

71st BPSC Prelims Current Affairs

International Relations (October 2024 to May 2025)

Visit of Spanish PM to India

- Spanish PM **Pedro Sanchez** visited India — first visit by a Spanish PM in **18 years**.
- Bilateral Talks:** Held discussions with **PM Modi** to strengthen **strategic and economic ties**.
- Modi's Spain Visit:** PM Modi had visited Spain in **2017**.

C295 Aircraft Assembly Line, Vadodara:

- Inaugurated by Pedro Sanchez in **Vadodara, Gujarat**.
- India's **first private military transport aircraft facility** by **Tata Advanced Systems Ltd (TASL)** and **Airbus**.
- Contract:** \$2.5 billion for **56 aircraft** (16 from Spain, 40 assembled in India).
- First **Made-in-India C295** to be delivered in **2026**, final delivery by **2031**.
- Involves **BEL, BDL**, and MSMEs to build an aerospace ecosystem.

Key Outcomes:

- MoUs signed in **trade, IT, infrastructure, renewable energy, defence, pharma, tourism**.
- 2026** declared as **India-Spain Year of Culture, Tourism, and AI**.

UK Hands Over Chagos Islands to Mauritius

- Historic Move:** UK agrees to transfer **sovereignty of Chagos Islands** (except Diego Garcia) to **Mauritius**, ending a colonial-era dispute.
- Treaty Highlights:**
 - UK **cedes claims** over Chagos Archipelago.
 - Diego Garcia** (UK-US military base) to remain under **UK control** for **99 years**.
 - Mauritius can **resettle citizens** on other islands.
 - UK pledges a **trust fund** for displaced **Chagossians**.
- India's Role:**
 - India **supported Mauritius** at **UNGA (2019)**.

- In **2024**, India inaugurated an **airstrip and jetty** at **Agaléga**, strengthening strategic ties.

- About Chagos Islands:**

- 58 islands** in the Indian Ocean.
- Diego Garcia** is the largest and most strategic.

- Colonial Timeline:**

- Portuguese → Dutch → French → British control (1814).
- 1965:** Declared **British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT)**.
- 1968–1973:** Over **1,000 Chagossians** forcibly evicted.

- Legal Developments:**

- 2015:** PCA ruled UK violated Mauritius' rights.
- 2019:** **ICJ ordered** UK to return Chagos "as rapidly as possible."
- UK rejected ICJ jurisdiction; Mauritius claimed coercion during decolonization.

- Strategic Significance:**

- Diego Garcia base:** Key for **UK-US military operations** in Middle East, Africa, and South Asia.
- Rich **marine biodiversity**; conservation value.

Israel's Ban on the UN Secretary-General

- Israel has officially banned **United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres** from entering the country.
- The decision came amid accusations that **Guterres is backing hostile entities** such as **Hamas, Hezbollah, the Houthis, and Iran**.

Reasons Behind the Ban

- Israel accused the UNSG of **failing to unequivocally condemn Iran's missile strikes** on Israeli territory.
- It also criticized Guterres for his **lack of strong condemnation of the Hamas attack** on **October 7, 2023**, in which:
 - Around **1,200 Israelis** were killed, and
 - About **250 people** were taken hostage.

Prabowo Subianto Sworn In As Indonesia's Eighth President

- **Prabowo Subianto** has been inaugurated as the **8th President of Indonesia**, marking a significant political shift in the country's leadership.

Background and Significance

- A **former military general**, Subianto's rise is notable given his **controversial past**, including **accusations of human rights abuses** during his military career.
- Despite being a **long-time political rival of outgoing President Joko Widodo**, he was:
 - **Appointed as Defense Minister** in Widodo's cabinet, and
 - **Later endorsed** by Widodo during the presidential election.

Dragon Drones in the Russia-Ukraine War

- "**Dragon drones**" have emerged as a **lethal new weapon** in the ongoing **Russia-Ukraine war**, capable of releasing **molten metal at temperatures of 2,427°C**.

How They Work

- These drones **release thermite**, a chemical mixture of **aluminum and iron oxide**, which:
 - Ignites in a **self-sustaining reaction**, and
 - **Burns through almost any material**, including:
 - **Military vehicles**, and
 - **Targets underwater**.
- Thermite causes **severe or fatal burns** on human targets due to extreme heat.

US Deploys THAAD Missile Defense System to Israel

- The **United States** has announced the deployment of its **THAAD (Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense)** missile defense system to **Israel**, signaling strong support for **Israel's security** amid regional tensions.

About THAAD

- **THAAD** is designed to **intercept and destroy ballistic missiles** during their **terminal (final) phase of flight**.
- It offers protection against:

- **Short, medium, and limited intermediate-range** missile threats
- With a range coverage of **up to 5,000 km**

Key Features

- Developed by **Lockheed Martin**
- Utilizes **"hit-to-kill" technology**, where interceptors destroy targets through **direct impact** rather than explosives.
- Offers **broader protection** compared to the **Patriot missile system**.

Kartarpur Corridor Pact Renewed

- **India and Pakistan** have renewed the **Kartarpur Sahib Corridor** agreement for another **five years**, ensuring **visa-free access** for Indian Sikh pilgrims to visit **Gurdwara Darbar Sahib** in **Pakistan**.

Background

- The agreement was **originally signed in October 2019**, and was set to **expire on October 24, 2024**.
- The renewal aims to maintain the **uninterrupted operation** of the religious corridor.

About the Kartarpur Corridor

- The corridor connects:
 - **Gurdwara Dera Baba Nanak** in **India**, with
 - **Gurdwara Darbar Sahib** in **Kartarpur, Pakistan**, where **Guru Nanak Dev** spent his final years.
- It comprises:
 - A **4.1 km highway** on the Indian side,
 - A **passenger terminal building** at the international border, and
 - The **gurdwara complex** in **Pakistan**.

Nepal-India-Bangladesh Sign Tripartite Power Trade Agreement

- **Nepal, India, and Bangladesh** have signed a **tripartite agreement** to facilitate **cross-border electricity trade**, enhancing regional energy cooperation.

Key Features of the Agreement

- The agreement enables **Nepal to export surplus hydroelectricity to Bangladesh** through Indian territory.
- **Duration of supply:** From **June 15 to November 15** every year (monsoon season).

Phase I: Initial Power Supply

- In the **first phase**, Nepal will:
 - **Export 40 MW** of electricity to Bangladesh.
 - Charge a rate of **6.4 cents per unit**.
 - Generate an estimated annual revenue of **USD 9.2 million**.

India Signs \$3.5 Billion Deal with US for 31 Predator Drones

- **India and the United States** have signed a **\$3.5-billion defence deal** for the acquisition of **31 MQ-9B Predator drones**, significantly boosting India's **intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance (ISR), and strike capabilities**.

Details of the Drone Acquisition

- The deal includes:
 - **15 Sea Guardians** for the **Indian Navy**
 - **8 Sky Guardians** each for the **Indian Air Force and Indian Army**
- These **MQ-9B drones** are equipped with:
 - **Hellfire missiles**
 - **Laser-guided bombs**
 - **Advanced sensors**
- They are designed for **long-endurance and high-altitude missions**, enabling precise targeting and persistent surveillance.

2024 US Presidential Election

- **Former U.S. President Donald Trump**, representing the **Republican Party**, won a **second term** in office.
- He defeated **Vice-President Kamala Harris**, the **Democratic nominee**, and became the **47th President of the United States**.

The U.S. Presidential Election Process Overview

- The **U.S. presidential election** is held **every four years** to elect the **President and Vice President**.
- The election follows an **indirect voting process**:
 - **Citizens vote** for a **slate of electors**.
 - These **electors** then formally **vote for the President and Vice President** in the **Electoral College**.

Constitutional Requirements for Presidential Candidates

According to the **U.S. Constitution**, a presidential candidate must:

- Be a **natural-born citizen** of the United States
- Be at least **35 years old**
- Have been a **resident of the U.S. for at least 14 years**

India Becomes Top Source of International Students in the US (2023–2024)

- **India has overtaken China** as the **largest source of international students** in the **United States** for the **2023–2024 academic year**, marking a **historic shift after 15 years**.
- The total number of Indian students in the US has reached **3.3 lakh (330,000)**.

Key Highlights

- **India and China together account for nearly 50%** of the international student population in the US.
- Most students pursue **STEM fields** such as:
 - **Computer Science**
 - **Engineering**
 - **Mathematics**

Economic Contribution

- In **2023**, Indian students contributed **\$50 billion** to the **US economy** through:
 - **Tuition fees**
 - **Living expenses**

Global Trend

- The rise in Indian students studying abroad is **not limited to the US**:
 - In the **UK**, Indian student numbers rose by **39%** in **2022–2023**, also surpassing China.

PM Modi's Visit to Nigeria

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** visited **Nigeria**, marking the **first visit by an Indian Prime Minister since 2007**.

Key Engagements

- PM Modi met with **President Bola Ahmed Tinubu**.
- He held **delegation-level talks** to strengthen bilateral cooperation.
- He also **addressed the Indian diaspora** in **Abuja**, emphasizing India–Nigeria ties.

Honour Received

- PM Modi was conferred with **Nigeria's prestigious "Grand Commander of the Order of Niger"**,
 - A national honour **previously awarded only to Queen Elizabeth II**.

Major Outcomes

- **Three Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs)** were signed on:
 - **Cultural exchange**
 - **Customs cooperation**
 - **Survey collaboration**
- **India provided 20 tonnes of relief material** for **flood victims** in Nigeria as a humanitarian gesture.

India–Nigeria Bilateral Trade

Trade Volume

- **Annual bilateral trade exceeds USD 14 billion**, making **Nigeria India's largest trading partner in Africa**.
- However, trade has **declined in recent years**, primarily due to:
 - **India reducing Nigerian oil imports** in favor of **cheaper Russian alternatives**.

Key Imports and Exports

- **India's Imports from Nigeria:**
 - **Crude oil** dominates, accounting for **over 70%** of total imports.
 - **India is among the largest buyers** of Nigerian oil.
- **India's Exports to Nigeria:**
 - **Pharmaceuticals**
 - **Engineering goods**
 - **Automobiles**
 - **Agricultural machinery**
 - **Textiles**

Indian Investments in Nigeria

- **Indian companies employ the second-largest workforce** in Nigeria **after the government**.
- **Cumulative Indian investments** in Nigeria are valued at around **\$27 billion**.

Taliban Appoint Ikramuddin Kamil as 'Acting Consul' in Mumbai

- The **Taliban regime** has appointed **Ikramuddin Kamil** as the **"acting consul"** at the **Afghan Mission in Mumbai**.
- This marks the **first official appointment** by the Taliban in **India** since their **takeover of Afghanistan in 2021**.

UK's Assisted Dying Bill

The Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill was introduced in the UK to provide terminally ill patients with the option to seek assistance to end their lives.

US Court Holds Israeli Company NSO Liable for Targeting WhatsApp Users

- Meta's WhatsApp secured a significant legal win as a US federal court found the Israeli firm NSO Group liable under federal and California laws for spyware attacks
- WhatsApp had sued NSO in 2019, accusing it of using Pegasus spyware to hack and surveil the phones of nearly 1,400 individuals during a two-week period in May 2019. The court will now determine the damages.

Impeachment of South Korea's President Yoon Suk Yeol

- South Korea's National Assembly initiated the impeachment process against Yoon Suk Yeol after securing a majority vote to proceed with the motion.
- The impeachment was based on allegations of abuse of power, violation of constitutional rights, and failure to uphold democratic principles.

Joe Biden Pardons His Son Hunter Biden in Two Federal Cases

- **U.S. President Joe Biden** has issued a **full and unconditional pardon** to his son **Hunter Biden**.
- The pardon covers:

- **Tax evasion**
- **Lying about drug use** while purchasing a firearm

Possible Future Pardons

- President Biden is reportedly considering **pre-emptive pardons** for:
 - **Vice President Kamala Harris**
 - **Former Chief Medical Officer Anthony Fauci**
 - **Republican Congresswoman Liz Cheney**
- These measures aim to **protect allies from potential prosecution** under President-elect Donald Trump.

The U.S. President's Power to Pardon

- The **President of the United States** has the **constitutional authority to grant pardons and commute sentences** for **federal crimes**.
 - **State crimes are not covered** under this power.

Legal Interpretation

- The **U.S. Supreme Court** has ruled that:
 - The **pardon power is "granted without limit"**
 - **Congress cannot restrict** this power
 - It is a **discretionary and broad executive authority**

No Accountability Required

- The President is:
 - **Not answerable** for the pardons issued
 - **Not required to provide any justification** for granting clemency

Nepal-China Sign 9-Point Agreement

- **Nepal and China** signed a **nine-point agreement** during **Nepalese Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli's** four-day official visit to **China**.
- A major highlight was the signing of the long-awaited **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) Cooperation Framework Agreement**.

Key Highlights

- Although **Nepal and China** originally signed the **BRI agreement in 2017**, no project has been implemented under it so far.

- During the visit, both sides reaffirmed commitment to **activate and operationalize BRI cooperation**.
- The **Trans-Himalayan Multi-Dimensional Connectivity Network (THMDCN)** was discussed as a **key initiative** under the BRI framework.

Australia's Online Safety Amendment (Social-Media Minimum Age) Bill, 2024

- **Australia's House of Representatives** has passed the **Online Safety Amendment Bill, 2024**, aimed at protecting children online by **setting a minimum age limit of 16 years** for creating social media accounts.

Key Provisions

- Social media platforms must take **"reasonable steps"** to prevent users **under 16** from registering.
- The Bill **amends the Age Discrimination Act, 2024**.

China to Build the World's Largest Hydropower Dam on the Yarlung Tsangpo (Brahmaputra)

- **China** has approved the construction of the **world's largest hydropower dam** on the **lower reaches of the Yarlung Tsangpo River (Brahmaputra) in Tibet**.
- The project will **generate 300 billion kilowatt-hours (kWh)** of electricity annually—**more than three times** the capacity of the current world leader, the **Three Gorges Dam**.

China's Brahmaputra Dam Project: Key Details

Location and Rationale

- Being built in **Medog County, Tibet Autonomous Region**, where the **Yarlung Tsangpo drops 2,000 meters**, creating ideal conditions for hydropower.
- The project is a part of:
 - **China's 14th Five-Year Plan (2021–2025)**, and
 - **Long-Range Objectives through 2035**.

Strategic and Economic Significance

- **Projected capacity: Up to 60 gigawatts (GW)** — **triple** that of the **Three Gorges Dam**.

- **Annual production: 300 billion kWh** of clean, renewable energy.
- Supports **China's goal of carbon neutrality by 2060**.
- Expected to **generate 20 billion yuan (\$3 billion) annually** for the **Tibetan region**.
- Helps bolster **China's energy security and regional development** in Tibet.

New Suez Canal Channel Extension

- Egypt has successfully tested a new 10 km channel in the southern section of the Suez Canal, extending the two-way section from 72 km to 82 km and increasing the canal's total length to 193 km.
- The Suez Canal is a man-made waterway that connects the Mediterranean Sea to the Red Sea in Egypt.
- The expansion aims to boost daily capacity by 6 to 8 ships and improve the canal's ability to handle emergencies.
- Following the 2021 grounding of the container ship Ever Given that blocked the vital waterway for six days, Egypt accelerated plans to extend the second channel in the southern reaches of the canal and widen the existing channel.
- Despite the improvements, the canal's revenue dropped over 60% in 2024, with losses of approximately \$7 billion, due to attacks by Yemen's Houthi militants on vessels in the Red Sea since November 2023.

Visit of Sri Lankan President to India

- Sri Lanka's President Anura Kumara Disسانayake (AKD) visited India recently. This was his first trip overseas since becoming leader of his country.

Key Highlights of The Visit

- **Bilateral Development Cooperation**
 - Key projects include:
 - Phase III & IV of the Indian Housing Project.
 - Three islands' Hybrid Renewable Energy Project.
 - High Impact Community Development Projects.

- **Enhancing Physical Connectivity**
 - Resumption of passenger ferry services between:
 - Nagapattinam and Kankesanthurai.
 - Rameswaram and Talaimannar (under review).
 - Discussions on rehabilitating Sri Lanka's Kankesanthurai port are underway.

Trade Watch Report by NITI Aayog– Key Findings

- **Limited success in 'China Plus One' strategy:**
 - India has had "limited success" in leveraging the 'China Plus One' strategy aimed at diversifying global supply chains away from China.
 - Southeast Asian countries like Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, and Cambodia have performed better due to cheaper labour, simplified tax laws, lower tariffs, and proactive FTAs.
- **Trade fragmentation and export control measures:**
 - India faces stiff export competition from Malaysia and Thailand, especially in sectors like electrical machinery.

Future Prospects:

- **Impact of Trump's trade policies:**
 - General US tariffs on imports (e.g., 10%) may not adversely affect India.
 - High tariffs on Chinese goods (e.g., 60%) could open major export opportunities for India.
- **Focus on diversification and market expansion:**

India and Bhutan Strengthen Bilateral Ties with Focus on Hydropower and Urban Planning

King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuk and Queen Jetsun Pema of Bhutan visited India.

Key Highlights:

- **Support for Gelephu Mindfulness City Project (GMC):**

- PM Modi assured continued Indian support for the GMC project.
- GMC is a Special Administrative Region in Bhutan aimed at enhancing prosperity, border connectivity, and economic cooperation.
- **Progress in Hydropower Projects:**
 - Both sides reviewed the 1020 MW Punatsangchhu-II project, which is nearing completion.
 - Discussed early conclusion of the Punatsangchhu-I project.
- **Recent High-Level Engagements**
Bhutanese PM Tshering Tobgay's participation in the Global Cooperatives Conference in New Delhi.

Kash Patel – Trump's Pick for FBI Chief

- Kashyap "Kash" Patel, Indian-American lawyer. Nominated by Donald Trump as FBI Director, replacing Christopher Wray.
- Born on **February 25, 1980**, in Garden City (Long Island), New York, to **Gujarati-Indian immigrant parents**—his father from Uganda and mother from Tanzania. His ancestors had migrated from Anand District, Gujarat to Uganda 70-80 years ago.

Nepal Army Chief Conferred Honorary Rank by President Murmu

- President Droupadi Murmu conferred the honorary rank of 'General of Indian Army' on Nepal's Army Chief General Ashok Raj Sigdel in New Delhi.
- There has been a tradition of conferring the title of Honorary General on each other's Army chiefs since 1950.
- The honor recognizes his military prowess and contribution to fostering Nepal-India relations.

Suspension of MFN Clause in India-Switzerland Tax Treaty

- Switzerland has announced the suspension of the Most-Favoured-Nation (MFN) clause under the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) with India, effective January 1, 2025.

- This move could lead to higher tax burdens for Indian companies operating in Switzerland and Swiss investors in India, potentially impacting bilateral investments.
- The Swiss government suspended the MFN clause citing **lack of reciprocity** from India. Swiss authorities stated they **could not apply reduced tax rates unilaterally** without **mutual agreement** from India.

India's Eastern Maritime Corridor (EMC)

- **India became the largest buyer of Russian oil in 2024**, surpassing China.
- **EMC connects Chennai to Vladivostok**, boosting India–Russia trade.
- **Transit time reduced to 24 days** (from 40+ via St. Petersburg–Mumbai route).
- **Lower shipping costs** make Russian crude more affordable.
- **Ports in use:**
 - **Russia:** Vladivostok (largest Pacific port).
 - **India:** Chennai, Paradip, Visakhapatnam, Tuticorin, Ennore, Kolkata.

India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (Ind-Aus ECTA)

- **Background:** Signed in **April 2022**; came into effect on **29 December 2022**.
- **Objective:** Strengthen bilateral trade, reduce tariffs, and boost MSMEs and employment.

Key Highlights:

- **Surge in Trade:**
 - Bilateral trade rose from **USD 12.2 billion (2020–21)** to **USD 26 billion (2022–23)**.
 - Trade in **2023–24** moderated to **USD 24 billion**; India's exports grew **14%**.
 - From **April–Nov 2024**, trade stood at **USD 16.3 billion**.
- **Tariff Benefits:**

- **85% of Australian exports** to India became **tariff-free** in 2022; to rise to **90%** in six years.
- **96% of Indian exports** to Australia now **tariff-free**; to reach **100% by 2026**.
- **Utilization:**
 - In 2023, **export utilization: 79%**, **import utilization: 84%**, indicating effective use of the agreement.
- **Future Goal:** ECTA is a **stepping stone to the full Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA)**.

India–France Pact for National Museum

- **Agreement Signed:** For "adaptive reuse" of **North and South Blocks** under the **Central Vista Project**.
- **Objective:** Create the **world's largest national museum** (1.55 lakh sq. m), surpassing the Louvre.
- **Phases:**
 - **Phase 1:** North Block retrofitting into a museum; target – **June 2026**.
- **French Involvement:** France to provide expertise (e.g., **Grand Louvre** experience).
- **Ministries Shift:**
 - **North Block** (Finance, Home Affairs) to be vacated by **March 2025**.
 - **South Block** (PMO, External Affairs) to be vacated later.

India's Reliance on China for Critical Minerals

- **Ministry of Mines Report (2023):** Identified **30 critical minerals** vital for economic development and national security.
- **Import Dependency:** Complete import reliance for **10 critical minerals**.

Dependency on China (2019–2024):

India heavily relies on China for 6 key minerals:

- **Bismuth (85.6%)** – Pharmaceuticals, chemicals

- **Lithium (82%)** – EV batteries, energy storage
- **Silicon (76%)** – Semiconductors, solar panels
- **Titanium (50.6%)** – Aerospace, defense
- **Tellurium (48.8%)** – Solar, thermoelectric devices
- **Graphite (42.4%)** – EV batteries, steel production

Southern California Wildfires 2025

- **Location:** Los Angeles, California
- **Impact:** Dozens killed, **130,000+ evacuated**, celebrity homes (e.g., Paris Hilton) destroyed
- **Major Fires:** Palisades, Eaton, Sunset, Hurst, Lidia – affecting Hollywood Hills
- **Unusual:** Intense **winter wildfires**, rare for the region's Mediterranean climate

Causes:

1. Hydroclimate Whiplash:

- Wet winters (2022–23) → dense vegetation
- Exceptionally dry 2024–25 winter → dry kindling
- NASA: Driest start to LA water year since 1944
- ClimaMeter: Fires linked to abrupt wet–dry shifts

2. Santa Ana Winds:

- Hot, dry winds from inland deserts
- Caused by high-pressure over Great Basin
- Descending air heats, loses moisture, accelerates through mountain passes
- Speeds over **100 mph** – spread fires rapidly

3. Climate Change:

- Rising global temps, early snowmelt, dry vegetation → longer fire seasons

Key Features of Santa Ana Winds:

- **Hot, dry, strong**
- Originate from **Great Basin**

- Cause **property damage**, power cuts, wildfire spread

Pink Fire Retardant in California Wildfires

- **Used in Wildfire Control:** Sprayed by planes and helicopters; 9 aircraft use pink retardant, 20 drop water.
- **Purpose:** Chemical mixture designed to **slow or extinguish fire spread**.
- **Common Brand:** Phos-Chek — widely used in the U.S.

Composition of Phos-Chek:

- **Water + Ammonium Phosphate (fertilizer) + rust-based red dye**
- **Ammonium Phosphate:**
 - Cools and coats fuel
 - Reduces oxygen
 - Alters how fuel burns
 - **Longer-lasting** than water

Additives:

- **Thickening agents** – prevent drift, improve application control
- **Pink Dye** – Improves visibility for firefighters; most visible and aesthetically pleasing color.

Trump Ends Birthright Citizenship

- **Executive Order** signed to **end birthright citizenship** for children of undocumented or temporarily present parents.

Excluded Categories:

1. **Unlawful Presence:**
 - Mother in U.S. illegally
 - Father not a U.S. citizen or permanent resident
2. **Lawful but Temporary Presence:**
 - Mother on visa or waiver program
 - Father not a U.S. citizen or permanent resident
- **Claim:** Such individuals are **not under U.S. jurisdiction**, so children won't get automatic citizenship.

U.S. Withdrawal from Paris Agreement

- On **January 20**, President **Donald Trump** signed an **executive order** to

withdraw the U.S. from the Paris Agreement.

China's Population declined for the third consecutive year.

- **Figure:** **1.408 billion** by end of **2024**.
- **Decline:** Decreased by **1.39 million** from the previous year.

Russian Gas Exports to Europe via Ukraine Halted

- **Reason:** Transit deal expired; no new agreement between Moscow and Kyiv.
- **Impact:** Ends Russia's **oldest gas route** to Europe.

Urengoy-Pomary-Uzhgorod Pipeline:

- Transports gas from **Siberia** via **Sudzha** (Kursk region, Russia).
- Passes through **Ukraine** → **Slovakia**, with branches to **Czech Republic** and **Austria**.
- **Transdnistria** (bordering Ukraine) also receives Russian gas via this route.

Panama Canal Treaty & U.S. Concerns

- **Trump's Statement:** Criticized the **1999 Panama Canal handover**, calling the treaty “foolish” and threatened to **reclaim control**.
- **Panama Canal:**
 - Artificial waterway linking **Atlantic & Pacific Oceans**.
 - Key to global trade by shortening shipping routes.
- **Concerns Raised:**
 - **High transit fees** post-2023 drought disruptions.
 - **China's growing presence** via **Belt and Road investments** in Panama.
- **Background:**
 - **Torrijos-Carter Treaties (1977)** led to U.S. handover in **1999**.
 - Canal remains **neutral**; U.S. retains rights to ensure neutrality and **priority for military transit** in emergencies.

Conflict Escalation in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) (2025)

- **M23 Rebels** (Tutsi-led group) captured **Goma**, capital of **North Kivu** province.
- Advanced into **South Kivu**, clashing with **DRC forces** and **Burundian troops**.

Rwanda's Involvement:

- Accused by **DRC, UN, and Western powers** of backing M23 with **troops and weapons**.
- **Rwanda denies**, citing defense against **FDLR attacks** on Tutsis.

About M23:

- Named after **March 23, 2009** peace accord.
- Claims DRC failed to integrate **Congolese Tutsis** into state institutions.
- Opposes **FDLR**, an ethnic Hutu militia linked to the **1994 Rwanda genocide**.

US Immigration and Deportation of Indian Nationals

- **Issue Raised:** US Secretary of State **Marco Rubio** discussed **irregular immigration** with India's EAM **S. Jaishankar**.
- **Deportation Data (as of Nov 2024):**
 - **Total Indians facing deportation: 20,407**
 - **Final removal orders: 17,940**
 - **Detained by ICE: 2,647**

Trump's Withdrawal from Global Corporate Minimum Tax Deal

- **Action:** President Trump declared the **2021 OECD global tax deal** "has no force or effect" in the U.S.
- **Effect:** **U.S. exit** from the **global minimum corporate tax agreement**.

About the Deal (2021):

- **Proposed by:** **OECD**
- **Minimum Tax Rate:** **15%** on corporate profits
- **Objective:**
 - End **profit shifting** to tax havens

- Prevent **race to the bottom** in corporate tax rates
- Ensure multinational companies pay **fair taxes globally**

US Eases Curbs to Push Nuclear Deal

- **Announcement:** US NSA **Jake Sullivan** announced plans to **remove Indian entities** from the **US Entity List**.
- **Entities:**
 - **Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC)**
 - **Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research (IGCAR)**
 - **Indian Rare Earths Limited (IREL)**
- **US Entity List:**
 - Maintained by **Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS)**, U.S. Dept. of Commerce
 - Restricts export of goods/technologies to entities linked to:
 - **Terrorism**
 - **WMD programs**
 - **Threats to US foreign policy/national security**
- **Objective:** Enable **nuclear cooperation** between Indian institutions and **US companies**.

US Opens Consulate in Bengaluru

- **Event:** U.S. inaugurated its **5th consulate in India**.
- **Location:** **Bengaluru**, temporarily housed at **JW Marriott Hotel**, Vittal Mallya Road.

India Protests China's Moves in Aksai Chin and on Brahmaputra

- **New Counties Protested:**
 - China created **He'an and Hekang** in **Hotan Prefecture**, including **Aksai Chin** (claimed by India).
 - **India's Response:** Lodged a **solemn protest**; reaffirmed non-recognition of China's **illegal occupation**.
- **Brahmaputra Mega Dam Concern:**

- **Location: Great Bend in Medog County**, Tibet — just before river enters **Arunachal Pradesh**.
- Planned as the **world's largest dam** on **Yarlung Tsangpo (Brahmaputra)**.
- **India's Stand:**
 - China **did not notify** India.
 - Urged **transparency, consultation, and protection of downstream interests**.
 - Asserted **India's established rights** as a **lower riparian state**.

Donald Trump Offers 'Gold Card' Visas For US Citizenship

- US President Donald Trump introduced a new "gold card" immigration initiative, replacing the EB-5 visa program. For a \$5 million investment, wealthy foreign investors can gain a path to U.S. citizenship and permanent residency.
- The existing EB-5 program, established in 1990, requires a minimum investment of \$1.05 million (or \$800,000 in distressed areas) to create or preserve jobs. It has faced criticism for fraud and misuse, including funding projects linked to Trump family businesses.
- In 2023, only 631 Indians obtained Green Cards through the EB-5 program.

Tea Horse Road Connecting India – China

- Recently, China's Ambassador to India Xu Feihong posted on X (Twitter) about the historic Tea Horse Road which spanned more than 2,000 km, and connected China to India via Tibet.
- The Tea Horse Road, played a key role in commerce and cultural exchange for centuries.
- While less famous than the Silk Road, this route facilitated the movement of tea, horses, and other valuable commodities across some of the world's most challenging terrains.

- The Tea Horse Road traces its origins to the **Tang Dynasty (618-907 CE)**, when trade between Southwest China, Tibet, and India first flourished.

Cook Islands, China Sign Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Deal

- The Cook Islands signed a comprehensive strategic partnership with China. The Cook Islands are located in the South Pacific Ocean, northeast of New Zealand. They are between French Polynesia and Fiji, and just south of the equator.
- The deal aims to enhance cooperation in trade, investment, tourism, ocean science, aquaculture, agriculture, infrastructure, climate resilience, and disaster preparedness

PM Modi Inaugurates Murugan Temple in Indonesia

- **Event:** PM Modi **virtually inaugurated** the **Shri Sanathana Dharma Aalayam** (Murugan Temple) in **Jakarta, Indonesia**.
- **Location:** Built on a **4,000 sq m plot** in **West Jakarta**, donated by the Indonesian government.
- **Shared Heritage:**
 - Referenced **Prambanan** and **Borobudur temples** as symbols of mutual preservation efforts.
- **Cultural Unity:**
 - Indonesia: **"Bhinneka Tunggal Ika"**
 - India: **"Unity in Diversity"**

US Deports Illegal Indian Migrants

The first U.S. military aircraft carrying 104 deported Indian nationals landed in Amritsar in the first week of February 2025. This marks the beginning of a stringent crackdown on illegal immigration under President Donald Trump's administration.

Revised Free Movement Regime (FMR) Along Myanmar Border

- **Operational Status:**
 - **22 out of 43** border crossing points functional.

- **States:** 10 in **Manipur**, 5 each in **Mizoram** and **Nagaland**, 2 in **Arunachal Pradesh**.
- **New Regulations:**
 - **QR code-enabled border passes** introduced.
 - **Biometric data** uploaded to a **central portal**.
 - **State police** conduct stay-based security verification.
 - **No formal order** yet to scrap **FMR**, despite announcement.
- **Monitoring:**
 - **Assam Rifles** monitor border movement.
- **Historical Background:**
 - **FMR** started in **1968** due to **ethnic and familial ties**.
 - Movement limit: **40 km (1968) → 16 km (2004) → 10 km (current)**.
- **Refugee Context:**
 - Over **40,000 Chin refugees** fled to India post **Myanmar's 2021 coup**.
- **Future Plan:**
 - **21 more crossing points** to be activated in **Phase 2**.

India-U.S. Cooperation on UDA Technologies

- **Objective:** Identify and co-produce **Underwater Domain Awareness (UDA) technologies** in India to strengthen maritime security.
- **Key Initiative:**
 - **Autonomous Systems Industry Alliance (ASIA)** launched during **PM Modi's U.S. visit**.
 - Aims to boost **industry partnerships** and **co-development**.
- **Focus Area:** Countering **China's growing influence** in the **Indian Ocean Region**.
- **U.S. Offer:**
 - **Exclusive access** to **sensitive UDA technologies**.

- Includes systems like **Sea Picket autonomous surveillance platforms**.

UK-India Defence Partnership Strengthens

- **New Initiative:** UK launched **"Defence Partnership-India" (DP-I)** — a dedicated cell in the **UK Ministry of Defence**.
- **Aim:** Deepen **defence cooperation** with India.
- **Key Agreements:**
 - **Co-production** of **MANPADS** (Man-Portable Air Defence Systems).
 - **Lightweight Multirole Missiles (LMM)** collaboration.
 - Establishment of an **ASRAAM assembly and test facility** in India.

PM Modi Meets PM of New Zealand

India signed a defence cooperation pact (MoU for Defence Cooperation) with New Zealand and agreed to step up dialogue to enhance maritime safety. This comes after PM Modi met the visiting PM of New Zealand, Christopher Luxon.

Trump Establishes US Bitcoin Reserve

- Former U.S. President Donald Trump signed an executive order establishing a **Strategic Bitcoin Reserve** and a **US Digital Asset Stockpile**.
- The Bitcoin reserve will be funded with BTC forfeited in criminal or civil asset seizures, providing the U.S. with a strategic advantage. Similarly, the **Digital Asset Stockpile** will include other forfeited digital assets.

Nepal's Political Turmoil & Monarchist Revival

- **Context:** Public protests demand return of monarchy; Former King Gyanendra Shah emerges as a symbol of frustration for ruling govt.
- **Reasons:** Corruption scandals, political instability, and economic decline under ruling govt.

- **Developments:** Pro-monarchy protests in Kathmandu; ruling MPs seek Shah's arrest; RPP (Rashtriya Prajatantra Party) supports monarchy revival.
- **Implication:** Threat to Nepal's republican structure; possible conflict or dialogue with royalist factions.

Bangladesh-China Ties Deepen

- **Context:** Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus visited China.
- **Key Agreements:**
 - \$1B Teesta River Restoration Project.
 - Special Economic Zone in Chattogram.
 - Defence cooperation (e.g., fighter jets).
- **Investments:** \$2.1B in total, including port upgrades and CEIZ commitments.
- **2025:** Declared "Year of China-Bangladesh People-to-People Exchanges."
- **Significance:** Strategic tilt toward China amid tense India ties.

Vanuatu Revokes Lalit Modi's Passport

- **Context:** Lalit Modi's golden passport revoked due to media scrutiny.
- **Golden Passport Program:**
 - Citizenship by investment (cost: \$135,500–\$155,500).
 - Visa-free access to 113 countries.
- **Vanuatu:** Gained independence in 1980; economy depends on tourism, agriculture, offshore finance.

Baloch Insurgency – Train Hijacking

- **Incident:** Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) hijacked Jaffar Express in Balochistan's Bolan district.
- **Insurgency Background:**
 - Ethnic Baloch grievances over economic neglect and resource control.
 - Accusations of foreign involvement (India denies role).
- **Strategic Importance:**

- Key for CPEC and China's BRI.
- Resource-rich region with geopolitical value (e.g., Reko Diq mine, coastline near Strait of Hormuz).

Race to Secure Copper Supplies

- **India-Zambia Deal:** India secured a 9,000 sq km copper-cobalt exploration block in Zambia's Northwestern Province.
- **Reason:** Decline in domestic copper production and rising global competition.
- **Africa's Role:** Africa produces 70% of global cobalt and 16% of copper; DRC to become 2nd-largest copper producer by 2030 (IEA).
- **China's Strategy:** Controls 50% of global smelting capacity; mandates long-term mining contracts for smelter expansion.
- **Other Indian Efforts:** Mines Ministry pursuing assets in DRC, Tanzania, Mozambique, Rwanda.

Tahawwur Rana Extradition

- **Context:** US Supreme Court rejected Rana's plea against extradition to India for his role in the 2008 Mumbai attacks.
- **Background:** India requested his extradition in 2019; Rana cited "double jeopardy" as defense.
- **Extradition Treaty (1997):** Only 2 terrorists extradited to India so far; 65 requests still pending.

US Clears Firm for SMR Transfer to India

- **Firm:** Holtec International granted approval by US DoE to transfer **Small Modular Reactor (SMR)** tech (30–300 MWe) to Indian private firms: Holtec Asia, TCE, L&T.
- **Significance:**
 - Boosts Indo-US civil nuclear cooperation.
 - Aids India's transition to Pressurised Water Reactor (PWR) tech.

- Counters China's lead in SMR development.
- **Challenges:**
 - Legal: India's Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act, 2010.
 - Policy: Atomic Energy Act, 1962 restricts private sector entry.

India Rejects USCIRF Report

- India termed the **USCIRF 2025 Report** as biased and politically motivated.
- The report accused India of targeting religious minorities and recommended "**Country of Particular Concern (CPC)**" status and sanctions against R&AW.
- MEA criticized the report for misrepresenting facts and ignoring constitutional safeguards.
- USCIRF has been denied entry into India since 2016 (except once).

Dubai Tops FDI Destinations Again

- Dubai retained its top rank in **Greenfield FDI** for the 4th straight year (AED 52.3 billion / \$14.24 billion).
- **India** emerged as the largest source of FDI in Dubai (21.5%), surpassing USA, France, and UK.

Princess Astrid of Belgium's India Visit

- Led an **Economic Mission**; second visit to India.
- **INR 750 crore** investment announced in Bijnor's potato processing plant (Agristo-Masa).
- **35 agreements** signed in green tech, healthcare, ports, education, etc.
- Belgium: India's 5th largest EU trading partner; USD 4 billion cumulative investments.

Namibia's First Woman President

- **Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah** sworn in as **Namibia's first female President**.
- Succeeds **Nangolo Mbumba** during Namibia's 35th independence anniversary.

Trump Imposes Tariff on Venezuelan Oil Buyers

- **25% tariff** announced on countries importing Venezuelan oil (effective April 2).
- Targets countries like **China, India, Spain**; may disrupt global energy trade.
- Accusations: Venezuela sending criminals to the US; hostile government.

India's 'Operation Brahma' – Earthquake Relief to Myanmar

- Launched after **March 28 Myanmar earthquake**.
- Included medical aid, rescue teams, and a field hospital.
- **Strengthens India's soft power** and regional leadership role.
- **US aid** limited to \$2 million, creating a strategic vacuum India filled.

India-Thailand Strategic Partnership

- PM Modi visited Thailand for the **6th BIMSTEC Summit** and held bilateral talks with PM Paetongtarn Shinawatra.
- **Ties elevated to Strategic Partnership**, signaling deeper cooperation in **defence, maritime security, and trade**.
- Both sides agreed to launch a **Strategic Dialogue** between security agencies.
- Reaffirmed commitment to **ASEAN Centrality** and a **free, open, rules-based Indo-Pacific**.
- Signed an **Agreement on Maritime Cooperation**.
- Thailand gifted PM Modi the **World Tipitaka: Sajjhaya Phonetic Edition**, symbolizing shared **Buddhist heritage**.

PM Modi's Visit to Saudi Arabia

- Modi's **third state visit** to Saudi Arabia; co-chaired the **2nd Strategic Partnership Council (SPC)** meeting with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.
- **New Committees:**
 - *Defence Cooperation Committee*
 - *Tourism and Cultural Cooperation Committee*

- **Investment Commitments:**
 - Saudi Arabia reaffirmed **\$100 billion investment** in India.
 - Breakthrough in **taxation issues**.
 - Agreement on **setting up two refineries** in India.
- **Key MoUs Signed:**
 - *Space cooperation* between ISRO and Saudi Space Agency
 - *Health sector* cooperation
 - *Anti-doping* partnership (SAADC–NADA)
 - *Postal cooperation* (Saudi Post–India Post)
- **Bilateral Trade:** \$42.98 billion in FY 2023–24.
- **Diaspora:** 2.4 million Indians live in Saudi Arabia.
- **Defence Ties:** Strengthened via *Al-Mohed Al-Hindi* naval exercises and counterterrorism cooperation.
- India is a **top Hajj beneficiary** with over 1.75 lakh pilgrims annually.

PM Modi's Landmark Visit to Sri Lanka

- **Visit Duration:** 3-day state visit.
- **Leaders Met:** President Anura Kumara Dissanayake.
- **MoUs Signed:** 7 in key sectors including defence, energy, railways, digital infrastructure etc.

Key Outcomes:

- **Defence Pact:** Sri Lanka assured that its territory will not be used against India—seen as a strategic move to counter China's influence.
- **Clean Energy & Infrastructure:**
 - Inauguration of **Sampur Solar Power Project**.
 - Agreement to develop **Trincomalee as an energy hub**.
 - India-assisted railway projects:
 - **Maho–Omanthai line** (128 km) refurbished with \$91.27 million Indian assistance.

- **Maho–Anuradhapura signalling system**, funded via \$14.89 million Indian grant.
- **Prestigious Honour:** PM Modi received **Mithra Vibhushana Medal**, Sri Lanka's highest civilian award.
- **Ceremonial Welcome:** First foreign leader to be honoured at **Colombo's Independence Square**.
- **Economic Cooperation:**
 - India's **\$4.5 billion aid** during Sri Lanka's crisis was acknowledged.
 - Discussions on **debt restructuring and currency swap**.
- **Digital Cooperation:**
 - ₹300 crore Indian grant for **Digital Identity Project**.
 - Collaboration in governance, services, and financial inclusion.

US Student Visa Revocations under Trump Administration

- **Target Group:** Students linked to **campus protests** or **Gaza-related human rights activism**.
- **Legal Basis:** US Immigration and Nationality Act (1952) – visas can be revoked for public order concerns.
- **New Scrutiny:** Tighter checks on **F, J, and M visas**.
- **Catch and Revoke Programme:**
 - Initiated in Trump's second term.
 - Over **300 student visas revoked** by March 27, 2025.
 - **AI-based social media analysis** used for decision-making.
 - Indian students among those affected.
- **University Pressure:**
 - Federal funding cuts to **Columbia, UPenn, Johns Hopkins** for alleged tolerance of anti-Semitism.

- **Executive Order:** Signed in Jan 2025 to counter anti-Semitic movements on campuses.

Optional Practical Training (OPT) Program

- **Bill Introduced:** *The Fairness for High-Skilled Americans Act of 2025* in the U.S. House of Representatives.
- **Proposal:** Seeks to **end the OPT program**, which allows international students to work in the U.S. after studies.
- **Concerns Raised:**
 - Reduces job opportunities for American graduates.
 - Offers **tax incentives** to employers to hire foreign labor.
 - **Circumvents H-1B caps** and payroll taxes like FICA and Medicare.
- **Critics' View:**
 - Could hurt U.S. businesses relying on skilled international workers.

U.S. Puts India on Priority Watch List – Special 301 Report 2025

- **Issued by:** U.S. Trade Representative (USTR).
- **Allegations:** India cited as a major economy with **weak IPR enforcement**.
- **Key Concerns:**
 - Patent revocations.
 - Vague interpretations of patentability under the Indian Patents Act.
 - Delay in granting patents and high compliance burdens.
- **India's Stand:**
 - India's IPR regime is **TRIPS-compliant**.
 - Calls the U.S. action **unilateral** under its Trade Act, 1974.

India's Trade with U.S. and China – Record Highs in FY 2024–25

- **India-US Trade:** \$131.84 billion (Top partner for 4th consecutive year).

- **Exports to U.S.:** \$86.51 billion (+11.6%)
- **Imports from U.S.:** \$45.33 billion (+7.44%)
- **Trade Surplus:** \$41.18 billion (vs \$35.32 billion last year)
- **Goal:** Boost bilateral trade to **\$500 billion by 2030**
- **India-China Trade:** \$127.7 billion (2nd largest partner)
 - **Exports to China:** Fell to \$14.25 billion (–14.5%)
 - **Imports from China:** Rose to \$113.45 billion (+11.52%)
 - **Trade Deficit:** Widened to **\$99.2 billion**
 - Experts call it a “**competitiveness crisis**” for India.

Mehul Choksi Arrested in Belgium

- **Key Accused:** ₹13,500 crore PNB fraud case.
- **Legal Hurdles in Extradition:**
 - 2021 **Dominica kidnapping allegation**
 - **Interpol withdrew Red Corner Notice** in 2023.
 - Defence cites **poor health, prison conditions, citizenship in Antigua, and human rights concerns**.

India Expands Extended Continental Shelf (ECS) Claim in Arabian Sea

- **New Claim:** India expanded its **ECS claim by ~10,000 sq km** in the Central Arabian Sea.
- **UN Submission:** Revised claims submitted in **April 2025** to the **UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS)**.
- **Modification:** Previous claims adjusted to avoid overlapping with Pakistan's claims near **Sir Creek**.

India's Current Maritime Claims:

- **Territorial Waters:** 12 nm
- **EEZ:** 200 nm (~2 million sq km)

- **ECS Claimed:** ~1.2 million sq km
- **Total Seabed Area:** ~3.2 million sq km (almost equal to India's land area)

Dispute with Pakistan:

- **Sir Creek:** Disputed tidal estuary between **Rann of Kutch (India)** and **Sindh (Pakistan)**.
- **Pakistan's Objection (2021):** Claimed overlap of **100 nm** in the Arabian Sea.
- **CLCS Rejection:** India's full claim was rejected in **March 2023**.
- **New Strategy:** India submitted **two partial claims** in April 2025 to protect uncontested zones without weakening its larger maritime claims.

India Withdraws Transshipment Facility for Bangladesh

- **Reason Cited:** Congestion at Indian ports and airports.
- **Impact:** Affects Bangladeshi exports (esp. apparel via air freighters to brands like Zara).
- **Trigger:** Bangladesh's trade restrictions on India:
 - Ban on yarn imports via land ports.
 - Closure of 3 land ports and suspension of Balla port.
- **Transit Not Affected:** Exports to Nepal and Bhutan via India remain operational.
- **Backdrop:** Diplomatic strain post-Hasina's exit and minority attacks under Muhammad Yunus's interim govt.

Dubai Crown Prince Visits India

- **Sheikh Hamdan Bin Mohammed Al Maktoum's Visit:** To enhance India-UAE ties.
- **Key Announcements:**
 - IIM Ahmedabad & IIFT campuses in Dubai.
 - Bharat Mart construction begins.
 - Land granted for UAE-India Friendship Hospital in Dubai.
 - India Office of Dubai Chamber of Commerce launched.

- **Bilateral Trade:** USD 97 billion; aiming for USD 100 billion (non-oil).
- **Virtual Trade Corridor (VTC):** Integral to IMEEC.
- **Healthcare MoU:** 100-bed hospital for Indian workers.
- **Ship Repair Cluster:** MoU between Cochin Shipyard and DP World (Kochi & Vadinar).

Tahawwur Rana Extradited to India

- **Background:** Accused in 26/11 Mumbai attacks.
- **Extradition:** From the US after 16 years.
- **Legal Basis:** India-US Extradition Treaty.
- **Key Support:** MEA, MHA, NIA, Indian Embassy, US DoJ, intelligence cooperation.

Kailash Mansarovar Yatra Resumes (2025)

- **Suspended Since:** 2020 (due to COVID-19 and China standoff).
- **Resumption Period:** June–August 2025.
- **Routes:**
 - **Lipulekh Pass (Uttarakhand):** 5 batches; more strenuous, requires trekking.
 - **Nathu La Pass (Sikkim):** 10 batches; motorable, easier for elders.

Lapu-Lapu Day and Vancouver Incident

- **Incident:** Car attack on crowd during Filipino celebrations in Vancouver, Canada; 9 killed.
- **About Lapu-Lapu Day:**
 - Celebrates the **Battle of Mactan (1521)**.
 - Filipino chief **Lapulapu** defeated Magellan.
 - **British Columbia** officially recognizes **April 27 as Lapu-Lapu Day** (from 2023).
 - Symbol of anti-colonial resistance and cultural pride.

India Places Curbs on Bangladesh Exports to North-East and Abroad

- **Action:** India restricted Bangladeshi exports via Northeast India and to foreign countries.
- **Reason:** Bangladesh's **non-tariff barriers** and remarks by interim PM Muhammad Yunus claiming Bangladesh is the "only guardian" to the Northeast's access to the ocean.
- **Scope:**
 - Restrictions apply to **all LCSs/ICPs** in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram, and parts of North Bengal.
 - Affected goods: garments, wooden furniture, snacks, plastic items, carbonated drinks, cotton yarn, etc.
- **Exemptions:** Fish, LPG, crushed stone, edible oil; exports to **Nepal/Bhutan** allowed.
- **India's Stand:** Bangladesh must **reciprocate trade benefits** and end trade discrimination.
- **Trade Stats (2023–24):**
 - Total trade: ~\$14 billion
 - India's exports: ~\$11–11.3 billion
 - India's imports: ~\$1.8–1.9 billion

Revamped OCI Portal Launched

- **Launched by:** Home Minister Amit Shah.
- **Objective:** Simplify OCI registration, enhance security and user experience.
- **Beneficiaries:** Over **5 million OCI holders** globally.
- **Background:**
 - OCI scheme introduced in **2005**.
 - Merged with **PIO scheme in 2015**.
- **Key Features:**
 - Life-long multiple entry visa to India.
 - No police registration required.
- **Restrictions:**
 - Cannot vote or hold public office.
 - Need special permits for **research, journalism,**

missionary work, or to visit restricted areas.

- **Global OCI Data:** Over **45 lakh cardholders** from 129 countries.

Pope Leo XIV Elected

- **New Pope: Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost** of USA, elected as the **267th pope**.
- **Name Taken: Pope Leo XIV.**
- **Significance:**
 - **First American pope.**
 - Succeeds **Pope Francis**, known for progressive reforms. Pope Francis was the first Jesuit pope, the first Latin American, and the first born or raised outside Europe (born in Argentina) since the 8th-century Syrian pope Gregory III.
- **Background:**
 - Former Bishop in **Peru**, led **Augustinian Order**.
 - Served in **Dicastery for Bishops** in the Vatican.

Colombia Joins China's BRI

- **Joined:** Belt and Road Initiative during Beijing summit.
- **Significance:**
 - Marks Colombia's foreign policy pivot towards China.
 - Now, **~2/3 of Latin America** is part of BRI.
- **Notable Project: Chancay Port in Peru** – Latin America's first China-funded BRI port.
- **China-CELAC Forum:**
 - Xi Jinping pledged **\$9.2 billion** in credit for the Global South.
 - Focus: **Infrastructure, clean energy, education, counterterrorism.**
- **Strategic Angle:**
 - U.S. worried about **China's influence** near Panama Canal.
 - U.S. exploring acquiring Chinese-controlled ports.

Political Crisis in New Caledonia

- **Issue:** French-brokered deal collapsed in May 2025.
- **Background:**
 - French Pacific territory with ~2.7 lakh people.
 - **Nouméa Accord (1998)** gave semi-autonomy.
- **Tensions:**
 - Pro-independence **Kanak groups** oppose French rule.
 - Past **referendums (3)** rejected independence.
 - Deadlock over **voter rights** and "sovereignty in partnership" model.

UK-EU Post-Brexit Summit

- **First Formal Summit** since Brexit.
- **Trade Agreements:**
 - EU gets **12-year fishing rights** in UK waters.
 - UK gains access to **EU plant & animal markets** under **SPS rules**.
 - **Carbon markets** to be linked.
- **Security & Foreign Policy:**
 - Regular **dialogues every 6 months**.
 - UK may access EU's **€150 billion defence loan fund**.
 - Cooperation on **space, sanctions, and migration**.
- **Youth & Mobility:**
 - Talks to restart **student exchanges**.
 - Propose a **capped youth mobility program**.

Trump Blocks Harvard from Enrolling International Students

- **Reason:** Harvard refused to comply with **Trump's executive order on campus free speech**.
- **Trigger:** Protests over **Israel-Gaza war**, alleged **bias and harassment** of Jewish students.

- **Court Ruling:** Temporarily blocks administration's move against Harvard.
- **Wider Context:**
 - Other elite colleges like **Columbia, Cornell** under scrutiny.
 - Move linked to criticism of **liberal dominance in academia**.

Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP)

- **Administered by:** U.S. Department of Homeland Security.
- **Required for:** F-1, M-1, and J-1 visa holders.
- **Key Feature:**
 - Institutions need **SEVP certification** to issue **Form I-20**.
- **Visas:**
 - **F-1:** Academic students (universities, English programs).
 - **M-1:** Vocational or non-academic programs.
 - **J-1:** Exchange visitors for educational/cultural programs.

One Big Beautiful Bill (U.S.)

- **Passed by:** U.S. House of Representatives; awaits Senate approval.
- **Key Provisions:**
 - Permanent extension of **2017 tax cuts**.
 - **Tax relief** on overtime, tips, and Social Security income.
 - **Increased spending** on border security and military.
 - Promotes **government efficiency** and **raises debt ceiling**.

GENIUS Act (U.S. Crypto Bill)

- **Full Form:** Guiding and Establishing National Innovation for US Stablecoins.
- **Key Provisions:**
 - **1:1 Reserve backing** for stablecoins.
 - Mandatory **AML/terror financing compliance**.

- **Separation of funds** between issuers and reserves.
- **Third-party audits** and transparency rules.
- **Impact:** Bitcoin crossed **\$110,000** due to investor optimism.

UK Transfers Chagos Islands to Mauritius

- **Deal Signed:** By UK PM Keir Starmer.
- **Key Points:**
 - UK returns sovereignty to **Mauritius**.
 - **Lease-back** of Diego Garcia to UK for **99 years** (£3.4 billion total).
 - Diego Garcia remains key **US-UK military base**.
- **Historical Context:**
 - UK separated Chagos from Mauritius in **1965** for Cold War use.
 - Diego Garcia was used in **Afghanistan, Gaza & Yemen operations**.

Visit of President of Angola to India

- **President:** Joao Lourenco's **first state visit** to India (after 38 years).
- **Major Outcomes:**
 - **\$200 million defence credit line** to Angola.
 - Expansion of ties in **energy, mining, pharma, agriculture**.
 - Affirmation of **India-Africa solidarity** as Global South partners.
- **Trade:** Bilateral trade reached **\$4.19 billion (2023–24)**.

India Rejects China's Renaming of Arunachal Pradesh

- **India's Stand:** Firmly rejected China's renaming of **27 locations**.
- **China's Claim:** Considers Arunachal as part of "**Southern Tibet**" (~90,000 sq km).
- **Pattern:** China has renamed places in **2017, 2021, 2023, 2024, and now 2025**.

- **India's Response:** Arunachal is an **integral part** of India.

Golden Dome – U.S. Missile Defence Plan

- **Proposed by:** Donald Trump in 2025.
- **Inspired by:** Israel's **Iron Dome**.
- **Goal:** Use **space-based satellites** and interceptors to neutralize ICBMs post-launch.
- **Budget:** **\$175 billion**, led by U.S. Space Force.
- **Status:** Faces concerns over **feasibility, funding, and 2029 timeline**.