

DIA, DEOGHAR IAS ACADEMY

Daily News Feed

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**Sabaijor Complex, Near Jamunajor Pul, Castair Town
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The fact is mangroves drive business

Mangroves have, historically, been on the margins of planning and policy priorities in spite of their vital role in anchoring coastal economies and protecting millions from climate extremes. Their loss is not just an environmental concern. Their loss erodes natural infrastructure that acts as a buffer for urban coastlines, underpins fisheries, and quietly contributes billions in ecosystem services and avoided damages.

As the world grapples with extreme weather events and rising sea levels, blue carbon ecosystems such as mangroves are critical to climate and economic resilience. Yet, their value rarely features in balance sheets or policy frameworks. How can businesses, governments, and communities reimagine these ecosystems as active drivers of sustainable growth and security? Three pillars of our work through the Mangrove Coalition offer ideas for the path forward.

Mapping with technology

First, embracing technology can help us better understand the value of "Natural Capital". Satellite and drone data with advanced geospatial Artificial Intelligence algorithms have improved accurate mangrove mapping and blue carbon quantification. This is crucial for informing policies and restoration efforts. The economic and ecosystem services valuation of mangroves ranges from ₹3,535 million in Pichavaram (Tamil Nadu) to ₹664 billion in the Sundarbans (West Bengal). Carbon sequestration alone is valued at ₹462 million per year in the Sundarbans, reflecting the ecological and economic importance of this habitat. Communities that possess deep knowledge of mangrove ecosystems

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It is unfortunate that the value of blue carbon ecosystems such as mangroves rarely features in balance sheets or policy frameworks

and rely on them for their livelihoods, must be prioritised and equitably benefited – socially and economically.

Involving communities

Second, community-led conservation efforts are key to strengthening symbiotic and mutually respectful relationships of people and nature. Fisherfolk especially value the role of mangroves as nurseries for juvenile fish. Healthy mangroves often translate into robust fish stocks, ensuring sustainable catch. The livelihoods of these coastal communities are intrinsically linked to the quality of mangrove and estuarine systems.

In dense urban settings such as Mumbai and Chennai, mangroves are often distressed, polluted and degraded. Since they are unable to support flourishing biodiversity, coastal livelihoods and socio-cultural interdependencies are compromised. However, when communities directly experience the benefits (more fish, cleaner air, protected homes) and are empowered to make decisions about their local environment, they become effective and enduring stewards. Mangroves and other coastal ecosystems can also create opportunities for alternative livelihoods such as aquaculture, beekeeping and eco-tourism. Integrated ownership models such as Eco-Development Committees (EDCs) or Joint Forest Management Committees (JFMCs) can be translated for urban mangroves.

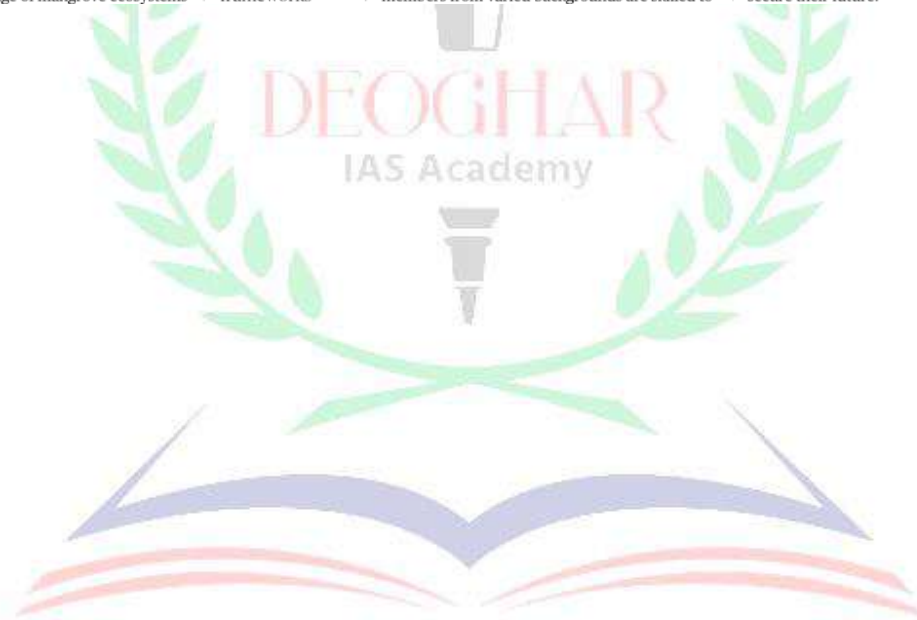
Third, citizen science can engage stakeholders to generate wonder and investment in this undervalued ecosystem and mobilise collective action for conservation. When community members from varied backgrounds are skilled to

understand and monitor ecosystems, this can either supplement existing assessment efforts or substitute for formal monitoring. Mangrove health is intertwined with the vitality of associated ecosystems and wetlands, and the health of rivers from source to the sea, as they contribute freshwater, sediments and biota. Regular monitoring can provide a good indication of how the system is faring.

Platforms can play a pivotal role

Key components of a mangrove health tool should include indicators around changes in mangrove area; quantity, quality and timing of freshwater flows; avian, floral, molluscan and fish diversity; and, crucially, community dependence and a perception of the ecosystem services. Such assessments can provide key insights to support management actions. Engagement platforms such as "Mangrove Mitras" or Friends of Mangroves can open avenues for urban citizens and local communities to engage constructively in the conservation of mangroves. This could help to rebuild a people-wetland-river-mangrove connection through an immersive experience on the magical value of mangroves.

Sustainable stewardship is not a top-down mandate but a symbiotic relationship where mangrove health and people's well-being are mutually reinforcing. Policymakers and businesses must recognise mangroves as vital climate and economic infrastructure rather than mere biodiversity zones. Protecting and restoring these ecosystems demands a coalition where science, business and community voices work in harmony – each bringing unique strengths to secure their future.



Deep ties

India needs to engage its neighbours
more closely

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the Maldives last week, after an invitation by Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu to be a special guest for the country's 60th Independence Day, signalled the full return of relations to the closeness they held during the previous Ibrahim Solih government. Although the two leaders had not gotten off to the best start in 2023, after Mr. Muizzu's surprise win, backed by an "India Out" campaign – this was followed by a "Boycott Maldives" social media campaign in India – they have been on the mend for the past year. During Mr. Muizzu's 2024 state visit to India, India had announced measures including lines of credit and a currency swap arrangement to support the Maldives during its economic troubles. Mr. Muizzu reflected gratitude when he described India's role in the Maldives as "pivotal" and Mr. Modi reciprocated the warmth. India announced a line of credit worth \$565 million (₹4,850 crore) and reduced the annual debt burden for Maldives on previous Indian lines of credit by 40%. There was also the launch of India-Maldives Free Trade Agreement negotiations, which will be a significant driver of future engagement. There was the signing too of MoUs for cooperation in fisheries, meteorological sciences, digital solutions and pharma, as well as a digital and rupee-rufiyaa national currency payments agreement. Over the past six decades, India has cultivated a strong security partnership with the Maldives, including trilateral national security consultations with Sri Lanka, and it is significant that after Mr. Modi's visit, Mr. Muizzu welcomed Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Disanayake for a state visit.

The Maldives visit was also a reaffirmation of the importance of India's "Neighbourhood First" policy, at a time when Indian foreign policy is facing headwinds linked to the U.S.'s trade tariffs and the conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza. The conflict with Pakistan after the Pahalgam attacks, and tensions with Bangladesh have engaged the government's attention. New Delhi has also been preoccupied with reaching out to different countries, following Operation Sindoor, but did not send delegations to neighbouring countries. It is heartening that New Delhi is preparing to welcome Nepal Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli, who has not been invited to India since he took office a year ago. A commemorative stamp by the Maldives for its national day celebrations showed traditional Indian and Maldives boats, which Mr. Modi described as a reflection of India and the Maldives being not just neighbours "but also fellow voyagers on a shared journey". In a time of global economic turmoil, a closer engagement with the neighbours – one that shores up their economic needs and supports their plans for development where possible – is essential.



House of wars

Attacking political rivals cannot be
a way to evade responsibility

The government and the Opposition crossed swords in Parliament during a discussion on Operation Sindoor this week. There was unanimity in praising India's armed forces, but there was little common ground beyond that. Operation Sindoor was India's military response to the terrorist attack in Pahalgam, on April 22, 2025, which claimed 26 lives. The elimination of three terrorists behind the attack, just before the parliamentary debate, helped the government's case. It told Parliament that these terrorists were Lashkar-e-Taiba members from Pakistan. The Narendra Modi government's strident approach seeks to change the behaviour of Pakistan and reassure its domestic audience. The success of this approach is debatable and the Opposition sought to put the government on the spot on both counts. A demonstrated willingness to use force against Pakistan in the event of a terrorism incident is a definitive turn in India's strategy, and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) takes pride in that. But there is no evidence yet that it is working though there has been chest thumping around it by the ruling party. The discussion in Parliament barely addressed the implications of this approach, which is being touted as the new normal. The Opposition and the government agreed on the need to punish Pakistan, and also disagreed on who would do it better.

The government claimed success in meeting its objectives of launching a military operation and denied that it had acted under pressure in ending the war. Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi demanded a pointed response to repeated claims by U.S. President Donald Trump that he mediated the ceasefire but the Prime Minister evaded a direct response on it. The government contradicts itself when it says that the operation was a success, and that it is continuing. It is also exasperating to hear a party that is now in its eleventh year of uninterrupted power, blame people who passed away decades ago for any challenge that India faces now. There was little self-reflection regarding the lapses that led to the terrorism incident, and whether and how the government plans to address them. The government had sent joint teams including several MPs from the Opposition abroad to garner support for India in the aftermath of the operation, but that sign of statesmanship was a short-lived aberration, as it turns out. The world is changing rapidly and India's capacity to navigate those changes will be largely determined by its own character. Questioning the patriotism of political opponents is an easy route to take to evade tough questions, but the BJP must realise that such an approach has diminishing returns.



What has been missed is India's digital sovereignty

The India-United Kingdom Free Trade Agreement (FTA), called the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), has been lauded by the Union Commerce and Industry Minister, Piyush Goyal, as the 'gold standard' for all India's trade deals. Mr. Goyal has asserted that no compromise was made in any sensitive sector. Evidently, the Minister seemed to be counting only agriculture and labour-intensive manufacturing as sensitive sectors – which they are. But remarkably, despite the wide coverage the FTA has received, the impact on India's other, highly sensitive digital sector, which permeates every sphere of national activity and holds the key to our future, has gone without official comment or media scrutiny.

We argue that the compromises made in the digital sector through the India-U.K. FTA have profound consequences for India's digital sovereignty – a term frequently invoked in high-level political discourse. India has completely flipped on several core positions that it has long maintained at global forums, including at the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Source code disclosure

The most surprising giveaway is on India's sovereign right to seek ex ante access to the source code for foreign digital goods or services, even for those deemed sensitive. This is very different from getting source code ex post for a specific investigation or remedy, which is allowed under the agreement. Regulators in different sectors often have strict disclosure rules, such as for food and medicine ingredients. Software now permeates nearly every product, including telecom, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and health applications, whereby it may be crucial for the regulators to be able to 'look under the hood' of software, for safety, security and general compliance requirements, and to enable urgent, real-time upgrades.

Giving up this right is a 180-degree turn from India's steadfast stand at the WTO and other forums. Even the United States, which first included source code related prohibitions in its FTAs and at the WTO, withdrew this formulation last year, recognising its domestic regulatory, law enforcement and security imperatives. In the U.S. driven Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP),



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The compromises that India made in the digital sector through the India-U.K. Free Trade Agreement will have profound consequences for India's digital sovereignty

the 'source code disclosure' provision applied only to mass-market software such as Microsoft's operating systems – meaning not to niche and custom-made software. It specifically excluded software for critical infrastructure. In the U.K. FTA text, the prohibition applies to all software. Businesses are always free to enter, or avoid, transactions requiring disclosure of source code. What is sacrificed here are India's regulatory rights in this regard, for all times to come, in a sector that has just begun to take shape.

Surrendering a critical national resource

Granting equal and non-discriminatory access for U.K. parties to 'Open Government Data' – a term from the pre-digital era which then meant government transparency, and access to its statistics – constitutes another major giveaway. This is because data is not what it used to be. Today, it has acquired an entirely new avatar, being the digital era's most valuable resource. AI, where heated competition for global mastery is raging, is but patterns derived from data, which is why data is deemed to be priceless.

This concession is very significant, even though this provision is yet at a 'best endeavour' level, and non-binding. It is incomprehensible why India (where the intention to be an AI superpower is a staple of top-level political rhetoric), has conceded that national data held by the government is not a sovereign resource but an international free for all. Facilitating foreign access to such data poses risks of eroding India's competitive advantage in using India's own data to create Indian AI products, and also serious security risks as national data can be weaponised.

The most contested issues in digital trade are the 'free flow of data' and 'data localisation'. While India seems to have largely stood its ground on these issues, its commitment to "enter into consultations to extend appropriate equivalent disciplines" to the U.K. if India agrees to any concessions with another country, denotes a dangerous regress, and visible vulnerability, with regard to India's long-held positions on these key issues.

This matter links to the one above on India's data being an important national economic resource as well as the need to safeguard it from a security point of view. Again, last year, owing to similar considerations, the U.S., the original proponent of 'free flow of data' and 'prohibition

on data localisation', withdrew from these stances at the WTO.

It is difficult to understand how Indian negotiators could be so naive or negligent in agreeing to the above concessions. Digital trade concessions are not like those on commodities, where tariffs can be applied one day and removed on another.

Digital trade texts are essentially about rule making for a new global digital order. We either fully opt into western, Big Tech-oriented, digital architectures, or we maintain sufficient autonomy and sovereignty. This is because once the digital rules and systems are set, they are almost impossible to roll back. India's digital concessions are thus buttressing a set of rules for a global digital ecosystem from which India cannot extricate itself later. And India is doing all this in a reactive mode without a clear road map of its own.

It seems that the U.K. was able to extract all the above concessions, the absolute opposite to what India has stood for till now, because, unlike manufacturing and agriculture, there is no specific political 'constituency' for digital sovereignty. But it is perhaps an even more important issue in the mid to long term. We may be seeing a repeat of how India lost out on early industrialisation and had to suffer grievous colonial exploitation, causing a loss of wealth and independence. In making these digital concessions, we may be giving up our digital future, independence and prosperity.

India must act quickly

India needs to develop and negotiate towards a global digital architecture that protects and furthers its digital sovereignty. As a late starter in 'digital industrialisation', it should create the space required for India to become a digital superpower and not a digital colony.

For this, India needs to urgently formulate a full-fledged digital sovereignty and 'digital industrialisation' policy which should then inform and guide its trade negotiations. Our negotiators must be accompanied by digital sovereignty experts with access to the top political leadership, which has the core responsibility for safeguarding India's long-term digital interests. These interests are often not so visible, and, therefore, tend to get by-passed and not fought for.



12th Fail named best film; Shah Rukh, Vikrant Massey, and Rani best actors

71st National Film Awards announced; best male actor award for a supporting role shared by Vijayaraghavan and Muthupettai Somu Bhaskar; Urvashi and Janki Bodiwala share best female actor award in the same category

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The best male actor award was shared by Shah Rukh Khan for *Jawan* and Vikrant Massey for *12th Fail*, which won the best feature film award at the 71st National Film Awards announced on Friday. Rani Mukerji was adjudged the best female actor for her role in *Mrs Chatterjee vs Norway*. This year, a total of 332 feature films, 115 non-feature films, 27 books, and 16 critics came for selection for the awards for 2023. Mr. Khan and Ms. Mukerji, senior artists, won the best actor awards for the first time.

The best male actor award for a supporting role was shared by Vijayaraghavan for *Pookkaalam* (Malayalam) and Muthupettai Somu Bhaskar for *Parking* (Tamil); Urvashi won the best female actor award for a supporting role for *Ullozhukku* (Malayalam) along with Janki Bodiwala for *Vash* (Gujarati). The best child artist award went to Sukriti Veni Bandreddi; Kabir Khandare; and Treesha Thosar, Shrinivas Pokale and Bhargav Jagtap, for *Gandhi Tatha Chettu* (Telu-

The credits roll...

The jury for the 71st National Film Awards picked the winners from 332 feature film entries for 2023

- **Best film on national values**
Sam Bahadur (Hindi)
- **Best direction**
The Kerala Story (Hindi) | Sudipto Sen
- **Best documentary**
God Vulture and Human
- **Best Editing**
Pookkaalam (Malayalam)
- **Best short film**
Giddh The Scavenger (Hindi)
- **Best screenplay**
Baby (Telugu), *Parking* (Tamil), *Sirf Ek Bandaa Kaafi Hai* (Hindi)



- **Best children's film**
Naal 2 (Marathi)
- **Best production design**: 2018 - *Everyone Is A Hero* (Malayalam)

- **Best music direction**
G.V. Prakash Kumar (*Vaathi*) and Harshavardhan Rameshwar (*Animal*)
- **Best choreography**
Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani (Hindi)

gu), *Gypsy* (Marathi), and *Naal 2*, respectively.

The best direction award went to Sudipto Sen for *The Kerala Story* (Hindi), which was also recognised for best cinematography (Prasantanu Mohapatra). PVNS Rohit was adjudged the best male singer for the song *Premisthanna* in the film *Baby* (Telugu), which also won for the best screenplay (Sai Rajesh Neelam). Shilpa Rao won the title of best female singer for *Chaleya* in *Jawan* (Hindi).

The award for best debut film was bagged by Ashish Bende for *Aatma-pamphlet* (Marathi), and the best popular film by *Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani* directed by Karan Johar. *Sam Bahadur*, directed by Meghna Gulzar, was recognised as the best film promoting national, social, and environmental values.

Naal 2 (Marathi), directed by Sudhakar Reddy Yakanti, topped the best children's film category, while *Hanu-Man* (Telugu) won for best film in anima-

tion, visual effects, gaming and comic category.

The awards for sound design were bagged by *Animal* (Hindi) (Sachin Sudhakaran and Hariharan Muralidharan); for editing by Midhun Murali in *Pookkaalam*; production design by Mohandas in *2018: Everyone Is A Hero* (Malayalam), music direction by G.V. Prakash Kumar in *Vaathi* (Tamil) and Harshavardhan Rameshwar in *Animal*; and lyrics by Karsarla Shyam in *Balagam* (*Ooru Palleturu* - Telugu).

The best choreography award went to Vaibhavi Merchant for *Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani* (Dhindhora Baj Re); and the best action direction award (stunt choreography) to Nandu Prudhvi for *Hanu-Man*. Sam Bahadur, a biopic on Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw, was named in categories for make-up and costume, while Sanya Malhotra-starrer *Kathal: A Jackfruit Mystery* was adjudged the best Hindi film.

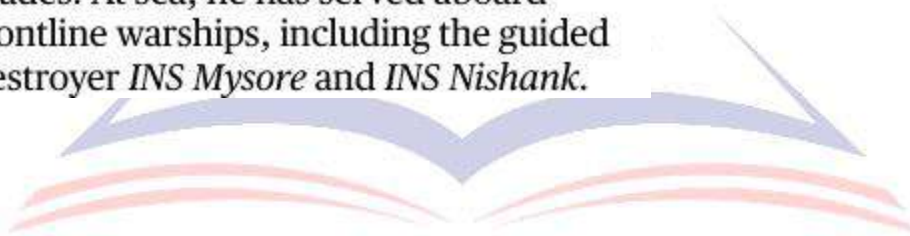
Deepak Kingrani was recognised as the best dialogue writer for the Hindi film *Sirf Ek Bandaa Kaafi Hai*. *Rongatapu 1982* (Assamese), *Deep Fridge* (Bengali), *Parking*, *Kandeelu* (Kannada), *Shyamchi Aai* (Marathi), *Pushkara* (Odia), *Godday Godday Chaa* (Punjabi), and *Bhagavanth Kesari* (Telugu) won in the language film categories.

The Hindi film *Flowering Man* won for the best non-feature film. The best documentary award went to *God Vulture and Human*; the best director award to Piyush Thakur for *The First Film*; and the best script award was bagged by Kannada short film *Sunflowers were the First Ones to Know* by Chidananda Nayak.



Vice-Admiral Sanjay Vatsayan takes charge as Navy vice-chief

Vice-Admiral Sanjay Vatsayan assumed charge as the Vice-Chief of the Naval Staff (VCNS) on Friday. Upon assuming office, he paid homage to fallen personnel who made the supreme sacrifice in service of the nation by laying a wreath at the National War Memorial in New Delhi. The Indian Navy stated that Vice-Admiral Vatsayan is a specialist in gunnery and missile systems, and has held a broad spectrum of command, operational and staff appointments over a distinguished naval career spanning more than three decades. At sea, he has served aboard several frontline warships, including the guided missile destroyer *INS Mysore* and *INS Nishank*.



Amid trade turmoil, U.S. to send White House adviser Ricky Gill to Delhi for IMEC conference

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

Amidst turmoil over the Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) and impending 25% tariffs on U.S. imports of Indian goods, U.S. President Donald Trump's most senior point-person for the region will lead a delegation to Delhi next week.

Ricky Gill, who is the Special Assistant to the U.S. President for National Security Affairs and the U.S. National Security Council's Senior Director for South and Central Asia, has been invited by India's National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS) to discuss the future of the long-delayed India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) on August 5 and 6.



Critical dialogue: Ricky Gill and the U.S. delegation are expected to hold talks with MEA officials during their visit to New Delhi. [X/USIBC](#)

Officials of the NSCS, which is led by National Security Adviser (NSA) Ajit Doval, did not respond to requests for details of the conference. According to sources, a number of countries involved in the project have been invited to attend apart from the U.S.

While the IMEC was

launched on the sidelines of the G-20 in September 2023, it has not made much progress since, due to the October 7 terror attacks in Israel, and Israel's bombardment of Gaza in which more than 60,000 people have been killed. The Israeli port of Haifa is a key part of the original

IMEC project, although scholars have suggested considering alternative alignments.

Sanctions impact

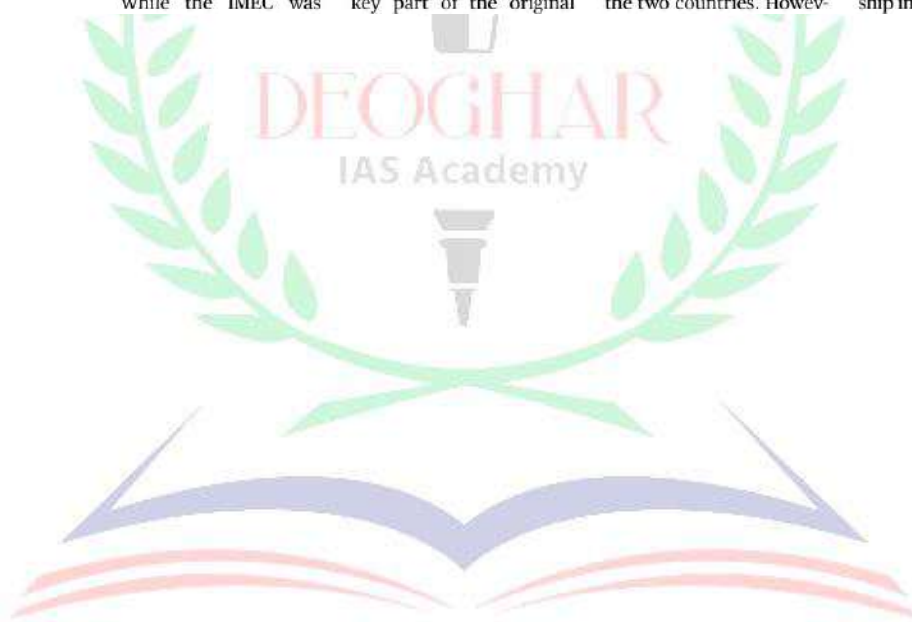
During their stay in Delhi, Mr. Gill and the U.S. delegation are also expected to hold talks with MEA officials. "The visit underscores the United States' continued commitment to advancing regional connectivity and infrastructure cooperation with key partners across South Asia, the Middle East and the Mediterranean," the U.S. Embassy spokesperson told *The Hindu*.

Officials said the visit had been planned several weeks in advance and is not connected to the current trade issues between the two countries. Howev-

er, Mr. Gill has previous experience in the U.S. NSC working on Russian and Iranian sanctions, both of which are now being imposed on Indian entities, and these might come up during talks.

On Thursday, the U.S. State Department sanctioned eight Indian entities and five Indian nationals for their alleged engagement in the oil trade with Iran.

Meanwhile, Mr. Trump announced that, in addition to the 25% reciprocal tariffs that would be imposed on Indian exports from August 7, Indian goods would face added "penalties" due to India's import of Russian oil, purchase of Russian military hardware, and membership in BRICS grouping.



Trump unveils slew of new tariffs on nearly 70 nations; Canada faces punitive levy

Agence France-Presse
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump unveiled new tariffs Thursday on nearly 70 countries – including a blistering 35% on neighbour Canada – as he seeks to reshape global trade to benefit the U.S. economy.

However, in a minor reprieve that opens the door to further negotiations, the White House said the measures will take effect in a week for most countries, not Friday as previously expected.

The tariffs are a demonstration of raw economic power that Mr. Trump sees putting U.S. exporters in a stronger position while encouraging domestic manufacturing by keeping out foreign imports. But the muscular approach has raised fears of inflation and other economic fallout in the world's biggest economy.

Mr. Trump raised duties on nearly 70 economies, from a current 10% level imposed in April when he unleashed “reciprocal” tariffs citing unfair trade practices.

Varying by partner

The new, steeper levels listed in an executive order vary by trading partner and go as high as 41%.

Any goods “transshipped” through other jurisdictions to avoid U.S. duties would be hit with an additional 40% tariff, the order said.

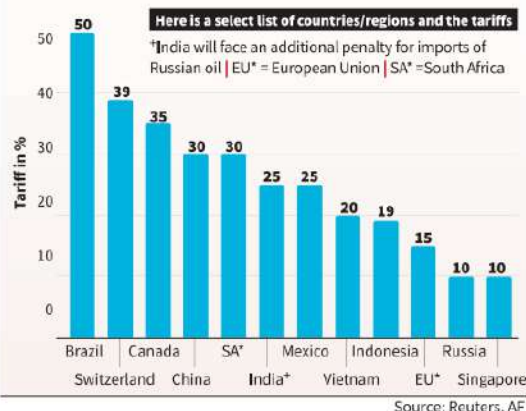
The American leader separately hiked tariffs on Canadian goods from 25% to 35% – starting on Friday. He had warned of trade consequences for Canada after Prime Minister Mark Carney announced plans to recognise a Palestinian

Trade walls thicken

The U.S. President Donald Trump imposed steep tariffs on imports from dozens of trading partners – including Canada, Brazil, India and Taiwan

■ A presidential executive order set duties of 35% on many Canadian, 50% on Brazilian, 25% on Indian, 20% on Taiwanese and 39% on Swiss products

■ The U.S. has been pressing India to open its markets to a wide range of American products, including dairy, poultry, corn, soybeans, rice, wheat, ethanol, fruits and nuts



state at the UN General Assembly in September. Mr. Trump's order cited Canada's failure to “cooperate in curbing the ongoing flood of fentanyl and other illicit drugs” as well as its “retaliation” against his measures.

Mr. Carney said his government was “disappointed” with the hike, citing its efforts to crack down on fentanyl and increase border security.

Mr. Trump gave more time to neighbour and major trading partner Mexico, delaying for 90 days a threat to increase tariffs from 25% to 30%, after holding talks with President Claudia Sheinbaum.

Exemptions remain, however, for a wide range of

Canadian and Mexican goods entering the U.S. under a North American trade pact. With questions hanging over the effectiveness of bilateral trade deals already struck – including with the European Union and Japan – the outcome of Mr. Trump's overall plan remained uncertain.

“No doubt about it – the executive order and related agreements concluded over the past few months tears up the trade rule book that has governed international trade since the Second World War,” said Wendy Cutler, senior vice president of the Asia Society Policy Institute. “Whether our partners can preserve it without the U.S. is an open question.”

India-U.S. ties have 'weathered several challenges': MEA

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

The India-U.S. relationship has "weathered several transitions and challenges", and the bilateral ties will "move forward", said a senior official of the Ministry of External Affairs against the backdrop of comments from U.S. President Donald Trump, who, on Wednesday, cited India's purchase of military hardware and energy from Russia and announced 25% tariffs on Indian imports "plus a penalty".

"India and the United States share a comprehensive global strategic partnership anchored in shared interests, democratic values, and robust people-to-people ties. This partnership has weathered several transitions and challenges. We remain focused on the substantive agenda that our two countries have committed to and are confident that the relationship will continue to move forward," said Randhir Jaiswal, official spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs, during Friday's weekly press briefing.

Officials clarified that the India-U.S. relationship has come a long way and expressed confidence that it will overcome the latest challenges in the way that India dealt with the sanctions that the U.S. had imposed after India tested nuclear weapons in May 1998.

Earlier on Wednesday, President Trump had placed the trade relationship within the context of his ongoing efforts to bring Russia to the negotiating table regarding the Ukraine crisis and said on social media platform Truth-Social, "Remember, while



Randhir Jaiswal

India is our friend, we have, over the years, done relatively little business with them because their Tariffs are far too high, among the highest in the World, and they have the most strenuous and obnoxious non-monetary Trade Barriers of any Country. Also, they have always bought a vast majority of their military equipment from Russia, and are Russia's largest buyer of ENERGY, along with China..."

Apart from targeting India for sourcing energy, and military hardware from Russia, President Trump had slammed the BRICS grouping where India and Russia have been the founding members. "You know, they have BRICS, which is basically a group of countries that are anti the United States, and India is a member of that. If you can believe it," Mr. Trump told the media at the White House on Wednesday.

Responding to this, Mr. Jaiswal said, "Our bilateral relationships with various countries stand on their own merit and should not be seen from the prism of a third country. India and Russia have a steady and time-tested partnership."

He, however, did not respond directly to the remarks from Mr. Trump regarding India sourcing military hardware from Russia

