

Headlines

SpaDeX Docking - Page No.1 , GS 3

Declining fertility - Page No.1 , GS 2

Draft digital data protection rules - Page No.6 , GS 2

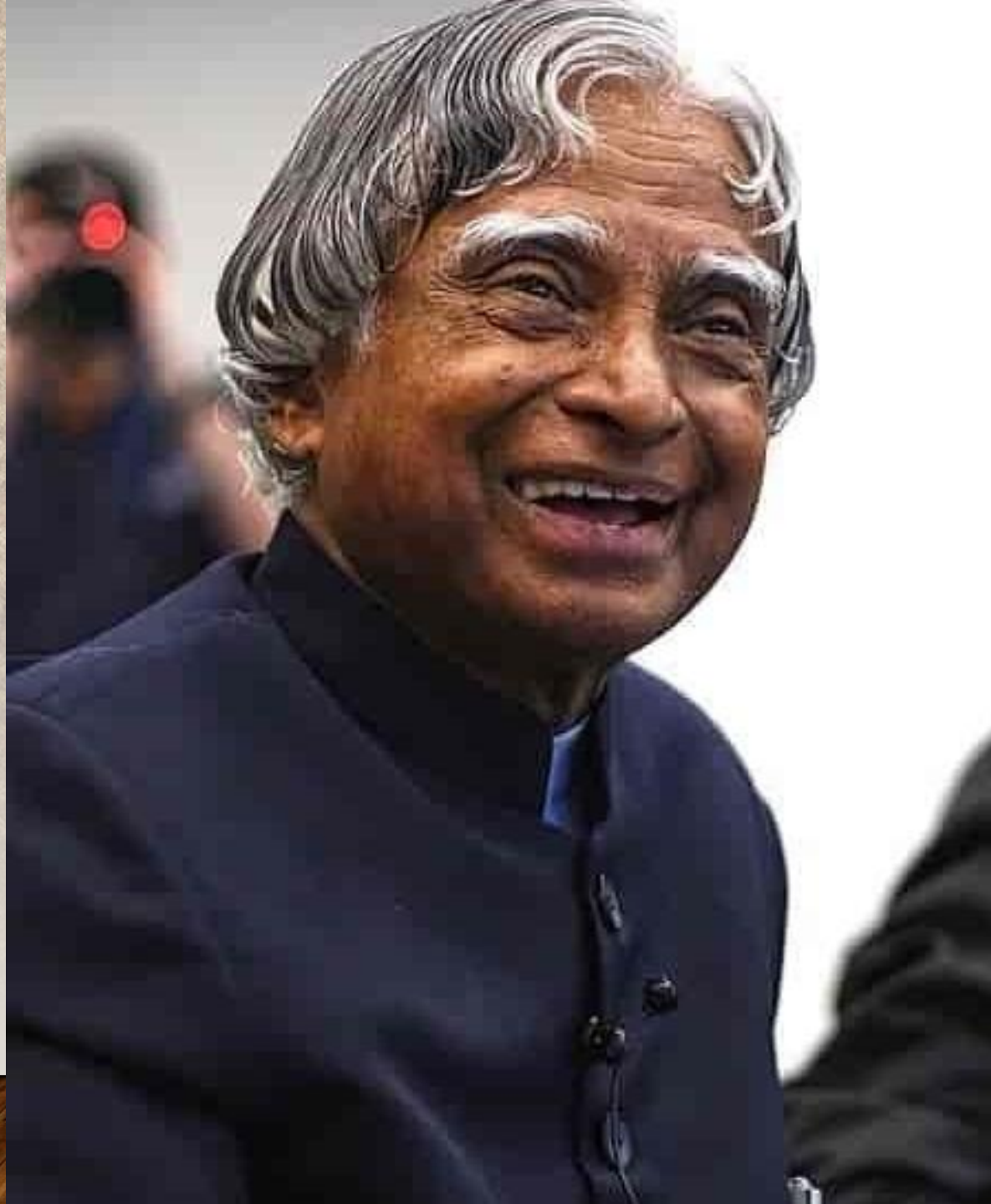
Good implementation, not stringency of law - Page No.6 , GS 2

European Union's oil and gas imports - Page No.7 , GS 3

Gangasagar Mela - Page No.12 , GS 2

Join me on Telegram :- Prashant Tiwari

Username:- UPSCwithPrashant



**"If you want
to shine like
a sun, first
burn like a
sun."**

Blue Flag Certification

- It is a globally recognized eco-label accorded by the Foundation for Environment Education in Denmark (FEE).
- The Blue Flag programme was started in France in 1985 and in areas out of Europe in 2001.
- It is one of the world's most recognised voluntary awards for beaches, marinas, and sustainable tourism boats.
- It promotes sustainable development in freshwater and marine areas through four main criteria: water quality, environmental management, environmental education and safety.
- The mission of Blue Flag is to promote sustainability in the tourism sector, through environmental education, environmental protection and other sustainable development practices.
- The other Indian beaches in the blue list are Shivrampur-Gujarat, Ghoghla-Diu, Kasarkod and Padubidri-Karnataka, Kappad-Kerala, Rushikonda- Andhra Pradesh, Golden-Odisha, Radhanagar- Andaman and Nicobar, Kovalam in Tamil Nadu and Eden in Puducherry beaches, Minicoy Thundi Beach, Lakshadweep, Kadmat Beach, Lakshadweep.

Hattis

- **The Hattis is a close-knit community who take their name from their traditional occupation of selling home-grown crops, vegetables, meat, and wool at small-town markets known as 'haats'.**
- **Hatti men traditionally don a distinctive white headgear on ceremonial occasions.**
- **The Hatti homeland straddles the Himachal-Uttarakhand border in the basin of the Giri and Tons rivers, both tributaries of the Yamuna. The Tons marks the border between the two states.**
- **There are two main Hatti clans: one in the Trans-Giri area of the Sirmaur district in Himachal Pradesh and the other in Jaunsar Bawar of Uttarakhand.**
- **The two Hatti clans have similar traditions, and intermarriages are common.**
- **They are governed by a traditional council called 'khumbli' which decides community matters.**
- **In 2023, the Indian government granted Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to the Hatti community in Himachal Pradesh.**

Silver Notice

- It is the latest addition to Interpol's suite of colour-coded alerts, designed to help countries track and retrieve criminally obtained assets.
- This notice allows participating nations to request information on assets linked to criminal activities such as fraud, corruption, drug trafficking, and environmental crimes.
- It aimed at tracing assets laundered across international borders.
- This initiative, part of a pilot project involving 52 countries, including India, was launched following a request from Italy to locate the assets of a senior mafia member.
- The project will run until at least November 2025, with 500 notices available for distribution among the participating countries.
- How does it work?
- Countries can use the Silver Notice to request information on various assets, including properties, vehicles, financial accounts, and businesses connected to criminal activities.
- The notice facilitates the identification and location of these assets, enabling further legal action, such as seizure or confiscation, subject to national laws.

INTERPOL NOTICES



RED NOTICE
WANTED PERSONS



YELLOW NOTICE
MISSING PERSONS



BLUE NOTICE
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION



BLACK NOTICE
UNIDENTIFIED BODIES



GREEN NOTICE
WARNINGS AND INTELLIGENCE



ORANGE NOTICE
IMMINENT THREAT



PURPLE NOTICE
MODUS OPERANDI



SILVER NOTICE (Pilot Phase)
IDENTIFICATION AND TRACING OF CRIMINAL ASSETS



**INTERPOL-UN SECURITY
COUNCIL SPECIAL NOTICE**
ENTITIES AND INDIVIDUALS SUBJECT TO
UNSC SANCTIONS

Docking trial: ISRO succeeds in nudging two satellites closer

Page No. 1, GS 3

By bringing Chaser and Target within three metres of each other, the agency has overcome last week's setback caused by an unexpected drift

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Trying to dock two satellites in space for the first time, the Indian Space Research Organisation announced early on Sunday that they were brought within three metres of each other in a trial attempt. It then moved them back to a safe distance.

“SpaDeX Docking Update: A trial attempt to reach up to 15m and further to 3m is done. Moving back spacecraft to safe distance. The docking process will be done after analysing data further,” the space agency posted on X.

An important project of the ISRO, the SPaDeX mission was designed to develop and demonstrate the technology needed for spacecraft rendezvous, docking and undocking using two small satellites. A PSLV C60 rocket carried them – SDX01 (Chaser) and SDX02 (Target) – to space from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota on December 30. Earlier on Sunday, the ISRO said the



A PSLV C60 rocket had carried the satellites to space from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota on December 30. PTI

two satellites were within 15 metres of each other.

“SpaDeX Docking Update: At 15m we see each other clearer and clearer, we are just 50 feet away for an exciting handshake,” the agency posted. It released photos and videos of the two satellites.

With this, the ISRO has overcome the setback last week due to an unexpected drift between the satellites, resulting in the postponement of the docking experiment.

On January 8, hours before the experiment was to be carried out, the agency

announced its postponement as the drift was more than expected. It later arrested the drift. The docking was initially scheduled for January 7.

The demonstration of this technology is essential for futuristic missions such as sending an Indian astronaut to the moon, sample return from the moon, and the building and operation of an Indian space station.

If the ISRO successfully executes the docking experiment, India will become the fourth country after the U.S., Russia and China to accomplish the feat.



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Space Docking Experiment" (SpaDeX)

- The primary objective of the SpaDeX mission is to develop and demonstrate the technology needed for rendezvous, docking and undocking of two small spacecraft.

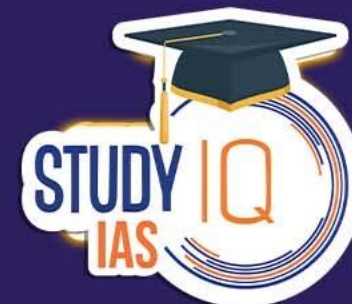
Fact

Secondary objectives include:

- **Demonstration of the transfer of electric power between the docked spacecraft, which is essential for future applications such as in-space robotics,**
- **Composite spacecraft control, and**
- **Payload operations after undocking.**
- **Two small spacecraft- SDX01 (the Chaser) and SDX02 (the Target) will be docked in a 476-km low-Earth circular orbit.**
- **Weight of two satellites: Approximately 220 kg each.**
- **Launch Vehicle: PSLV- C60**
- **The indigenous technology used for this mission is called the "Bharatiya Docking System".**



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[list=PLpuxPG4TUOR4VHsceopVQtj73aJ0idtpl](https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLpuxPG4TUOR4VHsceopVQtj73aJ0idtpl)

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3. PIB Weekly:- [https://youtube.com/playlist?](https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLpuxPG4TUOR59OtRNhFu)

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Description

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Educator at StudyIQ IAS

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Newspaper



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Declining fertility levels push up Kerala's maternal mortality ratio

C. Maya

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala's maternal mortality ratio, the lowest in the country at 19 per one lakh live births, is now climbing steadily, much to the consternation of the State Health Department. The reasons for the increase may be beyond the control of officials.

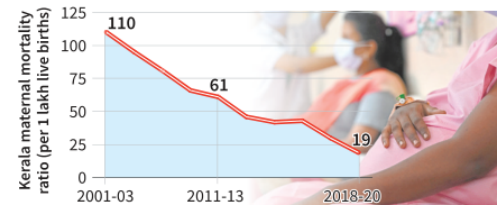
The latest Sample Registration System special bulletin on maternal mortality in India (2018-20), brought out by the Registrar-General of India, put Kerala's MMR at 19. However, while it depended on a sample survey to arrive at the figure, the State Health Department's actual estimates of maternal deaths – Kerala has near 100% institutional deliveries – put the figure at 29.

Except during 2020-21, when Kerala lost many women to COVID-19 during pregnancy and childbirth, the State had consistently held a firm grip over maternal mortality. Ironically, the current spike is not because more women are dying but because there are fewer childbirths than ever in the State.

The State has now hit a low of 3,93,231 births from an average of 5-5.5 lakh annually earlier, show the latest data of the Economics and Statistics Department

A worrying trend

Kerala's MMR is beginning to climb now because of fewer child births than ever in the State



Source: Sample Registration System bulletin of Registrar General of India

The State has now hit a low of 3,93,231 births from an average of 5-5.5 lakh annually earlier

of the State. It is this dip in the denominator that is pushing the MMR up and not necessarily an actual spike in maternal deaths.

The Health Department puts live births in the State between 3.4 lakh and 3.9 lakh currently. The full Vital Statistics Report (VSR) for 2023 is expected by January-end.

The decline in fertility levels and changing demographics, many fear, are having an irrevocable impact on the State's social fabric, and have been at the heart of many policy-level discussions in Kerala, especially in the past three years.

From an average of 5.5 lakh annual births since the 1980s, the graph went below the five-lakh mark for the first time in 2016, when 4,96,262 live births were recorded. Since 2018, the figure has been plummeting steadily, never going above the five-lakh mark again. The last published VSR (2021) recorded the total number of live births as 4,19,767.

"As part of the Sustainable Development Goals, Kerala was targeting an MMR of 20 by 2030. However, that looks quite unlikely now, given that birth rates are falling steeply. We reckon the State's MMR in 2024-25 has already climbed to 32," says V.P. Paily, a senior consultant in Obstetrics and Gynaecology.

"It would now be a herculean task to hold the MMR at 20. Because, while

we have successfully addressed all major medical causes of maternal mortality, the issues that are impacting the State's MMR now are not something essentially within our control. We are seeing the impact of demographic changes like low fertility rates, immigration and changing societal attitudes towards marriage and childbirth in Kerala much earlier than we thought we would," Dr. Paily says.

"It has been three decades since the birth rate began falling in Kerala and the steep fall in the number of children born now is part of a larger trend. But the problem is that once the fertility rate comes down, the graph rarely goes up because demographic transition is hard to reverse," says S. Irudaya Rajan, Chairman of the International Institute of Migration and Development (IIMAD).

Kerala led the demographic transition in the South, attaining the replacement level fertility rate of 2.1 in 1987-88. Replacement level fertility is the average number of children a woman needs to have to replace herself and her generation, so that the population is stable.

CONTINUED ON
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- **MMR of India declined from 384 in 2000 to 103 in 2020**
- **The world must significantly accelerate progress to meet global targets for reducing maternal deaths, or else risk the lives of over 1 million more women by 2030.**
- **The SDG target for maternal deaths is for a global MMR of less than 70 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births by 2030.**

Bengal govt. announces new initiatives to attract pilgrims to Gangasagar Mela

Page No. 12, GS 2

Shiv Sahay Singh
SAGAR (WEST BENGAL)

Competing with the Maha Kumbh at Prayagraj, the organisers of the Gangasagar Mela, held at the confluence of the Ganga with the Bay of Bengal in West Bengal, on Sunday announced a slew of initiatives, including a certificate for pilgrims participating in the annual pilgrimage.

A number of Ministers of the West Bengal government, led by Power Minister Aroop Biswas, held a press conference announcing the Bandhan initiative for pilgrims visiting the site in availing a certificate in three languages.

Other initiatives include the e-Anushandhan (pilgrims can access facilities at the mela ground) and e-Parichay (QR code-enabled identity band) to prevent missing people in the mela



Official visit: Aroop Biswas at the Gangasagar Mela. He and his Cabinet colleagues are present at the venue. DEBASISH BHADURI

crowd. “So far, about 42 lakh pilgrims have visited the island,” Mr. Biswas said, expressing hope that the number of pilgrims would cross the record of one crore set in 2023.

While claims of the number of pilgrims visiting the ecologically fragile island during the Makar Sankranti festival is contested by Opposition political parties, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has been

pushing for a “national mela” status for the Gangasagar Mela for several years.

Earlier this month, Ms. Banerjee had said that the Union government supported the Kumbh Mela but did not extend any support to the Gangasagar Mela.

Trinamool Congress Ministers echoed similar sentiments. They questioned why the Gangasagar Mela was not being granted the

status of a “national mela”.

Mr. Biswas said elaborate arrangements had been made to transport pilgrims from different parts of the State to Sagar Island, including about 2,500 government and private buses, 21 jetties, nine barges, 32 vessels, and 120 launches.

“About 13,000 policemen have been posted to ensure safety and security at the Gangasagar Mela,” the Minister said.

The State government also organises ‘Ganga Aarti’ every year during the mela, much like the event held at the ghats of Varanasi.

This year, the ‘Ganga Aarti’ is being organised from January 11 to January 13.

In separate incidents, one person died and two others were airlifted after they fell ill at the Gangasagar Mela.

Gangasagar Mela:

- It is known as the world's second largest human congregation after Kumbh.
- It happens every year during Makar Sankranti.
- The mela is held at Sagar Island.
- It has been mentioned in Indian epics such as the Ramayana and Mahabharata, putting its existence as early as 400 BCE.
- The pilgrims after taking a dip in Ganga also visit the temple of Kapil Muni.

Where is Sagar Island Located?

- Sagar Island, westernmost island of the Ganges-Brahmaputra delta lies in West Bengal state.
- It lies at the mouth of the Hugli (Hooghly) River, an arm of which separates it from the mainland to the east.



Kapil Muni:

- **Kapila or Maharishi Kapila is a Vedic sage (rishi) traditionally considered to be the original proponent of the Samkhya system of Indian philosophy.**
- **He is said to have lived in the Indian subcontinent, around the sixth or seventh century B.C.E.**
- **Kapila is described within the Puranas as an incarnation of Vishnu.**
- **He is known for teaching a process of liberation known as bhakti yoga.**
- **Buddhist sources present Kapila as a well-known philosopher whose students built the city of Kapilavastu**
- **He is not only renowned in Hinduism, but also in Buddhism.**
- **Kapila shared many similarities with Buddha, including an emphasis on meditation as a technique for removing suffering, belief that the Vedic gods were subject to limitations and conditions, and dislike for ritual and Brahmanic doctrines.**

Draft digital data protection rules and authoritarianism

Page No. 6, GS 2

In August 2024, as India marked six years since the K.S. Puttaswamy judgment reaffirmed privacy as a fundamental right, the Internet Freedom Foundation hosted its annual “Privacy Supreme” event – not as a celebration, but as a sombre reflection on its unfulfilled promise. Social activist Nikhil Dey shared chilling accounts, from Ajmer in Rajasthan, on how Aadhaar, heralded for efficiency, has excluded vulnerable residents from pensions and rations. This grim reality must be central to tech policy discussions, including the Draft Digital Data Protection Rules, 2025.

Executive overreach, scant transparency
Rulemaking typically fleshes out legislation, ensuring laws passed by Parliament are enforceable while maintaining administrative flexibility. Yet, the draft Data Protection Rules provoke concern on questions of executive overreach and vague governance. Some earlier analysis here bears repetition for these rules are a conscientious pupil in obedience of its master. Here, its parent is the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, that was rammed through Parliament as “a product of the subversion of the democratic process”. There is more than a mere lack of trust in how the law was created, for its substantive provisions advance a broader policy of “total state control – a digital leash to yank us and make us stand in line than to serve the preambular objectives of the Constitution of India”. Its provisions are deliberately vague, granting broad discretion under the nebulous phrase “as may be prescribed”.

Despite the Act’s swift passage on August 9, 2023, its implementation remains in limbo. Sixteen months later, the draft Rules have been unveiled for consultation. But are they truly “public”? Published as a 51-page pdf (in Hindi/English as a gazette notification), with a three-page explanatory note that reads as AI glop, a simplistic and vague summary offers little insight into the policy choices during drafting. Comments can only be submitted through the MyGov platform that might encourage expert input but restricts broader participation.



Apar Gupta

an advocate and the founder-director of the Internet Freedom Foundation

There is a common thread with the parent Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, with its digital leash

Transparency is undermined by the government’s decision to treat submissions as fiduciary, precluding public disclosure and counter-comments. This controlled feedback process resembles a “corporate consultation” rather than a public one.

Substantively, the Data Protection Rules build on a framework of intentional vagueness and executive dominance. Many compliance obligations are either self-determined by companies handling personal data or left to government discretion. Consider Rule 3, which governs consent notices. It mandates “clear and plain language” but fails to define these terms, leaving interpretation subject to India’s vast linguistic and comprehension diversity. Without specific standards, notices risk being overly generic or oversimplified, omitting critical details. Similarly, while the Rules require an “itemized description” of data, they do not clarify whether the disclosure is for categories such as financial or health data; or to specific data points such as account numbers, or even metadata and inferred data. Nor do they define timelines for data breach notifications to users, raising risks for individuals in urgent situations. Such ambiguities, if purely administrative, should have been resolved by the standard setting powers of an independent regulatory authority that does not exist.

No independence for Data Protection Board
The vagueness reflects deeper structural flaws. The Act eschews the creation of an independent regulatory body, instead, consolidating power within the Union Government. Through informal interactions and gazette notifications, the government wields unchecked authority over citizens and the digital marketplace. Even the Data Protection Board (DPB), which has a limited ambit of jurisdiction to adjudicate on breaches, lacks independence. The Board’s chairperson is selected based on recommendations of a search and selection committee chaired by the Cabinet Secretary, raising critical concerns. How will the

committee address the critiques of political control that plague similar appointment processes? What value does the search committee offer when it has advance knowledge that its recommendations are not binding on the Union Government?

Even after its formation, the DPB is hamstrung. Its authority is largely limited to determining data breaches, and its independence is compromised by service conditions of its members to central government employees. This contravenes long-standing recommendations, such as the 2006 Planning Commission consultation paper on regulation, which emphasised that “the selection, appointment, and removal of chairpersons and members should be insulated against any perceived interference or

manipulation that may influence the outcome”. How will a subservient DPB apply data protection effectively? Rule 5 exempts data processing for subsidies from consent requirements. In such cases, can there be any meaningful accountability? It is not unreasonable to foresee scenarios where the DPB may fail to act promptly or effectively, particularly

when complaints involve powerful government entities such as the UIDAI that handles Aadhaar. It raises fundamental doubts about what it means for community organisations that may approach it for redress on user rights for things as simple as getting a data record corrected to receive rations.

Finally, regarding Rule 22, which contains the power of the government to requisition information, there is an absence of limitations and safeguards. As many may read this column, they may still wonder why the data protection rules are too late, too little, too vague? The answer may be provided by Mr. Dey who framed his characterisation of the digital policies of the Indian state with a reference to Through the Looking-Glass. When Alice probes Humpty Dumpty on how the same word can have different meanings, his reply captures the core of India’s data protection regime: “The question is... which is to be master – that’s all.”



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- **Finally, regarding Rule 22, which contains the power of the government to requisition information, there is an absence of limitations and safeguards.**
- **Indian Context: In 2017, the Supreme Court affirmed this right in the landmark Puttaswamy v. Union of India case, recognising privacy as a constitutional and fundamental right under Article 21 of Part III of the Indian Constitution.**
- **International Framework: Article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 and Article 17 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights 1966 establish legal safeguards against "arbitrary interference" with an individual's privacy, family, home, correspondence, dignity, and reputation.**

Law by reflex

Good implementation, not stringency of law, will deter sexual crimes

The tendency to make existing laws more stringent is an administrative reflex action often occasioned by political problems set off by particular crimes. The amendments enacted by the Tamil Nadu Assembly to criminal laws on sexual crimes against women fall under this category. In response to the Opposition moves to corner the DMK regime after a rape within the premises of Anna University in Chennai, the government has moved to enhance punishments under the penal and procedural laws. That the perpetrator is a DMK sympathiser and that some details of the student survivor were leaked added political sharpness to the general criticism over such an offence happening inside the campus. At pains to deny any leniency and overcome the setback to its image after the Madras High Court formed a special investigation team, the DMK government has chosen to amend the law based on the theory that more stringent laws deter sexual assault and harassment. This belief is not founded on any statistical or empirical evidence, but is often invoked by those in government. This invariably means the use of legislative power to send out a political message that the administration is committed to women's safety. After all, necessary amendments need not have to wait for a brazen crime or a public outcry.

This is not to say the amendments are unreasonable: they enhance punishments for a range of sexual offences and extend bail-denying features to such offences as well as those under the POCSO Act. Also welcome is the new provision for passing binding protection orders that will ensure perpetrators do not contact survivors by any means. The death penalty has been introduced for acid attack that results in the victim being reduced to a vegetative state. On the other hand, the newly introduced definition of harassment of women to cover the use of digital and electronic means and even non-verbal means may be too broadly worded and prone to misuse. Few would disagree with the enhancement of jail terms for rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking and voyeurism, but a question does arise whether the mere increase in the quantum of punishment increases the possibility of conviction or reduces the incidence of these crimes. The onus of arresting offenders, gathering credible evidence and proving it in court remains the same. Impartial investigation and resisting pressure for a cover-up while effectively implementing existing laws are more crucial for demonstrating commitment to women's safety. Making workplaces, public space and homes safer for women will work better than merely adding to the severity of laws.

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- Making workplaces, public space and homes safer for women will work better than merely adding to the severity of laws.

Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act:

About:

- **It is the first comprehensive law in the country dealing specifically with sexual abuse of children, enacted in 2012 and is administered by the Ministry of Women and Child Development.**
- **It was intended to protect children from sexual assault, sexual harassment and pornographic violations, as well as to establish Special Courts for such trials.**
- **In 2019, the Act was amended to strengthen the penalties for specified offences in order to deter abusers and promote a dignified upbringing.**

Fact

Key provisions:

- **Gender-neutral legislation:** The Act defines a child as "any person" under the age of 18.
- **Non-reporting is a crime:** Any person in charge of an institution (excluding children) who fails to report the commission of a sexual offence involving a subordinate faces punishment.
- **No time limit for reporting abuse:** A victim may report an offence at any time, even years after the abuse has occurred.
- **Keeping victim's identity confidential:** The Act forbids the disclosure of the victim's identity in any form of media unless authorised by the special courts established by the Act.

Is Trump justified in asking EU to buy more oil and gas from the U.S.?

The European Union's oil and gas imports from the U.S. are already increasing at a rapid pace, as the bloc does not want to purchase these products from Russia

DATA POINT

Sambavi Parthasarathy
Vignesh Radhakrishnan

U.S. President-elect Donald Trump threatened to impose tariffs on many countries if they do not fulfil certain conditions. In November last year, he said he would impose sweeping tariffs on imports from Canada, China, and Mexico if these countries failed to stem illegal border crossings into the U.S. and the trafficking of drugs – in particular Fentanyl, which is a deadly opioid.

He has also threatened the European Union (EU) with tariffs, as the U.S. runs a trade deficit with the bloc. This means that its imports from the EU are higher than its exports. Data show that the U.S. had a trade deficit of more than \$208.7 billion with the EU at the end of 2023, second only to China with which it had a trade deficit of \$279.4 billion. The third on the list is Mexico (trade deficit of \$152.4 billion). With Canada, the U.S. had a trade deficit of \$67.9 billion. **Chart 1** shows the U.S.'s trade deficit with select countries at the end of 2023. The other countries which have been threatened with tariffs are also part of the list of countries with which the U.S. runs the highest trade deficits.

It is debatable whether imposition of tariffs is the most efficient way of dealing with this. In 2023, the U.S. imported €40.7 billion worth of motor cars and vehicles from the EU. This was the second biggest commodity in terms of value, from the bloc. If there are higher tariffs on the import of European cars, these cars would become more expensive. This would benefit U.S. car manufacturers.

At the same time, consumers in the U.S. have been importing cheaper goods from countries such as China. They imported over \$35 billion worth of smartphones in 2023 from China. If the higher tariffs proposed by Mr. Trump

come into force, consumers will need to look for alternatives. This means that they will spend more on these products.

This means manufacturers will benefit, but not consumers.

Mr. Trump's solution to bridge the EU's trade deficit with the U.S. is also questionable: he has asked the bloc to buy more oil and gas from the U.S. By the end of 2023, the EU had sourced close to 43% of its Liquefied Natural Gas needs from the U.S. Just three years before that, in 2020, the EU had sourced below 20% from the U.S. (**Chart 2**). This means that the EU's dependency on the U.S. had more than doubled in just three years. This was because sanctions were imposed on Russia after it invaded Ukraine. Thus, import of gas from Russia had to be cut, which benefited the U.S.

In July 2024, the EU sourced close to 15% of its crude oil from the U.S. compared to just 8% in July 2020. In the same period, crude oil imports from Russia were reduced from 23% to 2% (**Chart 3**). So, the question is, why is Mr. Trump threatening the EU when the bloc's dependency on the U.S. for oil and gas is already increasing at a rapid pace?

The U.S. exported 31.8% of its crude oil production in 2023 compared to just 18.7% five years prior. It exported 16% of its natural gas production in 2023 compared to 9.6% five years prior (**Chart 4**). Are producers in the U.S. equipped to sustainably increase production if the export share increases further, given that the U.S. is also the biggest consumer of oil and natural gas domestically?

Finally, of all the top 10 oil refineries (in terms of processing capacity) that operate in Europe, most are owned by private players (**Chart 5**). While Mr. Trump's trade is directed against the governments in Europe, will the bloc be able to convince the private refineries, whose best interest is to choose the cheapest and most viable oil, to get supply from the U.S.?

Shifting the balance

The data for the charts were sourced from Eurostat, the U.S. Energy Information Administration, and the International Trade Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce.

Chart 1: The chart shows the U.S.'s trade deficit with select countries at the end of 2023. Values in billion USD

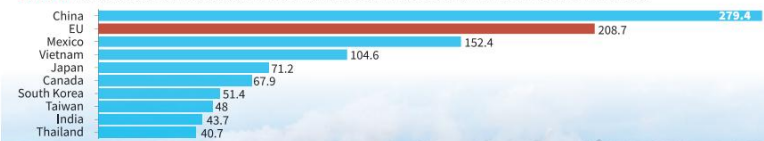


Chart 2: The chart shows EU's imports of liquefied natural gas from the U.S. and Russia. (Figures in %)

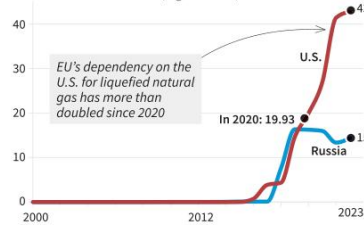


Chart 4: The chart shows the U.S.'s exports of crude oil and natural gas as a share of production. (Figures in %)



Chart 3: The chart shows EU's crude oil imports from the United States and Russia. (Figures in %)

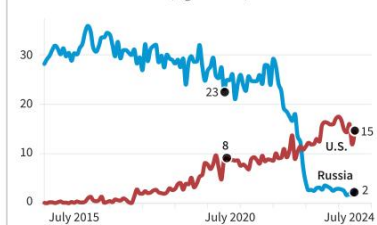
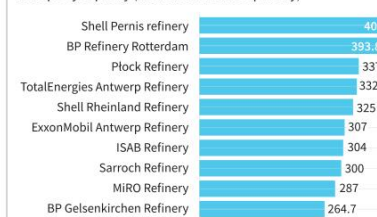


Chart 5: The chart shows the largest crude oil refineries in Europe by capacity (in thousand barrels per day)



Content.

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- **In November last year, he said he would impose sweeping tariffs on imports from Canada, China, and Mexico if these countries failed to stem illegal border crossings into the U.S. and the trafficking of drugs — in particular Fentanyl, which is a deadly opioid.**
- **He has also threatened the European Union (EU) with tariffs, as the U.S. runs a trade deficit with the bloc. This means that its imports from the EU are higher than its exports.**
- **Data show that the U.S. had a trade deficit of more than \$208.7 billion with the EU at the end of 2023, second only to China with which it had a trade deficit of \$279.4 billion. The third on the list is Mexico (trade deficit of \$152.4 billion). With Canada, the U.S. had a trade deficit of \$67.9 billion.**

Content.

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- **It is debatable whether imposition of tariffs is the most efficient way of dealing with this. In 2023, the U.S. imported €40.7 billion worth of motor cars and vehicles from the EU. This was the second biggest commodity in terms of value, from the bloc. If there are higher tariffs on the import of European cars, these cars would become more expensive. This would benefit U.S. car manufacturers.**
- **At the same time, consumers in the U.S. have been importing cheaper goods from countries such as China. They imported over \$35 billion worth of smartphones in 2023 from China. If the higher tariffs proposed by Mr. Trump come into force, consumers will need to look for alternatives. This means that they will spend more on these products.**
- **This means manufacturers will benefit, but not consumers.**

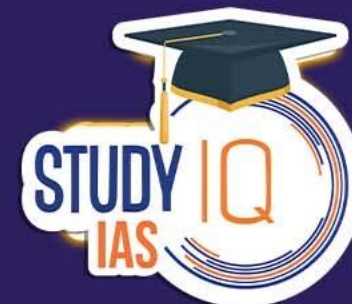
Fact

- **Mr. Trump's solution to bridge the EU's trade deficit with the U.S. is also questionable: he has asked the bloc to buy more oil and gas from the U.S. By the end of 2023, the EU had sourced close to 43% of its Liquefied Natural Gas needs from the U.S. Just three years before that, in 2020, the EU had sourced below 20% from the U.S.**
- **This means that the EU's dependency on the U.S. had more than doubled in just three years. This was because sanctions were imposed on Russia after it invaded Ukraine. Thus, import of gas from Russia had to be cut, which benefited the U.S.**
- **In July 2024, the EU sourced close to 15% of its crude oil from the U.S. compared to just 8% in July 2020. In the same period, crude oil imports from Russia were reduced from 23% to 2%**





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