

# Headlines

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Username:- UPSCwithPrashant**

“

Where there is no struggle,  
there is no strength.

OPRAH WINFREY

# Trump pauses tariffs by 90 days; slaps China with 125%

U.S. President says he took decision after countries reached out to negotiate; U.S. earlier ramped up duties on Chinese goods to 104%, after which Beijing had increased retaliatory tariffs to 84%

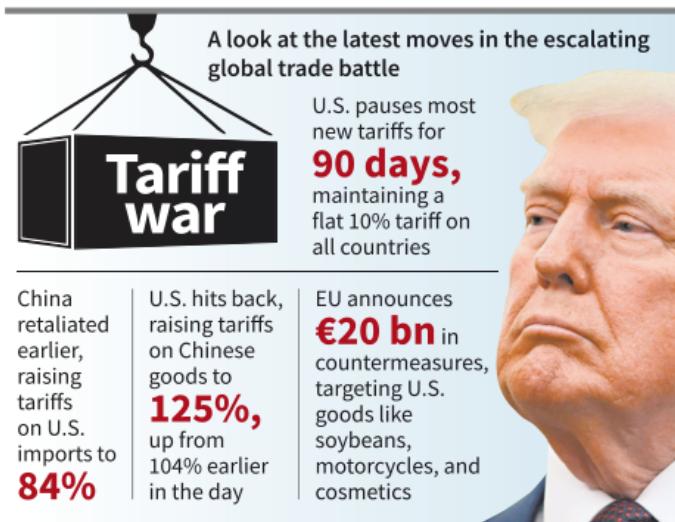
**Agence France-Presse**

WASHINGTON

**U**.S. President Donald Trump abruptly backed down on Wednesday in his global trade war with a 90-day pause for most countries, but slapped even more levies against China in what has become a full-scale confrontation between the world's two largest economies.

"I have authorized a 90 day PAUSE" on higher tariffs that took effect on Wednesday, Mr. Trump said on the Truth Social network, saying he took the decision after more than 75 countries had reached out to negotiate and did not retaliate against the United States.

"Based on the lack of respect that China has



shown to the World's Markets, I am hereby raising the Tariff charged to China by the United States of America to 125 percent, effective immediately," Mr. Trump added.

Mr. Trump had only hours earlier ramped up the duties on Chinese

goods to a giant 104%. China then retaliated by rising tariffs on U.S. imports to 84%. Following days of global market turmoil, Wall Street stocks surged in reaction to Mr. Trump's announcement.

Only a flat rate of 10% tariffs on all countries that

took effect on Saturday will remain in place. This marked a stunning reverse from often punishing levies that hit even many of the closest U.S. allies.

But Mr. Trump accused China of still "ripping off" his country. "At some point, hopefully in the near future, China will realize that the days of ripping off the U.S.A., and other Countries, is no longer sustainable or acceptable," Mr. Trump said.

The European Union had earlier launched its own counter-attack, announcing measures targeting some U.S. products from Tuesday in retaliation for American duties on global steel and aluminium exports.

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## A look at the latest moves in the escalating global trade battle

U.S. pauses most new tariffs for **90 days**, maintaining a flat 10% tariff on all countries

China retaliated earlier, raising tariffs on U.S. imports to **84%**

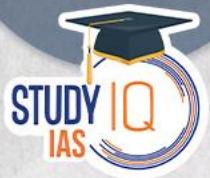
U.S. hits back, raising tariffs on Chinese goods to **125%**, up from 104% earlier in the day

EU announces **€20 bn** in countermeasures, targeting U.S. goods like soybeans, motorcycles, and cosmetics



## **Fact**

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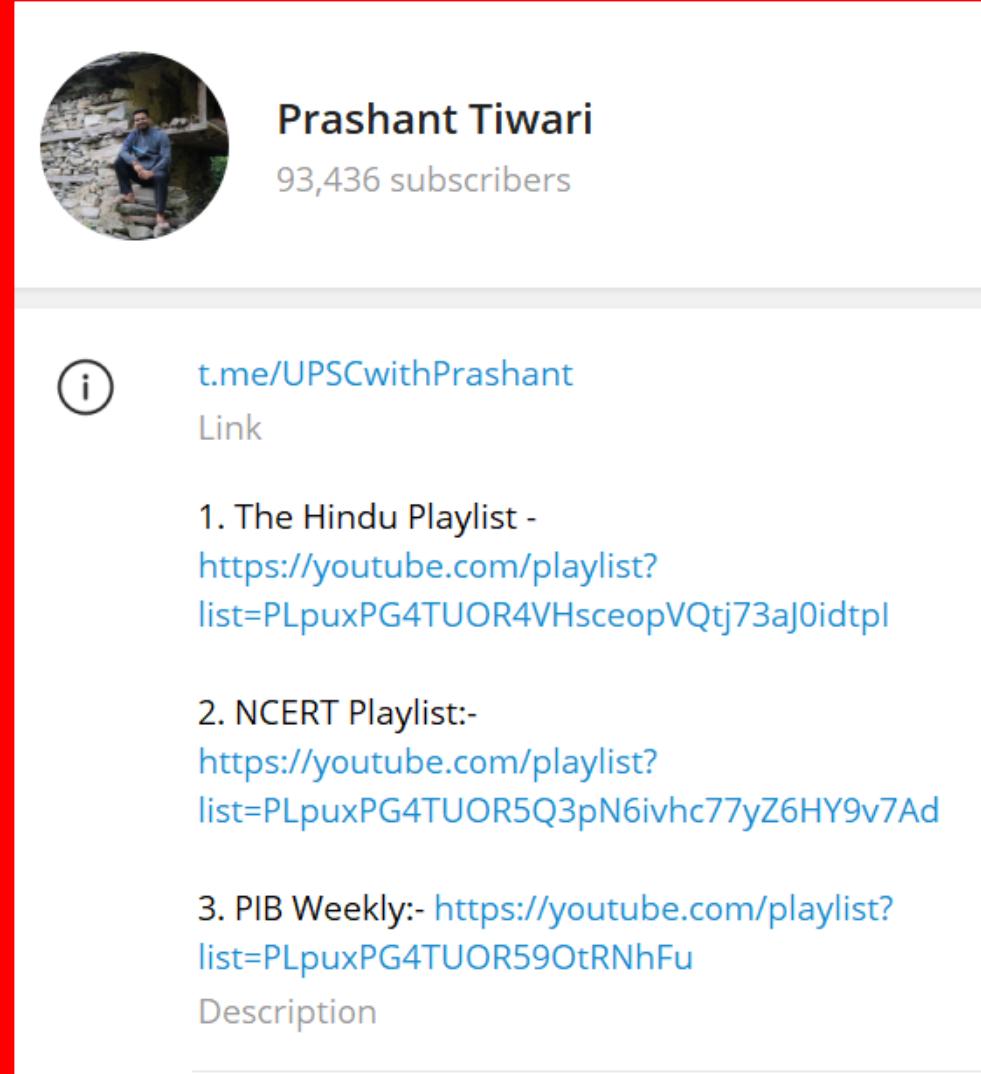
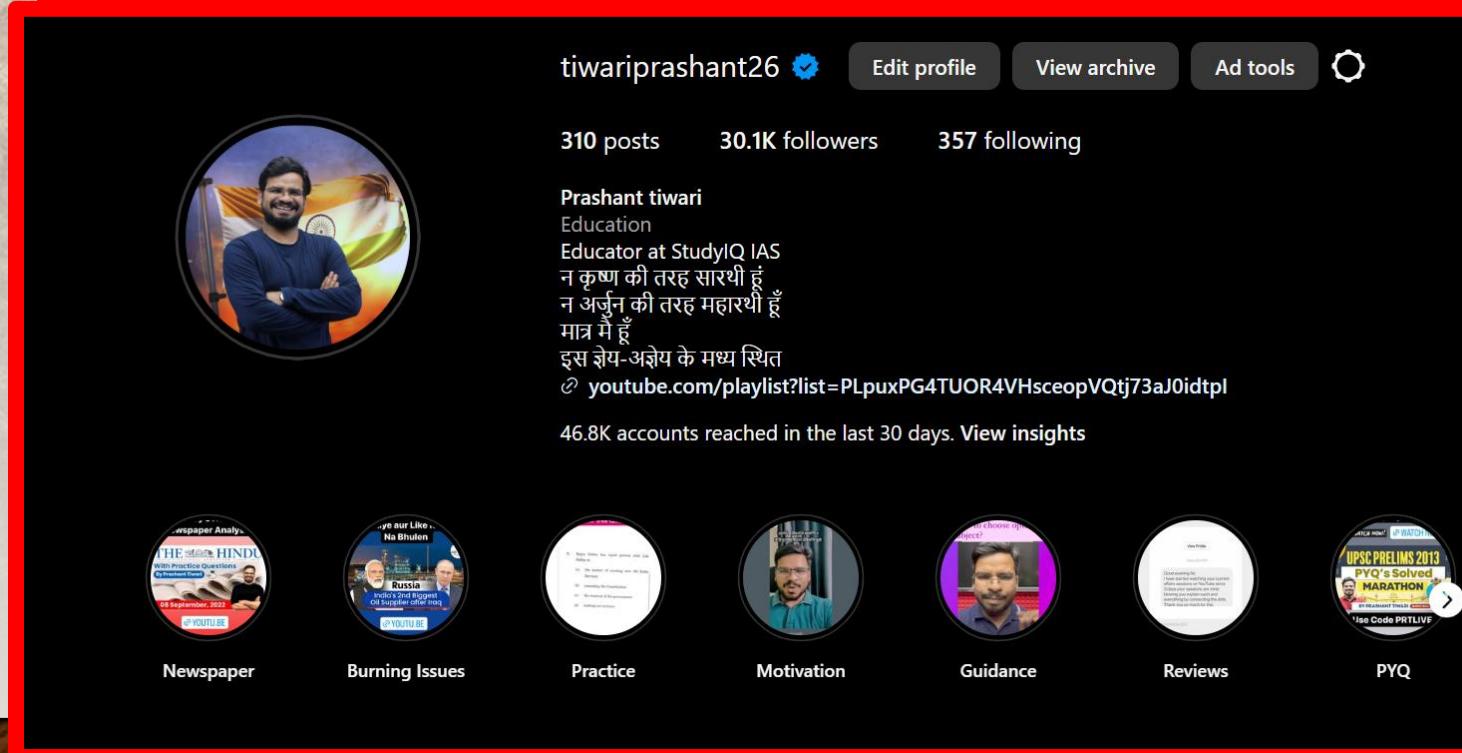
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Description

# RBI cuts repo rate by 0.25%, trims GDP growth forecast

**Lalatendu Mishra**

MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India slashed the repo rate by 25 basis points to 6% on Wednesday, with its Monetary Policy Committee voting unanimously to reduce the policy rate in a bid to support growth and bring down the interest burden on home, auto, and other loan borrowers. However, this will also reduce the interest earned on savings by depositors.

The move comes against the backdrop of an escalating global trade war, triggered by U.S. President Donald Trump's wide-ranging tariffs. The MPC has also lowered its forecast for India's GDP growth this year, from 6.7% to 6.5%.

This is the second time in a row that the MPC has cut the repo rate by 25 basis points (bps) or 0.25%. The committee, headed by RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra, also unanimously

## Credit cushion

The Reserve Bank of India slashed the repo rate by 25 basis points to 6% on Wednesday. The repo rate is the rate at which the RBI lends to banks to meet their short-term funding needs



shifted its policy stance from neutral to accommodative, indicating that it is more worried that economic growth could be a casualty of the trade war, than about inflation.

This is a policy stance "geared towards stimulating the economy through softer interest rates," Mr. Malhotra said, signalling the likelihood of further rate cuts.

"Uncertainty in itself

dampens growth by affecting investment and spending decisions of businesses and households," he said, in a monetary statement explaining the situation. "Second, the dent on global growth due to trade friction will impede domestic growth. Third, higher tariffs shall have a negative impact on our exports," he said.

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# Centre approves ₹63,000-crore deal for procuring 26 Rafale-M jets from France

**Dinakar Peri**

NEW DELHI

The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS), headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on Wednesday approved a nearly ₹63,000 crore deal for the procurement of 26 Rafale-M fighter jets from France for the Indian Navy, official sources confirmed.

The contract is expected to be concluded later this month. It includes 22 single-seater jets that can operate from aircraft carriers and four twin-seater trainer jets, which are not carrier-compatible.

The CCS approval for the government-to-government deal is the final step, and the agreement now awaits formal conclusion. It is expected to be signed



**Flight might:** Rafale-M jets lined up on French carrier *Charles de Gaulle* during the Varuna exercise last month. DINAKAR PERI

during the French Defence Minister's visit to India likely later this month.

This leaves another mega deal with France for three additional Scorpene-class conventional submarines awaiting CCS approval, before it can be finalised.

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The Indian Navy got the opportunity to witness the performance of the Rafale-M jets aboard the French aircraft carrier *Charles de Gaulle* during the bilateral Varuna exercise last month.

On July 13, 2023, the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC), chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, had accorded initial approval for the procurement of 26 Rafale-M fighters and three additional Scorpene-class diesel-electric submarines.

The Navy currently operates two aircraft carriers – INS *Vikramaditya*, which was procured from Russia, and the indigenously built INS *Vikrant*, which was commissioned in September 2022.

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- The delivery of the jets will begin three-and-a-half years after the contract is signed and is expected to be completed in about six- and-a-half years, official sources said. The Indian Air Force operates 36 Rafale jets, acquired under a ₹60,000-crore deal signed in September 2016.
- The Indian Navy got the opportunity to witness the performance of the Rafale-M jets aboard the French aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle during the bilateral Varuna exercise last month.
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## Legal milestone

Cooperative federalism must guide conduct of Governors

The Supreme Court's judgment on the conduct of Tamil Nadu Governor R.N. Ravi is set to have a far-reaching impact on Centre-State relations, underscoring as it does India's federal principles in what are undoubtedly fraught times. The verdict enhances the administrative autonomy of States, and regulates the functioning of constitutional offices, with implications for the entire country. In the case which concerns Mr. Ravi's handling of 10 Bills passed by the State Assembly, the Court has effectively changed how Governors carry out their constitutional responsibilities. The intervention comes at a time when tensions between Governors and governments in States ruled by parties other than the BJP have peaked – especially over issues such as the appointment of Vice-Chancellors (V-Cs) to State-run universities, where Governors serve as Chancellors. It is no coincidence that the Bills at the heart of the case sought to replace the Governor with the State government as the authority for appointing V-Cs. Mr. Ravi had forwarded these Bills to President Droupadi Murmu after they were re-adopted by the State Assembly. The Court held that the Bills were deemed to have received assent. It described the Governor's action of referring the Bills to the President as "not bona fide", and his conduct as "arbitrary, *non est*, and erroneous in law" – language that resembled a performance appraisal of the gubernatorial office. In normal circumstances, such a severe reprimand would have resulted in the resignation of the person whose conduct was under scrutiny: Mr. Ravi. But these are not normal circumstances, and Mr. Ravi was certainly playing the politically partisan role assigned to him by the government at the Centre, led by the BJP, which is inimically disposed to the DMK that is in power in Tamil Nadu. Hindrance was the strategy.

The significance of the judgment goes beyond the censure of a particular Governor. It lays down definite timelines for Governors to act on Bills. It ensures that Governors can no longer indefinitely delay legislation under the pretext of scrutiny or act whimsically or with impunity. The Court has reaffirmed a constitutional principle that has often been undermined: that Raj Bhavans must function with transparency, and accountability. With the legislation now in force, the Tamil Nadu government has the authority to appoint V-Cs and must act swiftly to fill these vacancies in 12 universities, and are made based on merit, integrity, and competence, given past allegations of corruption. This judgment is not merely a legal milestone; it is a call for constitutional morality and cooperative federalism, and restoration of dignity to the office of the Governor, who, as the Court pointed out, is expected to act as friend, philosopher, and guide to the State Cabinet, and not as a blunt instrument of the Centre.

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## Home and abroad

India must improve research infrastructure to serve its students

The ongoing programme of revoking the visas of foreign students in the U.S., ostensibly for opposing the country's foreign policy, is a direct outcome of the xenophobic tendency in the Trump administration. The danger is that the 'Make America Great Again' movement that propelled Donald Trump into the Presidency may soon permeate deep into campus life too. In any case, the number of Indian students enrolling in U.S. universities has been on a downward trend since last year – even before the drumbeats of hostility started. Indian students are already finding other countries such as Germany attractive for lower costs and greater flexibility to self-fund their education through work. Enrolment figures for September this year will demonstrate how attractive the U.S. still is for Indian students despite the looming cancellation of the Optional Practical Training programme that offered a segue for foreign students to working in the U.S. All this, together with the defunding of research and arm-twisting of universities in a country known to value academic freedom, has indeed lowered, if not upended, the regard that people outside had for the U.S.

Many countries have sought to leverage the decline of the U.S. as a destination for talent. Reports talk about European institutions welcoming disgruntled U.S.-based researchers, ironically noting that scientists and researchers fleeing persecution greatly contributed to American progress in the past. For a while now, Indian returnees have been driven in-part towards a desire to come back home or even serve their motherland. Professional achievement or the opportunity to do high-end research has not always been a big driver towards India attracting back its people. While, outwardly, new vistas have opened, research opportunities have expanded, and the fight for funds is less intense, in part due to the encouragement given to private institutions, much work remains to be done. Loosening up the government's purse strings and goading private institutions to invest in research more may only be the starting point. What often puts off returnees is the daily struggle in India. The struggle not only characterises everyday social life but also the workplace. Collaboration between institutions or even across departments is a tough sell. The suffocating social norms and hierarchies are a downer. Lastly, the academic freedom that Indians are used to enjoying elsewhere will need to be recreated. That would require a complete overhaul in the Indian government's attitude to liberal values and towards foreigners, which often borders on the Trumpian.

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- Professional achievement or the opportunity to do high-end research has not always been a big driver towards India attracting back its people.
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- Loosening up the government's purse strings and goading private institutions to invest in research more may only be the starting point. What often puts off returnees is the daily struggle in India.

# *The pandemic – looking back, looking forward*

**T**he only possible answer to the question of how we can survive the plague is by living.” – José Saramago

Last month, March, we marked five years of the COVID-19 pandemic around the world. By now, we have had events, conferences, editorials, policy statements and thought leadership internationally. And there could also be some of us left pondering about Saramago. Have we learnt enough as a society and moved toward a healthier, more innovative and inclusive society by picking up lessons from the pandemic?

The learnings are of course stark and have necessitated a fundamental rethink about trust, the role of technology, our responsibility towards the vulnerable, and the architecture of health and innovation in the Global South and North.

## **Some of the critical lessons**

It was from the pandemic that we learnt about the fragility of trust in health-care institutions and public health guidance. Several studies indicated that low trust and confidence in health-care service delivery could hinder the adoption of non-pharmaceutical and pharmaceutical interventions broadly, like for tests and vaccines. This also showed up as a heterogeneity in confidence in health-care systems, impacting mobility and compliance worldwide during the pandemic.

In India, the heterogeneity in reported COVID-19 infections in the early stages pointed to a variation in confidence levels in the health-care sector – as highlighted by reports of the underreporting of excess mortality that was later published in Science. Other countries faced communication failures, as seen in vulnerable economies. Overall, this underscores the critical role of government in convincing populations about the effectiveness of preventive measures. Public health interventions are predicated on public trust, and any erosion of this foundation can severely undermine pandemic response efforts tomorrow.

Technology, a double-edged sword, has also witnessed an unprecedented acceleration in its



**Chirantan  
Chatterjee**

is a Professor of Development Economics, Innovation and Global Health at the University of Sussex

adoption even as it has starkly revealed the digital divide between the privileged and the underserved and also impacting vulnerable populations during work or study from home.

The pandemic propelled the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in pharmaceutical innovation. This writer's research at the University of Sussex with patent data showed a sharp increase in the presence and the count of AI keywords in pharmaceutical patent abstracts after the onset of COVID-19, suggesting increased use of innovative technologies in this sector (further validated by the Nobel Prize awarded to Demis Hassabis and John M. Jumper of DeepMind and the rapid progress in drug discovery and innovation spurred by AI). Telemedicine experienced a reinvigoration, offering an alternative way to providing health care amidst restrictions on movement and face-to-face encounters. While digital technology offers solutions, equitable access remains a significant challenge, particularly in developing economies, despite the global surge in digital health interventions.

## **Vulnerabilities were amplified**

We also learnt, brutally, about an amplification of existing vulnerabilities, leading to concerns that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has been significantly compromised, particularly in vulnerable, resource-poor economies. The disproportionate effect of COVID-19 on women, concerning childcare, work and mental health, was a critical lesson. Access to health-care services became a major challenge. The experience highlighted the urgent need for policies and investments that specifically address the needs of vulnerable groups to ensure equitable access to care and mitigate disproportionate impacts during health emergencies. The pandemic also triggered a silent pandemic of global mental health challenges. The pandemic has severely affected global workplace productivity, with no stable solution as yet to address this structurally and sustainably as debates around work-from-home or hybrid models continue globally.

COVID-19 laid bare inherent weaknesses in

health systems globally, emphasising the necessity of having universal health insurance coverage. The pre-pandemic health systems in India and other Global South nations had inherent weaknesses in addressing public goods and institutional capacity. National oxygen capabilities are now an important issue to address respiratory pathogens circulating for tomorrow's pandemic, as research from U-Edinburgh has pointed out. The concept of “hybrid” solutions, coupling digital technology with existing infrastructure, emerged as a potential pathway for delivering care in a cost-optimal manner. So did public-private collaborations in research and development and health delivery. But on many occasions, these efforts have gone away in various countries after the pandemic has subsided. The need for a central public health officer to harmonise efforts and reduce coordination costs, especially in countries with decentralised health systems, has become increasingly apparent.

The crisis also brought into focus the contentious issue of profiteering. Debates surrounding intellectual property (IP) waivers for COVID-19 vaccines, diagnostics, and therapeutics highlighted the tension between protecting innovation and ensuring equitable global access. Africa suffered significantly due to vaccine nationalism, amplifying the need for South-South collaboration for future pandemics in this Anthropocene.

## **In perspective**

Overall, five years since the COVID-19 pandemic, it seems like we may have flattened the curve on health, innovation and the economy, but there is a lot of unfinished work. Whether we will be able to usher in ‘One World and One Health’ or remain mired in protectionist tendencies globally, reflecting on national health security considerations, remains to be seen. Yes, for those left behind on this planet, we are living beyond the pandemic – to allude to Saramago. But are we learning and actively breathing to create globally health-resilient inclusive societies tomorrow? One is left to wonder.

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- The pre-pandemic health systems in India and other Global South nations had inherent weaknesses in addressing public goods and institutional capacity.

# Understanding India's China conundrum

Today's China is evidently not the China of Deng Xiaoping. With the advent of Xi Jinping in 2013, China has changed even more and there is little indication that it has since retracted from this path. On the other hand, it is harking more and more to its past, wallowing in self-pity as a 'wronged' civilisation. As this becomes more pronounced, the need for caution becomes self-evident, at least as far as countries on its borders are concerned. China's border provocations, in the Himalayas for instance, can be traced to its determination to restore the Qing Dynasty frontiers, notwithstanding the evident weakness of these claims.

**From skirmishes to some de-escalation**  
The border skirmishes with India in Depsang (2013), Demchok (2016), Doklam (2017), and Galwan (2020) serve to confirm this hypothesis. The warm sentiments exchanged between leaders of India and China recently, therefore, need to be taken with a great deal of circumspection. Much of the rest of the world, apart from India, has been surprised by the recent outburst of sentiments. Caution is, thus, well merited, and it would be highly optimistic to treat the present as denoting a return to the Hu Jintao period – in the first decade of the century – which was a brief interregnum when relations appeared to veer towards normalcy.

A thaw in relations could be discerned towards the latter part of 2024, involving a de-escalation of operations at friction points on the border. Official references to this were, however, made only just prior to the BRICS Summit in Kazan (Russia) in October 2024. Outlines of the India-China Border Patrolling Agreement, nevertheless, remained sketchy, though they did appear to signal a breakthrough. The Agreement, focusing primarily on patrolling arrangements between the two sides in the Himalayas, has since been invested with far greater significance than a mere Border Patrolling Agreement. A 'degree of stand-off', however, still prevails along the Line of Actual Control.

It was China that was first off the mark. In November 2024, the Chinese Defence Ministry observed that India and China were implementing a settlement reached between the two countries for disengagement and resumption of patrolling. Even before the process had been completed, a Chinese Defence Ministry Spokesman (during a media briefing), observed "we look forward to a harmonious dance between the Chinese Dragon and the Indian Elephant with concerted steps".

In an interview with an American podcaster, Prime Minister Narendra Modi – who visited the United States in February 2025 – declared that normalcy had returned to the India-China border after his talks with President Xi Jinping in Kazan



M.K. Narayanan

is a former Director, Intelligence Bureau, a former National Security Adviser, and a former Governor of West Bengal

in October (2024), adding that "our cooperation is not only (mutually) beneficial, but also essential for global peace and prosperity". Subsequent to this, there has been mention of the revival of the SR (Special Representatives) talks in the near future.

De-escalation of tensions on the border and putting in place new 'patrolling arrangements' are important, but fall well short of robust negotiating stages. Specifics are, however, important in dealing with such issues, all the more so in the case of a nation such as China. In a world that is no longer considered multipolar, and where pluralism is at a severe disadvantage, most experts veer to the view that 'Might is again Right'. Also, that references to the 'rules based international order' have little meaning. Hence, the need for caution.

## A reality check

Meanwhile, China, in March, announced that it is increasing its Defence Budget by 7.2% over that of the previous year. This is approximately three times higher than that of India, and should serve as a warning to India. India's defence spending is currently believed to be less than 2% of its GDP, and the difference between a burgeoning Chinese Defence Budget and that of India's is a matter of concern. India and China are not about, or expected, to go to war in the near future, but India should not also be inveigled into accepting China's assertions and promises. The grim reality is that the People's Liberation Army today maintains over a lakh of soldiers (along with tanks, howitzers, surface-to-air missiles and heavy weaponry), in the icy Himalayan heights of Ladakh. This apart, there are reports that China is stocking-up on its nuclear weaponry (and while all reports about nuclear warheads are at best speculative), Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) and other reliable agencies suggest that in the recent past, Beijing has added another hundred nuclear warheads to its existing stockpile.

India should not be oblivious to the fact that while talking peace, China is strengthening its war-fighting capabilities (even though this may also be intended to withstand a U.S.-led attack). China's lead in Artificial Intelligence (AI) today also gives it a decided advantage in the realm of 'new age' warfare. Simultaneously, China has taken the lead as far as military applications of cyber, apart from AI, are concerned, becoming adept at AI-enabled cyber-security operations.

China already maintains a lead over India in aspects such as anti-satellite capabilities and has made rapid advancements in battlefield digital technologies, real-time data processing, predictive analytics and automated decision support systems. China is also understood to have a decisive advantage in aspects such as quantum technology. Hence, much more than

pious words will be needed to convince the world (India included) about China's real intentions before the Elephant and the Dragon can dance together. India must, hence, exercise utmost vigil.

## In the neighbourhood

Meanwhile, as a part of its current foreign policy initiatives, China has embarked on a quest for new friends in India's 'backyard'. India needs to be vigilant about this development. The latest is Bangladesh. After the eclipse of the Sheikh Hasina regime in Bangladesh, and a successful visit by Bangladesh's Chief Adviser, Mohammed Yunus, to China in March, Bangladesh has now come directly on China's radar, and is being viewed as a 'good friend'.

This development, apart from being an aspect of deep concern, creates a new void on India's eastern flank. What is also becoming evident is that even as India has been assiduously courting the U.S., it seems to be losing focus on strengthening and improving relations with countries in its immediate neighbourhood. This situation extends to West Asia and North Africa as well.

Again, if energy security remains the 'Holy Grail' for nations the world over, China appears to have stolen a march over India and many others, in the nuclear energy domain. It has been active in the African continent and has reportedly gained a beachhead there, in terms of nuclear energy resources, while other countries such as India (which are similarly hoping to increase their reliance on nuclear power) remain far behind. Irrespective of relations between India and China, nuclear energy will soon be an important component in the tussle for energy independence and influence. For now, China appears to have stolen a march over India with its successful foray into the African continent, even as their market is beginning to open up. Given the mounting intensity of great power competition, including between India and China, the scale and pace of China's military modernisation, and China's penchant for expanding its boundaries, India could well confront a difficult future, if it does not act in time and with necessary foresight.

Finally, in its shadow play with China, India must also be prepared for any and all eventualities. U.S. President Donald Trump, given his mercurial temperament, could well strike a deal with China – an eventuality that could upset and alter power equations across the globe. It might, hence, be prudent for India's leaders and strategists to take note of such an eventuality, if not for now in the not too distant future, and prepare for this eventuality. India and China are old civilisations and have overcome many problems in the past. This may be one more eventuality that India's leaders might have to anticipate and contend with even if it appears highly improbable at this point in time.

In its shadow play with Beijing, New Delhi must also be prepared for all eventualities

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## **Content.**

- **The border skirmishes with India in Depsang (2013), Demchok (2016), Doklam (2017), and Galwan (2020)**
- **A thaw in relations could be discerned towards the latter part of 2024, involving a de-escalation of operations at friction points on the border. Official references to this were, however, made only just prior to the BRICS Summit in Kazan (Russia) in October 2024.**
- **In an interview with an American podcaster, Prime Minister Narendra Modi — who visited the United States in February 2025 — declared that normalcy had returned to the India-China border after his talks with President Xi Jinping in Kazan in October (2024), adding that “our cooperation is not only (mutually) beneficial, but also essential for global peace and prosperity”. Subsequent to this, there has been mention of the revival of the SR (Special Representatives) talks in the near future.**

## **Content.**

- Meanwhile, China, in March, announced that it is increasing its Defence Budget by 7.2% over that of the previous year. This is approximately three times higher than that of India, and should serve as a warning to India.
- India's defence spending is currently believed to be less than 2% of its GDP, and the difference between a burgeoning Chinese Defence Budget and that of India's is a matter of concern.
- India should not be oblivious to the fact that while talking peace, China is strengthening its war-fighting capabilities (even though this may also be intended to withstand a U.S.-led attack). China's lead in Artificial Intelligence (AI) today also gives it a decided advantage in the realm of 'new age' warfare. Simultaneously, China has taken the lead as far as military applications of cyber, apart from AI, are concerned, becoming adept at AI-enabled cyber-security operations.

# The Rohingya are on the brink of starvation

**D**uring his four-day visit to Bangladesh in March, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres visited Cox's Bazar, the site of one of the world's most overlooked humanitarian crisis. Over a million Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar are teetering on the edge of catastrophe. Now, their fragile existence has made even more precarious by the Trump administration's abrupt shutdown of U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) funding.

USAID, historically the largest donor to humanitarian causes, spent about \$40 billion a year globally. This has been slashed by the Department of Government Efficiency, led by billionaire and senior adviser to Mr. Trump, Elon Musk. It is ironic that the U.S., which in 2022 declared the atrocities against the Rohingya a 'genocide', signalling a commitment to respecting and protecting human rights, is today pulling the plug on the very aid that has kept over a million displaced Rohingya alive in Bangladesh, the second-largest recipient of USAID in South Asia.

**Catastrophic consequences**  
The decision to slash USAID funding has sent shockwaves through the global humanitarian community. It has severed a vital lifeline and exposed refugees around the world to starvation, disease, and insecurity. For the Rohingya, who have already endured genocide, exile, and decades of statelessness, the consequences of the decision have been catastrophic. The World Food Programme, which relies largely on U.S. funding, has been forced to cut already meagre rations from \$12.50 per refugee per month to an unsustainable \$6. Medical aid has dwindled, with at least five hospitals shutting down, and sanitation programmes collapsing. This is a manufactured crisis, an ideological experiment in dismantling global aid, carried



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Senior Director of the international think tank IPAG India.

out on the backs of the world's most vulnerable people.

## A weak moral compass

Mr. Musk's opposition to foreign aid is not new. He has long dismissed USAID as a "financial black hole." His gleeful participation in its dismantling reveals a deeper ideological inclination: a tech billionaire's fantasy of replacing structured aid with privatised, profit-driven solutions. Mr. Musk, like many libertarians, believes that markets solve problems more efficiently than governments. But hunger, displacement, and genocide are not market failures; they are moral failures. The idea that philanthropic ventures or ad hoc charity can replace long-term institutional support is naïve at best and reckless at worst.

The collapse of USAID-funded gender-based violence services and medical facilities has left vulnerable refugees, including women and children, without protection, medical care, and essential support, exposing them to heightened risks of exploitation and harm. The dismantling of USAID is not just about numbers; it's about values. America's moral compass is questioned when the world's richest men believe that spending on starving refugees is wasteful. The problem at hand also reflects a broader shift in the U.S.'s role in the world: a retreat from global responsibility and the abdication of moral leadership. The images from Cox's Bazar – a mother unable to feed her child, a clinic forced to turn away a dying patient, a child scavenging for scraps in a camp that once received international support – are not just distant tragedies. They are reflections of a world where indifference has become a policy and where the whims of the rich dictate the fate of the poor.

This retreat from aid will not go unnoticed. Historically, the U.S.'s foreign assistance has not been purely altruistic; it has been a crucial instrument of soft power.

Cutting aid to the Rohingya refugees doesn't just hurt the refugees. It also weakens America's standing in South Asia and beyond. China, which has steadily increased its influence in Bangladesh, will step into the vacuum left by the U.S., leveraging economic aid as a tool for geopolitical leverage. China has already been mediating between Bangladesh and Myanmar for possible repatriation of the Rohingya refugees back home.

## A huge vacuum

The question is, if the U.S. withdraws funding, can other nations pitch in? Unfortunately not. The U.S. alone contributed nearly half of the World Food Programme's budget in previous years, making its sudden withdrawal a near-impossible burden to redistribute among remaining donors. This has resulted in drastic food ration cuts, leaving the Rohingya refugees on the brink of starvation. The European Union has pledged €32.3 million, and Japan and Italy have made commitments, but none of them can fill the gap left by the U.S.

The collapse of USAID sets a dangerous precedent. If the world's richest country can turn its back on one of the most vulnerable groups, what would stop other nations from following suit? The Rohingya crisis is not just a test for those suffering, it is a test for human civilisation. As Mr. Guterres said at Cox' Bazar, "We cannot accept that the international community forgets about the Rohingya". He added that he will "speak loudly" to world leaders that more support is urgently needed.

The question is, will the world watch idly as humanitarianism is eroded? Or will it reclaim the compassionate values that once defined the world's oldest and leading democracy, the nation which poured billions of dollars to revive war-torn Europe through the Marshall Plan in 1948?

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## **Content.**

- USAID, historically the largest donor to humanitarian causes, spent about \$40 billion a year globally. This has been slashed by the Department of Government Efficiency, led by billionaire and senior adviser to Mr. Trump, Elon Musk.
- For the Rohingya, who have already endured genocide, exile, and decades of statelessness, the consequences of the decision have been catastrophic.
- The World Food Programme, which relies largely on U.S. funding, has been forced to cut already meagre rations from \$12.50 per refugee per month to an unsustainable \$6.
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## **Content.**

- The collapse of USAID-funded gender-based violence services and medical facilities has left vulnerable refugees, including women and children, without protection, medical care, and essential support, exposing them to heightened risks of exploitation and harm.
- Historically, the U.S.'s foreign assistance has not been purely altruistic; it has been a crucial instrument of soft power. Cutting aid to the Rohingya refugees doesn't just hurt the refugees.
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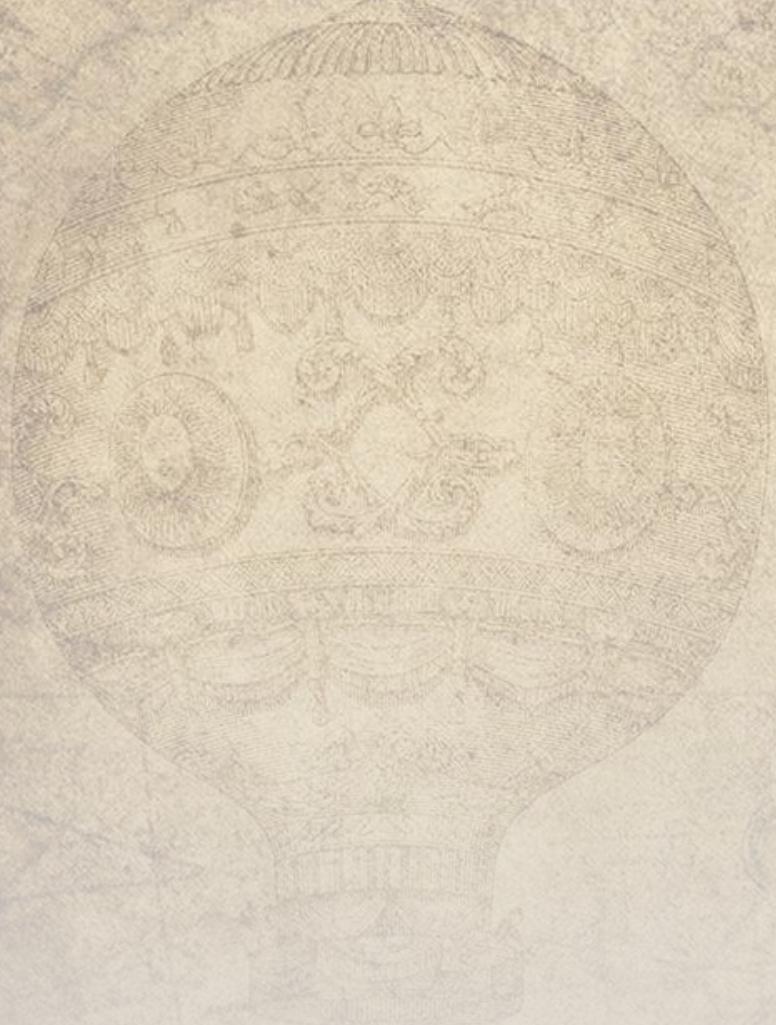


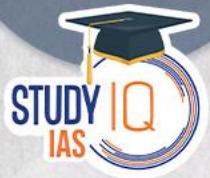
## Fact

- The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is an independent agency of the U.S. government, established in 1961 by President John F. Kennedy.
- It was created to consolidate various foreign assistance programs under one agency to administer civilian foreign aid and development assistance.
- USAID receives funding allocated in the U.S. federal budget.
- The top recipient countries of USAID include: Ukraine, Ethiopia, Jordan, Somalia etc.
  
- The Rohingya are an ethnic group, mostly Muslim, who live in the western Myanmar province of Rakhine.
- They speak a Bengali dialect, unlike the commonly spoken Burmese language.
- Myanmar does not grant them full citizenship, considering them as migrants from colonial times, despite their long presence in the country.

## **Fact**

- **Rohingya refugees are protected under the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, which enshrine the principle of non-refoulement (prohibiting the expulsion of individuals to countries where they face persecution).**
- **India is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention and other human rights treaties like the Convention against Torture.**
- **India uses the Foreigners Act, 1946, and the Passport Act, 1967 to regulate the presence of foreigners and considers Rohingya refugees as “illegal migrants.”**
- **India is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which obligates member states to refrain from deporting individuals to places where they may face torture or cruel treatment.**





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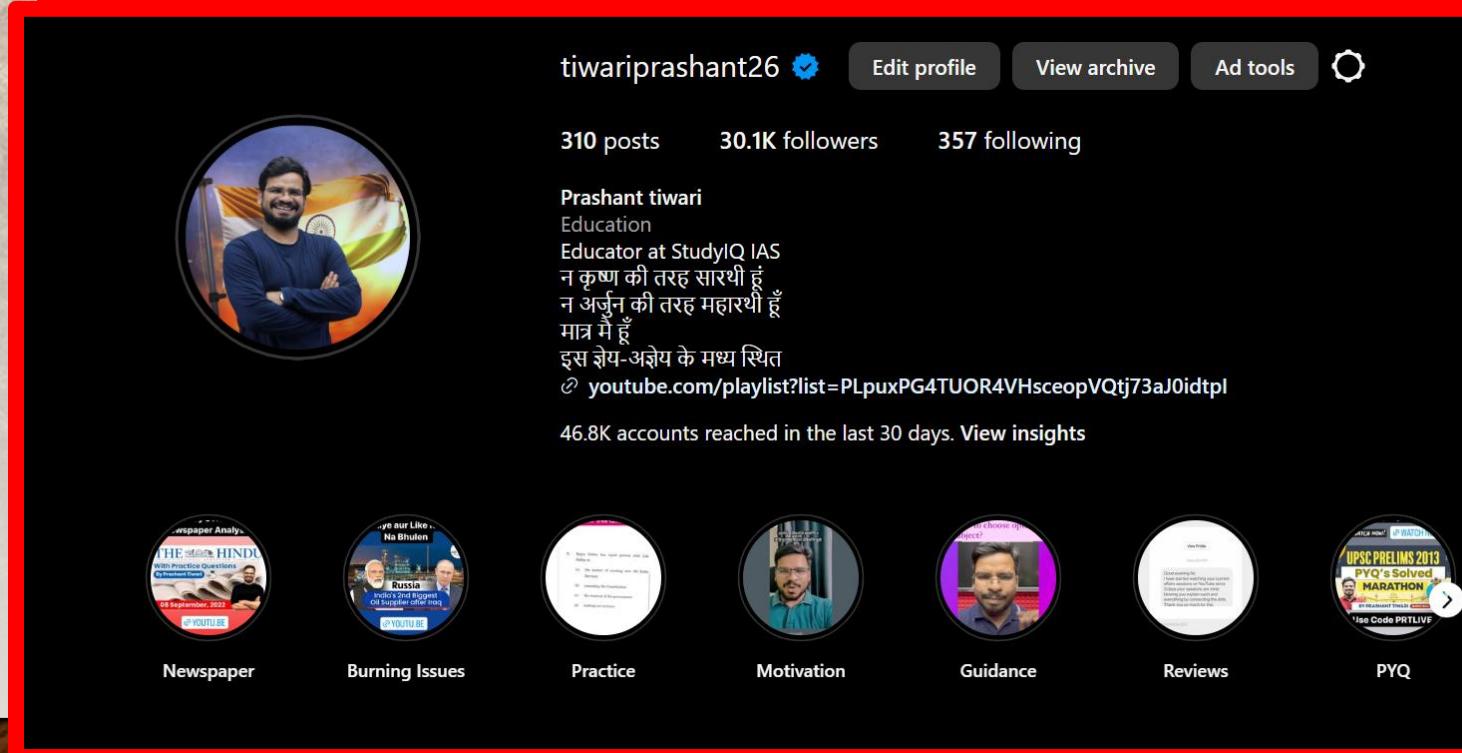
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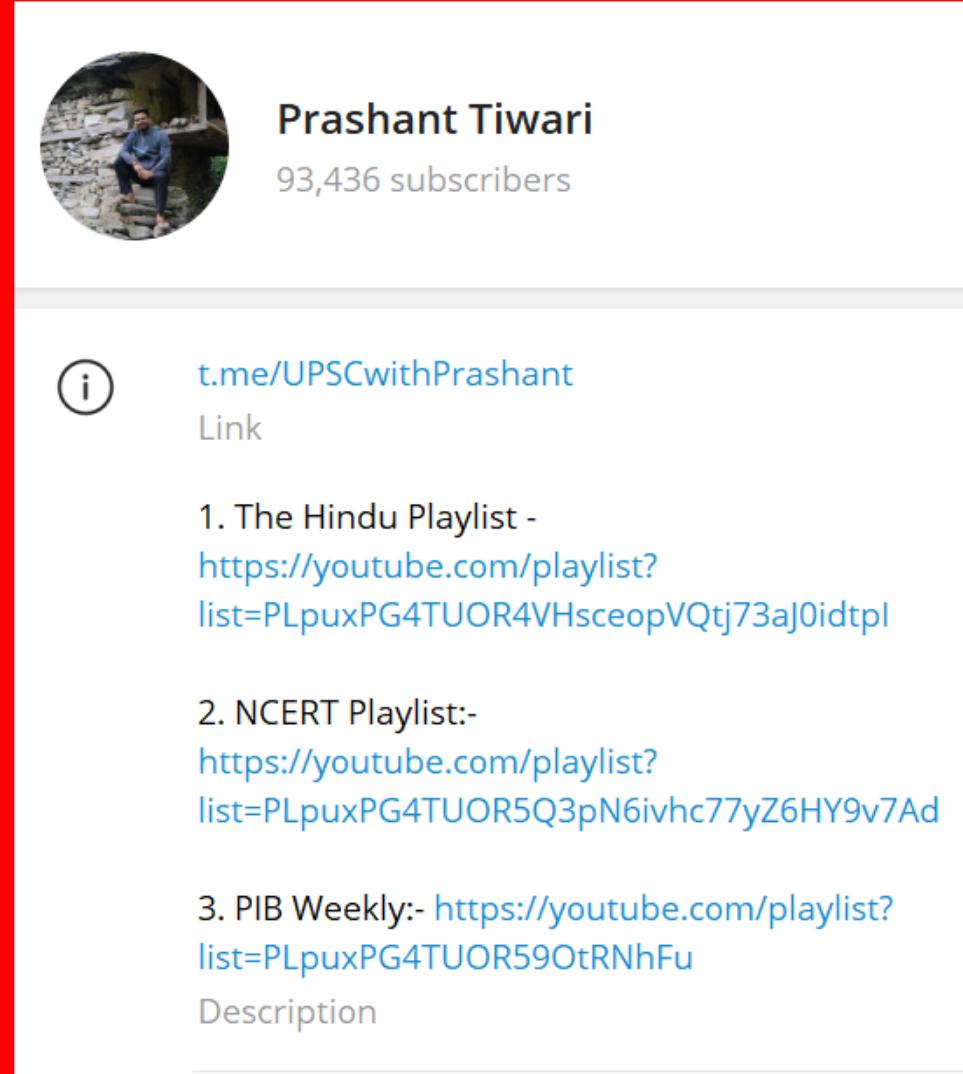
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