



## Lok Sabha passes Waqf Bill after a long debate

### POLITY & GOVERNANCE

The Lok Sabha passed the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, also known as the Unified Waqf Management Empowerment, Efficiency, and Development Bill (UMEED), after a lengthy debate that extended past midnight on Wednesday. Home Minister Amit Shah assured the Muslim community that the Bill does not interfere with religious practices, despite accusations from the Opposition that it would. He accused the Opposition of fear-mongering for vote bank politics.

The Bill passed with 288 votes in favour and 232 against. The Opposition's proposed amendments were defeated through division of votes. Shah clarified that the Bill allows only Muslims to be mutawallis (managers/administrators) of



Waqfs, while non-Muslims can be included in Waqf Boards or Councils for administrative purposes, ensuring donations are properly utilized. He emphasized that the Bill is focused on administration, not religious practices, and rejected the idea that it would interfere with the nature of Waqf donations. The Bill was presented by Minority Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju as a revised version of the original Waqf Bill.

Home Minister Amit Shah explained that "donation" in the context of the Bill refers to one's own property, as government property cannot be donated. He also highlighted that a designated official will verify the authenticity of Waqf properties in case of disputes. A key change in the new law, compared to the 2013 Waqf law, is that only individuals who have been practicing Muslims for over five years can donate to Waqf.

## Speaker cannot be 'indecisive' on pleas over defection: SC

### POLITY & GOVERNANCE

**Courts cannot tell a Speaker how to decide, but can it not tell a Speaker to decide within a reasonable period?**

**JUSTICE B.R. GAVAI**  
Supreme Court Judge



The Supreme Court stated on Wednesday that it is not "powerless" if a Speaker remains "indecisive" regarding disqualification petitions of defecting legislators. The court was hearing petitions filed by Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) leaders, who sought timely action from the Telangana Speaker on the disqualification proceedings of 10 MLAs who joined the ruling Congress party. The Bench, led by Justice B.R. Gavai, emphasized that a Speaker cannot use indecision to undermine the objective of the Tenth Schedule (anti-defection law) of the Constitution.

### 'Reasonable period'

During a hearing on disqualification petitions related to defections in Telangana, Justice B.R. Gavai questioned whether courts could direct a Speaker to decide within a reasonable time frame, even though they cannot dictate the decision itself. He asked if courts should remain powerless when a Speaker delays action for years, particularly if defections happen early in a legislative term. Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, representing the respondents, argued that while courts could request a Speaker to act swiftly, they should not impose strict deadlines for decision-making. The respondents included the Telangana government, the State Assembly Speaker, and the Election Commission.

## India braces for tariffs on U.S. 'liberation day'

### INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Ahead of an anticipated announcement on "reciprocal tariffs" by U.S. President Donald Trump, the Indian government prepared for potential harsh tariffs against India. However, it remained hopeful that the U.S. might show some leniency due to recent concessions offered by Indian trade negotiators. Trump referred to the move as "liberation day" on the Truth Social platform, claiming it was in response to unfair treatment by other countries. With markets set to open the following day, attention turned to whether India would join other nations in imposing counter-tariffs on the U.S., though an official refrained from commenting on India's likely response.

India has been identified by the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) as having the highest average Most-Favoured-Nation (MFN) tariff rate (17%) among major world economies. It is also listed as one of the "Dirty 15" countries with the largest bilateral trade deficit with the U.S. (\$45.7 billion). The USTR has criticized India for surcharges, limited market access, and mandatory price caps on items like medical equipment. However, President Trump's statement suggesting India is ready to reduce tariffs was seen as a positive sign, indicating progress in trade negotiations. After talks between Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal and U.S. officials, India agreed to discuss lowering or eliminating tariffs on over half of U.S. imports.

## U.S. man arrested for entering restricted North Sentinel Island

### POLITY & GOVERNANCE

Mykhailo Viktorovych Polyakov, a 24-year-old U.S. national, was arrested on the Andaman and Nicobar Islands for allegedly entering the prohibited North Sentinel Island tribal reserve. He arrived in Port Blair on March 26 and launched his inflatable boat on March 29 to reach the island. There, he left a coconut and a can of cola as offerings to the Sentinelese and collected sand samples, but did not encounter any inhabitants. After returning in the evening, he was spotted by local fishermen and arrested. The police are investigating his intentions and prior visits, including a previous attempt to enter the island in October and January. They seized his boat, motor, and a GoPro camera, which showed footage of him landing on North Sentinel Island. Polyakov is currently in police custody.

## Army asks Pakistani forces to abide by 2021 ceasefire

### INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The Indian Army urged the Pakistan Army to uphold the 2021 ceasefire agreement along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir, following an exchange of fire between the two armies in the Krishna Ghati sector of Poonch. The Indian Army emphasized the importance of maintaining peace and stability as outlined in the 2021 DGMO agreement. The incident, which involved a mine blast and unprovoked firing by the Pakistan Army, was met with a controlled response from Indian troops. The situation is under control, and no casualties have been confirmed. While ceasefire violations have been rare since the 2021 agreement, this year has seen an increase in such incidents. Military and intelligence officials remain on high alert in the region.

### Upward trend

In February, there were multiple skirmishes along the Line of Control (LoC) between Indian and Pakistani troops. On February 16, the Indian Army accused the Pakistan Army of "unprovoked firing" in the Gulpur sector. Earlier, on February 12, Pakistan's Dawn newspaper reported that two Pakistani soldiers were injured in an "unprovoked ceasefire violation" by Indian troops in the Deva and Bagsar sectors. In January and February, six skirmishes occurred in Jammu, Rajouri, and Poonch districts, resulting in casualties, including the deaths of two soldiers—one of whom was a Captain—due to an improvised explosive device, and two others were injured by snipers across the LoC.

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## Maoists offer conditional talks; Chhattisgarh says ready for dialogue but with no conditions

### INTERNAL SECURITY

As the Indian government steps up operations against left-wing extremism in Chhattisgarh, the banned Communist Party of India (Maoist) has reportedly offered conditional peace talks. The Maoists have stated they are willing to engage in talks if the government halts its anti-Maoist operations and stops setting up new military camps in various states, including Chhattisgarh. However, the state government has insisted that any talks must be unconditional. The Maoists released a statement on March 28, expressing readiness for peace talks to benefit the public and proposing a positive atmosphere for negotiations. They also mentioned a recent meeting in Hyderabad on March 24, advocating for an immediate halt to the conflict and a declaration of an unconditional ceasefire by both the government and the Maoists.

#### 'No conditions'

Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Sharma stated that the Chhattisgarh government is open to talks with the Maoists and their reintegration into society, but it will not accept conditions set by them. He emphasized that talks must be unconditional and that the government would not form any committees for peace negotiations, though the Maoists are free to initiate talks through any channel they choose. The Maoist offer for peace talks came just days before Union Home Minister Amit Shah's visit to Chhattisgarh. Meanwhile, the Opposition Congress criticized the development, accusing the ruling BJP of using it as propaganda to prepare for Shah's visit, with State Congress chief Deepak Baij suggesting the government was scripting the situation.

## Navy seizes 2,500 kg of narcotics in Indian Ocean operation

### INTERNAL SECURITY



The Indian Navy's frigate INS Tarkash, deployed for maritime security operations in the western Indian Ocean since January, seized over 2,500 kg of narcotics on March 31. Acting on intelligence from the Navy's P8I aircraft about suspicious vessels involved in illicit activities, INS Tarkash intercepted and boarded a suspect dhow. A specialist team, including marine commandos, conducted a search, uncovering 2,386 kg of hashish and 121 kg of heroin hidden in various compartments of the vessel. The operation was carried out with coordination from the Maritime Operations Centre in Mumbai.

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## Ahead of BIMSTEC summit in Bangkok, doubts persist over Modi-Yunus meeting

### INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Ahead of the 6th BIMSTEC summit in Bangkok, there is speculation about a potential meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Bangladesh's Chief Adviser Prof. Mohammed Yunus. Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Jashim Uddin confirmed that a meeting is scheduled, but the Ministry of External Affairs has not confirmed it. The summit, being held in person for the first time since the pandemic, will focus on the theme "prosperous, resilient, and open BIMSTEC." It is expected to result in the adoption of the 5th BIMSTEC Declaration and the signing of an agreement on maritime transport cooperation.

#### On the sidelines

Plans are underway for Prime Minister Narendra Modi to hold bilateral meetings with several dignitaries at the upcoming BIMSTEC summit. Bangladesh's High Representative for the Rohingya crisis, Khalilur Rahman, suggested that a meeting between Modi and Professor Yunus could take place on the summit's sidelines. Upon arrival in Bangkok, Modi will meet with Thai Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra and Thai King Maha Vajiralongkorn, before traveling to Colombo for a state visit. The summit, gaining attention amid the recent earthquake in Myanmar, is significant as BIMSTEC finalized a common charter in 2022, but bilateral relations among members, particularly between Bangladesh, Myanmar, and India, remain tense, especially following the removal of Bangladesh's ex-Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in August 2024.

## Ensure education, hygiene, healthcare in rural areas: SC

### POLITY & GOVERNANCE



**Direct States to set up at least one public library in every village in the country.**

**PETITION BY MUNDONA RURAL DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION**



**A person who is starving, does he go to a library?... Have you looked at the availability of schools, teachers and mid-day meals for children, the water supply to villages... Has anybody done these surveys?**

**JUSTICE SURYA KANT**  
Supreme Court Judge





# Committees formed to amend nuclear liability laws: Minister

## POLITY & GOVERNANCE

The Indian government has formed committees comprising members from various departments, including the Department of Atomic Energy, Atomic Energy Regulatory Board, NITI Aayog, and the Ministry of Law and Justice, to discuss amendments to the Atomic Energy Act and the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act (CLNDA). These changes aim to allow private companies to participate in building and commissioning future nuclear reactors. While the plan was announced in Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's Budget speech, the timeline for introducing the legislation in Parliament has not been specified. The move follows challenges in nuclear commerce with Western companies, which have cited issues with CLNDA clauses that impose high liability on suppliers, conflicting with international conventions on nuclear damage.

### Clauses added in 2012

The controversial clauses in the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act (CLNDA) were added in 2012 after intense debates in Parliament, where the opposition accused the government of absolving Western companies of liability. In his written response, Union Minister Jitendra Singh stated that the committees will also examine issues related to waste management, fuel sourcing, handling, decommissioning, and the implementation of security and safeguards.

## 'Only Indian steel for govt. contracts'

## ECONOMICS & DEVELOPMENT

India has updated its procurement policy, the Domestically Manufactured Iron & Steel Products Policy - 2025, to address the growing steel imports that threaten domestic market stability and the survival of primary mills. The new policy gives preference to domestically produced steel for government contracts, excluding foreign competition. A reciprocal clause bans suppliers from countries that restrict Indian firms from their government tenders. All ministries and departments are now required to prioritize Indian-made steel products, such as flat-rolled steel, bars, rods, and railway materials, which

must meet the 'Melt & Pour' condition. The policy targets countries like China and aims to reduce imports from other Asian nations with which India has free trade agreements.

### Bar on enquiries

The new policy prohibits Global Tender Enquiries (GTE) for iron and steel products and restricts such enquiries for capital goods valued over ₹200 crore, unless approved by the Department of Expenditure, to shield domestic manufacturers from foreign competition. It includes a reciprocal clause, barring entities from countries that block Indian firms from government procurement from bidding in India for steel-related items, unless permitted by the Ministry. The policy also mandates that capital goods used in steel production, like furnaces and rolling mills, must have at least 50% domestic value addition.

## Steely resolve

The Centre has directed all ministries and departments to prioritise iron and steel products manufactured within the country



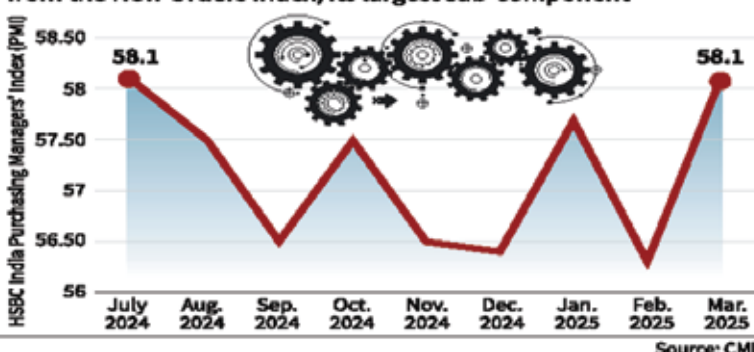
- Revised policy covers items such as flat-rolled steel, bars, rods, and railway materials
- Materials must comply with the 'Melt & Pour' norm, wherein the steel must be melted and solidified in India
- Capital goods used in alloy production like furnaces, rolling mills must achieve at least 50% domestic value addition

## Factory output at 8-month high in March

## ECONOMICS & DEVELOPMENT

### On a recovery

Recovery in manufacturing was largely driven by contribution from the New Orders Index, its largest sub-component



Manufacturing activity in India reached an eight-month high in March 2025, with the seasonally adjusted Purchasing Managers Index (PMI) rising to 58.1, up from 56.3 in February. This marks 45 consecutive months of expansion. The increase in PMI was driven by higher new orders, with the new orders index hitting an eight-month high of 61.5. Although international orders slowed slightly, overall demand remained strong, leading to a rapid decline in finished goods inventories. Business expectations for the future were optimistic, with 30% of survey participants predicting higher output. Sales expanded robustly, driven by positive customer interest and successful marketing. However, new export order growth slowed, and capacity pressures grew at a moderate pace. Input

prices rose to a three-month high but remained below long-term averages. The PMI provides a general overview, with more detailed data expected from the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) later this month.

## T.N. adopts resolution on retrieval of Katchatheevu

### INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Sri Lanka, the Tamil Nadu Assembly unanimously passed a resolution urging the Union government to take steps to retrieve Katchatheevu island from Sri Lanka. Chief Minister M.K. Stalin moved the resolution, stating that retrieving the island was essential to protect the traditional fishing rights of Tamil Nadu fishermen and to address their ongoing struggles with the Sri Lankan Navy. The resolution called for a review of the 1974 Indo-Sri Lankan agreement and for talks during Modi's visit to secure the release of imprisoned fishermen and their boats. Stalin criticized the continued attacks on Tamil Nadu fishermen despite political changes in Sri Lanka, recalling Modi's 2014 promise that no fishermen would be arrested under BJP rule.

#### Heated debate

During the discussion on the government's resolution in the Tamil Nadu Assembly, Leader of the Opposition Edappadi K. Palaniswami criticized the DMK, alleging that despite being a coalition partner in the Central government for nearly 16 years, the DMK had failed to find a lasting solution to the Katchatheevu issue.

## The ring of fire around Iran is tightening

### INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

A During the discussion on the government's resolution in the Tamil Nadu Assembly, Leader of the Opposition Edappadi K. Palaniswami criticized the DMK, alleging that despite being a coalition partner in the Central government for nearly 16 years, the DMK had failed to find a lasting solution to the Katchatheevu issue.

#### The deal that did not work

U.S. and Israel took the long-standing issue of Iran's nuclear programme. President Obama sought a diplomatic solution through the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which limited Iran's nuclear ambitions but left its missile programme and regional activities intact. Israel opposed the deal, fearing it would strengthen Iran. President Trump, in 2018, withdrew from the JCPOA and reimposed sanctions, leading to increased tensions between the U.S., Israel, and Iran. The passage also describes the escalation of conflicts involving Israel and Iran, particularly after the October 7, 2023 Hamas attack, and how Israel's military actions, including targeting Iranian assets, did not achieve its goals. Despite this, Iran expanded its nuclear programme, now having enough enriched uranium for up to six nuclear bombs.

#### Changing regional dynamics

In November, two key developments shifted regional dynamics in Israel's favor. First, the election of President Trump, who strongly supports Israel's war policies, gave Israel confidence to continue its regional military actions without external interference. Second, the fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria disrupted Iran's regional alliance by severing the vital land bridge from Iran to Hezbollah in Lebanon, weakening Hezbollah and Iran's overall deterrence. This shift influenced Israel's approach, as it refused to withdraw from southern Lebanon and Gaza despite ceasefire agreements. Trump's support, including bombing pro-Iranian groups like the Houthis, further bolstered Israel's strategy. Israel now believes that Iran, weakened by the loss of its Syrian ally, is more vulnerable than ever, and it aims to target Iran directly.

#### Shrinking strategic space

The contents of President Trump's letter to Iran remain undisclosed, but his demands align with Israel's goals: Iran must abandon its nuclear programme, limit its military capabilities, and sever ties with its allies. Iran, however, is only willing to engage in indirect talks about its nuclear programme, essentially returning to the 2015 framework. Given Iran's strategic isolation and Israel's increasing aggression, the likelihood of a large-scale military confrontation is higher than ever. However, any military action against Iran, such as airstrikes targeting its nuclear facilities, could fail due to the underground nature of many of its sites. Even if damage is done, Iran could still rebuild its nuclear programme, with heightened motivation to pursue a nuclear bomb.



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# Digital child abuse, the danger of AI-based exploitation

## POLITY & GOVERNANCE

The UK government, in collaboration with the AI Safety Institute, has released the first International AI Safety Report 2025, highlighting the risks of AI tools being used to generate, possess, and disseminate child sexual abuse material (CSAM). The UK is also making its first legislative attempt to combat AI-generated CSAM. CSAM refers to explicit material involving children, and concerns have been raised about generative AI creating realistic images of children. Similarly, the World Economic Forum and the Internet Watch Foundation have noted the increasing spread of CSAM online. The Government of India is urged to amend existing laws to address these emerging threats.

### Recent developments

The upcoming UK legislation will make it illegal to possess, create, or distribute AI tools capable of generating child sexual abuse material (CSAM), as well as possession of paedophile manuals guiding the use of these tools. This shift moves from an 'accused-centric' approach to a 'tool-centric' one, focusing on the tools used to commit crimes rather than just the individuals involved. The new law will allow authorities to apprehend offenders at the preparation stage, prevent the spread of CSAM, and address the gap in laws regarding AI-generated CSAM, which was previously limited to images of actual children. This approach is more holistic and deterrent in nature.

### On whether India is future ready

The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) Report 2022 highlights a significant increase in cybercrimes against children, with the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal (NCRP) recording 1.94 lakh child pornography incidents as of April 2024. The NCRB has also partnered with the National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) to share cyber tip-line reports, with 69.05 lakh reports shared by March 2024. While existing laws, such as Section 67B of the IT Act and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO), address child pornography and related crimes, the current legal framework does not adequately address the growing threat of AI-generated child sexual abuse material (CSAM).

### A plan to follow

India's legislative and policy framework must be updated to address emerging challenges, particularly in combating AI-generated child sexual abuse material (CSAM). Key proposals include:

- Replacing the term 'child pornography' with 'CSAM' in the POCSO Act for a broader scope.
- Defining 'sexually explicit' under Section 67B of the IT Act to enable real-time identification and blocking of CSAM.
- Expanding the definition of 'intermediary' under the IT Act to include Virtual Private Networks, Virtual Private Servers, and Cloud Services, making them liable for CSAM-related compliance.
- Introducing amendments to address risks from new technologies.
- Supporting the UN Draft Convention on countering ICT-related crimes.
- Drawing from the U.K.'s upcoming legislation in the proposed Digital India Act 2023 to specifically target AI-generated CSAM.

## Timing and location

### INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Bangladesh Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus' remarks at the Boao Forum for Asia conference in China have drawn sharp criticism in India. He referred to India's north-eastern States as "land-locked" and claimed Bangladesh was the "guardian of ocean access." He also suggested that China view these Indian States, along with Bhutan, Nepal, and Bangladesh, as an "extension of the Chinese economy," positioning them as a market and production base. His comments, shared on social media, come during heightened tensions between Bangladesh and India, particularly over attacks on minorities in Bangladesh and Yunus's government's demand for the repatriation of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Muhammad Yunus's visit to China, with no invitation from India, has been seen as a diplomatic snub, raising concerns about a potential shift in Bangladesh's foreign policy. His comments, particularly regarding Bangladesh's role as the "guardian of ocean access" and suggesting that India's north-eastern States and neighbouring countries align with China, have drawn criticism from Indian political leaders, including Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. The remarks were seen as provocative and ill-timed, particularly given the ongoing tensions between the two countries. Yunus's comments, though possibly aimed at promoting regional connectivity, could have been better framed at a more appropriate forum like the BIMSTEC summit. India extended diplomatic gestures to Bangladesh with letters from President Murmu and Prime Minister Modi, and there is hope for a constructive dialogue between Yunus and Modi on the sidelines of the summit to ease tensions.



## Season of bluster

### INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

After months of supporting Russian President Vladimir Putin and criticizing Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, U.S. President Donald Trump shifted his approach towards negotiating peace between the two leaders. Following a call with Putin, Trump expressed frustration over Putin's attack on Zelenskyy's credibility, instead of discussing peace steps. Upset that his campaign promise to end the conflict was faltering, Trump threatened to impose a 50% tariff on countries buying Russian oil unless Putin agreed to a ceasefire. Putin's stance was that Zelenskyy lacked the authority to sign a peace deal, suggesting the introduction of "temporary governance" in Ukraine, potentially through democratic elections, to establish a government with broader legitimacy.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy refuted U.S. President Donald Trump's claim that his approval rating was only 4%, pointing out that it was actually around 57-65% in early 2025. Meanwhile, Russian President Vladimir Putin's accusations against Zelenskyy, including questioning his legitimacy and accusing him of enabling Nazis, are linked to Moscow's reluctance to negotiate peace while continuing military pressure on Ukraine. There is concern that Putin might use influence operations to sway Ukraine's elections and install a pro-Russian government. For Trump, while not overly concerned with European security, the potential loss of a U.S.-Ukraine mineral deal could be a factor in his push for a ceasefire. An early ceasefire, despite the ongoing tensions, could be crucial for lasting peace after years of conflict.

#### The reciprocal tariff dilemma

The Trump administration's "Fair and Reciprocal Plan" aims to address non-reciprocal trade arrangements by imposing reciprocal tariffs on foreign trading partners, considering factors like tariffs, taxes, subsidies, exchange rate manipulations, and other market access barriers. While the U.S. share of global merchandise exports has remained relatively stable, it still accounts for only 13.4% of global exports in 2022. This leaves around 87% of global exports traded between countries not including the U.S. The U.S. has significant trade relations with certain regions, like the Cayman Islands and Canada, but many countries, especially in Africa, export less than 5% of their goods to the U.S.

The analysis of U.S. tariffs compared to partner tariffs reveals that in 27 partner countries, including major ones like Canada, the EU, Japan, and the U.K., U.S. tariffs are higher than those of its partners, meaning the "Fair and Reciprocal Plan" would not apply effectively in these cases. These countries account for half of U.S. merchandise exports, and imposing reciprocal tariffs could harm U.S. commercial interests. For the remaining 130 countries, the tariff disadvantage is smaller, and in many cases, the U.S. would only need to increase its tariffs slightly (less than 5%) to balance the trade. The threat of reciprocal tariffs is more credible in the 73 countries where U.S. tariffs would need to rise by over 5% to match partner tariffs.

The analysis shows that implementing reciprocal tariffs, especially where there is a significant tariff differential, could harm U.S. exports by raising duties on products from countries that consider the U.S. an important market. This could lead to self-inflicted harm, as tariffs are often seen as a counterproductive policy. Although this analysis is basic, more detailed comparisons might provide further insights. There's a possibility that partner countries could redirect their exports to other markets if faced with large reciprocal tariffs, as businesses have proven to adapt quickly to external shocks, as seen during the pandemic.

#### Removing barriers

The best response to reciprocal tariffs is for affected countries to reduce internal barriers to trade and enhance regulatory cooperation, improving cross-border trade in both goods and services. Reports from the World Bank and World Trade Organization indicate that digital services exports have grown rapidly. Research also shows that trade agreements addressing regulatory issues have a positive impact on digital services trade. Instead of retaliating with tariffs, countries should focus on improving regulatory frameworks to foster more effective trade.

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# Third language choice: Hindi in non-Hindi States, Sanskrit in Hindi-belt

## POLITY & GOVERNANCE

With the debate over Tamil Nadu's refusal to adopt the three-language policy still ongoing, the latest data needed to address key questions on the issue is lacking. Vital data that could help bring clarity is the list of languages currently being taught in schools across the States. Notably, DMK MP Kanimozhi Karunanidhi raised this question in the Lok Sabha (LS) last month. However, the reply only provided the share of schools that taught three-languages, without mentioning the specific languages.

The last survey with this detail was the 2009 All India School Education Survey, which is not publicly available. The Hindu accessed a copy of the report through sources in the Education Ministry. Notably, even in the 2009 survey, school-wise data on languages taught is limited to the primary stage. However, the insights remain relevant, as the LS reply from 1995 states that 27 States/U.T.s had implemented the three-language formula (**Table 1**).

An analysis of the 2009 survey (**Table 2**) shows that in Bihar, 99.1% of schools taught Hindi, 64% taught English, and 56% taught Sanskrit in the primary stage, with only 8% teaching other languages. Similarly, in Uttar Pradesh, 94% taught Hindi, 75.3% taught English, and 65.2% taught Sanskrit in the primary, with just 7% offering other languages. For Uttarakhand, the numbers were 99.5% Hindi, 85.5% English, 79.4% Sanskrit, and 2.6% others.

## Whither the three language formula

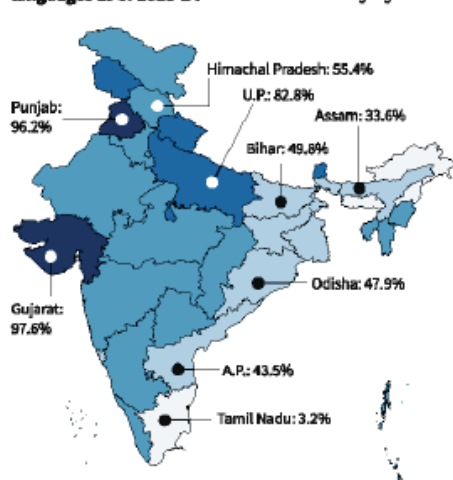
The data for the charts were sourced from All India School Education Survey (2009), Lok Sabha questions & answers and includes The Hindu's calculations

**Table 1:** The table shows the status of implementation of the three-language formula in States/UTs as per a reply in the Lok Sabha on December 13, 1995

Category	States/UTs
The State governments that adopted /implemented the three-language formula as of 1995	Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Chandigarh, Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan, Orissa, Sikkim, West Bengal, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Lakshadweep, Daman & Diu, Goa, Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra
Status not available in the report	Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Manipur
The State governments that had not implemented the three-language formula as of 1995	Jammu & Kashmir, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry

**Map 3:** State-wise share of schools teaching three languages as of 2023-24

In the map, the darker the colour, the higher the share of schools that teach three languages



**Table 2:** The table shows the share (in %) of schools that taught the regional language, English, Hindi, Sanskrit, and other languages in the primary stage, across select States, as of 2009

State	Regional	English	Hindi	Sanskrit	Others
Haryana	-	70.9	94.4	-	5.4
Himachal	-	68.3	97.3	-	1.5
Delhi	-	87.4	92.0	-	13.7
U.P.	-	75.3	94.0	65.2	7.0
Punjab	97.8	79.8	79.2	-	0.8
Uttarakhand	-	85.5	99.5	79.4	2.6
M.P.	-	52.5	99.1	1.2	10.9
Chhattisgarh	-	37.1	99.3	-	3.6
Gujarat	97.3	20.9	64.1	-	2.2
Rajasthan	-	52.5	98.7	-	5.8
Maharashtra	91.3	60.0	6.2	-	9.1
Arunachal	-	90.8	81.2	-	23.3
Assam	77.8	11.9	0.5	-	24.2
Manipur	86.3	86.5	35.2	-	27.6
Meghalaya	88.2	64.8	1.1	-	15.4
Mizoram	78.7	85.3	4.2	-	24.9
Nagaland	-	97.7	5.4	-	72.3
Sikkim	87.9	86.6	43.8	-	26.0
Tripura	98.5	79.7	0.5	1.8	18.3
Odisha	94.8	64.3	0.2	-	7.9
Bengal	94.2	86.5	2.0	-	3.5
Jharkhand	-	37.4	99	0.1	17.5
Bihar	-	64.0	99.1	55.9	8.4
Karnataka	97.5	86.2	30.4	-	15.0
Kerala	90.4	72.0	8.4	-	33.0
Undivided A.P.	94.3	83.1	6.3	-	7.2
Tamil Nadu	95.5	73.9	3.7	-	4.8

Others refer to languages other than English, Hindi, Sanskrit and the regional language in each State. The total in each row does not add up to 100 as one school can teach more than one language

The All India School Education Survey (2009) includes govt./govt. aided, private aided/unaided, recognised and unrecognised schools

Data from these three States show that in Hindi-speaking States, the third language offered is mostly limited to Sanskrit. This is notable as the 1968 National Education Policy (NEP) had preferred a modern southern language in Hindi-speaking States.

Officials in Himachal Pradesh's Department of Education told The Hindu that in the last 15 years, there was no enrolment for Telugu, Tamil, and French "due to unavailability of teachers". Also, in the State, 34% of the 100 sanctioned Punjabi teaching posts are vacant, 71% of the 100 Urdu teaching posts are vacant, while only 9.8% of the 5,078 Sanskrit teaching posts are vacant presently. The high number of teaching posts and low vacancy at present also hint at Sanskrit being the preferred third language even now.

A similar situation continues in Uttar Pradesh currently. Bhagwati Singh, Secretary, Madhyamik Shiksha Parishad, Uttar Pradesh, said, "We have one student of Malayalam, three students of Tamil, and five students of Kannada registered with us. These students appear as private candidates."

Data from the 2009 survey also show that in Gujarat, over 97% schools taught Gujarati and 20.9% taught English, and 64% taught Hindi in the primary stage, with only 2.2% teaching other languages. In Karnataka, 97.5% offered Kannada, 86.2% English, 30.4% Hindi, and just 15% others. In Punjab, 79.2% schools offered Hindi, with less than 1% offering languages other than English and Punjabi. This hints at another trend, that in non-Hindi speaking States, the third language is mostly limited to Hindi.

Moreover, the LS reply shows that in Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Odisha — States that had agreed for the three-language formula — less than 50% schools had implemented it as of 2023-24 (**Map 3**). In

Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Haryana, less than 60% schools had implemented, pointing to uneven execution among those States that agreed.

## How did the Myanmar earthquake occur?

### GEOGRAPHY

The powerful earthquake in Myanmar on March 28 had its source in central Myanmar, about 20 km from Mandalay, the country's second-largest city. Mandalay, located on the east bank of the Irrawaddy river, is close to one of the most seismically active faults in the region, called the Sagaing fault, named after a town not far from Mandalay on the river's opposite side. The earthquake of magnitude 7.7 struck around 12:50 pm local time, followed by several strong aftershocks, including one of magnitude 6.4, which occurred 11 minutes after the major event.

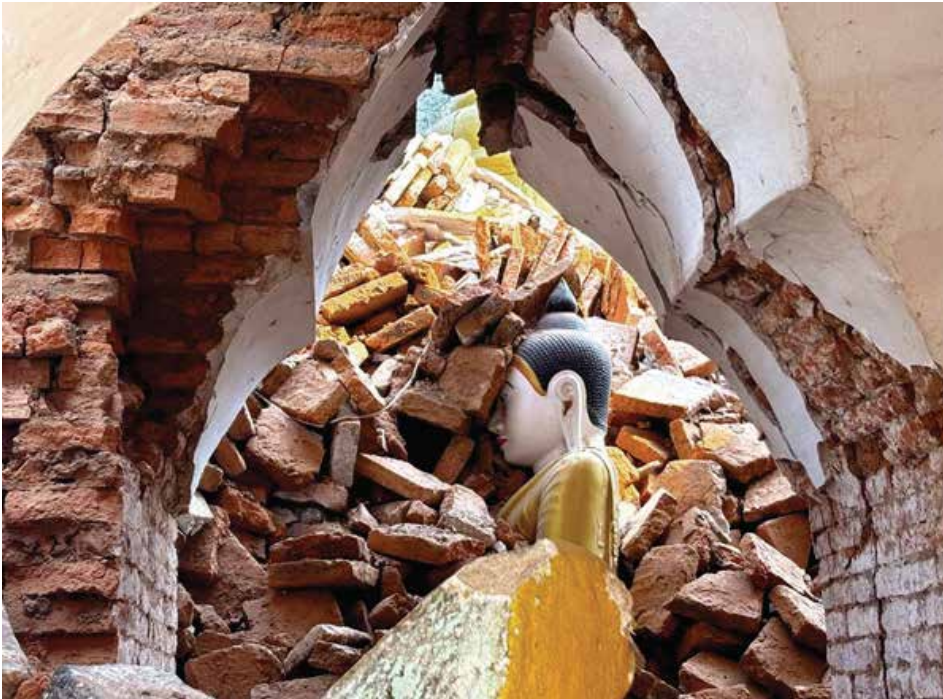
#### What effect did the quakes have?

The recent earthquakes were highly destructive, causing widespread devastation and a significant loss of life. The damage extended to Bangkok, Thailand, about 1,000 km from the epicenter, where minimal damage occurred, such as the collapse of a high-rise under construction and water overflow from a rooftop pool due to seismic seiches. The U.S. Geological Survey predicted a death toll exceeding 10,000, with Mandalay, Myanmar, being hit hardest due to its location on a thick alluvial layer that amplified seismic waves. The earthquake's shallow depth of 10 km contributed to the extensive damage. Areas to the north, like China's Yunnan Province, and eastern India escaped significant damage, as the earthquake's energy spread along the fault in a north-south direction.

#### Are quakes common in South Asia?

South Asia, including Myanmar, is prone to frequent earthquakes due to its location near significant tectonic features, such as the Himalayas, the Shillong Plateau, the Indo-Burman Range, and the Andaman-Nicobar subduction zone. The collision of the Indian and Eurasian Plates, which began 40 million years ago, has caused tectonic stress, resulting in seismic activity. The region has experienced major earthquakes, such as the 2004 magnitude 9.2 quake and tsunami, and the 1792 magnitude 8.5 earthquake in Myanmar. Southeast Asia is home to various earthquake faulting mechanisms, with quakes occurring at depths from 5 km to 400 km. The 2025 Mandalay earthquake originated within the continental part of the mountain range, which forms due to the accumulation of sediment and rocks from the subducting Indian plate.

#### What is the geodynamic context of the Sagaing fault?



The northeast-directed convergence of the India and Eurasia plates causes strain to be partitioned, with part of the deformation occurring perpendicular and part parallel to the plate boundary. The Sagaing fault, running north-south, marks the boundary between the Central Myanmar Lowlands and the Indo-Burman Range. This fault, along with its parallel structures, accommodates much of the strike-slip motion of the oblique convergence at a rate of 15-25 mm per year. Earthquakes along the Sagaing fault are typically shallow, with magnitudes often reaching 7.0 or higher. The fault system, which extends 1,400 km from the Andaman Sea to the eastern Himalayas, has a history of moderate to strong earthquakes. The 2025 earthquake in Myanmar was expected, as it is part of a sequence of events that release stress from the ongoing tectonic interactions.

#### What does the Mandalay earthquake portend?

Historical records show that Myanmar has experienced significant earthquakes along the Sagaing fault, including the deadly 1839 Ava earthquake, the 1927 earthquake near Yangon, and the 1946 earthquake north of Mandalay. The region, including the historic city of Bagan, has suffered from repeated seismic events, with the most recent in 2016. The 2025 Mandalay earthquake, which has caused widespread damage and loss of life, highlights the ongoing risk. This event underscores the need for India, also prone to earthquakes, to implement scientifically proven safety measures to reduce the impact of future earthquakes.





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