

SANSKRITI IAS EDITORIALS HIGHLIGHTS

23-08-2026

What are the U.S. latest allegations against India?(THE HINDU PAGE NO 78)

- **Syllabus**
 - GS Paper II Bilateral regional and global groupings and agreements involving India
 - GS Paper III Indian Economy and issues relating to planning mobilization of resources growth and development
- **Syllabus Sub topics**
 - US China trade war transshipment of goods trade tariffs Make in India and supply chain vulnerabilities
- **Key Themes**
 - **Trade and Tariffs** The United States accusing India and other nations of serving as a shadow transshipment network for Chinese goods to evade American tariffs
 - **Impact on Domestic Manufacturing** How curbing these imports might negatively affect India manufacturing sector which heavily relies on intermediate goods from China

What are the U.S.'s latest allegations against India?

Why has the U.S. accused India of violating what it considers fair trade practices? How many countries have been named in The Great Transshipment Scam? What do these allegations mean for India? Can they impact India's growth story?

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan

The story so far:

Last week, the U.S. accused India of violating what it considers fair trade practices. The White House published a report titled 'The Great Transshipment Scam' in which it accused about 40 countries, including India, of helping China evade U.S. tariffs.

What is the Great Transshipment Scam?

Over the last nearly three decades, the U.S. and Chinese economies have become deeply intertwined, with the U.S. increasingly relying on China to be its manufacturing hub, and China relying on the U.S. as its market and for investments. This is a somewhat simplistic assessment of their engagement, but it is also the most relevant for the current context.

This relationship has resulted in the U.S. running huge trade deficits with China. That is, importing much more from the country than it exports to it. U.S. President Donald Trump has for long spoken about his concerns with vast trade deficits; it is primarily why he insisted on levying tariffs on U.S. trade partners during his second term.

However, China began facing such actions during Mr. Trump's first term itself. In 2018, the U.S. imposed tariffs ranging from 7.5% to 100% on goods from China such as electric vehicles, semiconductors, and medical products under Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974, for unfair trade and tech practices. As per the White

The U.S. has alleged that more than 40 countries ore regions are importing Chinese goods, modifying them, and exporting them to the U.S. at tariffs below what they would have faced had they directly been exported from China

House report, this resulted in a shrinking of the U.S.'s trade deficit with China in 2019 and 2020.

On July 24, 2026, the U.S. added a further 12.5% tariff for gaps in forced-labour compliance and the lack of comprehensive legal import prohibitions.

According to the report, since 2018, Chinese exporters have increasingly been routing goods through third countries to evade tariffs. "Products that previously moved directly from China to the United States were shipped through jurisdictions where limited assembly, finishing, repackaging, relabeling, or documentation changes could create the appearance of a different national origin," the report stated.

What is India's involvement?

The White House has identified more than 40 countries associated with "elevated illegal transshipment risk", with India among the top "enablers" of China's evasion of tariffs. The other countries/regions named as the top enablers are Mexico, Canada, the European Union, Japan, and South Korea.

The U.S. has alleged that these countries are importing Chinese goods, modifying them marginally, and exporting them to the U.S. at tariffs below what these goods would have faced had they directly been exported from China. This, the report said, has led to significant revenue loss for the U.S. government.

"The Office of Trade and Economic Analysis estimates that approximately \$67 billion in U.S.-bound goods were transshipped from China through the top hubs – Mexico, India, and Vietnam – in 2025, producing an estimated \$28 billion in lost tariff revenue," the report said.

As an example, the report mentioned the Pune-Gujarat-Chennai production belt, saying that the region "absorbs" pumps and compressors from China, thereby affecting industrial supply chains in Cincinnati, Dayton, and Columbus in the U.S.

What does this mean for the U.S.?

Broadly, the report's findings suggest that the U.S.'s tariff policy has failed to reduce U.S. imports and increase domestic production. While U.S. imports from China fell from \$525.8 billion in 2017 to \$327.5 billion in 2025, total U.S. imports from all countries rose sharply from \$2.41 trillion to \$3.50 trillion. In short, the U.S. replaced many Chinese finished goods with imports from other countries rather than with domestically produced goods.

As Ajay Srivastava, founder of the think tank

Global Trade Research Initiative, said, "Mr. Trump's tariffs changed the source of imports but failed to reduce America's overall dependence on imported goods".

What are the implications for India?

This is yet another way that the U.S. is finding fault with India's trade policies. During his first term, Mr. Trump found fault with India's tariffs on luxury motorcycles, after which India reduced them.

Last year, he blamed India for financing Russia's war with Ukraine by importing Russian oil; his government hiked tariffs on imports from India to 50% as a penalty.

More recently, the U.S. Senate passed a Bill with Mr. Trump's backing that would result in tariffs of up to 100% being levied on India for its Russian oil imports. The Bill is waiting to be introduced and passed in the House of Representatives.

Apart from this, the U.S. has also imposed a 10% tariff on imports from India as a penalty for not doing enough to curb the import of goods made using forced labour. Another investigation on excess capacity is ongoing, which could potentially see tariffs being hiked even further.

The latest allegations that India is helping China evade tariffs are not accompanied by penal actions yet, but that possibility remains. Mr. Trump could decide to impose further tariffs on countries he deems are helping China in this regard.

How could India's economy be impacted?

For India, any penal action would be a blow to its growth story. Over the last few years, rather than predominantly importing Chinese finished goods, India has been importing raw materials and intermediate goods, using them to manufacture finished goods within the country, and then exporting them.

For example, electronic components made up 3.3% of India's imports from China in the first quarter of 2015-16. This has grown to nearly 13% as of the first quarter of 2026-27. Several other goods used in manufacturing in India, such as electric machinery, chemicals, plastics, have seen their shares rise over the same period.

On the other hand, the share of finished goods such as telecom instruments have fallen from about 18% to 11% over the same period of time. Similarly, the share of manufactured fertilizers have fallen from about 7.5% in 2015 to less than 1% in 2026. The share of consumer electronics in imports from China have halved over the same period.

The 'Make in India, For the World' story still relies heavily on inputs from China. If India is forced to curb those imports, its manufacturing costs will rise, making Indian products less competitive globally.



U.S. President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping during a state dinner at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, AP

What did Trump say about India's voting system?(THE HINDU PAGE NO 8)

- Syllabus
 - GS Paper II Comparison of the Indian constitutional scheme with that of other countries Representation of Peoples Act and Election Commission of India
- Syllabus Sub topics
 - US versus India electoral systems voter ID laws Special Intensive Revision and institutional mandate of the ECI
- Key Themes
 - **Comparative Electoral Systems** Differences in voter registration identification requirements and the federal versus centralized administration of elections between the US and India
 - **Electoral Roll Integrity** The debate over the Special Intensive Revision process in India balancing the purification of electoral rolls with ensuring voter inclusion

What did Trump say about India’s voting system?

Why is the President pushing for stricter voter ID rules in the U.S.? How are elections conducted in the U.S. and how are they different from those in India? What is the SAVE America Act? What do Americans think about the requirement of a photo ID?

Srinivasan Ramani

The story so far:

U.S. President Donald Trump posted on his social media platform, Truth Social, that India’s Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar had asked his administration how elections are held in the U.S. without a valid photo identity card. He also pointed out that just 1% of India’s 64.64 crore electors who voted in the last general elections voted by mail (unlike the large number who do so in the U.S.) Mr. Trump reiterated his demand that Congress pass the Safeguard American Voter Eligibility (SAVE America) Act, which would require documentary proof of citizenship to register to vote in federal elections and a photo ID to cast a ballot, among other restrictions.

How are elections conducted in the U.S. and how do they differ from elections in India?

Article I, Section 4 of the U.S. Constitution (the Elections Clause) empowers the State legislatures to determine the “times, places, and manner” of federal elections even as it allows Congress to alter or make such regulations. There is no national election authority like the Election Commission of India. There is the Federal Election Commission, but it is only empowered to regulate campaign finance as registration, balloting, and counting are done by

The Bipartisan Policy Center in the U.S. estimates that over 20 million eligible American citizens do not have ready access to a passport or a birth certificate. Newly registering young adults have also faced problems producing these documents

the States’ county and municipal jurisdictions. This is due to the strongly federal nature of the U.S., unlike India’s quasi-federal system.

The U.S. Congress also passed the National Voter Registration Act, 1993, which required States to offer voter registration at motor vehicle and public assistance offices, and the Help America Vote Act, 2002, which provided funding for States to buy new voting machines and called for State-wide elector databases.

Voter eligibility in the U.S. is therefore a State concern, and registration is elector-initiated. While documentary proof of citizenship is not demanded, a potential elector has to affirm citizenship under penalty of perjury on the registration form. Thirty-six States ask for some form of identification at the polling place and 23 ask for a photo ID.

This is unlike India, where electoral rolls are compiled in each State via house-to-house enumeration conducted by the ECI, which has superintendence over the whole process of registration. Eligible electors are then issued the Electoral Photo Identity Card (EPIC), though other documents, including Aadhaar, can be used as identification at the booth as well.

Is non-citizen voting a real problem in the U.S. as Mr. Trump has made it out to be?

Independent studies have found that almost all non-citizen registrations in the U.S. are accidental and only a small proportion of them votes. The Trump administration’s claims have not survived scrutiny. The New York Times reported that after announcing in July that it had identified 2,78,000 non-citizens on the rolls of four States, including 15,903 in Nevada, the Department of Homeland Security told Nevada’s election administrators this month that it had identified just 185 potential non-citizens so far. It described the earlier figure as a “ceiling” and shared a list without names.

Surveys show that a large majority of the electorate supports the requirement of photo identification at the polls. Yet, even this is short of the more onerous requirement of proving citizenship at the point of registration, which is what the SAVE America Act requires.

What is the SAVE America Act, and why is it opposed by Democrats and others?

The SAVE America Act was passed by the U.S.

House of Representatives in February along party lines, with Republicans outnumbering Democrats. It requires every new registering elector or an existing elector who wants to update his/her record to produce a passport, or a birth certificate, or naturalisation papers along with a government photo ID. Mail-in voters – a widely used option in the U.S. – have to enclose a copy of their photo ID. States will then run names on electoral rolls through the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the latter could flag non-citizens for removal. Election officials who register people who lack the documents can face up to five years in prison.

The Bipartisan Policy Center in the U.S. estimates that over 20 million eligible American citizens do not have ready access to a passport or a birth certificate. Newly registering young adults have also faced problems producing these documents. These concerns have led the Democratic Party to oppose the SAVE America Act, which has stalled in the Senate.

Is India’s Special Intensive Revision (SIR) process delivering the “pure” rolls that the ECI promises?

The SIR, launched by the ECI to “purify” the electoral rolls, uses a peculiar methodology in which electors must self-enumerate on forms distributed door-to-door by the ECI before being included in the draft roll. After scrutiny by election officials, who will compare the forms with the previous SIR conducted more than two decades ago in the States, the draft rolls will be updated (the corrections and clarifications phase) before new SIR rolls are released.

The three phases of the SIR conducted by the ECI have been beset by anomalies in each State. By phase 2 of the SIR, for instance, more than 7 crore names were deleted during the process. The issues with the SIR are reflected in the drastic fall in gender ratio in the new rolls across most States. In West Bengal, in particular, an analysis published in The Hindu showed that there has been a religious skew in the deletions as well, which mattered in the way the election results panned out in the State. Despite these infirmities and anomalies, the Supreme Court held that the exercise was well within the ECI’s statutory mandate.

The SIR in India has shifted the onus of verifying voter eligibility onto electors, unlike the earlier process in which election officials prepared the rolls by identifying and enrolling eligible citizens through house-to-house surveys. Opponents of the SAVE America Act have raised a similar concern about the Trump administration-backed legislation.



Attendees hold signs advocating for voting rights and against the SAVE America Act at a rally outside the U.S. Capitol in March in Washington, DC. AFP

Indian rock yields oldest directly dated traces of microbial life(THE HINDU PAGE NO 10)

- Syllabus
 - GS Paper I Salient features of world physical geography
 - GS Paper III Science and Technology developments and their applications
- Syllabus Sub topics
 - Geological time scale origin of life Singhbhum Craton radiometric dating and biosignatures
- Key Themes
 - **Geological History** The discovery of carbon biosignatures in a 3.5 billion year old rock in the Singhbhum Craton shedding light on the earliest microbial life
 - **Scientific Dating** The utilization of zircon crystals acting as natural clocks for radiometric dating to establish a precise timeline of early life on Earth

‘Indian rock yields oldest directly dated traces of microbial life’

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

Researchers say they have found “compelling evidence” from multiple sources that microbial life existed in what is now eastern India at least 3.5 billion years ago. Typically, these involve finding fossils or traces of organic chemicals but in this case they rely on converging chemical clues, according to a paper that appeared in the peer-reviewed *Proceedings of the*

National Academy of Sciences.

The source of discovery is a single carbon-bearing rock in the Singhbhum Craton, which is an ancient, stable block of continental crust in eastern India, spanning parts of Jharkhand and Odisha. It has long interested geologists because it holds some of the oldest rocks in India, recording crust that formed more than 4 billion years ago.

“To our knowledge,

(this) is the oldest directly dated rock with a confirmed biosignature,” say the authors, who include Trisrota Chaudhuri, of the Geological Survey of India, Kolkata, and Mark Harrison, of the Department of Earth, Planetary, and Space Sciences, University of California, Los Angeles.

The rock – a “black-and-white” banded chert from Bhitardari – pairs a firm age with several independent chemical and structural signs that its carbon

was made by living organisms. Chert is a hard, fine-grained rock made largely of silica that can preserve organic matter for billions of years, but cannot be dated directly. So the researchers extracted zircons – hardy crystals that act like natural clocks as they trap uranium that decays to lead at a known rate. Of eight zircons analysed, four indicated an age of 3,497 million years. Because those zircons appear to be volcanic ash that

settled as the chert formed, the team took that to be the rock’s age, too.

They then argued the carbon was biological. Its balance of carbon isotopes matches carbon captured by living cells. They also found the material was degraded organic matter rather than later inorganic contamination.

Scientists bother with such questions because the earth formed about 4.54 billion years ago, so a 3.5-billion-year-old trace of

life comes from only about a billion years after the planet’s birth and may open new hypotheses on evolution. If microbes were already established, life itself must have begun earlier still. That bears on whether life is a freak accident or something that emerges readily on habitable worlds.

Older claims exist, including graphite in 3.7- to 3.8-billion-year-old Greenland rocks, but several have been disputed.

Retractions alone do not protect India scientific record(THE HINDU PAGE NO 10)

- Syllabus
 - GS Paper III Science and Technology developments and their applications
 - GS Paper IV Ethics and Human Interface
- Syllabus Sub topics
 - Research integrity scientific misconduct institutional accountability and ethics in scientific publication
- Key Themes
 - **Research Integrity** The challenges posed by fraudulent research and the cascading effect where retracted papers continue to be cited by subsequent studies and AI models
 - **Institutional Accountability** The urgent need for dedicated research support offices better peer review mechanisms and proactive communication from journals to correct the scientific record

Retractions alone do not protect India's scientific record

Scholars agree that the way retractions happen at present raise thorny challenges to preserving the integrity of the scientific record; experts said when a retraction can be said to have achieved its purpose is itself 'very difficult' to say

Rohan Singh
LUCKNOW

Once a journal publishes a research paper, other researchers can keep citing that work and build on it to produce more research. Sometimes, this continues even after the journal has retracted the original paper because it contains a mistake or, as is increasingly the case, it was produced by fraudulent means.

So simply withdrawing a faulty paper does not correct the research record: the work based on it also needs to be checked and, if necessary, undone.

According to Sabuj Bhattacharyya, an expert on research ethics at the Institute for Stem-cell Science and Regenerative Medicine, Bengaluru, retractions have increased substantially over the last four decades. In 2025, his team analysed data on life-sciences papers retracted between 1981 and 2023 and found that the reasons for retraction included non-compliance with ethical standards, plagiarism, data-related concerns, and publication misconduct.

In a 2026 study, research scholar P.R. Devanath and associate professor Rupesh Kumar of Tumkur University, Karnataka, analysed more than 12,000 citations of papers funded by the Indian government and later retracted. They found that 30% of the citations had been incurred after a paper was retracted. They also identified a "cascading retraction effect" in which some

Vitiating record

The way retractions happen today frustrate the integrity of the scientific record

- Research retractions have increased significantly over the last few years thanks to higher publication volumes and scrutiny
- Withdrawing a faulty paper does not correct the record because subsequent studies may continue citing the original work
- Many researchers remain unaware of retractions because journals often fail to notify institutions and authors avoid discussion
- Experts said the scientific system should learn from retractions to improve data sharing and institutional accountability
- Artificial intelligence systems may also propagate retracted findings unless they are specifically updated to flag errors
- The scientific record may remain permanently uncorrected if no researchers bother to replicate and fix retracted studies

There is no foolproof way to ensure researchers are quickly informed when a paper is retracted.

retracted papers continued to be cited by studies that were themselves later retracted. Nearly 64% of those second-generation papers were also authored by the same groups.

Not all post-retraction citations necessarily endorsed the retracted findings, but many also did not acknowledge the paper's retracted status. Some retracted papers also continued to appear in patents. Dr. Devanath said one important reason is a lack of awareness, particularly among early-career researchers with limited training in responsible citation practices.

Retraction is part of how science corrects itself – but the correction often comes long after a paper has entered the scientific literature, according to Partha Pratim Majumder, former National Science

Engineering Research Board. By the time a study is withdrawn, other researchers may have built on its findings. He said there is no foolproof way to ensure researchers are quickly informed when a paper is retracted.

Bhaskar Mukherjee, professor and head, Department of Library and Information Science, Banaras Hindu University, also said retractions often receive little institutional attention in India. So journals rarely notify an author's institution while researchers themselves often avoid discussing retracted papers.

Gagandeep Kang, adjunct professor of microbiology at the Christian Medical College, Vellore, said better communication alone is not enough. The more important question is whether the scientific system learns from each

retraction. A reactive system, she says, removes a problem paper but does little to understand why it passed scientific scrutiny in the first place.

She added that a stronger research integrity system would identify whether the problem was fraud, an honest error or failure of replication – and use those lessons to make peer review, data-sharing practices, and institutional accountability better.

Mr. Devanath and Prof. Kumar also recommended dedicated research support offices, checks for retracted references during peer review, and regular training in responsible research practices.

That said, ever-stronger research practices may not resolve the problem. Achal Agrawal, founder of the independent research-integrity effort India Research Watch, said that as AI sys-

tems increasingly draw on published research, retracted studies may continue to influence AI-generated responses unless those models are also updated to flag retracted papers.

Scholars agree that the way retractions happen at present also raises thorny challenges to preserving the integrity of the scientific record.

In fact, Dr. Majumder said when a retraction can be said to have achieved its purpose is itself "very difficult" to determine. A retraction is meant to inform other scientists that the data and inferences reported in a study are incorrect. Because that information spreads slowly, he said he believes a retraction will have broadly achieved its purpose when about 90% of researchers in that field are aware of it, although complete awareness is impossible to ensure.

"When errors in science are inadvertent, the errors get corrected when the experiment is repeated by the scientist who committed the error or by another scientist. Thereafter, the erroneous results of the experiment do not influence scientific practice," Dr. Majumder said. That process, however, may never occur in every case. According to Dr. Majumder, no scientist may be willing to study the same problem addressed in a retracted paper and generate correct data and inferences. "Therefore," he added, "the scientific record may never be corrected."

(Rohan Singh is an independent science journalist in Lucknow)

About E20 Why choice pricing matter(INDIAN EXPRESS PAGE NO 10)

- **Syllabus**
 - GS Paper III Infrastructure Energy and Environmental Conservation
 - GS Paper II Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors
- **Syllabus Sub topics**
 - Ethanol Blended Petrol programme energy transition consumer behavior public policy and fossil fuel dependence
- **Key Themes**
 - **Policy Implementation Challenges** The disconnect where consumers face the cost of lower mileage from E20 fuel without seeing a tangible price benefit at the pump
 - **Consumer Choice and Incentives** The necessity of offering differential pricing and fuel choices to effectively encourage a behavioral shift away from pure fossil fuels

About E20: Why choice, pricing matter



OFF THE RECORD
BY P VAIDYANATHAN IYER

THE ETHANOL-petrol debate refuses to abate on the streets, and just like the Cockroach Janta Party's Jantar Mantar NEET protest, it is getting traction on Instagram, and other social media platforms. The government is finding it challenging to quell public disenchantment and turn opinion in favour of E20 (petrol blended with 20 per cent ethanol). There are reasons beyond politics why reasoned communication by the government is being disregarded by people, and there are possible solutions, which are being resisted by the government due to big implementation hurdles.

But some in the government have their ears to the ground, are filtering the noise, and picking the right signals. They are looking behind to see what could have been done to incentivise those who feel short-changed on mileage due to E20 rollout. And now, thinking ahead, if something is still possible to win them back. In India, Real Creator IAS Edition <https://whatsapp.com/channel/0029Van2VRb6RGJOKH6oBd0F>

they understand mileage and price are two key aspects that influence decision-making in lower and middle-income families.

All along, the NDA government has defended the blending programme and rightfully so, while simultaneously emphasising that it did not begin under the present government. Indeed, the pilot was launched during AB Vajpayee's government in 2001, and the E5 roll out across several states was attempted in 2006 under the UPA. But it gathered momentum after the present government assumed charge in 2014. Ethanol blending reached 10 per cent in 2021-22, and gradually rose to 19.2 per cent in 2024-25, and is now set at 20 per cent.

There is no doubt, ethanol blending has many advantages. It cuts fossil fuel use, produces lower carbon emissions, reduces dependence on imports, saves precious foreign exchange, and insulates the country from the vagaries of geopolitics that affect supplies. While this may be appreciated by those affected, they are not convinced how all this translates into benefits for them.

They don't get it, because as a government officer explains, the consumer is not seeing a tangible price benefit despite bearing the cost of a lower mileage. And this is because the consumer does not have a choice. For example, when petrol pumps started dispensing E5, could they have offered it alongside petrol? Consumers are not seeing a tangible price benefit despite bearing the cost of a lower mileage. This is because they do not have a choice today.

sumers then have a choice. They could be incentivised to transition to E5 by being charged lower than petrol for this blended fuel. Similarly, for E10, and now E20. Differential pricing becomes an incentive; consumers would make peace with a 3-5 per cent lower mileage because of a lower-priced E20 compared with E10.

This can be best explained by what the government did following changes in the income tax regime, points out another officer. A new tax regime with lower taxes but no major exemptions was introduced in April 2020. It was voluntary. As the new tax regime evolved over the years, the Finance Ministry continued to offer tax payers the option to file returns under the old tax regime. The old regime offers exemptions, but tax rates are high. It has been six years, and the two systems continue alongside. But almost 90 per cent of all individuals have shifted to the new tax regime.

To be fair, the government has tried to explain the advantages of E20 by comparing India's retail fuel prices with that of other countries in South Asia and Europe. The petrol price hike in India between June 2022 and June 2026 was in the lower single digits, at less than 6 per cent, whereas it was more than 15 per cent in European countries, and more than 20 per cent in South Asian countries.

Be that so, it is tough to make the Indian consumers believe the counterfactual. What did not happen, but could have Real Creator IAS Edition https://t.me/+2RvD_RGf9mljMzg1

happened, is a concept that does not stick easily. The fact that E20 was a reason why the government could keep petrol prices low despite the Indian crude oil basket averaging over \$100 a barrel is still lost on most consumers.

The transition from E10 to E20 happened in four years. Given the West Asia crisis, it is possible the government was worried about its impact on oil prices in the long term. It is possible prices could remain higher for longer. It has not played out that way, but uncertainty prevails in the region, and the motivation for transitioning to E20 could be many. When global crude oil is at \$70 a barrel or less, E20 is costlier to produce than pure petrol, according to government estimates. Ethanol becomes much cheaper at relatively high global crude oil prices of \$120-130 a barrel.

Clearly, for many reasons, moving away from fossil fuels is a long-term strategic imperative. Ethanol blended fuel is definitely an alternative, but requires behavioural changes among consumers. It is here that public policy gets interesting, and challenging. Offering consumers a choice of fuel and making them see a price advantage will make a difference. What can't be done about mileage, can choice and differential pricing cover for that?

The writer is Managing Editor, The Indian Express. Off the Record is a fortnightly column