented on a Supreme Court ruling that set timelines for the President and Governors to act on state legislation, highlighting the court's authority to issue writs for inaction. He raised concerns about the judiciary's lack of accountability compared to the legislature and executive, particularly regarding judicial review and orders encroaching on the executive. He suggested revisiting the requirement for five judges in constitutional matters, given the current strength of 34 judges. Lastly, he expressed concerns that the Supreme Court's use of its extraordinary power under Article 142 undermines representative democracy.

A critical analysis

The Vice-President's speech has sparked debate regarding the appropriateness of his remarks for his constitutional and ceremonial role. Supporters argue that concerns about judicial opacity, especially regarding inquiries into alleged misbehaviour by judges, are valid and that the Chief Justice of India should ensure transparency in such matters. A key issue highlighted is the lack of accountability and transparency in judicial appointments through the collegium system. Proposals suggest creating a National Judicial Appointments Commission, with the Chief Justice holding a veto, to make the process more transparent and inclusive while maintaining judicial independence.

The Supreme Court's recent order setting timelines for the President and Governors is within its constitutional powers and aligns with prior judgments. Similar timelines were also outlined in a 2016 Home Ministry memorandum. Judicial activism, including the use of Article 142, has been instrumental in delivering justice and holding the executive accountable, as seen in landmark cases like the Bhopal gas tragedy compensation, sexual harassment guidelines, and women's permanent commission in the armed forces. Given the precedence over the past seven decades and the Supreme Court's case backlog, the current requirement of five judges for a Constitution Bench remains optimal.

Judicial review and its independence

Parliamentary democracy operates on the principle that the executive is accountable to the legislature, which answers to the people. The judiciary, however, is independent and upholds the Constitution. While the U.K. follows the doctrine of Parliamentary sovereignty, and the U.S. emphasizes judicial supremacy, India combines both concepts. Judicial review has been recognized as a "basic structure" of the Indian Constitution, reinforcing constitutional sovereignty. It is important for all branches of governance to respect constitutional values through a healthy separation of powers, rather than confrontation.

Why did China block exports of rare earth elements?

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Amid the ongoing U.S.–China trade war, Chinese authorities have reportedly imposed export controls on rare earth elements (REEs) and magnets that are needed in a range of manufacturing activities, from semiconductor fabrication units to defence equipment. This has been one of the more recent salvos in the trade war between the two countries, but the export restrictions apply to any Chinese refinery that can export refined rare earths outside the country.

What are rare earth elements?

Rare earth elements (REEs) are a group of 17 substances found in the Earth's crust, though they are not actually rare, but difficult to isolate for industrial use. They are found in countries like India, China, Myanmar, Japan, Australia, and North Korea. China's recent curbs target seven specific REEs: dysprosium, gadolinium, lutetium, samarium, scandium, terbium, and yttrium. These elements have various industrial applications, including in hard disks, car motors, nuclear reactors, medical equipment, personal electronics, fighter aircraft, lighting, and cancer treatments.

What are China's export restrictions?

Practically all heavy REEs used all over the world are refined in China. From personal electronics to defence, therefore, Beijing has enormous leverage over the entire world for a range of supply chains for critical raw and intermediate materials. The export restrictions don't appear to amount to an outright ban, but could interrupt supplies to countries for a few weeks as refiners work through the process of getting permits.

What is the impact on India?

India's supply chains may not face immediate impacts from China's restrictions on rare earth element (REE) exports. While India is working to enhance domestic production of semiconductors and defense equipment, advanced manufacturing typically occurs in countries like China and Japan. Japan has already built a stockpile of REEs to mitigate supply shocks. India, with 6% of global REE deposits, faces challenges in mining and refining due to environmental concerns. While India has light REE extraction capabilities through Indian Rare Earths Ltd, it imports a limited quantity, with 2,270 tonnes imported in 2023–24. India's strategy focuses on increasing both domestic production and imports.

What is the government's plan?

India has launched the National Critical Mineral Mission (NCMM) to secure the supply chain of critical minerals, including rare earth elements (REEs). The initiative aims to increase domestic production and diversify foreign supply sources. The Ministry of Mines highlighted the fragility of critical mineral supply due to factors like China's restrictions and the Russia-Ukraine war. As part of the NCMM, the government plans to engage in 1,200 exploration projects, offer exploratory licenses to encourage private exploration, and auction more critical mineral blocks.

Two ISRO satellites dock successfully for the second time

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has successfully completed the second docking of two satellites, SDX01 (Chaser) and SDX02 (Target), as part of the Space Docking Experiment (SpaDeX) mission. The PSLV-C60 / SPADEX mission was launched on December 30, 2024. The satellites were first docked on January 16, 2025, and undocked on March 13, 2025. Further experiments are scheduled for the next two weeks.

Docking satellites

India became the fourth country, after the U.S., Russia, and China, to conduct a spacecraft docking experiment. The SpaDeX mission, led by ISRO, aims to demonstrate the technology for spacecraft rendezvous, docking, and undocking using two small satellites. This technology is crucial for future missions, including sending an Indian astronaut to the moon, returning lunar samples, and establishing an Indian space station. Additionally, the mission aims to demonstrate the transfer of electric power between docked spacecraft, which is vital for in-space robotics, spacecraft control, and payload operations.

WE AIM TO INSPIRE YOU





VEDHIK
IAS ACADEMY
The New Learning Mantra

**Comprehensive Coaching For
568 Government Jobs**

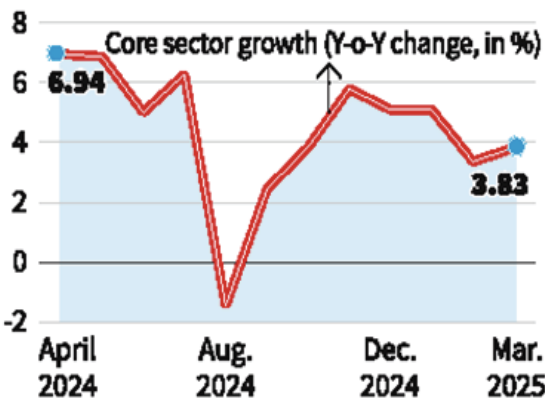
www.vedhikiasacademy.org

March core sector output rises 3.8%; slips to 4.4% in FY25 vs. 7.6% in FY24

ECONOMICS & DEVELOPMENT

Mixed bag

While the growth in March came on higher electricity demand, output in crude oil and natural gas shrank



Source: CMIE

Core sector growth in March rose to 3.8%, up from 3.4% in February, driven by increased electricity demand due to an early summer and heatwaves. Electricity output, which forms nearly 20% of the core-sector index, grew by 6.2%. Cement output saw the highest growth at 11.6%, followed by steel at 7.1%, supported by higher government spending and increased private investment in Q4. However, crude oil and natural gas output continued to decline, contracting by 1.9% and 12.7% respectively. Sectoral performance overall remained mixed.

Year-on-year drop

However, core sector output grew at 4.4% in FY25, down from 7.6% in F24, the slowest in four years. Output growth in almost all sectors slowed with two of them, crude oil and natural gas shrinking. To be sure, core sector growth covers 40.27% of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP).

India imposes 12% temporary tariff on steel imports

ECONOMICS & DEVELOPMENT

India has imposed a 12% safeguard duty on select steel imports for 200 days to curb rising imports, especially from China, the second-largest steel exporter to India. The move, announced by the Finance Ministry, marks India's first major trade policy shift since U.S. tariff hikes under President Trump. In 2024/25, India remained a net importer of finished steel for the second year, with imports hitting a nine-year high of 9.5 million metric tons. Tata Steel's CEO welcomed the decision as vital to counter unfairly priced imports.



VEDHIK
IAS ACADEMY
The New Learning Mantra

**Comprehensive Coaching For
568 Government Jobs**

www.vedhikiasacademy.org



VEDHIK

IAS ACADEMY

The New Learning Mantra

START YOUR JOURNEY WITH THE BEST

**INDIA'S
TOP MOST
CIVIL SERVANTS
FOR COACHING**

www.vedhikiasacademy.org

Head Office:

Vedhik IAS Academy
Mercy Estate,
MG Road, Ravipuram,
Ernakulam-682 015,

Corporate office:

Vedhik IAS Academy
Samkalp Bhawan, Plot No.15,
Sector 4, Rama Krishna Puram,
New Delhi, Delhi-110022

Regional office

Vedhik IAS Academy
202, Raheja Chambers, 12,
Museum Road. Bangalore -
560001. Karnataka, India.

GCC Office:

Bobscoedu,

Bobsco Educational Solutions WLL
Office No: 201, Floor: 2
AL RAYA SHOPPING CENTRE WLL
Bldg. 517, Road 2408, Area 324,
Al Fateh, Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain
www.bobscoedu.com