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India hits back as Trump steps up tariff war

Tariffs 'paid by India' will be substantially raised as it keeps profiting from Russian oil: U.S. President

MEA says U.S. 'actively encouraged' Russian imports since war in Ukraine, points at EU's trade with Russia

It adds that Russian oil imports are to ensure 'affordable energy costs' for Indian consumer

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

Less than a week after he announced a 25% tariff on imports from India "plus a penalty", U.S. President Donald Trump on Monday once again raised the issue of India buying oil from Russia and profiting from it. He stated that he would be "substantially" raising the tariff "paid by India to the USA".

It is important to note that such tariffs are paid by importers in the U.S., rather than the country on which the tariffs are levied.

The Indian government hit back at Mr. Trump's statements and also criticism from European countries on India's trade with Russia, saying that such "targeting of India" was "unjustified and unreasonable". In a statement, the government pointed out that not only did the U.S.

encourage such trade previously, both the European Union and the U.S. continue to actively trade with Russia at levels significantly higher than India's.

Trump's remarks

"India is not only buying massive amounts of Russian Oil, they are then, for much of the Oil purchased, selling it on the Open Market for big profits," Mr. Trump posted on the social network Truth Social. "They don't care how many people in Ukraine are being killed by the Russian War Machine. Because of this, I will be substantially raising the Tariff paid by India to the USA. [sic]"

The Ministry of External Affairs responded to the statement, saying that the U.S. had previously "actively encouraged" the import of Russian oil.

"India has been targeted by the United States and the European Union for

importing oil from Russia after the commencement of the Ukraine conflict," the official spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs said. "In fact, India began importing from Russia because traditional supplies were diverted to Europe after the outbreak of the conflict. The United States at that time actively encouraged such imports by India for strengthening global energy markets stability."

The MEA's statement added that India's oil imports from Russia are meant to ensure "predictable and affordable energy costs" for the Indian consumer.

"They are a necessity compelled by the global market situation," it said. "However, it is revealing that the very nations criticising India are themselves indulging in trade with Russia. Unlike our case, such trade is not even a vital national compulsion."

They [India] don't care how many people in Ukraine are being killed by the Russian War Machine. Because of this, I will be substantially raising the Tariff paid by India to the USA

DONALD TRUMP, U.S. President



It is revealing that the very nations criticising India are themselves indulging in trade with Russia. Unlike our case, such trade is not even a vital national compulsion
MEA STATEMENT

The MEA said that the European Union in 2024 had a bilateral trade of €67.5 billion in goods with Russia, in addition to a trade in services estimated at €17.2 billion in 2023.

The U.S. President had on July 31 signed an executive order that authorised a 25% tariff on imports from India.

A day earlier, he had posted on Truth Social that he would be imposing this

tariff plus a penalty "because their [India's] tariffs are far too high, among the highest in the world, and they have the most strenuous and obnoxious non-monetary trade barriers of any country".

Apart from this, he also cited India's energy and military equipment purchases from Russia as an irritant.

Following this announcement, Union Minister of

Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal had informed both Houses of Parliament that the government was "studying the implications" of Mr. Trump's announcement, consulting all the relevant domestic stakeholders, and would "take all steps necessary to secure our national interest".

Trade with Russia

"This is significantly more than India's total trade with Russia that year or subsequently," the MEA added. "European imports of LNG [liquefied natural gas] in 2024, in fact, reached a record 16.5 mn tonnes, surpassing the last record of 15.21 mn tonnes in 2022."

Europe's trade with Russia includes not just energy, but also fertilizers, mining products, chemicals, iron and steel and machinery and transport equipment, the statement said.

"Where the United States is concerned, it continues to import from Russia uranium hexafluoride for its nuclear industry, palladium for its EV [electric vehicle] industry, fertilizers as well as chemicals," the MEA noted.

"In this background, the targeting of India is unjustified and unreasonable," it added. "Like any major economy, India will take all necessary measures to safeguard its national interests and economic security."

The 25% tariff places India at a relative disadvantage compared to some of its competitors such as Vietnam, Indonesia, Mexico, and the Philippines. Mr. Trump's new tariffs are expected to take effect from August 7.

INDIA AND THE TRUMP ERA

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'REJECT THREATS'

» PAGE 4



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U.S. Announces Tariffs

- Trump declared a 25% tariff + penalty on Indian imports over oil trade with Russia.

Tariff Clarification

- Tariffs are paid by U.S. importers, not India.

Trump's Criticism

- Accused India of profiting from Russian oil and ignoring Ukraine conflict.

India's Response (MEA)

- Called it "unjustified and unreasonable".
- Highlighted EU trade more with Russia than India.

India's Oil Trade Context

- Imports increased post-Ukraine war; U.S. earlier encouraged it.
- Ensures affordable energy for Indian consumers.

India's Official Stand

- Piyush Goyal: Govt studying impact, will protect national interest.

EU-Russia Trade Data (MEA):

- Goods (2024): €67.5 bn | Services (2023): €17.2 bn
- LNG imports (2024): 16.5 mn tonnes

U.S. Imports from Russia:

- Includes Uranium, Palladium, fertilizers, chemicals

Tariff Timeline & Impact

- Effective August 7; may disadvantage India vs. Vietnam, Mexico, etc.

MCQs for Practice

Consider the following statements:

- I. India has joined the Minerals Security Partnership as a member.
- II. India is a resource-rich country in all the 30 critical minerals that it has identified.
- III. The Parliament in 2023 has amended the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 empowering the Central Government to exclusively auction mining lease and composite license for certain critical minerals.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

1. (a) I and II only
2. (b) II and III only
3. (c) I and III only
4. (d) I, II and III

[PYQ 2025]



Bangladesh, a year after Sheikh Hasina's ouster

Bangladesh today is abysmally different from the trajectory promised to the people by Professor Muhammad Yunus when he was sworn in (August 8, 2024) as Chief Adviser of the Interim Government. Many myths have been shattered.

The first myth that has unravelled is that Sheikh Hasina's ouster was the result of a "spontaneous students' uprising". It is now accepted that the 'meticulously designed' regime change operation was the handiwork of the Jamaat-e-Islami (Jel), the radical Islamist political party that fought against the creation of Bangladesh in 1971. In 2024, as in 1971, the Jel was strongly supported by Pakistan, backed by key external powers including the United States and China. The Jel is the power behind the Chief Adviser, controlling every decision.

The second myth concerns the legitimacy and constitutional validity of the Yunus-led regime. On August 8, 2024 they took the oath of allegiance to the Constitution of Bangladesh. However, this Constitution has no provision for an interim government. Even though the Bangladesh High Court (on December 17, 2024) restored the system of caretaker government, the Yunus-led Interim Government cannot be considered a caretaker government. The Yunus regime has violated the mandated neutrality and non-party requirements of the caretaker government. Members of the Hizb-ut Tahrir, Islami Andolan Bangladesh, and Hefazat-e-Islam have been included as advisers in his regime. In a tweet (now deleted), one of the advisers expressed their desire to establish a caliphate in Bangladesh based on Sharia law, and even spoke about a civil war to achieve this goal. The strongly Islamist ideological leanings and objectives of those who hold the reins of power in Bangladesh have alienated them from the people.

An election delaying tactic

The third myth relates to the *raison d'être* of any interim government. Its mandate can only be to ensure that free, fair and inclusive elections are organised within the specified 90-day period, with the participation of all registered political parties. An interim regime is not authorised to take any major decisions, especially those with constitutional significance or implications. Such decisions can be taken only by an elected parliament.

Instead of preparing for elections, the Yunus-led interim regime has initiated a reform process, insisting that this must be completed before the elections. It has set up reform commissions for the Constitution, for electoral reforms, and for police reforms, among others. The Jel is the key protagonist of these reforms, which it hopes will boost its vote share far above the meagre 5% to 10% it has been receiving. This so-called reform process is merely an excuse to delay the elections, a step strongly opposed by the Army and by major political parties such as the Bangladesh Nationalist Party which are



Veena Sikri
is a former High Commissioner of India to Bangladesh

Public opinion appears to have turned against the Yunus interim regime — with growing economic distress, the shared refrain seems to be a yearning for the 'earlier and better times'

insisting that elections be held by December 2025. This issue is now rapidly coming to a head, and election dates may be announced very soon.

Led by the Jel, the interim regime is unleashing unspeakable violence on the people. Prime targets are the non-Muslim minorities (Hindus, Christians, Buddhists) as well as Muslim religious minorities (Sufis and Ahmadiyyas). Equally vicious has been the violence unleashed against Awami League members and their supporters. Every statue, every building, every institution associated with the Liberation War of 1971 has been destroyed.

Over the months, as this violence has continued unabated, with varying degrees of ferocity, a huge backlash has built up among the people. Awami Leaguers have been jailed in large numbers or just brutally slaughtered. In May 2025, all Awami League activities were banned. While Sheikh Hasina is being tried on charges of ordering attacks on students (during the unrest of July-August 2024), there is deliberate amnesia about the burning and looting (by the mobs) of 400 police *thanas* across Bangladesh, followed by the killing of policemen in the hundreds, even thousands, using these looted weapons. The decision by the interim regime to indemnify itself and all "the students and people who actively took part in the mass uprising of July-August" against harassment or arrest has been sharply criticised within and outside Bangladesh.

A party, its disconnect

The 'students' party, the National Citizen Party (NCP), formed in February 2025, is dubbed the King's Party, owing direct allegiance to Mr. Yunus. So far, the party has no legal status since it is not registered with the Election Commission. At first it included erstwhile members or sympathisers of the Islami Chhatra Shibir (students' wing of the Jel) and claims 'it was established to fight for the rights of the student community'. Yet, it has little or no following among university students. On July 16, 2025, NCP leaders held a rally in Gopalganj, the hometown of the Father of the Nation, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, with the reported intention of desecrating his mausoleum in Tungipara.

The NCP was strongly resisted by the local people, staunch supporters of the Awami League. The Bangladesh Army is said to have supported the NCP by firing on unarmed civilians, resulting in the loss of several lives. The Gopalganj incident has caused a furor, with dissatisfaction against the NCP and the Interim regime reaching new highs. A complaint has now been filed with the United Nations, describing this as a genocidal attack on the people of Bangladesh.

Important institutions of state such as the judiciary, the central bank and even the media have been compromised. In August 2024, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and the Governor of the Bangladesh Bank were surrounded by mobs and forced to resign. This pattern of mobocracy soon became the norm.

Strict media control has been ensured by peremptorily taking over media houses. Journalists have been imprisoned since the early days of the interim regime, many on charges of murder. Many have lost their jobs, and face penury. This massive clampdown on an otherwise vibrant and comparatively free media has allowed the interim regime to peddle its own version of events to the global media.

Economic distress, a patient India

However, it is difficult to hide the overwhelming economic distress being faced by the people. Growth rates have halved from the robust 6% and more per annum, that was the norm under Sheikh Hasina. Factories have shut down due to poor supply chain management, resulting in joblessness and hyper-inflation. In July 2025, Bangladesh Bank highlighted continuing macroeconomic challenges due to "persistent inflation, uncertainties associated with the forthcoming elections, slowing economic growth and stagnant private investment".

The economic distress is, in many ways, the direct result of the foreign policy goals set by the Yunus regime. As can be expected, the Jel is not averse to the moniker, '*client state of Pakistan*', that is increasingly used for Bangladesh. The events of July-August 2024 were preceded and accompanied by vicious anti-India propaganda. Harsh criticism of Sheikh Hasina as a 'fascist dictator' was invariably followed by blaming India for the state of affairs in Bangladesh. The mutually beneficial trade and economic partnership between these two neighbouring countries was criticised as being one-sided and unfair.

One year of this unrelenting barrage has now boomeranged on the Yunus regime. Public opinion has turned against it because, except for words, it has provided no succour to the people of Bangladesh. Across the nation, the shared refrain openly describes the 'earlier times' as 'being better', including the benefits to Bangladesh of their strong economic, trade and investment links with India.

India has shown a lot of patience in dealing with the interim regime. In August 2024, India had conveyed its willingness to continue with and build upon its links with Bangladesh. In April 2025, during the bilateral meeting with Mr. Yunus, Prime Minister Narendra Modi reiterated India's support for a democratic, stable, peaceful, progressive and inclusive Bangladesh, enunciating India's people-centric approach to the relationship. Unfortunately, the hand of friendship was rebuffed. Now, a new grouping of China, Pakistan and Bangladesh is sought to be created. Bangladesh must have early free, fair and inclusive elections under a new caretaker government. India is confident that the new elected government, one that truly reflects the wishes of the people of Bangladesh, will work to re-establish a cordial and mutually beneficial relationship with India.

Summary

Regime Change Background:

- On August 8, 2024, Prof. Muhammad Yunus took charge as Chief Advisor of the caretaker government, following the ouster of Sheikh Hasina.
- The transition was initially seen as a popular uprising led by students, but later revealed to be a planned regime change operation backed by Jamaat-e-Islami (Jel).

Constitutional Breakdown:

- Bangladesh's Constitution has no provision for a caretaker government, making the Yunus regime constitutionally invalid.
- The government has violated neutrality, with Jel loyalists in key positions.

Suppression & Violence:

- The regime has unleashed unspeakable violence on political opponents, students, and minorities.
- Liberation War symbols and institutions are being systematically destroyed.



Media Crackdown:

- There is a massive clampdown on media, with the regime preemptively taking over media houses and censoring dissent.

Electoral Delay & Power Extension:

- Elections have been delayed, and the regime seeks a referendum to extend its tenure.
- The Election Commission is filled with Jai loyalists, undermining credibility.

Economic Distress:

- Bangladesh is facing high inflation, rising unemployment, stagnant private investment, and an investor exodus.
- There is a dismantling of economic and democratic institutions.

India's Stand:

- India has taken a watchful and cautious approach, emphasizing support



EXPLAINED CONSERVATION

ATTEMPT TO SAVE RHINOS BY GIVING THEM RADIOACTIVE HORNS

ANAGHA JAYAKUMAR
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 4

FIVE RHINOS were administered radioactive isotope injections in the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve in South Africa last week as part of a novel anti-poaching campaign by the University of the Witwatersrand, supported by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

The so-called Rhisotope Project cost \$290,000 and underwent six years of intense research and testing. The researchers claim that the procedure has been proven to do no harm to the rhinos, while making their horn "useless" and "poisonous" to humans.

"We have demonstrated, beyond scientific doubt, that the process is completely safe for the animal and effective in making the horn detectable through international customs nuclear security systems," James Larkin, the project's Chief Scientific Officer, told the Associated Press.

How isotope tagging works

Through a non-invasive procedure, rhino horns are tagged with low doses of radioactive isotopes, allowing for their ready detection by radiation portal monitors (RPMs) already deployed at borders, ports, and airports worldwide to identify unauthorised nuclear materials.

Radioisotopes are the unstable form of an element that emit radiation to transform into a more stable form. The radiation can be traced and typically causes changes in the substance it falls upon.

To test this system, the researchers used 3D-printed rhino horns with identical



Radioactive isotopes are injected into rhino horns. Rhisotope Project

shielding properties to real keratin, the substance that makes up rhino horns. According to the university, the tests confirmed that individual horns could be detected inside full 40-foot shipping containers.

It also announced the results of the pilot phase undertaken last June, when it injected radioisotopes into 20 rhinos at the Waterberg Biosphere. A team from Ghent University, Belgium, monitored the health and conducted cytological examinations on 15 treated rhinos, comparing these results with five untreated animals. They found no damage.

Scale of the poaching crisis

According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature, the global rhino population, estimated to be around 500,000 at the start of the 20th century, has declined to 27,000 due to their poaching for horns. While the project is not a silver bullet to curb poaching, the researchers hope it will be a deterrent. It will certainly be less disruptive to rhino behaviour compared to dehorning, in which rhinos' horns are removed to deter poaching.

The Initiative:

- Under the Rhisotope Project, 5 rhinos were injected with radioactive isotopes in South Africa's Waterberg Biosphere.
- Led by University of the Witwatersrand, with IAEA support.

Purpose:

- Deter poaching by making horns traceable, useless, and even toxic to humans.
- Designed as an alternative to cruel dehorning.

Mechanism – How It Works:

- Low-dose radioactive isotopes are injected only into the horn (keratin-based).
- These emit harmless radiation detectable by Radiation Portal Monitors (RPMs) at borders/airports.
- Makes smuggling easily detectable and risky for buyers.

Why It's Harmless:

- Horns have no nerves or blood supply, so isotopes don't affect the animal's health.
- A study on 15 treated rhinos found no harm or cellular damage.

Poaching Context:

- Rhino population dropped from 50,000 to 27,000 (IUCN data).
- Horn demand remains high, especially in black markets in Asia.



Despite HC order, rural employment guarantee scheme remains stalled in Bengal

NEWS ANALYSIS

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

While directing the resumption of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) in West Bengal, a Division Bench of the Calcutta High Court, led by Justice T.S. Sivagnanam, on June 18, spoke about drawing a line between past actions and future steps to be taken to implement the scheme. The Division Bench, while resolving the three-year imbroglio, pointed out that the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) "does not envisage a situation where the scheme will be put into cold storage for eternity".

Despite the High Court order to resume the scheme from August 1, 100 days of guaranteed wage employment to rural households has yet to start, and it seems that neither the Centre nor the State is keen to resume it.

The funds have been stalled since March 2022, over allegations of corruption in the implementation of the scheme. The Centre invoked Section 27 of the MGNREGA, 2005, which allows for stoppage of funds for violation of rules in implementation of the scheme by the State. The suspension of MGNREGS has dominated politics of the State for three years.

Before the 2024 Lok Sabha election, Trinamool Congress leaders paraded MGNREGS beneficiaries in New Delhi and highlighted that the Centre was depriving

the workers of the State of their rightful dues. However, after the High Court's June 18 direction, the response of the ruling party has been lukewarm.

In several public gatherings between June 18 and August 1, West Bengal Chief Minister gave no hints on the resumption of the 100-day work. Instead, Ms. Banerjee spoke about Karmashree Prakalpa, a scheme aimed at providing at least 50 days of wage employment to each job card holder in every household in a financial year.

After the court's direction, Trinamool cannot use the "Centre's deprivation" card any more. However, it continues to highlight that the Centre owes ₹3,000 crore to the State under the scheme. The pending funds are related to past work and has nothing to do



Workers at Tuima village in West Bengal's Purulia district standing near an unfinished pond. The Centre had stopped the release of MGNREGS funds to the State from March 2022. FILE PHOTO

with the resumption of work under the scheme. Once work begins, payment receipts will be generated and the Centre will have to directly pay the workers. Several States have pending payments under MGNREGS, and pending wages is not a hindrance in starting new work under the Act.

The State government, however, is not accepting applications from individuals

seeking work. In the past six weeks, thousands of people have approached the authorities expressing their willingness to work under the scheme but there seems to be no clarity on whether MGNREGS will resume or not.

The Centre, on the other hand, has not also shown any willingness to comply with the High Court order and continues to hide behind Section 27

of the MGNREGS, blocking the release of funds, and thereby systematically depriving workers of their legal right to employment.

The West Bengal Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders, who have publicly opposed the resumption of the scheme, do not want the State government to get any allocation under the scheme before the Assembly polls.

Looming migrant crisis

Both Central and State governments are unwilling to resume the scheme even when West Bengal is facing a huge migrant crisis, with millions leaving the State in search of work.

While the fate of the scheme and workers hangs in balance, West Bengal is heading for Assembly polls in 2026. The resumption of the scheme could have

provided succour to millions of workers in the State but may no longer serve the political interests of the Trinamool and the BJP.

It was the Paschim Banga Khet Majoor Samity (PBKMS), a union of agricultural workers that approached the High Court seeking resumption of MGNREGS. The union put up a legal fight for three years to ensure that work under the scheme can start again.

The PBKMS blames "wilful inaction by both the governments" for not resuming the work. Demanding immediate implementation of MGNREGS in West Bengal, the PBKMS says that non-resumption of work is a "blatant non-compliance of a High Court order, and is illegal, unjust, and unacceptable".



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- **The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS)** in West Bengal has remained stalled since March 2022, following allegations of corruption in its implementation.
- Despite a Calcutta High Court order (June 2024) directing the resumption of the scheme and guarantee of 100 days of rural employment, neither the Centre nor the State has acted decisively to restart it.
- The Centre invoked Section 27 of the MGNREGA, 2005, which explicitly allows the Union government to stop the release of funds to a State if there is a violation of the Act's rules. This has resulted in sustained withholding of funds and wages, severely affecting rural workers' livelihoods.

- Ongoing blame-shifting between the State and Centre, with each accusing the other of non-compliance or political motives, has left workers without income and basic rights under the scheme.

Key Provisions (with Sections) of MGNREGA, 2005:

- **Section 3:** Legal right to at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment for every rural household whose adult member volunteers for unskilled manual work.
- **Section 7:** Entitlement to unemployment allowance if employment is not provided within 15 days of application.
- **Section 9, 16:** Decentralised planning and implementation through Gram Panchayats and local institutions.
- **Section 27:** Empowers the Central Government to withhold the release of funds if there is violation or non-compliance by the State in implementation of the scheme.

- **Section 17:** Mandatory social audits by the Gram Sabha to ensure transparency and accountability.
- **Section 13:** At least one-third of the beneficiaries must be women.
- **Section 15:** Wage payments must be made through bank or postal accounts for transparency.





Fears on ethanol-blended petrol 'largely unfounded', says Govt

SOUMYARENDRA BARIK & SUKALP SHARMA
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 4

AS INDIA pushes ahead with its ethanol-blended petrol programme—a key measure to cut emissions and reliance on energy imports—car owners, especially those who purchased their vehicles over a couple of years ago, feel they have been left in the lurch. In the recent past, a number of consumers have raised concerns about possible risks that the ethanol-blended petrol could pose to the engine, with apprehensions that in older cars, using blended fuel could negatively impact fuel economy, shorten the engine's lifespan, and even result in hefty repair bills. The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoPNG), however, has termed most such concerns as "largely unfounded" and not backed by "scientific evidence or expert analysis".

"...the narrative that #EthanolBlending in Petrol is harming vehicles or causing undue hardship to consumers is not based on real facts and lacks technical foundation. Ethanol blending is a forward-looking, scientifically supported, and environmentally responsible measure that brings multi-dimensional benefits to the nation," the MoPNG said in a detailed social media post on Monday. For India, which is the world's third-largest consumer of crude oil and depends on imports to meet over 85 per cent of its requirement of the commodity, increasing the use



Express File

of biofuels is a key tool towards two ends—reducing dependency on energy imports and limiting the carbon footprint of the country's rapidly growing energy use.

While newer cars, particularly those sold since 2023, are understood to be ready for E20 fuel, engines of cars made before that have not been specifically tuned for such blended fuel, and could be at a disadvantage in the long-term. An auto industry executive said that corrosion in the engine is of particular concern, which could be even more pronounced in the case of two wheelers. The executive explained that the calorific value of ethanol blended fuel is higher than gasoline, which means that more fuel is burnt for similar performance, which brings down the fuel economy of the vehicle.

These concerns have given way to several consumers questioning its impact on the longevity of their vehicles, while also flag-

ging the opacity at petrol pumps regarding the type of fuel they were getting, where no clear communication exists about the blend levels. They are also questioning why such blended fuel is not being made available at a discounted rate than unblended petrol.

The MoPNG acknowledged the drop in fuel economy due to the use of E20 fuel—blend of 80 parts petrol and 20 parts ethanol—but said that the decrease was only "marginal". India achieved 20 per cent ethanol blending just last month, five years ahead of the original target. The 20 per cent blending aim had earlier been advanced from 2030 to 2025-26, given the success the country tasted in achieving 10 per cent blending levels ahead of schedule.

"Ethanol, being lower in energy density than petrol, results in a marginal decrease in mileage, estimated at 1-2% for four-wheelers designed for #E10 and calibrated for #E20, and around 3-6% in others. This marginal drop in efficiency can be further minimized through improved engine tuning and use of E20-compatible materials, which leading automobile manufacturers have already adopted. In fact, the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) has confirmed that E20-compliant vehicles with upgraded components began rolling out from April 2023. Thus, the allegation that E20 leads to drastic drop in fuel efficiency is factually incorrect," the MoPNG said in its post on social media platform X.

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com

India's Ethanol Blending Mission:

- The Ethanol Blending Programme (EBP) aims to mix ethanol, a plant-based biofuel, with petrol to reduce emissions, enhance energy security, and cut the oil import bill.
- Ethanol is mainly produced from sugarcane, molasses, food grains, and agricultural residues.
- The programme was launched in 2003. The National Policy on Biofuels (2018, amended in 2022) advanced the 20% blending target from 2030 to 2025-26 due to rapid progress in earlier targets.
- India achieved 10% ethanol blending ahead of schedule and reached the 20% blending target (E20) in 2025, five years early.
- The mission generates benefits like lower carbon emissions, increased rural income, and greater energy self-reliance.

Nodal Ministry:

- The nodal ministry responsible for implementing and coordinating the Ethanol Blending Mission is the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoP&NG).



Consider the following statements :

Statement I :

Of the two major ethanol producers in the world, i.e., Brazil and the United States of America, the former produces more ethanol than the latter.

Statement II :

Unlike in the United States of America where corn is the principal feedstock for ethanol production, sugarcane is the principal feedstock for ethanol production in Brazil.

Which one of the following is correct in respect of the above statements?

(a) Both Statement I and Statement II are correct and Statement II explains Statement I

(b) Both Statement I and Statement II are correct but Statement II does not explain Statement I

(c) Statement I is correct but Statement II is not correct

(d) Statement I is not correct but Statement II is correct

[PYQ 2025]

Consider the following statements :

- I. Ethanol**
- II. Nitroglycerine**
- III. Urea**

Coal gasification technology can be used in the production of how many of them?

- (a) Only one**
- (b) Only two**
- (c) All the three**
- (d) None**

[PYQ 2025]



MAINS ENRICHMENT

Women's inclusion in armed forces a priority, says Rajnath

Officials highlight expanding opportunities for women across all three armed services; as per data, women make up 13.4% of IAF, 6.85% of Army, 6% of Navy, with numbers rising steadily since 2005

Saurabh Trivedi
NEW DELHI

The parliamentary consultative committee on Defence, headed by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, was briefed on the representation of women in the armed forces.

Mr. Singh spoke on the government's commitment to provide maximum representation to women in the forces.

As per the data from the Ministry of Defence (MoD), women form 13.4% of the Indian Air force workforce – the highest among all three services – while they make up 6.85% of the Army's workforce and 6% of the Navy's.

In 2024, there were a total of 1,735 women in the Army, 1,614 in the Air Force, and 674 in the Navy.



According to data, 13.4% women constitute the Indian Air force workforce, the highest among all three services. EMMANUAL YOGINI

In 2005, the figures were 767, 574, and 154, respectively.

Twelve branches in the Army are open to women officers, including combat. In the Navy, all branches are open for women officers except submarines. All

branches of the Air Force are open for women officers.

More to come

Asked about women's representation in the armed forces, a senior Defence Ministry official said that

they were opening more and more branches for women for all categories. Women are eligible for various roles, including technical and non-technical positions, and can join through different entry schemes. Most of the defence training institutes and academies have been opened for women.

Colonel Sofiya Qureshi of the Indian Army, who led the Operation Sindoor briefing along with Wing Commander Vyomika Singh of the Air Force, have become an inspiration for women aiming to join the armed forces.

Another senior defence officer said that women in the armed forces are doing remarkably well and their number is only going to increase in the future as the forces adopt a more gender neutral approach.

Landmark Supreme Court Judgment:

Secretary, Ministry of Defence vs Babita Puniya & Others (2020)

- Supreme Court granted permanent commission to women officers in the Indian Army (non-combat roles).
- Cited Article 14 & 15, ruling that gender-based discrimination is unconstitutional.
- Stated that “physiological features cannot be a ground for denial of equal opportunity.”

Women's Representation in Indian Armed Forces (as per 2024 data):

- Indian Air Force (IAF) – 13.4% (Highest among all three)
- Indian Army – 6.85%
- Indian Navy – 6%



DAILY MCQs FOR PRACTICE

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA):

1. The Act provides a legal guarantee of wage employment to every adult citizen of India.
2. The Centre can stop fund allocation to a state under specific provisions of the Act.
3. Delay in wage payment under MGNREGA is penalized by paying compensation to the worker.

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

Q2. In the context of international conservation efforts, which of the following best describes the innovation under the Rhisotope Project?

- A. Injection of radioactive material into the animal's horn to deter illegal trade
- B. Cloning endangered species in controlled biomes
- C. Using CRISPR gene editing to strengthen horn composition
- D. Implanting RFID chips in large mammals for cross-border tracking

Q3. With reference to the ethanol blending initiative in India, consider the following statements:

1. E20 Fuel is compatible with all vehicles currently on Indian roads.
2. Ethanol blending helps improve engine efficiency and performance.
3. The programme aims to reduce India's dependence on crude oil imports.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3



DAILY MCQs FOR PRACTICE

Q4. Which of the following was upheld by the Supreme Court in the Babita Puniya case?

- A. Women must be given reservation in the armed forces.
- B. Permanent commission must be extended to women officers in non-combat streams.
- C. Women should be inducted into the National Defence Academy.
- D. Gender-based restrictions in paramilitary forces are unconstitutional.

Q5. With reference to the recent trade tensions between India and the United States, consider the following statements:

1. The United States announced increased tariffs on India in response to its continued oil imports from Russia.
2. These tariffs are paid by the Indian government as a penalty under WTO rules.
3. India defended its oil imports by citing national energy security and affordability concerns.
4. The European Union imports more energy from Russia than India does.

Which of the above statements are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 1, 3 and 4 only
- C. 2, 3 and 4 only
- D. 1, 2, 3 and 4



MAINS QUESTION FOR PRACTICE

Q. Explain the constitutional perspectives of Gender Justice with the help of relevant Constitutional Provisions and case laws. (GS 2/250 Words)

[PYQ 2023]