

Headlines

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Join me on Telegram :- Prashant Tiwari

Username:- UPSCwithPrashant

“Don’t let yesterday take up too
much of today.”

Will Rogers

PICTURE OF THE WEEK

Solace during summer



Women of the Lanjia Saora tribal group dance to celebrate the mango harvest in the Gunupur region of Rayagada district, Odisha. K.R DEEPAK

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Content.

- **Saora is one of the ancient tribes of Odisha, which is also mentioned in the epics Ramayana and Mahabharata.**
- **They are called by various terms such as Savaras, Sabaras, Saura, Sora, etc.**
- **Though Odisha is the main land for the tribe, a small number of people are also found in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, and Assam.**
- **Language:** They have their own native language called Sora, which is a Munda language, and they are one of the very few tribes of India that have a script for the language, Sorang Sompeng.
- **They have unique art practices, religious customs, as well as a dying tattooing tradition called 'Tantangbo'.**

JIUQUAN

China launches three astronauts to replace crew on its space station

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REUTERS

China launched three astronauts aboard Shenzhou-20 spaceship to the Tiangong space station for a six-month mission, replacing the current crew. The mission supports China's lunar and Mars ambitions, with astronauts conducting science experiments and maintenance tasks on the fully Chinese-built station. AP



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创新超越

Content.

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- The mission supports China's lunar and Mars ambitions, with astronauts conducting science experiments and maintenance tasks on the fully Chinese-built station.
- Tiangong (Chinese for "Heavenly Palace") is a modular space station being constructed by the China National Space Administration (CNSA).
- It is the first space station built by China.
- Tiangong is currently in low Earth orbit (LEO), and it is expected to be operational until 2028.
- It is a three-module space station. The core module, Tianhe, launched in April 2021, followed by the Wentian and Mengtian experiment modules in 2022.

Content.

- **Tiangong is significantly smaller and lighter than the International Space Station (ISS), with only three modules compared to the ISS's 16 modules.**
- **It can accommodate up to three astronauts at a time for six-month stays. It can also support six astronauts at a time during crew handovers.**
- **The station will have its own power, propulsion, life support systems, and living quarters.**
- **The new space station is planned to share its orbit with the Xuntian space telescope to allow astronauts to easily repair and upgrade the telescope.**
- **China is only the third country to have put both astronauts into space and build a space station, after the Soviet Union (now Russia) and the US.**

Content.

- **The International Space Station (ISS) is the largest man-made object in space launched on November 20, 1998. It serves as a habitat for astronauts in space. Since 2011, the ISS has been continuously inhabited.**
- **Participating States:** ISS is a collaborative project of the United States (NASA), Russia's (Roscosmos), Europe's (ESA), Japan's (JAXA), and Canada's (CSA) space agencies.
- **Orbit:** The International Space Station is in orbit about 400 kilometres above Earth.
- **Speed:** It travels around Earth at a speed of about 28,000 kilometres per hour. This means that it orbits Earth about every 90 minutes.
- **Objectives:** To expand our knowledge about space and microgravity and promote new scientific research. It also serves as an example of international cooperation.

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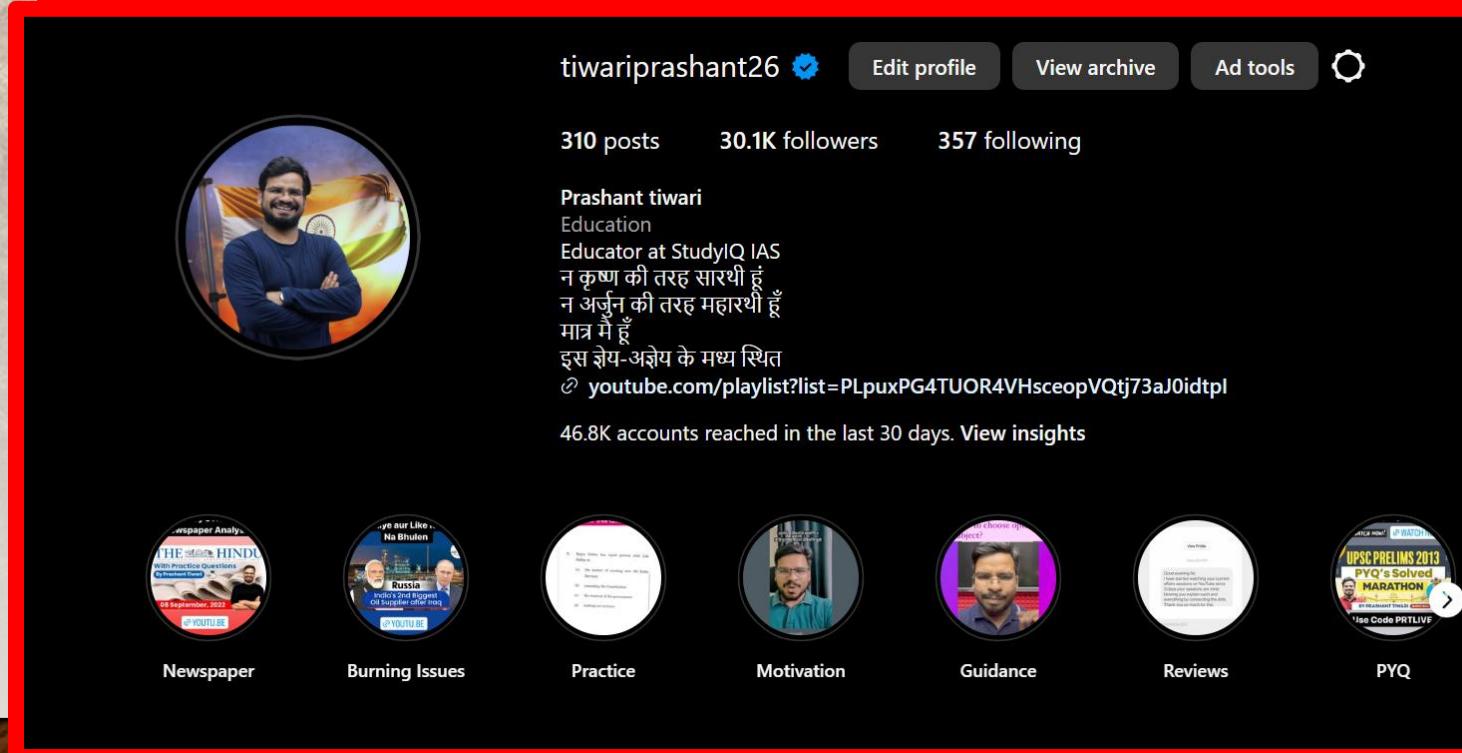
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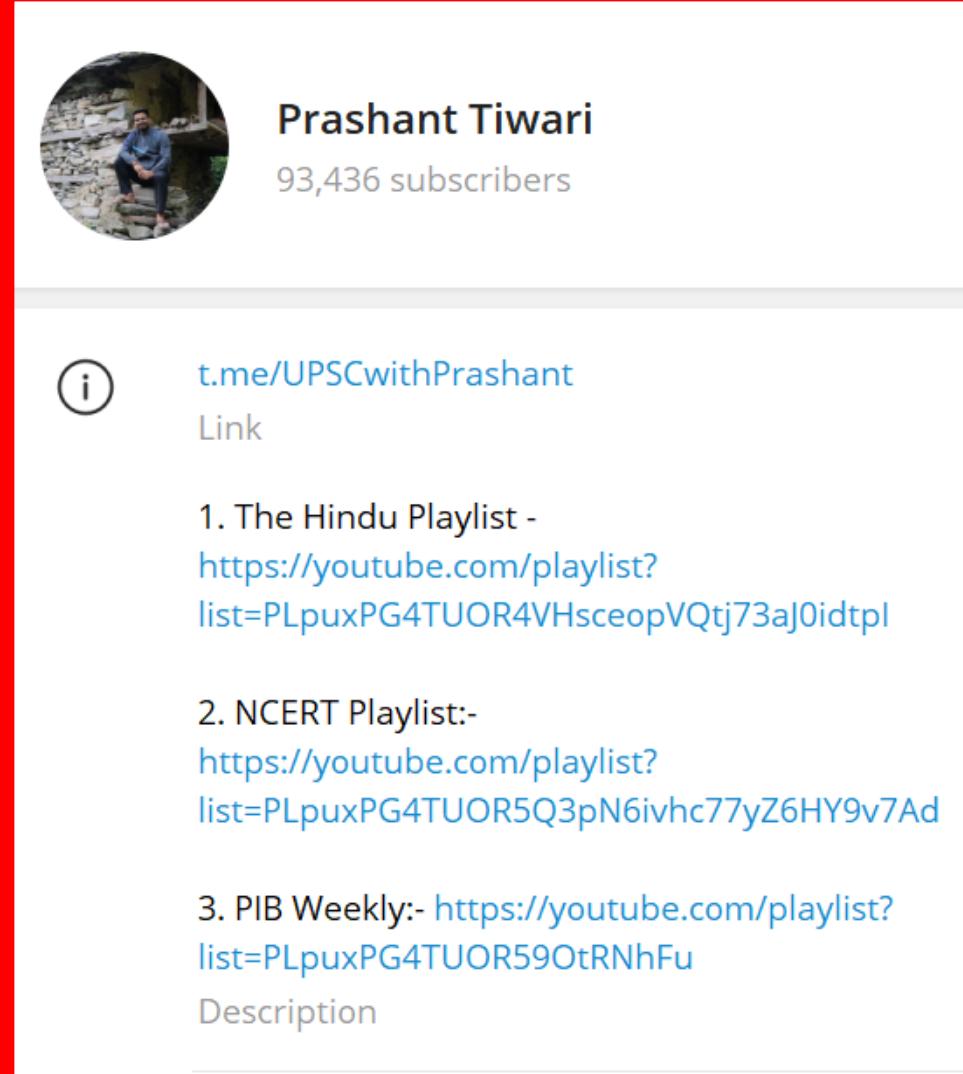
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Prashant tiwari
Educator at StudyIQ IAS
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Description

Supreme Court to examine concerns on POCSO clause

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday agreed to hear concerns flagged by senior advocate Indira Jaising that mandatory reporting of sexual activity, even if it is voluntary, under Section 19 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) is leading to the criminalisation of the young and poses a threat to the fundamental right to health of adolescent girls.

Appearing before a Bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta, Ms. Jaising, who is *amicus curiae* in the case along with senior advocate Siddharth Luthra, said the age of consent was raised from 16 to 18 in 2012 with the enactment of the POCSO Act. This has led to a situation when knowledge of even voluntary sexual activity between juveniles is required to be reported to the police.

Counselling is required
“Counselling and not criminalisation is required in such cases. We do not need to create an army of criminals,” Ms. Jaising submitted. The senior advocate said parents, guardians, and even doctors are being penalised on the ground that they had knowledge but did not report to the



police about the sexual activity.

“A doctor to whom a juvenile approaches for medical care has to report the sexual activity to the police even if she says it was voluntary. In such a situation, juveniles would turn to quacks and endanger their health,” Ms. Jaising argued.

The court said Ms. Jaising has raised a “serious and relevant” issue. It scheduled a detailed hearing on May 8.

The Bench suggested taking the aid of Additional Solicitor-General Aishwarya Bhati, and, if required, the Attorney-General of India on the issue.

The legislature had intended the requirement for mandatorily reporting sexual activity under Section 19 of the POCSO Act to prioritise timely intervention and protection of children.

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Content.

- The Supreme Court on Thursday agreed to hear concerns flagged by senior advocate Indira Jaising that mandatory reporting of sexual activity, even if it is voluntary, under Section 19 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) is leading to the criminalisation of the young and poses a threat to the fundamental right to health of adolescent girls.
- Appearing before a Bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta, Ms. Jaising, who is amicus curiae in the case along with senior advocate Siddharth Luthra, said the age of consent was raised from 16 to 18 in 2012 with the enactment of the POCSO Act. This has led to a situation when knowledge of even voluntary sexual activity between juveniles is required to be reported to the police.
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Content.

- “A doctor to whom a juvenile approaches for medical care has to report the sexual activity to the police even if she says it was voluntary. In such a situation, juveniles would turn to quacks and endanger their health,” Ms. Jaising argued.
- The court said Ms. Jaising has raised a “serious and relevant” issue. It scheduled a detailed hearing on May 8.
- The legislature had intended the requirement for mandatorily reporting sexual activity under Section 19 of the POCSO Act to prioritise timely intervention and protection of children.
- An **amicus curiae** (literally, “friend of the court”; plural: **amici curiae**) is someone who is not a party to a case who assists a court by offering information, expertise, or insight that has a bearing on the issues in the case.

Content.

- **POCSO Act came into effect on 14th November 2012 which was enacted in consequence to India's ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1992.**
- **The aim of this special law is to address offences of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children, which were either not specifically defined or in adequately penalised.**
- **The Act defines a child as any person below the age of 18 years. The Act provides punishment as per the gravity of offence.**
- **The Act was further reviewed and amended in 2019 to Introduce more stringent punishment including the death penalty for Committing sexual crimes on children, with a view to deter the perpetrators & prevent such crimes against children.**
- **The Act recognizes that both girls and boys can be victims of sexual abuse and that such abuse is a crime regardless of the gender of the victim.**

Content.

- There is sufficient general awareness now to report cases of sexual exploitation of children not only by individuals but also by institutions as non-reporting has been made a specific offence under the POCSO Act. This has made it comparatively difficult to hide offences against children.
- **Explicit Definition of Terms:**
- The storage of child pornography material has been made a new offence.
- Further, the offence of 'sexual assault' has been defined in explicit terms (with increased minimum punishment) unlike an abstract definition of 'outraging modesty of a woman' in the Indian Penal Code.
- Rule-9 of the POCSO Rules allows the Special Court to order interim compensation for the child's needs related to relief or rehabilitation after the FIR's registration.

DCGI urged to lay down stringent guidelines on use of new antibiotics

Page No. 14, GS 2

Ramya Kannan

CHENNAI

Infectious diseases experts have flagged the overuse of a potent antibiotic leading to it losing its efficacy, and drug resistance. The Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) has been urged to lay down strict pathways for these newer antibiotics, so that they are not misused by practitioners.

Abdul Ghafur, infectious diseases specialist and founder of the AMR Declaration Trust, has written to Rajeev Singh Raghuvanshi, DCGI, about ceftazidime-avibactam. "One of the most potent antibiotics currently available in our armamentarium is rapidly losing its efficacy due to extensive, irrational, and uncontrolled use."

The drug which was in-



Two new, powerful antibiotics are about to enter the Indian market.

itially registered with the U.S. FDA in 2015 and approved in India three years later is a last-line antibiotic. It is to be used as targeted therapy for certain carbapenem-resistant gram-negative infections and not prescribed as a broad spectrum antibiotic.

Dr. Ghafur, however, claims it is already being misused in the community.

"To overcome this resistance, aztreonam is often added to ceftazidime-avibactam, unfortunately, resistance has now emerged even to this combination, due to irrational use."

The problem, he explains, is that while the DCGI has licenced the drug, it has only provided indications for use. There are no clear-cut pathways laid out, and nothing to deter mis-prescriptions.

This trend could erode the huge gains secured in India primarily with the ban on use of colistin as a growth promotion drug amongst poultry, in recent times.

Rational use

There are two new very powerful antibiotics that are about to enter the Indian market, Cefierocol

and Cefepime-zidebactam. Dr. Ghafur urges the DCGI to kick in with antibiotics stewardship: "We need these drugs in India. However, their use must be restricted strictly to infections where no other effective alternatives exist. Education alone is not enough; we need a clear regulatory pathway to ensure the rational use of these molecules from the moment they are licenced."

"If we do not act now, we risk losing the few therapeutic options left. Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is already a serious crisis in our country. Without urgent and strong action, it may escalate to an unmanageable level. We cannot change the past – but we still have time to act for the immediate future," he says.

Content.

- **Infectious diseases experts have flagged the overuse of a potent antibiotic leading to it losing its efficacy, and drug resistance.**
- **The Drugs Controller General of India(DCGI) has been urged to lay down strict pathways for these newer antibiotics, so that they are not misused by practitioners.**
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- **We need these drugs in India. However, their use must be restricted strictly to infections where no other effective alternatives exist. Education alone is not enough; we need a clear regulatory pathway to ensure the rational use of these molecules from the moment they are licenced.”**

- Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is already a serious crisis in our country.
- while the DCGI has licenced the drug, it has only provided indications for use. There are no clear-cut pathways laid out, and nothing to deter mis-prescriptions.
- This trend could erode the huge gains secured in India primarily with the ban on use of colistin as a growth promotion drug amongst poultry, in recent times.
- Drug regulation is based on centrally-enacted Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 (DC Act) and the corresponding Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945 (DC Rules).
- Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO):
 - Prescribes standards and measures for ensuring the safety, efficacy and quality of drugs, cosmetics, diagnostics and devices in the country.
 - Regulates the market authorisation of new drugs and clinical trials standards.

Content.

- It works under the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.
- Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) is the head of the CDSCO.
- Headquarters: New Delhi.
- Under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, CDSCO is responsible for,
- Approval of New Drugs;
- Conduct of Clinical Trials;
- Laying down the standards for Drugs;
- Control over the quality of imported Drugs in the country;
- Coordination of the activities of State Drug Control Organizations;
- CDSCO, along with state regulators, is jointly responsible for the grant of licenses for certain specialized categories of critical drugs, such as blood and blood products, I.V. Fluids, Vaccine and Sera.

Is the World Trade Organization still relevant?



Mohan Kumar
Professor of Diplomatic Practice at the Jindal School of International Affairs, O.P. Jindal Global University. He previously served as India's lead negotiator at GATT and WTO

PARLEY

United States President Donald Trump's 'reciprocal tariffs' have been compared to the Smoot-Hawley tariffs of the 1930s, which many say hastened the slide into the Great Depression. The difference between the 1930s and now is that we have the World Trade Organization (WTO) to oversee and enforce global trade rules. However, some argue that over the years, the WTO has gradually lost its compass and is in need of massive reforms. Is the WTO still relevant? Mark Linscott and Mohan Kumar discuss the question in a conversation moderated by Samreen Wani. Edited excerpts:

Has the WTO been sidelined? Will the U.S. pay heed to any advice from the WTO?



Mark Linscott
Senior Adviser with the U.S.-India Strategic Partnership Forum and former assistant, United States Trade Representative for South and Central Asia

Mohan Kumar: The WTO, as we know it, is gone. It is irrelevant and has been sidelined. I don't want to say it is dead yet. The WTO was expected to perform three functions – the negotiating function, the dispute settlement function, and the trade monitoring function – and it is not performing any of them. The negotiating function has gone for a six since Doha [the Doha Round of talks in 2001]. There is only one multilateral agreement – the fisheries agreement – that has been concluded, and even that has not been fully concluded. The Appellate body or the dispute settlement mechanism (DSM) has also been rendered dysfunctional. It started during Barack Obama's time. Since then, the U.S. has blocked appointments to the Appellate body, the ultimate court of appeal. The WTO tries to do whatever it can under the trade monitoring function, but that is not being performed efficiently because there is a lot of opacity about trade measures from a number of members, particularly one big member. The fact that the Trump tariffs are happening at a time when the multilateral trading system has been rendered toothless and inefficient makes it much more serious.

Mark Linscott: I agree with Ambassador Kumar that the WTO has been sidelined. The decline of the WTO and its diminishing relevance goes back long before the first Trump administration to the launch of the Doha Round. I think that mandate was misplaced. It was perhaps too ambitious, too far reaching, and basically [had] mismatched expectations. We also had the accession of China. And I think there was a degree of naivete about how well WTO rules would function with respect to China's measures and its behaviour on trade. During the Doha Round, the mismatched expectations involved some of the grievances that are felt now by the



A logo outside the WTO in Geneva, Switzerland. REUTERS

Trump administration. There were efforts to negotiate on large disparities on tariffs and [there was] really no traction in those negotiations to lower tariffs multilaterally on a non-discriminatory basis.

The U.S. has for too long blocked appointments to the Appellate body, but there were grievances associated with the operations of the WTO's DSM and the Appellate body, and whether it was in fact engaging in 'legislating' as opposed to simply looking at facts.

If these tariffs do come into effect, can the WTO prevent an economic crisis?

ML: No. The WTO is not in a position to stem any global economic decline. It is not a forum where most nations can come together, be honest with one another, and essentially find a solution out of that kind of crisis.

MK: The basic problem is that consensus or decision making by consensus is proving to be a problem. When this issue was discussed in the legal drafting group, two countries opposed voting – India and the U.S. So, if there are reforms to be made on the basis of decision making, we will have to get around the principle of 'consensus'. On the question of dispute settlement, the European Union put forward a proposal on arbitration which has not found universal favour. On trade monitoring, there is no way of forcing countries to somehow disclose the measures they have taken, to the WTO.

At this juncture, is there a complete erosion of the MFN (most-favoured-nation) principle?

MK: The bedrock of the multilateral trading system is Article I, MFN. Free trade agreement (FTA) is an exception to Article I and has to be blessed by the WTO. If you conclude an FTA, you have to intimate the WTO. I concede that



The WTO was expected to perform three functions – the negotiating function, the dispute settlement function, and the trade monitoring function – and it is not performing any of them.

MOHAN KUMAR

The WTO has not done a great job in minutely scrutinising the FTAs.

The tariffs indicate the U.S.'s final withdrawal from the WTO system. Second, they introduce tremendous uncertainty. And finally, they also introduce a certain degree of complexity because I don't know if the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) has the resources to negotiate with 60 countries all at once. But India got a first movers advantage [in negotiating trade deal].

ML: MFN goes back to 1947 with the creation of GATT [General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade]. And that is part of the problem, at least from the U.S.'s standpoint. What has fed the grievances of the Trump administration is the sense that the U.S., perhaps rashly and unilaterally, over many rounds of trade negotiations, lowered its simple average tariffs to a very low level compared to many other countries, including India. Then, when efforts were made to continue tariff liberalisation and expectations were high that other countries would follow suit and lower their tariffs, that didn't happen. The U.S. started stepping away boldly from MFN during the first Trump administration but it was continued by the Biden administration. Section 232 (tariffs on steel and aluminium) and Section 301 (tariffs against China) were maintained by the Biden administration. With Trump 2.0 we have got a much more radical set of circumstances. There is consensus among Democrats and Republicans that MFN has not worked well for the U.S. Countries started negotiating FTAs on an accelerated basis in the late 1990s and early 2000s. And many countries through FTAs were stepping away from MFN. They found it easier to negotiate on tariffs bilaterally than at the WTO.

It has been decades since any consensus was reached on fisheries subsidies, agricultural subsidies, and on public stock holding of grains. India has led the opposition to these agreements. Why is that the case?

MK: While the major players will have to bear the major responsibility of the collapse of the WTO because of just the sheer weight of trade clout that they possess, India also did its bit. We

objected to some things that we should not have objected to.

India cannot do much when it comes to agriculture. This is a politically sensitive area for any government in India. The WTO was callous when it came to India's concerns on agriculture. While the U.S. and the EU were allowed to subsidise so much over the years, India, which relies on domestic production, was limited to a 10% subsidy. India finds itself in a situation where it does not want to negotiate labour standards and environmental protection at the WTO, but is okay to discuss this bilaterally with the EU, the U.K., and maybe even with the U.S. The only explanation I have heard is from a former commerce secretary who said that India wants a certain degree of comfort doing this bilaterally first.

ML: The view in the U.S. is different from the Indian view as to what extent the developed world was ignoring the sensitivities and food security concerns of many developing countries, particularly India's. There are many other developing countries which don't necessarily share India's view. Negotiations collapsed on agriculture and domestic support. It is almost impossible to negotiate bilaterally on subsidies.

There has been a lot of criticism, particularly from the U.S., that the WTO has allowed China to flood the global markets with cheap exports, but simultaneously restricted access to its domestic markets. Would you agree with this assessment?

ML: China is a remarkable challenge globally, economically, and on trade. When China joined the WTO, nobody anticipated how lacking the WTO rules would be in addressing the China challenge and how dominant China would become as an export juggernaut.

MK: When we framed the rules we had no idea of things which do not necessarily violate the WTO rules but which still undermine the integrity of the multilateral trading system. So, for example, there was never any question of looking at excess capacity and how one country, which can produce more than 50% of steel and cement, would suddenly flood the market and distort trade. And trade distorting measures are extremely important to the WTO. But we could not frame the rules for it because we simply did not foresee this.



To listen to the full interview
Scan the code or go to the link
www.thehindu.com

Content.

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- The difference between the 1930s and now is that we have the World Trade Organization (WTO) to oversee and enforce global trade rules. However, some argue that over the years, the WTO has gradually lost its compass and is in need of massive reforms.
- The Appellate body or the dispute settlement mechanism (DSM) has also been rendered dysfunctional. It started during Barack Obama's time. Since then, the U.S. has blocked appointments to the Appellate body, the ultimate court of appeal.
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- The tariffs indicate the U.S.'s final withdrawal from the WTO system.
- WTO is an international institution formed to regulate the rules for global trade among nations.
- It was formed under the Marrakesh Agreement signed on 15th April 1994 by 123 countries after the Uruguay Round negotiations (1986-94) of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), leading to the birth of WTO in 1995.
- WTO succeeded the GATT which had regulated world trade since 1948.
- GATT focused on trade in goods, while WTO covers trade in goods, services, and intellectual property, including creations, designs, and inventions.
- Headquarters: Geneva, Switzerland.
- Members: 166 countries, representing 98% of global trade.

Ministerial Conference

The WTO's **main decision-making body** consists of trade ministers and senior officials from 164 nations.

It meets **every two years** to address global trade developments.

Last MC, i.e. 13th, was held in **Abu Dhabi** in 2024.

WTO General Council

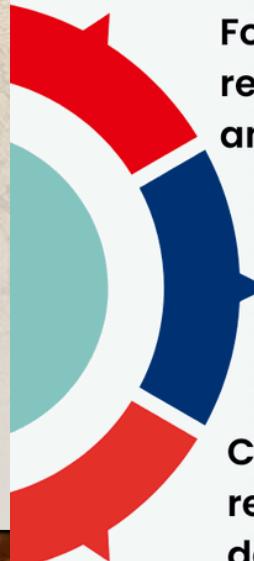


Highest-level decision-making body

Also meets as the **Dispute Settlement Body (DSB)** and **Trade Policy Review Body**.



Dispute Settlement Body (DSB)



Founded in **1995** to resolve disputes among WTO members.

Establish dispute settlement panels and act on their recommendations.

Consider Appellate Body reports that review panel decisions.



Major WTO Agreements

- 1** Agreement on Agriculture (AoA)
- 2** General Agreement on Trade in Services
- 3** Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS)
- 4** Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade
- 5** Agreement on Trade-Related Investment Measures (TRIMs)

Secretariat

Provides **administrative and technical support** to WTO bodies.



- It also manages the WTO budget.

Power and freedom

At stake is not the continuance of a Minister but propriety

The Supreme Court's remark on April 23, asking Tamil Nadu Minister for Electricity, Prohibition and Excise V. Senthilbalaji, who has been out on bail since September 2024 in an alleged money laundering case, to choose between his post and freedom was expected. In the last four months, the Court has used strong language against the Minister on more than one occasion. Last December, the Court expressed its objection to the return of Mr. Senthilbalaji to the Cabinet a few days after it granted him bail. On March 24, it took a dim view of the lack of response from him to its question raised on February 12 over his continuance as Minister. Mr. Senthilbalaji, in all likelihood, would have anticipated what the Court said now. That two senior advocates, Kapil Sibal and Mukul Rohatgi, and an advocate for the Minister, had to persuade a Bench of Justices A.S. Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan not to issue an interim order till Monday (April 29) is no common event in any court of law, let alone the Supreme Court. The observations of the Bench that it had been a "mistake" in granting him bail and that the conduct of the Minister was "dishonest," and the statement of Justice Oka to Mr. Sibal that "you [Mr. Senthilbalaji] will ensure that no witness comes to the box", reflect concerns that a Minister could tamper with evidence and influence witnesses. Clearly, Mr. Senthilbalaji would have done himself a favour by not returning to the Cabinet.

Even now, it is not too late for him to resign. If he does not, Chief Minister M.K. Stalin would be forced to act against him. What is at stake is not just the continuance of a Minister, but propriety. After all, the Court had granted Mr. Senthilbalaji bail not on merits, but on the ground that he had undergone an incarceration of one year as an under trial in the case. When it had not given him a clean chit in the first instance, his re-induction into the Cabinet has naturally become a subject matter before the Court, regardless of the correctness or otherwise of the Minister's claim that "there is not even a whisper of violation of any bail condition." On September 28, 2024, at the time when he was granted bail, *The Hindu* had pointed out that "the cause of justice for the victims of the job scandal and a fair trial for the accused would be served well if Mr. Stalin avoids inducting Mr. Senthilbalaji again in his Cabinet until he is cleared of the charges." The point still holds. Mr. Senthilbalaji should not risk the ignominy of getting dropped from the Cabinet on the recommendation of the Chief Minister.

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Where tariffs trump economics

The recently announced reciprocal tariffs by U.S. President Donald Trump have led to a decline in the prices of key commodities, crude oil, volatility, and a downturn in stock markets. Since the tariff announcement, crude oil prices have declined by nearly 14%. This drop is driven by fears that the global economy, particularly trade between major economies, may slow down, which could lead to reduced demand for oil. The responses to the announcement have reinforced concerns that a full-scale global trade war is now under way. New trade tensions could lead to higher inflation, slower economic growth, and escalating disputes. More importantly, the announcement has ushered in an extended period of uncertainty, opening up new challenges to economic policy making. While higher-income economies have the time and armoury to retaliate to U.S. policies, lower-income ones face a double disadvantage. They have to cope with a new world order, while addressing pressing domestic economic issues.

The role of reciprocal tariffs

Reciprocal tariff is a tax that one country places on another in response to similar actions taken by that country. The rationale for this response is to protect local businesses, preserve jobs, and fix trade imbalances. Though the idea behind reciprocal tariffs is to create balance in trade, they can lead to a back-and-forth increase in trade barriers with negative impacts on both economies. The evolution of reciprocal tariffs can be traced to when countries began using tariffs to shield their local industries, boost economic growth, and negotiate better trade deals. While reciprocal tariffs can help local industries in the short run, they lead to higher prices for consumers, disrupt supply chains, and slow down growth. Tariffs were a major source of income for governments, but this has greatly



M. Suresh Babu

Director, Madras Institute of Development Studies. Views are personal

The proposed tariffs are expected to deliver a blow to India's merchandise exports to the U.S.

reduced. They now serve as protective measures or negotiation tools.

Targeting Asia

Two aspects of the tariff tirade stand out. First, no other regions have been hit as hard as South Asia and Southeast Asia. Economic development over the past three decades in these regions has largely been driven by exports to the rest of the world, particularly the U.S. Exports to the U.S. contribute around 30% of Vietnam's GDP and 25% of Cambodia's. Vietnam and Cambodia have been hit by some of the highest tariffs (46% and 49%, respectively). Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Singapore have been hit by tariffs of varying magnitudes. Among countries of that region, this round of tariffs poses perhaps the greatest threat for Cambodia. The garment industry, which employs close to 7,50,000 workers, has been crucial in providing steady incomes to the poor. Thousands of jobs in this sector are now likely to be lost. The smaller economies of Southeast Asia are not in a position to retaliate, unlike China, which has hit back with its own measures. These economies can only negotiate. And the interests of the U.S. would primarily guide such negotiations.

The second is the curious case of calculation of tariffs. The formula underpinning reciprocal tariff is the country's trade deficit with the U.S., divided by its exports, and then divided by two. The U.S. also implemented a 10% baseline tariff on almost every country. However, the formula for calculating tariff rates for nations around the world is based on an elasticity rate lower than it should be in practice. The formula assumes an elasticity of import prices with respect to tariffs of about 0.25, but economists are of the view that the number should be closer to one. This one-size-fits-all formula is blunt as it applies the same math to countries whether they have

substantial trade barriers or wide-open markets. It considers only the size of the trade deficit, not why the deficit exists. Also, the trade deficit is calculated using only goods (items that can be shipped) and not services (technology, banking). This benefits countries which export few goods but plenty of financial services to the U.S.

Prospects for India

The proposed tariffs are expected to deliver a blow to India's merchandise exports to the U.S. If tariff plans are implemented after the current pause, India could see a \$7.76 billion drop (6.4%) in exports to the U.S. this year, according to an estimate by Global Trade Research Initiative. In 2024, India exported \$89 billion worth of goods to the U.S. This underscores the need for India to broaden the trade base necessitating swift trade policy actions. First, India has to secure a balanced trade deal with the U.S., which requires continuous negotiations. Second, it needs to fast-track trade agreements with the European Union, the U.K., and Canada. Third, it needs to deepen ties with Russia, Japan, South Korea, ASEAN, and the UAE. Fourth, it needs to handle ties with China with deftness and strategic intent.

Some believe that India could convert the situation into an opportunity. These beliefs are partly driven by the spectacular success of Apple's iPhone exports from India (by 54% last year). Hidden behind this achievement is the fact that the total goods exports for 2024-25 was \$437 billion, which is the same as last year. Given this reality, cashing on the present situation requires enormous homework. A set of coherent reforms encompassing rationalised tariffs, simpler GST, easier trade processes and fair implementation of quality standards and controls are prerequisites for such an ambition. Easier, straightforward responses to intensify inward orientation runs the risk of missing a global moment.

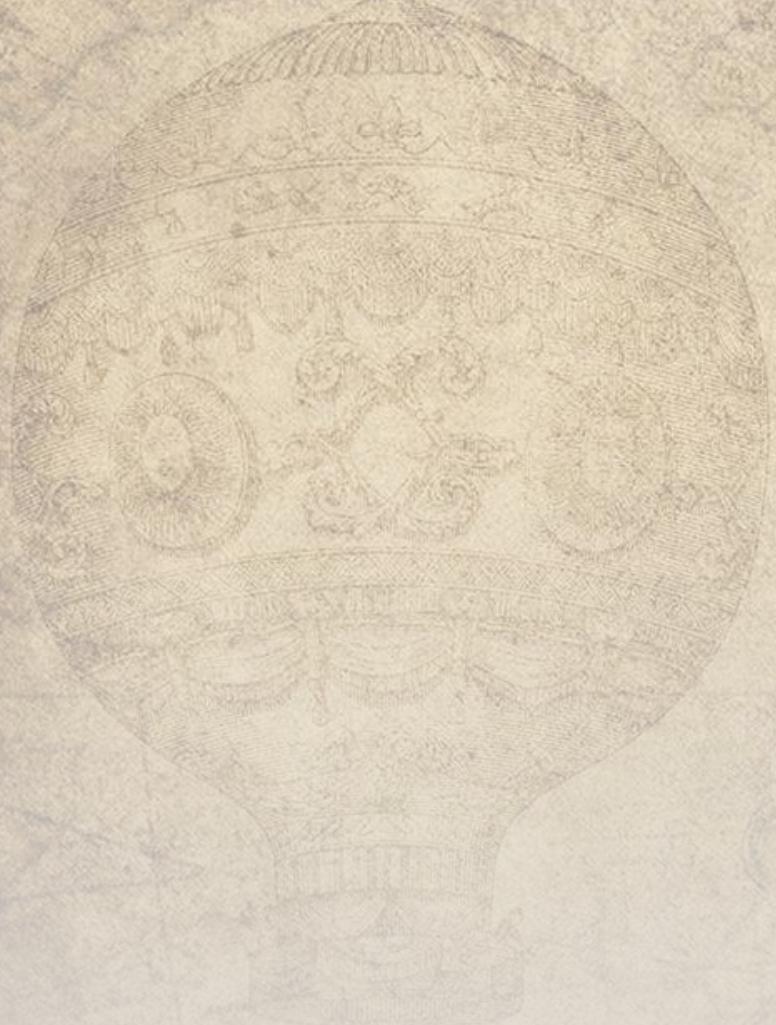
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- The recently announced reciprocal tariffs by U.S. President Donald Trump have led to a decline in the prices of key commodities, crude oil, volatility, and a downturn in stock markets.
- Since the tariff announcement, crude oil prices have declined by nearly 14%. This drop is driven by fears that the global economy, particularly trade between major economies, may slow down, which could lead to reduced demand for oil.
- The responses to the announcement have reinforced concerns that a full-scale global trade war is now under way. New trade tensions could lead to higher inflation, slower economic growth, and escalating disputes.
- While higher-income economies have the time and armoury to retaliate to U.S. policies, lower-income ones face a double disadvantage.

- Reciprocal tariff is a tax that one country places on another in response to similar actions taken by that country. The rationale for this response is to protect local businesses, preserve jobs, and fix trade imbalances.
- Though the idea behind reciprocal tariffs is to create balance in trade, they can lead to a back-and-forth increase in trade barriers with negative impacts on both economies.
- First, no other regions have been hit as hard as South Asia and Southeast Asia.
- Economic development over the past three decades in these regions has largely been driven by exports to the rest of the world, particularly the U.S. Exports to the U.S. contribute around 30% of Vietnam's GDP and 25% of Cambodia's. Vietnam and Cambodia have been hit by some of the highest tariffs (46% and 49%, respectively).
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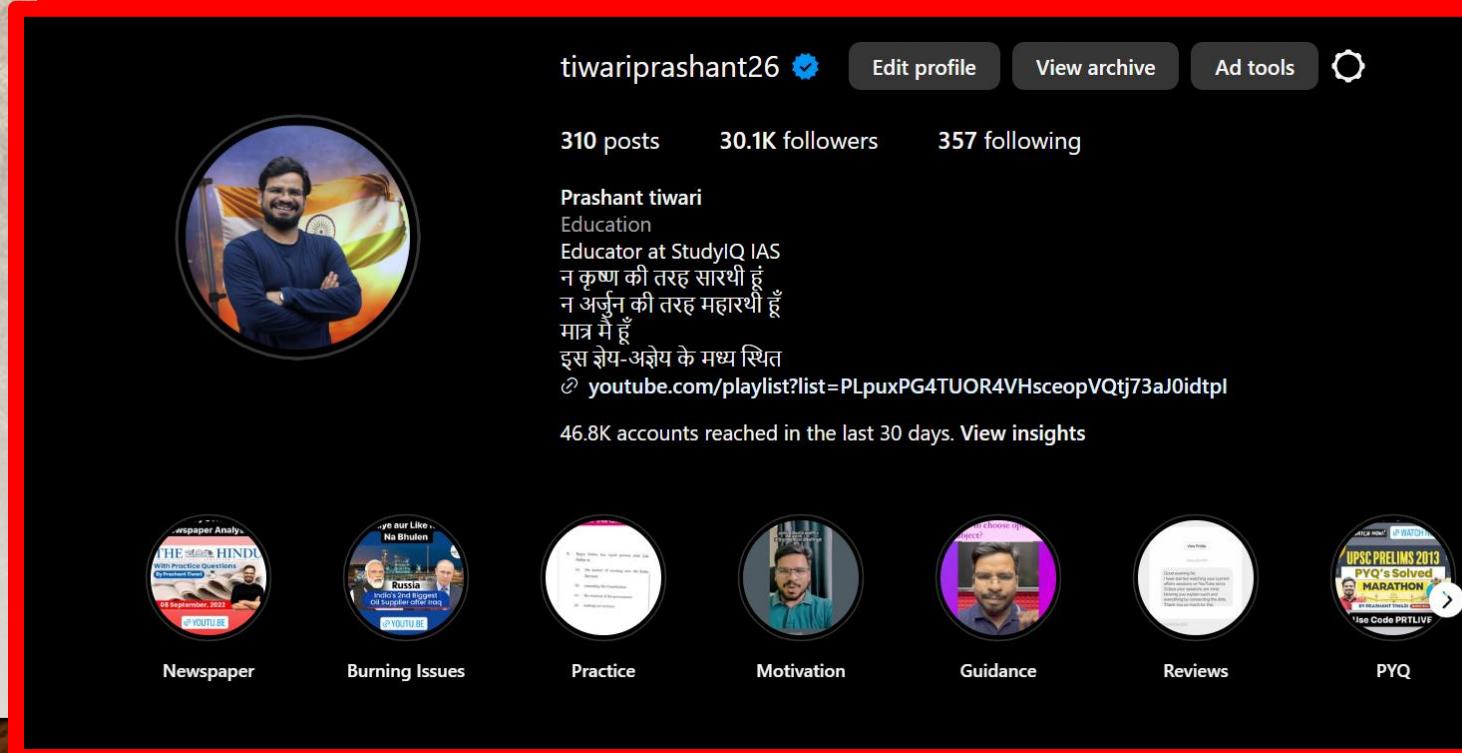
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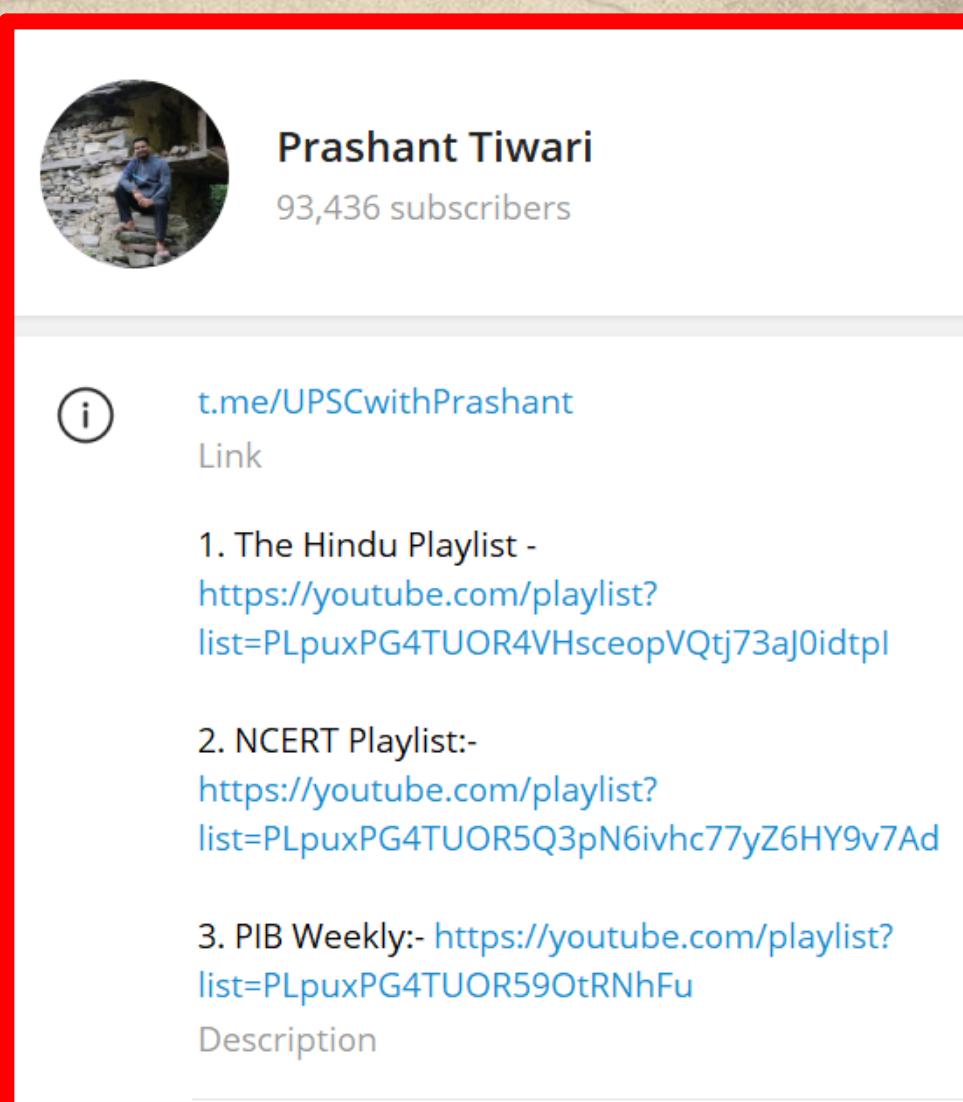
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