

## India–U.S. rice tariff issue

### Why in News?

Just days before a U.S. trade delegation headed by Rick Switzer landed in New Delhi (Dec 10–12), Donald Trump suggested that new tariffs might be imposed on Indian rice.

The allegation: India is “dumping” rice in American markets.

This remark was made at a White House briefing while unveiling a \$12-billion aid scheme for U.S. farmers.

A question was put to U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent regarding India’s supposed “waiver” on rice-related duties.

This development arrives when Washington already enforces 50% tariffs on several categories of Indian exports.

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### Relevance

#### GS II – International Relations

- Rising friction in India–U.S. trade engagements
- Implications of Donald Trump’s protectionist, nationalist economic policy
- Trade diplomacy contradictions: QUAD cooperation coexisting with tariff pressure
- Tariffs being deployed as strategic leverage

#### GS III – Economy & Agriculture

- MSP-driven procurement and its impact on export pricing
- Agricultural trade performance amid rising global protectionism
- WTO AoA debates on public stockholding and alleged dumping
- Effects on:
  - Farmer income certainty
  - Overseas food inflation
  - Market diversification for Indian exporters

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### Core Economic Facts

#### 1. Trade Asymmetry in Rice

- Only around 3% of India’s rice exports are shipped to the U.S.
- Conversely, India supplies more than 25% of America’s total rice imports.

#### Inference:

- India does not rely on the U.S. for its rice market.
- The U.S. significantly relies on India as a supplier.

#### Conclusion:

A tariff escalation hurts American buyers far more than Indian exporters.

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### **Dumping: Is the allegation valid?**

#### **WTO concept of dumping:**

Selling goods abroad at prices below production cost or below domestic prices to gain market share.

#### **India's rice exports:**

They are competitive because of:

- Lower cultivation costs
- Large-scale production efficiencies
- MSP-backed procurement systems

No proven evidence shows sales at:

- Below cost of production
- Below Indian wholesale rates

#### **Conclusion:**

The “dumping” charge is political positioning rather than a WTO-consistent claim.

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### **Strategic Context**

#### **1. Domestic U.S. Politics**

Trump's remarks came alongside:

- Announcement of a \$12-billion farm compensation package
- Strong lobbying by American farmer groups

#### **Aim:**

Assert protectionism and shift blame for domestic agricultural distress.

#### **2. Negotiation Tactics**

The timing coincides with:

- Ongoing tariff discussions with India

The U.S. often:

- Applies pre-negotiation pressure
  - Uses specific sectors—here, rice—as bargaining tools
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### **Who Loses If Rice Tariff Is Imposed?**

#### **Impact on the U.S.**

- Steep rise in retail rice prices

- Contribution to food inflation
- Heaviest burden on low-income and immigrant households
- No alternative exporters offering India's scale and pricing

#### **Impact on India**

- Very limited export disruption due to diversified markets:
  - West Asia
  - Africa
  - Southeast Asia
- The U.S. is not a crucial market for India's rice sector

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#### **WTO & Legal Angle**

Anti-dumping duties require:

- Detailed price–cost investigations
- Proof of injury to domestic producers

A unilateral tariff hike:

- Contradicts multilateral trade principles
- Illustrates tariff use as a geopolitical instrument

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#### **Strategic Implications for India**

Strengthens the case for:

- Wider export diversification
- Reducing susceptibility to U.S. trade pressure

Reinforces India's push for:

- South–South trade channels
- Agricultural export diplomacy

Highlights limits of:

- “Strategic partnership” when confronted with transactional protectionism

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#### **Link with MSP, Food Security & Global Image**

India's rice prominence is based on:

- MSP procurement regime
- Large buffer stocks
- Post-Green Revolution output strength

U.S. criticism indirectly challenges:

- India's food security framework
  - WTO debate on public stockholding
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### **Broader Trend: Return of Trump-era Protectionism**

Sectors earlier targeted:

- Steel, automobiles, pharmaceuticals

Now:

- Rice

Methods applied:

- National security claims
  - Dumping accusations
  - Pressure from domestic farm groups
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### **Conclusion**

The suggested U.S. tariff on Indian rice is economically flawed, politically driven, and strategically counterproductive.

It reveals:

- The fragility of the U.S. commitment to open trade
- Use of tariffs for political signalling

India remains comparatively secure due to:

- Broad export markets
  - Strong cost advantage
  - Global dominance in rice trade
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### **High Court judge impeachment move**

#### **Why in News?**

A group of 107 MPs from the INDIA bloc submitted a petition to Speaker Om Birla seeking the impeachment of Justice G.R. Swaminathan of the Madras High Court (Madurai Bench).

Accusations include:

- Delivering verdicts influenced by ideological leanings
- Displaying bias toward a particular religious group



- Extending undue benefit to a senior lawyer
- Acting contrary to secular principles

Triggering incident:

A directive concerning the lighting of the Karthigai Deepam on a deepasthambam near a dargah atop Thirupparankundram hill.

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## Relevance

### GS 2 – Polity & Constitution

- Removal of constitutional functionaries
- Judicial independence vs mechanisms of accountability
- Secularism as part of the Basic Structure

### GS 4 – Ethics & Integrity

- Ethical norms for the judiciary
- Conflict of interest concerns
- Preserving public trust in judicial neutrality

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## Constitutional Basics: How Are High Court Judges Removed?

### Key Articles

- **Article 217** – Appointment and removal of HC judges
- **Article 124(4)** – Procedure for removal (same as for SC judges)
- **Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968** – Investigation framework

### Grounds (only two permitted):

- Proven misbehaviour
- Proven incapacity

*Note:* Judicial mistakes or unpopular rulings *cannot* justify removal.

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## Step-by-Step Removal Process (Impeachment)

1. Motion signed by:
  - 100 MPs in Lok Sabha **or**
  - 50 MPs in Rajya Sabha
2. Speaker/Chairman examines and admits motion
3. A 3-member inquiry panel is constituted:



- One Supreme Court judge
  - One High Court Chief Justice
  - One eminent jurist
4. If charges are substantiated:
- Motion must pass both Houses separately
  - With a special majority:
    - Majority of total membership
    - Two-thirds of members present & voting
5. President issues final removal order

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### What Is Being Alleged in This Case?

- Decisions influenced by ideological preferences
- Communal tilt in a religious dispute (deepasthambam–dargah issue)
- Partiality toward specific advocates
- Possible breach of:
  - Article 14 (Equality)
  - Articles 25–28 (Secular framework)
  - Basic Structure principles

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### Why This Is Constitutionally Sensitive?

Judges enjoy:

- Strong tenure security
- A deliberately stringent removal mechanism

Purpose:

To protect against political pressure and ensure independent adjudication.

Frequent impeachment threats risk converting judicial accountability into political leverage.

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### Key Judicial Precedents

- **Justice V. Ramaswami (1993):** Impeachment attempt failed due to abstentions
- **Justice Soumitra Sen (2011):** RS passed motion; judge resigned before LS vote
- **Justice J.B. Pardiwala (2018):** Notice withdrawn early

*No judge has ever been removed through a complete impeachment process.*

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### **But Accountability Still Matters**

- Judiciary must remain subject to constitutional checks
- Genuine evidence of bias warrants inquiry
- Impeachment, if used judiciously, is a legitimate constitutional remedy

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### **Conclusion**

The impeachment notice against Justice G.R. Swaminathan illustrates rising tensions between judicial independence and political oversight in sensitive communal matters. While the Constitution permits removal for substantiated misconduct, using impeachment amid political–religious controversies risks:

- Weakening judicial autonomy
- Turning constitutional safeguards into partisan instruments

The correct path ahead requires:

- Neutral judicial investigation
- Procedure under the Judges (Inquiry) Act
- Commitment to constitutional morality

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### **Gannon's Storm discovery**

#### **Why in News?**

Aditya-L1—India's first solar observatory—together with six U.S. satellites has decoded why the May 2024 solar storm behaved anomalously.

Called "Gannon's Storm," it produced far stronger geomagnetic effects than expected.

ISRO has, for the first time, confirmed that:

- Magnetic reconnection occurred *inside* a CME
- The reconnection zone extended nearly 1.3 million km—about 100 times Earth's diameter

The finding used data from:

NASA missions (Wind, ACE, THEMIS-C, STEREO-A, MMS)  
DSCOVR (NASA-NOAA)

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### **Relevance**

#### **GS III – Science & Technology**

- India's solar observatory capabilities
- Landmark discovery in heliophysics



- International science collaboration

### **GS III – Disaster Management**

- Space weather as an emerging hazard
  - Threats to:
    - Electrical grids
    - GPS & NavIC
    - Telecom and aviation networks
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#### **Basics First: What Is a Solar Storm?**

Solar storms arise from:

- Solar flares
- Coronal Mass Ejections (CMEs)

CMEs:

- Massive plasma clouds carrying magnetic fields
- Travel at 500–3,000 km/s

Impact on Earth includes:

- Satellite degradation
  - Navigation system errors
  - Radio communication failures
  - Grid collapses
  - Intense auroras
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#### **What Is a CME?**

A CME is a huge expulsion of magnetised plasma from the Sun. It contains:

- Charged particles
- Twisted magnetic flux ropes

Normally:

- A single CME interacts with Earth
  - Severity depends on magnetic alignment (southward is dangerous)
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#### **What Was Unusual in May 2024?**

##### **1. Two CMEs Collided Mid-Space**

Instead of a solo CME, two collided during transit, causing:

- Extreme magnetic compression
- Turbulent internal reconnection

## **2. First Direct Evidence of Magnetic Reconnection Inside a CME**

Reconnection = snapping and rejoining of magnetic field lines, releasing enormous energy.

Earlier assumption:

It occurs on the Sun or near Earth—not *inside* CMEs.

New insight:

Reconnection occurred *within* the CME during its journey.

## **3. Massive Scale**

Reconnection region size:

~1.3 million km (~100 Earth diameters)

A record-setting observation.

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### **Why Did This Intensify the Storm?**

The CME collision caused:

- Sudden magnetic polarity reversal

Consequences:

- Stronger engagement with Earth's magnetosphere
- Enhanced geomagnetic storm
- Severe ionospheric disruptions
- Increased drag on satellites
- Greater power grid stress

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### **Role of Aditya-L1**

Using:

- Magnetometers
- Plasma instruments
- Solar wind analysers

Aditya-L1:

- Provided precise magnetic field mapping
- Pinpointed the reconnection region



Significance:

Establishes India's capability in advanced space weather research and real-time monitoring.

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### **Strategic Importance for India**

Helps protect:

- NavIC
- Defence satellites
- Power infrastructure
- Communication networks

Reduces reliance on foreign space-weather advisories.

Essential for:

- Gaganyaan
- Lunar/planetary missions

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### **Global Scientific Importance**

Improves:

- CME modelling
- Early warning for aviation, military, financial systems

Validates:

- Multi-satellite observational approaches

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### **Link with Global Preparedness**

Past disruptions:

- Carrington Event (1859)
- Quebec blackout (1989)

The 2024 storm shows high vulnerability of modern digital systems.

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### **Conclusion**

The discovery by Aditya-L1 of internal CME reconnection reshapes understanding of solar storms.

It proves CMEs are dynamically evolving—not stable structures.

For India, Aditya-L1 now stands not only as a scientific mission but as a strategic shield for national infrastructure.

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## **SURYAKIRAN-XIX**

### **Why in News?**

The 19th India–Nepal joint military exercise SURYAKIRAN-XIX concluded in Pithoragarh.

The validation phase was attended by both nations' Directors General of Military Operations (DGMOs).

Exercise focus:

- Counter-terror strategies
- Intel-driven precision missions
- High-altitude and rugged-terrain warfare
- Operational drills aligned with UN Charter Chapter VII

A symbolic "Tree of Friendship" was planted by the DGMOs.

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### **Relevance**

#### **GS II – International Relations**

- India–Nepal defence cooperation
- Strategic dynamics amidst Nepal's China balancing
- Cross-border confidence-building

#### **GS III – Internal Security**

- Joint counter-terror readiness
- Mountain warfare preparedness
- UN-aligned tactical operations

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### **What Is Exercise SURYAKIRAN?**

An annual bilateral exercise between:

- Indian Army
- Nepal Army

Conducted alternately in both territories.

Major themes:

- Counter-terror drills
- HADR operations
- Peacekeeping training

Reflects:

- India–Nepal open-border military affinity
  - Historical recruitment ties (Gorkhas)
  - Deep-rooted defence partnership
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## **Blue Corner Notice**

### **Why in News?**

Interpol issued a Blue Corner Notice against Goa club owners Saurabh and Gaurav Luthra, promoters of Café Cubi and Curlies. They allegedly escaped to Thailand after a massive fire at a Goa club that killed 25 people.

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### **Relevance**

#### **GS II – International Institutions**

- Interpol's role and limitations
- Mechanisms of global police coordination
- Difference among Interpol notices

#### **GS III – Internal Security**

- Tracking fugitives involved in negligent crimes
  - Cross-border evasion routes
  - Extradition as a law enforcement tool
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### **Basics First: What Is Interpol?**

- International Criminal Police Organization
- HQ: Lyon
- Founded: 1923
- Members: 195 nations

Functions:

- Facilitates inter-country policing
- Shares biometric and criminal data
- Helps track financial and cybercrime networks

Interpol **cannot arrest**—it only assists national police.

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### What Are Interpol Notices?

Colour	Purpose
Red	Trace, detain, extradite a wanted person
Blue	Collect data on identity, location, activities
Green	Alert on habitual offenders
Yellow	Trace missing persons
Black	Identify deceased persons
Orange	Warn of imminent threats
Purple	Share criminal methods & tools
Silver	Track assets in financial crimes
UN Notice	For persons sanctioned by UNSC

### What Is a Blue Corner Notice?

Purpose:

- Trace a suspect's whereabouts
- Gather information on identity, movements, and activities

Used when:

- Investigation is ongoing
- Formal charges or arrest orders are not yet issued

It **does not authorise arrest**.

Acts as:

- An intelligence tool
- A precursor to possible extradition requests

### Blue vs Red Notice

Parameter	Blue Notice	Red Notice
Objective	Info gathering	Provisional arrest
Legal power	No arrest	Enables detention
Stage	Investigative	Post-charges



Parameter	Blue Notice	Red Notice
Purpose	Tracking	Extradition

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## Cyber Slavery Racket in Southeast Asia

### Why in News (2024–25)?

- Nearly 300 Indians were rescued from Myanmar after being coerced into cyber fraud operations.
- Delhi Police arrested major recruiters in this transnational cyber-slavery network.
- Similar arrests occurred in Gujarat and Haryana.
- Renewed focus on the intersection of trafficking and cybercrime.

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### What Is “Cyber Slavery”?

A modern form of forced labour where victims are trafficked to run online scams.

Victims:

- Tricked through fake foreign job ads
- Taken abroad on tourist visas
- Confined and compelled to conduct cyber fraud

Working conditions:

- 15–18 hours/day
- Physical abuse
- Detention in secured scam complexes

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### How Did India First Recognise It?

- First high-profile alert by Tamil Nadu CM M.K. Stalin in Sept 2022
- Reports soon surfaced from Gujarat, Delhi, and Uttar Pradesh

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### Hotspots of Cyber Slavery

- **Myanmar:** Myawaddy (largest hub)
- **Cambodia:** Sihanoukville casinos
- **Laos:** Golden Triangle SEZ

Reasons:

- Weak policing

- Criminal syndicates
  - Casino infrastructure
  - Post-pandemic economic gaps
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### **Why These Countries Became Epicentres?**

- Surge in digital crime after COVID
  - Casinos providing cover for scam centres
  - Porous borders
  - Chinese crime groups relocating operations
  - Availability of trafficked South Asian labour
  - High returns from crypto scams, romance frauds, fake trading platforms
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### **Indian Government's Response**

- Screening passengers at airports
- Verifying overseas job sponsors
- Public awareness campaigns
- Tracking high-risk destinations
- Embassy-led rescue operations

### **Key data:**

- Jan 2022–May 2024: 70,000+ Indian job seekers profiled for Cambodia/Laos
  - Over 1,500 Indians rescued (mainly from Myanmar & Cambodia)
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### **Use of Strategic Assets**

- Indian Air Force aircraft engaged in evacuations
  - Coordination with Myanmar military and local authorities
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### **Why It's a National Security Issue**

- Mix of trafficking, cybercrime, and global syndicates
- Coerced Indians used to defraud Indian citizens
- Links to:
  - Money laundering
  - Crypto-based terror funding
  - Organised crime networks

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### Structural Gaps Highlighted

- Poor oversight of overseas employment agents
  - Low digital awareness among youth
  - Slow international cooperation mechanisms
  - Inefficient MLAT processes
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### Diplomatic & Legal Dimension

Long-term remedy requires:

- Bilateral treaties
- ASEAN-level cybercrime coordination
- Faster extradition and joint policing frameworks

### 11<sup>th</sup> December 2025: Daily MCQs

**Q1. With reference to the recent India–U.S. rice tariff dispute, consider the following statements:**

1. Under Article 253, Parliament can enact laws to implement international trade agreements such as WTO rules.
2. The allegation of “dumping” under WTO rules implies selling exports below domestic production cost.
3. India sends more than 25% of its total rice exports to the United States.

**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

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

**Answer: A**

**Explanation:**

- India sends only ~3% of its rice exports to the U.S.; however, 25% of U.S. rice imports come from India.
  - Article 253 empowers Parliament to legislate on international agreements.
  - WTO defines dumping as selling below production cost or domestic price.
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**Q2. Consider the following regarding the impeachment of High Court judges:**



1. Article 217 provides the method for removal of High Court judges.
2. The motion for removal must be passed in each House by a special majority.
3. The Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968 provides a 5-member inquiry panel to investigate charges.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: A

Explanation:

- Article 217 refers to appointment and conditions, but removal follows Article 124(4) procedure.
- The inquiry committee is 3-member, not 5-member.
- Both Houses require a special majority.

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Q3. Gannon's Storm, recently in news, was significant because:

- A. It provided the first evidence of nuclear reactions in a coronal loop.
- B. Two Coronal Mass Ejections collided, leading to magnetic reconnection inside a CME.
- C. It marked the strongest solar flare ever recorded.
- D. It detected a new particle stream that bypassed Earth's magnetosphere.

Answer: B

Explanation:

- Gannon's Storm showed first-ever direct evidence of internal magnetic reconnection inside a CME after two CMEs collided.

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Q4. SURYAKIRAN-XIX, a bilateral military exercise between India and Nepal, focuses primarily on:

1. Counter-terror operations
2. High-altitude warfare
3. Naval interoperability
4. Peacekeeping training under the UN Charter

Select the correct answer using the code below:

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

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

Answer: A

Explanation:

SURYAKIRAN is an Army-to-Army exercise; naval roles are not involved.

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**Q5. With reference to Interpol's Blue Corner Notice, consider the following statements:**

1. It authorises the provisional arrest of a fugitive abroad.
2. It is issued to collect additional information about a person's identity and activities.
3. It is binding on all member countries under the Interpol Charter.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: B

Explanation:

- Blue Notice does NOT authorise arrest (that is Red Notice).
- Interpol notices are not legally binding; compliance is voluntary.

**Mains:** The impeachment mechanism under Articles 217 and 124(4) aims to balance judicial independence with accountability. Critically examine this balance in the context of the impeachment notice against a sitting High Court judge. 150 words.