

# DAILY NEWSP APER ANALYSIS

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**CHANAKYA IAS ACADEMY  
SECTOR 25 CHANDIGARH**

# Centre unveils policy to tackle terror threats

PRAHAAR states that India faces terrorist threats on all three fronts – water, land and air, capacities have been developed to protect critical sectors of the economy, it adds; policy aims at criminalising all terrorist acts and denying terrorists, their financiers and supporters access to funding, weapons and safe havens, says Union Home Ministry

Vijaita Singh  
NEW DELHI

The Union Home Ministry on Monday released the country's first-ever anti-terror policy, emphasising that other than terror sponsored from across the border, "criminal hackers and nation states continue to target India through cyber-attacks".

The policy – titled PRAHAAR – has been uploaded on the Ministry's website.

It states that India faces terrorist threats on all three fronts – water, land and air – and that capacities have been developed to protect critical sectors of the economy, including power, railways, aviation, ports, defence, space and atomic energy, from both state and non-state actors.

On December 23, 2025, that the National Counter Terrorism Policy and Strategy had been finalised and would be released soon. The policy underlines that "India does not link terrorism to any specific religion, ethnicity, nationality or civilisation".

**Cross-border terrorism**  
However, it notes that India has been affected by "sponsored terrorism" from across the border, with "jihadist terror outfits as well as their front organisations" continuing to plan, coordinate, facilitate and execute terror attacks.

"India has been on the target of global terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda and IS, which have been trying to incite violence in the country through sleeper cells," it says, adding that extremists operating from foreign countries



**Assessing threats:** India has been affected by "sponsored terrorism," the policy says.

have hatched conspiracies to promote terrorism. "Their handlers from across the border frequently use the latest technologies, including the use of drones, for facilitating terror-related activities and attacks in Punjab and J&K. Increasingly, terrorist groups are engaging organised criminal networks for

logistics and recruitment to execute and facilitate terror strikes in India," the policy says.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah had announced on November 7, 2024, that a National Counter Terrorism Policy and Strategy was being drafted to fight terrorism and its ecosystem.

Following the April 22, 2025, Pahalgam terror incident, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) conducted meetings with anti-terror units of all States and apprised them of the measures aimed at preventing and pre-empting such attacks.

The policy further states that for propaganda, communication, funding and guiding terror attacks, these terror groups use social media platforms as well as "instant messaging applications" and technological advancements such as encryption, dark web, crypto wallets etc, enabling them to operate anonymously.

"Disrupting/intercepting terrorist efforts to access and use CBRNED (Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, Explosive, Digital) materials remains a challenge for

Counter Terrorism (CT) agencies. The threat of state and non-state actors misusing drones and robotics for lethal purposes remains another area of concern," it flags. As a way forward, the policy suggests that to make appropriate cases against the perpetrators of acts of terrorism, there is a need to associate legal experts at every stage of investigation.

"Terrorist groups based outside (from abroad) nowadays use the infrastructure, logistics and terrain knowledge of local outfits for launching attacks. National actions, coupled with international and regional cooperation, are key elements in addressing the transnational terrorism challenge," it emphasises.

The MHA said Indian intelligence and law enforcement agencies have been

continuously working to prevent the recruitment of Indian youth by extremist groups. Underscoring the role of community and religious leaders, the policy states that moderate preachers and NGOs are engaged to spread awareness about the adverse consequences and impacts of radicalisation and extremist violence.

The Ministry said there is a move to establish a uniform anti-terrorism structure across States, as standardisation of processes and procedures would ensure similar and synergistic responses to terror attacks.

It said that the policy aims to criminalise all terrorist acts and deny access to terrorists, their financiers and supporters access to funds, weapons and safe havens.

5. Terror Financing & Logistics

  - Criminalisation of all terrorist acts.
  - Denial of access to funds, weapons and safe havens.
  - Focus on terror-organised crime nexus.

## Static Linkages

- Article 355 – Duty of Union to protect States against external aggression and internal disturbance.
- Police & Public Order – State List (Seventh Schedule).

## KEY HIGHLIGHTS

### Context

- The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has released India's first comprehensive National Counter Terrorism Policy and Strategy titled PRAHAAR.
- It follows recent terror incidents including the April 2025 Pahalgam attack and growing concerns over cross-border terrorism and cyber threats.
- The policy aims to create a standardised anti-terror framework across States.

### Key Highlights

#### 1. Nature of Threats Identified

- Cross-border sponsored terrorism.
- Global terror groups (e.g., al-Qaeda, IS).
- Cyber-attacks by nation-states and criminal hackers.
- Drone-enabled attacks in border states.
- Terror use of encryption, dark web, cryptocurrency.
- Risk of misuse of CBRNED (Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, Explosive, Digital) materials.

#### 2. Protection of Critical Infrastructure

Focus on safeguarding:

- Power and energy sector
- Railways and aviation
- Ports and maritime assets
- Defence, space and atomic energy

#### 3. Institutional Measures

- Uniform anti-terror structure across States.
- Standardised operating procedures (SOPs).
- Legal experts to be involved at every stage of investigation.
- Strengthening coordination between Central and State agencies.

#### 4. Counter-Radicalisation Strategy

- Engagement with religious leaders and NGOs.
- Preventing recruitment of youth by extremist organisations.

- Criminal Law & Procedure – Concurrent List.
- Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), 1967 – Primary anti-terror law.
- National Investigation Agency Act, 2008 – Central agency for terror offences.
- 2nd ARC Report on Combating Terrorism – Recommended institutional reforms including NCTC.
- FATF framework on terror financing.

### Critical Analysis

#### Prelims

- UAPA, NIA Act, Constitutional provisions (Art. 355, Seventh Schedule)

#### Significance

- First formal national doctrine integrating cyber, drone and CBRN threats.
- Moves towards standardised national response.
- Recognises evolving technology-enabled terrorism.

#### Challenges

- Federal concerns due to policing being a State subject.
- Balancing national security with civil liberties (Articles 14, 19, 21).
- Capacity gaps in cyber-forensics at State level.
- Coordination issues among multiple intelligence agencies.

### Way Forward

- Strengthen intelligence-sharing platforms (MAC, NATGRID).
- Improve cyber forensic and AI-based surveillance capacity.
- Judicial safeguards to prevent misuse of anti-terror laws.
- Enhance international cooperation against terror financing.
- Institutionalise community-based de-radicalisation programs.



**Tragic incident:** A health official collecting a blood sample from a person who consumed milk supplied by the vendor. [1]

## 'Adulterated milk' claims four lives in Andhra Pradesh

**T. Appala Naidu**  
RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM

Four elderly persons have died from acute renal failure after consuming adulterated milk in Rajamahendravaram City in Andhra Pradesh, the East Godavari district administration said on Monday.

Officials said 12 people, including the dead, had taken ill after consuming the milk. Eight victims are suffering from anuria (absence of urine), and are undergoing treatment and dialysis. Three of them are children aged below four and are critical, said doctors.

The deceased have been identified as N. Seshagiri-rao, 72, Radha Krishna Murthy, 74, Thadi Krishna-veri, 76, and Thadi Rama-ni, 58.

East Godavari District Collector Kirithi Chekuri said the victims consumed milk supplied by the same vendor, Addala Ganeswara Rao. The vendor, who procured milk from 46 dairy farmers and supplied to 106 families, has been detained.

"All the 12 persons are from Swaroop Nagar and Chowdeswari Nagar areas of Rajamahendravaram," Ms. Kirithi said.

"People in the age group of 50-70 and those below five years are prone to anuria. A State-level expert team has collected blood samples from 73 families who consumed milk supplied by the vendor. The samples have been sent to the forensic laboratory for tests," she said. Experts have also collected the fodder given to the cattle for tests, she said.

Superintendent of Police D. Narasimha Kishore said post-mortem reports, which are awaited, will establish the reasons that caused anuria and acute renal failure in the deceased.

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu announced an *ex gratia* of ₹10 lakh each for the families of the dead. He informed the Assembly that samples collected from the victims have been sent for detailed analysis.

Former Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy alleged that negligence in enforcing food safety norms has endangered public lives and demanded strict action against those responsible for the deaths. He urged the Health Department to ensure comprehensive medical care for those unwell.

- FSSAI National Milk Safety Survey (2018):
  - ~7% samples unsafe (contamination/adulteration).
- Food safety governed under:
  - Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006
  - Regulated by Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)
- Food adulteration is punishable with imprisonment and fine under FSS Act.

### Static Linkages

- Article 21 – Right to life (includes right to health – SC interpretation).
- Article 47 – Duty of State to improve public health.
- Adulteration of foodstuffs – Concurrent List (Seventh Schedule).
- National Health Mission (NHM).
- Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP).
- Consumer Protection Act, 2019 (Product liability).

### Critical Analysis

#### Governance Issues

- Weak enforcement at district level.
- Inadequate food testing infrastructure.
- Informal dairy supply chains difficult to regulate.

#### Public Health Concerns

- Vulnerable groups (elderly, children) disproportionately affected.
- Need for early detection and toxic surveillance.

#### Administrative & Ethical Concerns

- Accountability of food safety officers.
- Criminal negligence vs systemic failure.
- Duty of State under welfare framework.

### Way Forward

- Strengthen district-level food testing labs.
- Periodic mandatory testing of milk supply chains.
- Digital traceability in dairy procurement.
- Public awareness on milk adulteration detection kits.
- Strict enforcement under FSS Act.
- Integrate food poisoning alerts with IDSP.

## KEY HIGHLIGHTS

### Context of the News

- Four elderly persons died due to acute renal failure after consuming allegedly adulterated milk in Rajamahendravaram, East Godavari district, Andhra Pradesh.
- 12 persons fell ill; 8 suffering from anuria (absence of urine) and undergoing dialysis.
- Three children below four years are critical.
- Milk was supplied by a local vendor procuring from 46 dairy farmers and supplying to 106 families.
- Samples sent for forensic testing.
- ₹10 lakh *ex gratia* announced by State government.
- Raises concerns regarding food safety enforcement and public health governance.

### Key Exam-Relevant Points

- Anuria: Absence of urine output due to kidney failure; can result from toxic exposure.
- Possible adulterants in milk:
  - Urea
  - Detergents
  - Heavy metals
  - Pesticide residues

# Interfaith marriages not prohibited under new U.P. conversion law: HC

Allahabad HC orders police protection for 12 interfaith live-in couples, tells respondents to refrain from interfering with their private life; State argued that the relationships were unlawful

Ishita Mishra  
NEW DELHI



The HC said it does not view the petitioners through the lens of religion but as adults who have chosen to live together. FILE PHOTO

Stating that no one among the 12 interfaith live-in partners have converted from his/her religion and hence do not attract penalty under the anti-conversion law, the Allahabad High Court on Monday allowed police protection to the couples and asked the Uttar Pradesh government and private respondents to refrain from interfering with their life, liberty and privacy.

A Bench led by Justice Vivek Kumar Singh was hearing a batch of 12 writ petitions involving seven cases where Muslim women were living with Hindu men and five cases where Hindu women were living with Muslim men. The judge observed that the court did not view the petitioners through the lens of religion but as adults who had voluntarily chosen to live together peacefully for a considerable period.

"It is the bounden duty

of the state as per the Constitutional obligations cast upon it to protect the life and liberty of every citizen. Right to human life is to be treated on much higher pedestal, regardless of a citizen's religious belief. The mere fact that the petitioners are living in an interfaith relationship would not deprive them of their fundamental right as envisaged in the Constitution of India, being citizens of India. No discrimination can be made on the basis of caste, creed, sex or religion," the court said.

The State government, however, argued that the couples had failed to comply with Sections 8 and 9 of the Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Act, 2021, as no application for religious conversion had been submitted since the law came into force in November 2020. The State further contended that their relationship was unlawful and therefore not entitled to protection under the Act. Rejecting this argument,

the court observed that the anti-conversion law applies only when there is an actual conversion from one religion to another through misrepresentation, force, coercion, undue influence, allurement, fraud, or through marriage or a relationship in the nature of marriage. It noted that even interfaith marriages are not prohibited under the Act.

#### 'Freedom of choice'

"This court fails to understand that if the law permits two persons even of the same sex to live together peacefully, then neither any individual nor a family nor even the state can have objection to heterosexual relationship of two major individuals who out of their own free will are living together," the Bench said.

It said to disregard the choice of a person who is of the age of majority would not only be antithetical to the freedom of choice of a grown-up individual but also be a threat to the concept of unity in diversity.

## KEY HIGHLIGHTS

### Context

- The Allahabad High Court granted police protection to 12 interfaith live-in couples in Uttar Pradesh.
- The Court held that since no religious conversion had taken place, provisions of the Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Act, 2021 were not attracted.
- The State argued non-compliance with procedural provisions (Sections 8 & 9), but the Court rejected this.
- The Bench emphasized protection of life, liberty, privacy, and freedom of choice of consenting adults.

### Key Takeaways

- Live-in relationships between consenting adults are not illegal.
- Anti-conversion laws apply only when:
  - There is actual conversion, and
  - It is induced by force, fraud, coercion, misrepresentation, undue influence, or allurement.
- Interfaith marriage or relationship per se is not prohibited.
- State has a constitutional obligation to protect life and liberty.
- Fundamental Rights cannot be denied on the basis of religion.

## Static Constitutional Provisions

- Article 14 – Equality before law.
- Article 15 – Prohibition of discrimination.
- Article 19 – Freedom of expression and movement.
- Article 21 – Right to life and personal liberty (expanded interpretation).
- Article 25 – Freedom of conscience and religion.
- Judicial precedents:
  - Rev. Stanislaus v. State of MP (1977) – No fundamental right to convert another person.
  - Justice K.S. Puttaswamy (2017) – Right to privacy under Article 21.
  - Recognition of live-in relationships under judicial interpretation.

## Critical Dimensions

### Constitutional Angle

- Balance between Article 25 (religion) and Article 21 (personal liberty).
- Constitutional morality vs social morality.
- Scope of State's regulatory power.

### Governance Issues

- Risk of misuse of anti-conversion laws.
- Need for clarity in procedural provisions.
- Protection mechanisms for vulnerable couples.

## Way Forward

- Ensure anti-conversion laws are narrowly tailored.
- Prevent misuse through clear administrative guidelines.
- Strengthen police sensitization on Fundamental Rights.
- Promote constitutional awareness among citizens.

# WhatsApp tells SC it does not share data with Meta

Will fully comply with National Company Law Appellate Tribunal directions on user consent for sharing data with parent company, it says as both challenge imposition of penalty of ₹213.14 crore

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

The instant messaging platform WhatsApp maintained in the Supreme Court on Monday that it was not "quite right" to say the online entity was sharing data with other Meta platforms.

Appearing before a three-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, senior advocate Kapil Sibal, for WhatsApp and its parent company, Meta, said its technology was very clear and put a premium on privacy. "There is no question of violating the law," Mr. Sibal submitted.

He said the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023, comprehensively addressed the privacy concerns raised in the Supreme Court.

The court was hearing petitions filed by Meta and WhatsApp against a National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) decision to uphold a ₹213.14-crore penalty imposed by the Competition Commission of India (CCI).

The CCI had found WhatsApp's "take-it-or-leave-it" approach in its

## Privacy message

WhatsApp submits its view before SC on user consent and sharing of data with Meta

WhatsApp and Meta challenge NCLAT order upholding ₹213.14-crore penalty imposed by CCI

Case arises from CCI findings on WhatsApp's 2021 privacy policy

### DEFENDING STATEMENTS

WhatsApp denies improper sharing, cites enactment and DPDP Act

Company says it will follow NCLAT directions by March 16, 2026

CCI argued the matter also involves competition law and consumer protection

### KEY ALLEGATION

CCI found WhatsApp's 2021 privacy policy a "take-it-or-leave-it" practice

Regulator said users were forced to share data with Meta to keep using the app

Tribunal stressed user choice and consent for non-essential data use



had already been given a choice to opt in or out.

WhatsApp has filed a comprehensive affidavit explaining its technology of end-to-end encryption, following scathing oral remarks from the Bench in the previous hearing on February 3.

The Bench had cautioned that it would not permit the platform and Meta to breach the right to privacy of millions of their "silent consumers" in India through the sharing and commercial exploitation of personal data. It had even compared sharing of private data to a "decent way of committing theft". Though WhatsApp and Meta had protested that users could "opt out" of the data-sharing provision, the court had persisted in its criticism.

Senior advocate Madhavi Goradia Divan, for CCI, said there was also a competition law concern attached to the case.

"Data-sharing has many facets. One may be privacy and data protection. But there is another aspect, protecting market and consumer, which stands on a totally different footing," Ms. Divan submitted.

2021 privacy policy an abuse of its market dominance. It found the prior consent sought from users to share their data with Meta "manufactured". It had concluded that users were forced to share data for continued access to WhatsApp messaging services.

In an appeal last year, the NCLAT concluded that the "core principle is to remove exploitation by restoring user choice".

"The users can be given choice if users retain the right to decide what data is collected from them, for which purposes, and for how long. We had also stat-

ed in our findings that any non-essential collection or cross-use (like advertising etc.) can occur only with the concerned user's express and revocable consent," the NCLAT had observed.

On Monday, WhatsApp said it would fully comply with the NCLAT directions relating to user consent for sharing data with Meta under its controversial 2021 privacy policy by March 16, 2026. The tribunal had, however, found the CCI's five-year ban on sharing data for advertisement purposes "redundant", considering that the user

- WhatsApp's Argument:
  - End-to-end encryption protects private messages.
  - No unlawful sharing of message content.
  - DPDP Act provides comprehensive statutory framework for privacy protection.
- Competition Concern:
  - Data accumulation strengthens network effects and market dominance.
  - Privacy law and competition law address distinct but overlapping concerns.

## Static Linkages

- Article 21 – Right to Life and Personal Liberty.
- Justice K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India (2017) – Right to Privacy recognised as Fundamental Right.
- Doctrine of Proportionality.
- Competition Act, 2002 – Abuse of Dominance (Section 4).
- Role of statutory and quasi-judicial bodies.
- Data as an economic resource in digital markets.

## Critical Analysis

### Positives

- Strengthens user autonomy and informed consent.
- Recognises data concentration as a source of market power.
- Promotes accountability in dominant digital platforms.
- Aligns digital governance with constitutional privacy principles.

### Concerns

- Potential regulatory overlap between DPDP Act and Competition Act.
- Compliance burden on digital platforms.
- Jurisdictional issues in cross-border data flows.
- Difficulty in defining "essential" versus "non-essential" data.

## Way Forward

- Institutional coordination between CCI and Data Protection Board.
- Clear guidelines on consent architecture and data minimisation.
- Periodic digital market audits.
- Strengthening user awareness and digital literacy.
- Balanced regulatory approach to protect innovation and fundamental rights.

## KEY HIGHLIGHTS

### Context of the News

- Competition Commission of India (CCI) imposed a ₹213.14 crore penalty on WhatsApp for abuse of dominant position regarding its 2021 privacy policy.
- The penalty was upheld by the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT).
- WhatsApp and its parent company Meta challenged the decision before the Supreme Court of India.
- WhatsApp argued that concerns are addressed under the Digital Personal Data Protection Act (DPDP Act, 2023).
- The Supreme Court cautioned against breach of privacy and commercial exploitation of user data.

### Key Points

- CCI's Finding:
  - Abuse of dominant position under Section 4 of the Competition Act, 2002.
  - "Take-it-or-leave-it" consent mechanism.
  - Users allegedly compelled to share data with Meta for continued service access.
- NCLAT Observations:
  - Core principle: restore user choice.
  - Non-essential data sharing must require express and revocable consent.
  - Five-year advertisement data-sharing ban termed redundant due to opt-in/opt-out provision.

# The quiet crisis of adolescent mental health in India

The passing of three adolescent girls in Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh, earlier this month, is a case that deeply unsettled the public. The intense media attention reflects collective grief – but treating this tragedy as an isolated incident risks ignoring a larger reality. India faces a growing, largely neglected crisis in child and adolescent mental health, rooted in early vulnerability and worsened by an unregulated digital environment.

Mental health challenges are no longer limited to adults or older teens. Clinicians increasingly see anxiety, depression, attention disorders and behavioural issues in much younger children. Yet, many families, schools and even parts of the health care system still view these as “adult issues”. In fact, emotional and behavioural disorders can appear as early as four or five years of age. Early trauma, neglect and chronic stress can disrupt emotional and cognitive development, often resurfacing with greater intensity during adolescence.

These conditions have also grown more complex. Where children showed a single diagnosis, comorbidities are now common – attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) with anxiety, depression with compulsive digital use, learning difficulties with emotional distress – making early recognition crucial.

**The extent of the problem**  
Population level data mirrors what clinicians observe daily. Findings from the National Mental Health Survey and subsequent studies suggest that between seven per cent to 10% of Indian adolescents have diagnosable mental health conditions, and five per cent to seven per cent of school aged children have ADHD. Yet early signs – withdrawal, irritability, sudden behavioural changes – are often dismissed, leading to academic, social and long term emotional harm. India faces an acute shortage of trained child and adolescent mental health professionals. With fewer than 10,000 psychiatrists for a population exceeding 1.4 billion – and only a small fraction specialising in child mental health – the gap is stark. Shortages of clinical psychologists, child psychologists and psychiatric social workers further strain an already fragile system. Families are left to navigate fragmented care largely on their own.

Childhood vulnerability has been amplified by a transformed digital landscape. The rise in mental health concerns parallels the spread of smartphones and low-priced internet data, now used by over 800 million Indians – many of them children. The COVID-19 pandemic further embedded screens into daily life including education, recreation and social interaction.

With schoolwork, communication and entertainment all on the same device, boundaries have blurred. Internet addiction which is marked by loss of control, irritability, sleep disruption and social withdrawal, is now a routine clinical concern.

As early as 2019, the World Health



**Dr. Chandrakant Labarhya**  
is a practicing cardio-metabolic physician, health policy expert and a specialist in parenting and child development



**Dr. Deepak Gupta**  
is a leading child and adolescent psychiatrist

Organization issued guidelines and had cautioned against excessive screen exposure among children and adolescents, highlighting its adverse effects on sleep, attention, emotional regulation and overall wellbeing. These recommendations predated the pandemic. It is important to understand that the excessive screen use does not cause neurodevelopmental conditions such as ADHD or autism spectrum disorders. However, it can significantly exacerbate symptoms, delay diagnosis and displace the human interaction essential for healthy brain development during periods of heightened neuroplasticity. In vulnerable children, this displacement can have lasting consequences.

Against this backdrop, parents and families have to assume a central role. They are not merely caregivers but a child's first mental health champions – as the earliest observers of emotional change and the most consistent source of psychological safety. Trauma-informed parenting, which recognises how stress, loss and adversity shape behaviour, must extend beyond clinical settings into everyday life. Listening without judgement, noticing changes in sleep, mood or social engagement, and seeking help early can dramatically alter outcomes.

Support groups are proven to further strengthen this protective environment. Parent support groups reduce isolation, normalise help-seeking and enable shared learning. Adolescent peer support groups provide safe spaces for emotional expression, resilience-building and the development of coping skills. Evidence consistently shows that such collective, community-based approaches are more effective than isolated, clinic-centred interventions.

**Schools are a weak link**  
Schools, however, remain a critical weak link. Academic performance continues to dominate institutional priorities, often at the expense of emotional wellbeing. Examinations, rankings and competition define school culture, while structured attention to emotional regulation, stress management and happiness remains limited. This imbalance is neither benign nor sustainable. Mental wellbeing is foundational to learning, creativity and long-term productivity; without it, academic success is fragile and transient.

A further challenge lies in the gap between evidence and practice. India's research base on child and adolescent mental health, digital behaviour and early intervention has grown steadily. Yet, translation into routine care remains slow. Paediatricians – often the first point of contact for families – must routinely inquire about emotional wellbeing, sleep patterns, screen use and peer relationships, and not just physical growth. Teachers, counsellors, psychologists and all professionals working with children need structured training to identify early signs of mental health problems and internet related harms. Stigma continues to delay care, with

families often seeking help only during crises. In today's context, child and adolescent mental health is intricately linked to social media and internet use. These concerns were explicitly acknowledged in India's Economic Survey 2025-26, released in January 2026, which highlighted rising mental health challenges among young people and proposed a range of preventive strategies. Several Indian States, drawing on precedents in Australia, France and South Korea, are considering regulatory steps to limit adolescent social media use. This is an idea whose time has come, provided it is implemented thoughtfully, alongside education and support rather than punitive controls.

**Actions to implement**  
Policy and programmatic action must now align with reality. India can strengthen existing platforms – the National Mental Health Programme, school health services under Ayushman Bharat – health and wellness centre initiative, and tele-mental health initiatives – by introducing routine school-based screening, training teachers and frontline workers in early identification of child and adolescent mental health issues, and reinforcing referral pathways. Earmarked funding for child mental health initiatives, clear guidelines on digital use in schools, and affordable community-based counselling, especially for low- and middle-income families, are urgently needed. Implementation, however, faces practical hurdles. Stigma surrounding mental health remains pervasive, and child psychiatry carries an even heavier burden of fear and misunderstanding. Concerns about labelling, judgement and long term consequences often delay help-seeking until distress escalates into crisis. Normalising conversations around mental health within families, schools and health care systems is not optional; it is a public health imperative.

The Ghaziabad case must not remain just a headline. Preventing similar tragedies requires coordinated action between schools, paediatricians, mental health professionals, and communities. Even modest, timely interventions can change developmental paths. While telepsychiatry and digital platforms have expanded reach, access remains unequal; extending these services to underserved families, alongside investment in training and interdisciplinary care, must be a priority.

Parents need guidance on early warning signs and healthy digital use. Schools should make mental wellbeing part of daily learning. Paediatricians must screen for emotional and behavioural issues, and community support networks strengthened. Policy must treat mental health as central to child development.

Equally important is a need to shift in what we value as outcomes. Childhood should foster wellbeing, resilience, and connection – not just competitiveness. Neglecting it now will carry far higher social and economic costs later.

## Static Linkages

- Early childhood = period of high neuroplasticity.
- Article 21 – Right to life includes dignity and mental wellbeing.
- Article 47 – Duty of State to improve public health.
- Human capital formation depends on health and education.
- Preventive healthcare reduces long-term fiscal burden.
- Social stigma affects access to healthcare.

## Critical Issues

### Structural Gaps

- Acute shortage of mental health professionals.
- Weak school-based emotional support systems.
- Academic-centric education culture.
- Poor referral mechanisms.

### Digital Concerns

- Excessive screen time → sleep disturbance, poor attention, emotional dysregulation.
- Internet addiction emerging as behavioural disorder.
- Cyberbullying and social comparison pressures.

### Governance Challenges

- Fragmented implementation of NMHP.
- Urban-rural access disparity.
- Budgetary constraints.
- Social stigma delaying early intervention.

## Way Forward

- Institutionalize school-based mental health screening.
- Mandatory training for teachers and frontline workers.
- Strengthen NMHP and integrate with Ayushman Bharat Health & Wellness Centres.
- Expand Tele-MANAS to rural and underserved areas.
- Develop clear digital usage guidelines in schools.
- Increase funding and seats in child psychiatry training.
- Promote parent and peer-support networks.
- Behavioural change campaigns to reduce stigma.

## KEY HIGHLIGHTS

### Context of the News

- The recent deaths of three adolescent girls in Ghaziabad (Uttar Pradesh) brought national attention to child and adolescent mental health vulnerabilities.
- The incident reflects a broader rise in anxiety, depression, ADHD, and digital addiction among young people.
- Economic Survey 2025–26 highlighted growing mental health challenges linked to excessive social media and screen exposure.
- India faces a significant shortage of trained child and adolescent mental health professionals.

### Key Facts & Data

- National Mental Health Survey (MoHFW):
  - 7–10% of adolescents suffer from diagnosable mental disorders.
  - 5–7% of school-aged children have ADHD.
- India has <10,000 psychiatrists for 1.4+ billion population; very few specialize in child psychiatry.
- WHO (2019) guidelines cautioned against excessive screen time in children.
- Tele-MANAS launched under National Tele Mental Health Programme to expand access.
- Public health is a State subject (List II, Seventh Schedule).
- Mental Healthcare Act, 2017 recognizes the right to access mental healthcare services.

Families, schools and policymakers must prioritise youth mental wellbeing

# India's energy shift through the green ammonia route

At the inaugural session of the India Energy Week (IEW), in January 2026, Prime Minister Narendra Modi positioned India's ambitions at the centre stage of the global energy discourse, highlighting investment opportunities worth \$500 billion across the sector. As India raises its ambition from energy security to energy independence, the affordability of clean energy such as green hydrogen and its derivatives is critical to the long-term competitiveness of India's energy transition. But from fertilizers to clean energy and marine fuel, there are now green ammonia applications which are wide-ranging. Green ammonia – produced by combining nitrogen with green hydrogen – is currently leading in the adoption of green hydrogen, with its strategic adoption advanced across regions such as the European Union (EU), India and South Korea.

Aggregated procurement mechanisms are starting to lay the foundation for a global green ammonia market. Some noteworthy examples include H2Global's tender of green ammonia under the EU's hydrogen import strategy, South Korea's Clean Hydrogen Portfolio Standard (CHPS) tender for clean ammonia procurement as a bulk fuel, and the recent tender concluded by the Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI) under the Strategic Interventions for Green Hydrogen Transition (SIGHT) programme of India's National Green Hydrogen Mission.

**Green ammonia auction**  
Compared to these global procurement practices, India's green ammonia auction under SECI demonstrates broader market participation, attracting 15 bidders and resulting in seven unique successful awardees. Under the SIGHT programme, SECI floated a tender in June 2024 for an aggregated demand of up to 724,000 tonnes of green ammonia annually across 13 fertilizer plants in India. These tenders concluded

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## The country's

green ammonia auction model has the potential to redefine global standards for clean energy adoption

in August 2025, and offered a 10-year, fixed-price offtake agreements to successful bidders. This clarity in price and offtake provided producers with the market certainty required for investment. The auctions established a significant breakthrough in cost-competitive green ammonia procurement, setting new global benchmarks, almost 40%-50% less than the prices from the H2Global auction

The tender process faced multiple extensions and revisions, primarily to resolve concerns around risk allocation, payment security, and clarity on offtake and pricing conditions, raised by both project developers and offtakers. These refinements successfully addressed concerns, leading to a balanced win-win framework for all stakeholders.

In this auction, seven bidders secured a total of 13 delivery contracts for green ammonia. Notably, one company won six contracts for 3,70,000 tonnes/year. These contracts include production subsidies of ₹8.82 a kilogramme, ₹7.06 a kg, and ₹5.3 a kg for the first three years and a 10-year fixed price supply agreement to existing fertilizer manufacturers in India.

The discovered prices of green ammonia across these tenders range from ₹49.75 and ₹64.74/kg (\$572 and \$744 a tonne). In India, the grey ammonia price is as high as \$515 a tonne. When factoring in the newly discovered price of green ammonia, supported by longer-term contracts, the cost gap has significantly narrowed.

## On delivery and transportation

Notably, a standout feature of SECI's tender is the pre-identification of delivery points, as most fertilizer plants where the green ammonia is to be delivered are located near coastal areas, enabling the transportation of green ammonia through shipping as well. The contracted volumes of green ammonia contribute to approximately 30%

of the total ammonia being imported, offering price predictability and greater insulation from global gas market volatility, currency risks and geopolitical pressures. In locations where grey ammonia costs are higher, green ammonia procurement increases its appeal for scale-up.

## Propelling the momentum

India's approach is increasingly shaping the clean ammonia landscape worldwide, owing to its combination of low renewable energy costs, large-scale logistics, robust contract design and targeted incentives. As more countries seek reliable clean ammonia imports to decarbonise industry, power and transport, India's successful auction model is well placed to shape emerging global market structures and accelerate adoption at scale.

However, sustaining the momentum created by India's green ammonia auctions will require coordinated and sustained action from policymakers, project developers and financiers. Developers must focus on strong technical and financial due diligence, integrate hybrid renewable systems with storage, and adopt transparent monitoring frameworks to ensure long-term operational viability. Policymakers, in turn, need to provide stable and harmonised regulations on grid access, banking and incentives, while strengthening safety standards and aligning certification frameworks with evolving global norms.

Long-tenor, blended finance facilities, backed by extended offtake agreements and dedicated risk-mitigation instruments, can further enhance project bankability and crowd in private capital. Together, these measures can reinforce investor confidence, accelerate scale-up, and firmly position India not just as a participant but also as a global leader in clean ammonia markets.

The views expressed are personal

## KEY HIGHLIGHTS

### Context of the News

- At India Energy Week (January 2026), Prime Minister Narendra Modi highlighted \$500 billion investment opportunities in India's energy sector.
- Under the National Green Hydrogen Mission (2023), the Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI) conducted a green ammonia tender under the SIGHT Programme.
- Aggregated demand: 7.24 lakh tonnes per annum across 13 fertiliser plants.
- 10-year fixed-price offtake agreements signed (auction concluded in 2025).
- Prices discovered were 40–50% lower than comparable global benchmarks.

### Key Points

- Green Ammonia: Produced by combining nitrogen (from air) with green hydrogen (hydrogen produced via electrolysis using renewable energy).
- Used in: Fertilisers (urea), shipping fuel, power generation, hydrogen carrier.
- Discovered prices: ₹49.75–₹64.74/kg (\$572–\$744/tonne).
- Grey ammonia (gas-based) price: ~\$515/tonne.
- Production-linked incentive support: ₹8.82/kg → ₹7.06/kg → ₹5.3/kg (declining support for initial years).
- Replaces ~30% of India's imported ammonia.
- Linked to India's target of 500 GW non-fossil capacity by 2030 and Net Zero by 2070.

### Static Linkages

- Electrolysis process (NCERT Chemistry – Electrochemistry).

- Ammonia (NH<sub>3</sub>) production via Haber-Bosch process (Industrial chemistry).
- Fertiliser subsidy burden (Economic Survey).
- Energy security and import dependence (~85% crude oil imports).
- Updated NDC commitments (UNFCCC submission, 2022).
- Renewable energy expansion under MNRE schemes.

### Critical Analysis

#### Positives

- Enhances energy independence.
- Reduces natural gas import vulnerability.
- Provides long-term price certainty via 10-year contracts.
- Positions India as potential global export hub.
- Aggregated procurement reduces cost through economies of scale.

#### Challenges

- High capital cost of electrolysers.
- Renewable intermittency & storage gaps.
- Water availability issues for electrolysis.
- Need for global certification alignment.
- Risk of subsidy-driven market distortion.

### Way Forward

- Strengthen domestic electrolyser manufacturing (PLI alignment).
- Develop green hydrogen/ammonia hubs near renewable clusters.
- Improve port and shipping infrastructure.
- Promote blended finance & risk mitigation instruments.
- Harmonise standards with EU and global markets.

# AI for all

The AI Impact Summit was a sign of things to come in India

The attendance at the AI Impact Summit, in New Delhi, showed an extreme enthusiasm for Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies by digitally connected Indians. While statistics shared by AI firms have frequently cited India as the biggest user base outside the U.S., the crowds over the week were the biggest indicator of just how keen many Indians are to adopt this technology. At its core, the summit was a continuation of a series of annual multilateral discussions on AI, and 89 countries have signed a declaration laying out a voluntary set of commitments to share knowledge on AI democratisation. The summit's context comes with foreboding challenges for India: namely, deploying and diffusing a technology whose capital and infrastructure reside abroad, and finding a place in the global AI ecosystem that will place Indians well in the economic transformations that this technology's adoption promises. India's data centre capacity is growing healthily, but the AI moment calls for further momentum, a difficult task when the costs of graphics processing units (GPUs) driving AI push up the cost of domestic deployment so much, not to mention the additional electrical capacity that must be built. A national strategy that relies overwhelmingly on becoming a hub for the deployment of models, with less emphasis on their training and finetuning, could pose risks; after all, with fewer labour costs, the advantage that India has will be smaller than in the ITeS era.

On the international cooperation front, it is disappointing that India has so eagerly enabled the U.S.'s hands-off impulses for AI. This is a technology with enormous scope for economic and social disruption. Countries must use the annual AI forum to collectively build tools and safety standards that can exercise actual leverage over how LLMs diffuse throughout society. Leadership of the Global South entails empowering countries that are individually vulnerable to collateral damage in an era of great power rivalries. AI is increasingly defining that era more and more acutely. Consensus at all costs is not the appropriate approach. As a country of enthusiastic AI adopters, India has the leverage and capacity to articulate an optimistic but prudent way forward for AI governance, and the summit declaration showed no signs of this power. The summit's central pillar remains an important one: for AI to be a net good, its capabilities need to be democratised. As India closes its digital divide, there cannot be an inference gap. If the summit made anything clear, it was that India is as capable of organically contributing to worldwide growth as it has the capacity, should it choose, to be a force to shape its orderly growth.

## KEY HIGHLIGHTS

### Context of the News

- The AI Impact Summit (New Delhi, 2026) saw participation from 89 countries signing a voluntary declaration on AI democratisation and knowledge-sharing.
- India emerged as one of the largest AI user bases outside the U.S., reflecting rapid digital adoption.
- Debate centred around:
  - Infrastructure dependence (GPUs, semiconductor supply chains).
  - India's strategic positioning in AI value chain (deployment vs model training).
  - Global AI governance and Global South leadership.

### Key Points

- National Strategy for AI (2018) by NITI Aayog – Vision: “AI for All”.
- IndiaAI Mission under Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology – aims to build compute capacity, datasets, skilling.
- AI training requires high-performance GPUs (parallel processing architecture).

- Data centres → high electricity consumption → energy security implications.
- Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 – governs data processing.
- Semiconductor push under India Semiconductor Mission.

### Important Concepts

- Artificial Intelligence → Machine-based systems performing tasks requiring human intelligence.
- Comparative Advantage → India's labour-cost advantage may reduce in capital-intensive AI ecosystem.
- Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) → Aadhaar, UPI, ONDC as innovation enablers.
- Data Sovereignty → Control over citizens' data within national jurisdiction.
- Multilateralism → Cooperative global governance framework.

### Critical Analysis

#### Opportunities

- Large domestic market → bargaining power in global AI ecosystem.
- Strong DPI model → scalable AI deployment.
- Potential Global South leadership in AI governance.
- Economic transformation in health, agriculture, education.

#### Challenges

- Heavy dependence on imported GPUs and advanced chips.
- High capital and energy costs of AI infrastructure.
- Risk of becoming only a “deployment hub” rather than innovation hub.
- Voluntary global AI norms lack enforceability.
- Risk of widening digital divide (“Inference Gap”).

### Way Forward

- Build sovereign compute infrastructure (public-private partnerships).
- Promote indigenous foundational model training.
- Integrate renewable energy in data centres.
- Create binding AI safety and ethics frameworks.
- Skilling initiatives for AI workforce.
- Balance innovation with privacy and constitutional safeguards.

## Stick together

India and Brazil have realised the importance of their groupings

**B**razilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's India visit last week sent important messages for both India-Brazil ties, and for solidarity in the developing world, as two Global South powers focused on global governance and leadership. After his talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India and Brazil agreed to try and double trade to \$30 billion by 2030, and signed agreements on critical minerals, steel mining, and digital cooperation to diversify beyond China-led supply chains. Mr. Lula, along with French President Emmanuel Macron, was among about 20 leaders at India's AI Impact Summit and was later accorded a state visit. The 80-year-old Brazilian President's presence was important, as he faces elections later this year, which may make it difficult for him to attend India's BRICS summit if it coincides with his campaigning for a fourth term. It also came amidst fresh turmoil over U.S.-imposed trade tariffs, after the American Supreme Court struck down U.S. President Donald Trump's rationale for the reciprocal tariffs. India and Brazil were both the highest taxed countries by the U.S. – 50% tariffs each – and both faced further possible tariffs over BRICS ties, Iran trade, and Russian oil imports. India and Brazil are also key members of the BRICS grouping of developing nations, the India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA), G-4 with Germany and South Africa on UNSC reform, and co-founders of the biofuel alliance for alternative energy; each of these has faced challenges from Mr. Trump's policies on trade, territorial sovereignty, multilateralism and the UN, and fossil fuels. Amid such uncertainty, Mr. Modi and Mr. Lula reaffirmed their commitment to protecting the multilateral order.

Before leaving India, Mr. Lula, who is set to visit Washington next month, did not mince words while speaking to journalists about the challenges posed by the U.S. government. As a former trade union leader, he said he believed that the only way of tackling geopolitical uncertainty unleashed by the U.S. was for countries to "unite", rather than cutting deals individually with Washington, which leave smaller nations at a disadvantage. The words are particularly important for both Delhi and Brasilia, as both have negotiated with the Trump administration on tariffs, but have not so far signed trade deals with the U.S. The U.S. court ruling offers an opportunity to reset the terms of the agreements, and it is significant that New Delhi has postponed a meeting of trade negotiators this week to give the U.S. and India time to assess the ruling. India and Brazil, and their developing world partners, should coordinate the next steps and stay engaged with Washington. Mr. Lula's warning is clear: it is easy to break a single stick, but far more difficult to do so if the sticks are bundled tightly together.

## KEY HIGHLIGHTS

### Context of the News

- President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva visited India and held talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- Both countries agreed to double bilateral trade to \$30 billion by 2030.
- Agreements signed in:
  - Critical minerals
  - Steel and mining
  - Digital cooperation
- Visit occurred amid:
  - 50% U.S. tariffs imposed on India and Brazil.
  - U.S. Supreme Court striking down tariff rationale under IEEPA.
- Leaders reaffirmed commitment to multilateralism and Global South coordination.
- Both are key members of BRICS, IBSA, and G4.

### Key Points

#### Trade & Economy

- Current trade: ~ \$15 billion.
- Target: \$30 billion by 2030.

- Trade basket:
  - India imports crude oil, gold, soy oil.
  - India exports pharmaceuticals, chemicals, machinery.
- Focus on supply chain diversification beyond China.

#### Strategic Sectors

- Critical minerals: Lithium, rare earths (EVs, semiconductors, renewable energy).
- Biofuels:
  - Brazil: Global ethanol leader.
  - India: E20 blending target by 2025–26 (National Biofuel Policy).
- Digital & AI cooperation: Participation in AI Impact Summit.

#### Geopolitical Context

- High U.S. tariffs affecting both countries.
- Concerns over BRICS expansion, Russia oil trade, Iran trade.
- Lula's call for "bloc-based negotiation" to counter unilateralism.

#### Static Linkages

- Article 51: Promotion of international peace and security.
- WTO Principles:
  - Most Favoured Nation (MFN).
  - Rules-based multilateral trade.
- South-South Cooperation doctrine.
- Strategic Autonomy in India's foreign policy.
- Multipolar World Order concept.
- Energy security and ethanol blending (Economic Survey references).

#### Critical Analysis

##### Significance

- Strengthens Global South leadership.
- Enhances coordination in BRICS and IBSA.
- Promotes diversification of mineral and energy supply chains.
- Supports push for UNSC reform via G-4.
- Counters protectionism through multilateral engagement.

##### Challenges

- Divergences within BRICS.
- Limited complementarities in trade structure.
- Risk of secondary sanctions.
- Balancing U.S. relations with BRICS commitments.
- Global trade uncertainty due to rising protectionism.

#### Way Forward

- Institutionalise India–Brazil annual strategic dialogue.
- Expand cooperation in green hydrogen and renewables.
- Enhance private sector investment and value-added trade.
- Coordinate at WTO to defend developing country interests.
- Maintain strategic balance between U.S., BRICS, and Global South partners.
- Strengthen critical mineral partnerships under national missions.

# IDFC First staff plotted with outsiders in ₹590 cr. fraud'

Isolated case involved one branch and a Haryana government entity, recovery process initiated says CEO: bank well-capitalised to absorb shock, but magnitude of the issue is 'disturbing'

Lal Tendu Mishra  
MUMBAI

IDFC First Bank employees had perpetrated a ₹590 crore bank fraud through a 'traditional method' by colluding with external parties using forged physical cheque transactions, the private sector bank's MD and CEO V. Vaidyanathan said on Monday, a day after the bank reported the matter to the stock exchanges.

However, he said this was a "specific, isolated case involving one branch in Chandigarh and one client group, a Haryana Government entity, and not system-wide". He said no senior management staff of the bank was involved in the fraud and that the recovery process had been initiated. Four bank staff had been suspended.

"It's a case of employee fraud and external parties are involved. The bank has all the systems in place, but in this case it's not an electronic transfer and it's not a digital fraud. It's an older, traditional kind of

## In the red

IDFC First Bank stock tanked 16% a day after the ₹590 cr. fraud involving the bank's staff came to light

• Not digital fraud, but 'traditional kind' in connivance with employees, says MD

• Discrepancy comprises ₹490 cr. identified after reconciliation, ₹100 cr. self-identified via internal checks

• Lender to make provisions during this quarter, 'will still be profitable'



fraud in connivance with employees. It is a case of collusion," Mr. Vaidyanathan told analysts over an investor conference call. He said the bank had initiated necessary steps including police complaint to deal with the matter, first time in its 10-year history. It has also appointed KPMG as independent forensic auditor to detect the modus operandi.

The report is expected in four to five weeks, he said. Assuring investors and customers that a proper investigation would be conducted, Mr. Vaidyanathan said the bank was well capitalised to "bear

the shock". "The bank is well capitalised and profitability is in positive territory. As far as the bank is concerned, it is now financially very strong but the magnitude of the issue has disturbed us. We will take provisions for this during this quarter. Despite this hit, we will still be profitable," he emphasised.

The bank has been making a quarterly profit of about ₹500 crore. He said the discrepancy of ₹590 crore comprised ₹490 crore that was identified after reconciliation and ₹100 crore of 'self identified' one through internal checks, he said, declining

to disclose the timeline of the fraud. The MD said the bank would recover ₹35 crore from Employee Dishonesty Insurance. The fraud came to light when the Haryana government department concerned reached out to the bank asking it to close its accounts and transfer funds to another bank.

In the process, differences were observed between the balance in the accounts and the balance mentioned by the Haryana government entities holding the accounts.

It came to light that the entities had not issued such forged cheques which were cleared by the bank officials to outsider third party accounts in other banks. As news spread, the bank's stock fell 20%, but closed with a loss of 16.18% at ₹70.04 on the BSE.

The RBI is also watching the development, Governor Sanjay Malhotra said. Meanwhile, the Haryana government de-empowered IDFC First Bank and AU Small Finance Bank after the fraud came to light.

## Static Linkages

- RBI's powers under Banking Regulation Act, 1949.
- Fraud risk classification: Credit risk vs Operational risk vs Market risk.
- Basel III norms – Capital adequacy for operational risk.
- Corporate Governance principles – Accountability & internal controls.
- Role of statutory and forensic audits.
- Financial Stability and depositor confidence.
- Public fund management and fiduciary responsibility.

## Critical Issues

1. Governance Gaps
  - Failure of internal controls despite digitization.
  - Weak segregation of duties at branch level.
2. Regulatory Oversight
  - Importance of RBI supervision and inspection framework.
  - Need for stronger real-time fraud monitoring.
3. Ethical Concerns
  - Breach of fiduciary trust.
  - Integrity failure at operational level.
4. Financial Stability
  - Impact on depositor trust and market confidence.
  - Importance of adequate capitalization to absorb shocks.

## Way Forward

- Strengthen cheque-clearing verification protocols.
- Rotation of staff in sensitive positions.
- Strengthening internal audit systems.
- Real-time reconciliation for government accounts.
- Promote digital payment systems to reduce physical instrument risks.
- Strengthen whistleblower protection mechanisms.

## KEY HIGHLIGHTS

### Context of the News

- A leading private sector bank reported a ₹590 crore fraud involving forged physical cheque transactions.
- Fraud confined to one branch (Chandigarh) and a Haryana Government entity account.
- Involved employee collusion with external parties.
- ₹490 crore detected during reconciliation; ₹100 crore self-identified internally.
- Police complaint filed; forensic audit initiated.
- RBI monitoring the development.
- Partial recovery expected through Employee Dishonesty Insurance.

### Key Facts

- Type of Fraud: Internal (employee collusion) + external beneficiaries.
- Mode: Forged physical cheques (non-digital).
- Operational Risk: Falls under Basel norms classification.
- Fraud Reporting: RBI mandates reporting of frauds above specified thresholds under Master Directions on Frauds.
- Insurance Mechanism: Employee Dishonesty Insurance covers internal fraud losses.
- Reconciliation Mechanism: Account mismatch detected during balance transfer process.

# What happens to India's Russian oil imports, \$500-bn U.S. import goal?

## NEWS ANALYSIS

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan  
NEW DELHI

The Indian trade delegation's last-minute postponement of trip to Washington to finalise an Interim Agreement with the U.S., and the U.S. Supreme Court's order on tariffs both have implications for India's imports from Russia as well as the U.S.

The Indian delegation was to be in the U.S. on February 23-25 to finalise the Interim Agreement, which Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said could be implemented between mid-March and early April. However, sources in the Commerce Ministry on February 22 said that the meeting will be rescheduled "at a mutually convenient date".

"The two sides are of the view that the proposed visit of the Indian chief negotiator and the team be scheduled after each side has had the time to evaluate the latest developments and its implications," the official said.

Mr. Goyal had earlier said India would be able to remove or lower tariffs for American imports only after a deal is signed. The U.S., on the other hand, could so far modify tariffs through executive orders.

**No Russian oil threats**  
Trade and legal experts, said U.S. SC order meant President Trump no longer had any law enabling him to levy tariffs on India if it continues buying Russian oil in large quantities.

Without the tariff threat, India can once again reduce its purchase of the relatively expensive



**Pressure tactics:** The value of India's Russian oil imports fell to a 38-month low in December 2025. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

American oil and sour Venezuelan oil.

"With reciprocal tariffs gone, the U.S. now does not have any law under which it can penalise India for buying Russian oil," Ajay Srivastava, founder of the Global Trade Research Initiative and former Director General of Foreign Trade said. "Even if we were to continue our oil imports from the U.S., which have nearly doubled in the last few months, we should refrain from buying oil from Venezuela."

It is important to note Mr. Trump had, on February 6 itself, removed the tariffs linked to India's import of Russian oil. As per Ramesh K. Vaidyanathan, managing partner at law firm BTG Advaya, tariffs could theoretically return, but they would need the backing of U.S. Congress.

**Multiple mechanisms**  
"There are multiple legal mechanisms under which he can do this, but I think what is coming to the fore is that he cannot do these through executive orders and will have to do it under legislative backing for the purpose for which they are designed." In other words, if Mr. Trump can convince the U.S. Congress that ta-

riffs linked to Russian oil imports are necessary, then they could return.

An analysis by *The Hindu* found the value of India's crude oil imports from Russia fell to a 38-month low in December 2025 with Russia's share falling to less than a quarter from 34% a month ago. However, oil imports from the U.S. rose almost 31% over December 2024.

The analysis showed India imported oil from the U.S. at an average price of \$506.7 per tonne in December 2025 or almost 8% higher than the average price of Russian oil imported that month.

**Uncertainty over deal**  
"India should follow a wait-and-watch approach and should see how other countries that have signed deals with the U.S. are reacting," said Pankaj Chadha, chairman of exporter body EEPIC India.

Mr. Srivastava says the decision to postpone the Indian team's visit to Washington could simply be an "administrative delay".

"There is a possibility that this delay in the Indian team's visit to the U.S. could have been at the request of the U.S. since their officials would be under

fire trying to figure out the way forward."

### Impact on imports

A delayed Interim Agreement will also push back the date from which India will have to reduce tariffs for imports from the U.S. This can have a dual effect.

On the one hand, local manufacturers can breathe a bit easier since they will not have to compete with duty-free U.S. imports.

On the other several items India imports will continue to face import tariffs, thereby making them more expensive than they would have been had the deal gone through.

Mr. Goyal had previously told *The Hindu* there were several items such as oil, LPG, LNG, aircraft and parts, parts for data centres and quantum computing that India needs but does not manufacture, and so would need to import.

India's imports of electronic parts grew 117% year-on-year to about \$2.1 billion in April-December 2025. Similarly, the import of telecom instruments rose 25% and organic chemicals by almost 34%.

A joint statement said India intends to import \$500 billion worth of energy products, aircraft and aircraft parts, precious metals, technology products, and coking coal from the U.S. over the next 5 years.

The European Union (EU) also said the U.S. must provide more clarity before EU Parliament can ratify the U.S.-EU deal.

Meanwhile, Japanese officials said they won't immediately be revisiting the deal adding, the crux of Japan's deal with U.S. was on lowering auto-related tariffs, which stay unaffected by the U.S. SC decision.

- U.S. crude priced ~8% higher than Russian crude.
- India intends to import \$500 billion worth of U.S. goods (energy, aircraft, tech, coal) over 5 years.

## 3. Impact of Interim Agreement Delay Positive for Domestic Industry:

- Protection from lower-tariff U.S. imports.

## Negative for Import-Dependent Sectors:

- Higher cost of oil, LNG, aircraft parts, telecom equipment, data-centre components.
- Electronic parts imports grew 117% (Apr-Dec 2025).

## Static Concepts

- Tariff as a fiscal tool under legislative authority.
- Separation of Powers & Judicial Review.
- Balance of Payments (Current Account).
- Energy Security and Strategic Autonomy.
- WTO Principles: MFN & Reciprocity.
- Trade Diversification and Supply Chain Resilience.

## Critical Analysis

### Prelims Focus

- WTO principles
- Trade agreements
- Current Account Deficit
- Energy import trends

### Analytical Dimensions for Mains Strategic

- Reduced U.S. tariff threat enhances India's negotiating leverage.
- Maintains flexibility in Russian oil procurement.

### Economic

- Delayed tariff cuts increase input costs.
- Impacts manufacturing competitiveness and inflation.

### Geopolitical

- Balancing relations between U.S., Russia, and EU.
- Strategic autonomy in energy sourcing.

## Way Forward

- Diversify crude oil sources while ensuring price stability.
- Accelerate renewable energy transition (solar, green hydrogen).
- Negotiate a calibrated Interim Agreement protecting sensitive sectors.
- Strengthen domestic manufacturing under Make in India.
- Maintain WTO-consistent trade diplomacy.

## KEY HIGHLIGHTS

### Context

- India postponed its trade delegation visit to the U.S. to finalise an Interim Trade Agreement (ITA).
- The postponement follows a U.S. Supreme Court ruling restricting the President's ability to impose tariffs through executive authority.
- The development has implications for:
  - India's crude oil imports from Russia and the U.S.
  - Tariff reductions on U.S. imports into India
  - Ongoing bilateral trade negotiations

### Key Developments

#### 1. Tariff-Related Implications

- The U.S. President cannot impose certain tariffs unilaterally without legislative backing.
- Reduces immediate tariff-based pressure on India regarding Russian oil imports.
- Future tariff imposition would require Congressional approval.

#### 2. Energy Trade Trends

- Russia's share in India's crude imports declined to below 25% (Dec 2025).
- U.S. crude imports increased (~31% YoY).