

# Consider Aadhaar, EPIC, ration card as proof: SC

Hearing petitions against the special intensive revision of the voter list in Bihar, court says issue goes to very roots of democracy, and list of 11 documents for voter verification is not exhaustive

**Krishnadas Rajagopal**

NEW DELHI

**T**he Supreme Court on Thursday asked the Election Commission (EC) to consider Aadhaar, elector photo identity card (EPIC), and ration card as proof for voter registration in the ongoing special intensive revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls in Bihar.

The court referred to the EC's submission that its list of 11 documents for verification of voters was not "exhaustive". "Therefore, in our *prima facie* view, since the list [of documents] is not exhaustive, it would be in the interest of justice if the EC would also consider the following documents, Aadhaar, EPIC, issued by the EC itself, and ration card," the court dictated in its order.

## No stay

A Bench of Justices Sudhanshu Dhulia and Joymaya Bagchi allowed the SIR in Bihar to "go on". It did not pass any interim order of stay. The court listed the case for further hearing on July 28, prior to the publication of the draft electoral rolls in August.

The court said its judi-

## SIR in top court

The Supreme Court will take up for further hearing on **July 28** the case against the special intensive revision of the electoral rolls in Bihar



**1** What the court will focus on: **Election Commission's power to undertake the exercise;** the manner in which it is conducted; and the **chosen timing** just months ahead of the Assembly election

**2** Court finds the revision **nebulous** — neither 'summary' nor 'special' as defined under Section 21 of the Representation of the People Act, 1950

cial review of the SIR would focus on the EC's power to undertake the exercise, the manner in which it was conducted, and the chosen timing, which, it described as "very short". It noted that the revision in Bihar appeared nebulous — neither "summary" nor "special" as defined under Section 21 of the Representation of the People Act, 1950.

"This issue is very important. It goes to the very roots of our democracy. It is about the right to vote," Justice Dhulia observed.

The EC objected to Aadhaar, stating it was a document for identity verification and not proof of citizenship. Aadhaar, it said, was also issued to non-citizens who were ordinarily resident at a place.

"The Aadhaar Act clearly says it is not proof of citizenship. The EC cannot exalt the status of the Aadhaar," senior advocate Rakesh Dwivedi, appearing for the commission, submitted.

Justice Dhulia, however, remarked that Aadhaar was one of the primary

**3** Petitioners call it 'citizenship screening' of vulnerable groups under the guise of voter registration; Election Commission has no jurisdiction to ascertain citizenship

**Q** The Aadhaar Act clearly says it is not proof of citizenship. The EC cannot exalt the status of the Aadhaar. — **EC**

**Q** If I want a caste certificate, I show my Aadhaar. A document like Aadhaar, considered basic for getting other documents, is not part of the 11 documents? The entire exercise of SIR is about identity only.

**JUSTICE SUDHANSHU DHULIA**



identity documents, and the SIR was about establishing identity. "If I want a caste certificate, I show my Aadhaar. A document like Aadhaar, considered basic for getting other documents, is not part of the 11 documents? Caste certificate is one of the documents among the 11, but not Aadhaar? The entire exercise of SIR is about identity only. You want to know whether this person is A or B," he said.

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# Consider Aadhaar, EPIC, ration card as proof: SC

Justice Bagchi concurred, stating that none of the 11 documents listed in the EC's June 24 notification established citizenship. "They are all meant to prove your identity. Yet, you [EC] stridently oppose the inclusion of Aadhaar... You can do your work but do it in accordance with the mandate of law. The statute, Representation of the People Act, allows Aadhaar," he said, addressing the EC, also represented by senior advocate K.K. Venugopal.

Mr. Dwivedi urged the court to clarify that it would be at the Commission's "discretion" to accept Aadhaar, EPIC or ration cards. Justice Dhulia responded that the court's order was "clear".

Mr. Dwivedi said the revision was necessary, as the last intensive revision in Bihar was in 2003. He said 60% of enumerations – around 5.5 crore – had already been completed, with half uploaded on the EC's new digital platform, ECI Net. "For the first time, we have created ECI Net where the documents would be uploaded. This drive need not be repeated, except for adding names," he said.

## 'Citizenship screening'

The petitioners, represented by senior advocates Kapil Sibal, A.M. Singhvi, Gopal Sankaranarayanan, Shadan Farasat and Vrinda Grover, described the SIR as "citizenship screening" of vulnerable groups under the guise of voter registration. They argued that the EC had no jurisdiction to ascertain citizenship, which was the responsibility of the Union Home Ministry.

Citing a Bihar government survey, Mr. Sibal submitted that 87% of the population had Aadhaar, while only 14% had matriculation certificates and 2% had passports. "This means a substantial portion of the population risk disenfranchisement despite having an Aadhaar," he said.

Justice Bagchi raised questions about the strict deadlines of the SIR process. "You say within 30 days citizens have to do this and another 30 days they have to do that... The timing is very short... Why is SIR so election-focused," he asked.

Mr. Sankaranarayanan questioned why the SIR, meant to be implemented nationwide, began in Bihar ahead of the election later this year.



# Widen the net

**The ECI must heed Court's view on including more accessible documents**

**T**he Supreme Court of India's pointed observations on Thursday regarding Bihar's ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls are a crucial course correction for the Election Commission of India (ECI), which it must heed immediately. By urging the ECI to consider including the Aadhaar, the Elector Photo Identity Card, and the ration card among the acceptable documents for identity verification, the Court has acknowledged the critique of the SIR that the 11 documents listed for verification are a restrictive and unnecessary barrier to voter registration. The Court has nudged the ECI toward inclusivity in a way that could help resolve the core issues with the SIR. The Court rightly observed that "the entire exercise of SIR is about identity only", that none of the 11 documents currently listed are "telltale ones for citizenship", and that they are all meant to prove identity. It also rightly went on to question why Aadhaar, which is "considered basic for getting other documents", is excluded while dependent documents such as caste certificates are accepted, exposing the inconsistency in the ECI's position. The ECI's objection to Aadhaar as merely proving residence rather than citizenship reveals a misunderstanding of the practical realities of Bihar, besides legal precedents. For example, data show that while 87% of Bihar's population have an Aadhaar card, only 45%-50% are matriculates and close to just 2% have passports.

The Court's earlier judgments remain relevant too, having decisively rejected putting the "onus of proof of citizenship" on voters already enrolled in previous elections. This precedent contradicts the SIR's approach of treating every voter as a potential non-citizen unless proven otherwise and which risks significant disenfranchisement of electors despite their having valid identification. While not staying the SIR, the Court also listed the judicial review of the whole process, including its timing and nature, which "goes to the very roots of our democracy [and] is about the right to vote". The Court has reminded the ECI that its mandate, under Article 324, is to facilitate democratic participation, and not to create obstacles. There has been enough confusion on the ground following a more liberal reading of the ECI's SIR rules on document submission and verification by the Chief Electoral Officer, which was overruled by the Chief Election Commissioner. With its suggestion on expanding the list of verifiable documents, the Court has provided the ECI an opportunity to transform the SIR from a dangerously exclusionary exercise – one that could affect marginalised citizens – into a genuinely inclusive process.



# Indian team for U.S. again to negotiate trade deal further

## On the table

Indian negotiators are going to the U.S. for the third time in the past few months. A U.S. team visited India twice during this time

### What New Delhi wants:

- Clarity on several recent announcements from Washington, including a proposed 10% tariff on imports from BRICS countries

- Assurance on how a BRICS tariff will affect India and the deal that is being negotiated

- Negotiations for a “mini” trade deal and a wider bilateral investment treaty



A file photo of PM Narendra Modi with President Trump

### T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan

NEW DELHI

An Indian team of trade negotiators will soon be travelling to the U.S. once again, to seek clarity on several recent announcements from Washington, including a proposed 10% tariff on imports from BRICS countries, as well as to continue negotiations for a “mini” trade deal and a wider bilateral invest-

ment treaty.

According to sources and trade experts, the prospect of an added tax on all BRICS members – apart from the tariffs mentioned in U.S. President Donald Trump’s letters already sent to several BRICS countries – calls into question the sanctity of any trade deal with the U.S.

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# Indian team to seek clarity on U.S. tariffs

Mr. Trump first raised the spectre of a tariff on BRICS countries last Sunday, and then doubled down on it during a Cabinet briefing on Tuesday. “Anybody that’s in BRICS is getting a 10% charge pretty soon... If they’re a member of BRICS, they’re going to have to pay a 10% tariff.”

His announcement came a day after he sent letters to 14 countries reimposing higher tariffs on them effective from August 1. Then, on Wednesday, he sent similar letters to eight more countries. The recipients of these letters include three BRICS countries – Brazil, South Africa, and Indonesia. Mr. Trump’s threat of a BRICS tariff is, therefore, causing some confusion among Indian policymakers.

“More clarity has to come from the U.S. side,” an official told *The Hindu*. “They have already sent letters to some countries, and have entered into an agreement with China, and now are saying they will impose additional tariffs on BRICS countries. Do the tariffs in the letters include this 10% additional tariff or not? How will a BRICS tariff affect India and the current proposed deal that is being negotiated?”

Another government official confirmed to *The Hindu* that India plans to seek additional clarity on this. “We are engaged with the U.S. team virtually, and an Indian team will be heading to the U.S. soon,” the second official said.

This would be the third time that an Indian team of negotiators has travelled to the U.S. in the past few months to discuss the trade deal.

# Trump threatens 500% tariff on countries importing oil from Russia

**Rishi Ranjan Kala**

NEW DELHI

U.S. President Donald Trump has endorsed a Bill that proposes a 500% tariff on countries importing oil from Russia, a development that can disrupt India's crude oil supplies.

India's crude oil purchases from Russia has risen from less than 2% of total imports in 2022 to as high as 40% in a couple of years. In FY25, Russia accounted for 35% of India's total crude oil imports.

Responding to reports on further sanctions on Russian crude, Oil Minister Hardeep Singh Puri explained that Russian oil was never under global sanctions. Sensible decision-makers around the world were aware of the realities of global oil supply chains and how India was only helping global markets by buying discounted oil under a price cap from wherever it can.

"Russia is one of the largest crude producers with an output of over 9 million barrels/day. Imagine the chaos if this oil, amounting to about 10% of the global oil supply of around 97 million, vanishes from the market. It will force the world to reduce its consumption, and as consumers will be chasing reduced supplies, the prices would've spiralled to over \$120-130/barrel," the Minister said on X.

Any disruption of the Russia oil trade will not only jeopardise India's energy security but also lead to a higher import bill and possibly a higher current account deficit (CAD).

**India's oil purchases from Russia has risen from less than 2% of total imports in 2022 to as high as 40%**

About the proposed Bill, Trump told reporters during a Cabinet briefing on Tuesday: "I'm looking at it. It's an optional Bill. It's totally at my option. They pass it totally at my option and terminate it totally at my option, and I'm looking at it very strongly."

Mr. Trump's comments came even as last week, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said he had shared India's concerns with Republican Senator Lindsey Graham over the Bill – Sanctioning Russia Act of 2025. "I think our concerns and our interests in energy security have been made conversant to him," he had said in Washington, DC on July 2.

In April 2025, Senators Lindsey Graham (Republican-South Carolina) and Richard Blumenthal (Democrat-Connecticut) led 50 U.S. Senators - evenly divided by party affiliation - to introduce primary and secondary sanctions against Russia and actors supporting Russia's aggression in Ukraine.

These sanctions would be imposed if Russia refuses to engage in good faith negotiations for a lasting peace with Ukraine or initiates another effort, including military invasion, that undermines the sovereignty of Ukraine after peace is negotiated.

(The writer is with The Hindu businessline)



# Bangladesh tribunal indicts Hasina over deaths of protesters

**Associated Press**

DHAKA

A special tribunal indicted Bangladesh's ousted Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Thursday by accepting charges of crimes against humanity filed against her in connection with a mass uprising in which hundreds of students were killed last year.

A three-member panel, headed by Justice Golam Mortuza Mozumder, indicted Ms. Hasina, former Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan and former police chief Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun on five charges. Ms. Hasina and Mr. Khan are being tried in absentia. Ms. Hasina's Awami League party condemned the trial process and said the tribunal was a



Sheikh Hasina

“kangaroo” court.

Mr. Al-Mamun, who was arrested and appeared before the panel on Thursday, pleaded guilty and told the tribunal that he would make a statement in favour of the prosecution at a later stage.

Chief Prosecutor Mohammad Tajul Islam later told reporters that Mr. Al-Mamun appealed to the judges to be an “approver.”

Group flags rise in attacks against Dhaka minorities

**Kallol Bhattacharjee**

NEW DELHI

In the first half of 2025, Bangladesh witnessed 258 incidents of violence against the minority communities, the largest minority organisation of Bangladesh said on Thursday.

In a press conference in Dhaka, Bangladesh Hindu Bouddho Christian Oikyo Parishad said the interim government has not been able to stop violence against religious minority communities and that the inaction of the government has emboldened the miscreants carrying out these attacks. “Between August 4, 2024, and December 31, 2024, there were 2184 violent incidents targeting minority communities of Bangladesh,” it said.

# Fadnavis warns of 'urban Maoism', Bill to tackle 'extremist Left ideology' passed

Opposition calls some clauses vague,  
voices apprehension of law's misuse

**VALLABHOZARKAR**  
MUMBAI, JULY 10

THE STRINGENT Maharashtra Special Public Security Bill, which seeks "to provide for effective prevention of certain unlawful activities of Left Wing Extremist organizations or similar organizations and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto", was passed by the state Assembly Thursday via a voice vote amid Opposition concern over the definition and interpretation of some of the

terms and clauses in the Bill.

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, who tabled the Bill in the House and assured members that the Bill would not be misused against political protesters and activists, said Maoists had lost ground in the state and were "trying to brainwash the youth of urban areas and make them stand up against the democratic system". He warned of the rise of "urban Maoism" and said the Bill would "control them".

The Bill, which provides for punishment ranging from two

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## ● Maharashtra

to seven years in prison, defines 'unlawful activity' as "any action taken by an individual or organization whether by committing an act or by words either spoken or written or by sign or by visible representation or otherwise, (i) which constitute a danger or menace to public order, peace and tranquility; or (ii) which interferes or tends to interfere with maintenance of public order; or (iii) which interferes or tends to interfere with the administration of law or its established institutions and personnel" – the Bill defines four other actions that constitute 'unlawful activity'.

Maharashtra becomes the fifth state to pass such a Bill. It will now be tabled in the upper house for further deliberations.

Vinod Nikole, the lone CPI (M) MLA in the Assembly, opposed the Bill. "I am the only MLA from the Left party. Violent action should be curbed. There is MCOCA and UAPA. The CM has ended Naxalism in Gadchiroli, but I am opposing this Bill as it can be misused," Nikole said.

Several others including NCP SP's Rohit Pawar, Sena UBT's Bhaskar Jadhav and Varun Sardesai and Congress's

Vishwajeet Kadam voiced apprehension on some of the clauses of the Bill and what one of them felt was an extensive interpretation of the term 'Urban Naxal'. They also pointed out that not all suggestions of the joint select committee had been included in the revised Bill.

While Rohit Pawar, Sardesai and Kadam did not directly oppose the Bill, they expressed concern over the definition of some of the terms used in the Bill such as activism, Left wing extremism and unlawful activities.

Pawar and Sardesai said the terms are vague and clearer definitions should have been there in the Bill. "Not all suggestions have been included," Jadhav said. Congress MLA Nana Patole said,

"Despite 12,000 suggestions and objections, only three have been accepted."

Rohit Pawar raised apprehension on the misuse of these "vague" terms. "There is no clear definition of what is Left wing extremist ideology? There are doubts in the minds of the people. What is the need for a new law when there are existing laws? The definitions are vague and opaque," he said.

Addressing Opposition concerns, Fadnavis said the Bill was

not aimed at Left parties or those critical of the government.

"Some members have expressed apprehensions, but this Act is not against any Left wing political party. This is against those organisations which are inciting people to overthrow the Indian Constitution. This is for the internal security of the country. It is not against Left parties like CPI or CPI (M). We, in fact, respect them even though we have different ideologies. It is against those organisations whose motive is to demolish the established institutions of our country. They will face action," he said.

Fadnavis said the CPI (Maoist) was banned in 2009 during the rule of the UPA government. There was no question of the Act being against Left parties, he said.

Underlining the difference between dissent and extremism, Fadnavis said every citizen has the right to protest, and in case of violence, relevant provisions of the BNS would apply, not the new law.

He said the Bill targets organisations inspired by extreme Left ideologies which, over the years, have aimed to challenge constitutional governance through armed struggle.

"These groups reject democratic institutions and seek to replace them," he said, citing the ideology of CPI (Maoist).

He said armed Maoist activity had declined significantly in Maharashtra – down from four districts to two talukas – and would be eradicated soon.

Fadnavis, however, warned of the rise of "urban Maoism" where, he said, inactive cadres operate through what seem to pass off as civil organisations, furthering extremist agenda. He cited a 2014 response in Parliament, during the rule of the UPA government, that named several such organisations.

He also said the Centre had urged all states to enact preventive laws on the lines of Telangana and Odisha since UAPA provisions apply only in cases of active terror activity.

"Some of the organisations which are banned in other states where such an Act has been passed have their head offices in our state and they are running their activities. It is like Maharashtra has become a safe haven for these organisations. In the absence of the Act, we were unable to ban these organisations. Hence, this Act is important," he said.

# UK or France? Cabinet waits for DRDO on combat aircraft engine

## Engine tech a constraint, urgency for tie-up with Rolls-Royce, Safran

**AANCHAL MAGAZINE  
& ANIL SASI**

NEW DELHI, JULY 10

REALISING THE imperative to acquire expertise on engine technology, the government has decided to pursue this objective by pushing Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO) to join hands either with Britain's Rolls-Royce or France's Safran to co-develop aircraft engines in India.

"Engines are a constraining factor... a strategic decision has to be taken. Both Rolls-Royce and Safran are contenders for fifth-

generation Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft. A Cabinet note will be prepared from the DRDO side and circulated," an official told *The Indian Express*.

Both the companies have offered to collaborate with DRDO's Bengaluru-based Gas Turbine Research Establishment lab and provide full ToT and IPR, the government official said. A Cabinet note will be floated for this soon and the process has been initiated by the DRDO, the official said.

As India works to bolster its domestic defence manufacturing capacity, delays in engine supplies by GE to the Tejas

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# • UK or France? Cabinet waits for DRDO on combat aircraft engine

aircraft due to supply-side issues, have led to a realisation that engine technology is a big constraining factor for the Indian defence forces.

Amid efforts to develop aircraft engines indigenously, both Rolls-Royce and Safran have agreed to co-develop a new engine for AMCA, a twin-engine 5.5-generation stealth fighter.

This comes months after the Indian Navy issued a project sanction order for the design and development of a 6 MW-medium speed marine diesel engine with Kirloskar Oil Engines Ltd. The prototype diesel engine with indigenous content of over 50 per cent will be developed at a cost of Rs 270 crore with 70 per cent funding from the Centre.

The developed engines will be used for main propulsion and power generation on ships of the Indian Navy and the Indian Coast Guard. Most of the diesel engines of higher capacity were being imported from foreign equipment manufacturers so far.

"Very few Indian companies actually own engine technology. For aircraft, ships or even automobiles, we still don't entirely own the engine technology. The engines are getting designed abroad. The Kirloskar project (marine engines) will start the process of achieving self-reliance in marine engine development in the country. We are keen to do the same in aircraft engines," the official said.

The delays in delivery of the F404-IN20 engine by GE Aerospace to Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd for the Tejas Light Combat Aircraft Mk 1A fighter jet were attributed to problems faced by the American company in reviving its downstream supply chains, immediately after the Covid pandemic.

"The Tejas engine delays were caused by supply chain issues faced by the OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer GE Aerospace). There is a need to have greater control of the engine procurement. As was done in the case of marine engines

(with Kirloskar), the idea is to develop a local supply base for aircraft engines and we will do everything to develop an ecosystem here," the official said.

The RFI (request for information) has been issued by Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) and preliminary rounds of discussion with prospective players have been held.

The new engine for the AMCA, with a thrust class of 110-130 kN, is crucial for the aircraft's capabilities like supercruise and stealth optimisation. It is targeting a first flight by 2029-2030 and induction by 2035. Initial AMCA prototypes and the first production batch (Mk1) will use imported GE F414 engines. The more powerful locally-produced engines are being planned for the AMCA Mk2 variant.

Rolls-Royce's proposal involves developing a range of high-thrust turbofan engines for potential use in transport and civilian aircraft while Safran's

proposal entails a prototype derived from its Rafale fighter's M88 engine family. Safran, which has a base here, also proposes to leverage its offset obligations from the Rafale deal and potentially boost the indigenous Kaveri engine programme.

Alongside its AMCA push, the government is also examining proposals from Russia (Su-57) and the US (F-35) for procuring a batch of fifth generation aircraft as a short-term measure to meet the Indian Air Force's immediate needs, particularly in light of Pakistan procuring J-10C and newer fifth-gen fighters from China.

The problems with the American offer for the Lockheed Martin-built aircraft include invasive end-use monitoring clauses and interoperability issues with India's traditional French and Russian fleet that comprise Su-30MKIs, Rafales, Mirage 200s and the indigenous Tejas Mk1A.

There is also renewed focus on mid-air refuellers and Airborne Early Warning and Control Systems or AWACS, with RFIs being initiated by the Ministry of Defence for both these categories of equipment, officials said.

US HAS BLOCKED WTO FOR RESOLVING TRADE DISPUTES

# India gears up for trade policy review as EU chief calls for an alternate to WTO

RAVIDUTTA MISHRA  
NEW DELHI, JULY 10

AT A time when multilateralism is taking a back seat — with an ineffective UN Security Council and a dysfunctional dispute settlement body at the World Trade Organization (WTO) — India appears committed to key WTO processes and has begun preparations for its eighth trade policy review after five years.

The preparations in the Ministry of Commerce come at a time when the US has all but abandoned the forum for resolving trade disputes and is instead striking bilateral trade deals, which experts fear are often not WTO-compliant. This has significant risk for the rules-based system and for developing countries such as India, experts have warned.

While the US continues to block the appointment of judges to the WTO's Dispute Settlement Body (DSB), the European Union has called for wide-ranging reforms. European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen last week proposed to EU leaders the

## EU HAS CALLED FOR WIDE-RANGING REFORMS



Ursula von der Leyen,  
European Commission  
President

AP File

launch of a Europe-led initiative to establish structured trade cooperation with Asian countries — potentially pitching an alternative to the WTO.

The *Financial Times* reported earlier this week that von der Leyen suggested Brussels team up with the 11 other global economies of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) to form an institution to replace the WTO, which is struggling to contain

WHILE THE US continues to block the appointment of judges to the WTO's Dispute Settlement Body (DSB), the European Union has called for wide-ranging reforms

**EUROPEAN COMMISSION** chief Ursula von der Leyen last week proposed to EU leaders the launch of an initiative to establish trade cooperation with Asian countries

global trade tensions.

"Asian countries want to have structured cooperation with the EU, and the EU wants the same," von der Leyen said. "We can think about this as the beginning of re-designing the WTO...to show the world that free trade with a large number of countries is possible on a rules-based foundation."

This is of particular importance for India, as New Delhi has been filing several disputes against the US even while negotiating a bilateral trade agreement.

EXPLAINED

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8th trade  
policy review  
after five years

THE PREPARATIONS in the Ministry of Commerce for the eighth trade policy review after five years come at a time when the United States has all but abandoned the forum for resolving trade disputes and is instead striking bilateral trade deals.

## India revises retaliatory proposal against US

On Thursday, India revised its proposal to impose retaliatory duties under WTO norms against the US over American tariffs on steel and aluminium, in view of the Trump administration's further hike in duties.

The US first imposed 25 per cent tariffs on imports of aluminium, steel, and derivative articles on 12 March. On June 3, these tariffs were further raised to

50 per cent. "Without prejudice to its earlier notification to the Council for Trade in Goods and the Committee on Safeguards dated 12 May, India reserves its right to adjust the products and tariff rates. This request is made in response to the increase in the tariff rate by the US from 25 per cent ad valorem to 50 per cent," the WTO said in a communication on Wednesday.

The communication was circulated among WTO members at India's request.

It stated that the proposed suspension of concessions or other obligations could take the form of increased tariffs on selected products originating in the US. "The safeguard measures would affect \$7.6 billion worth of imports into the United States of the relevant products originating in India, on which the duty collection would be \$3.82 billion," it said.

Accordingly, India's proposed suspension of concessions would result in an equivalent amount of duty collected on products originating in the US. In the 12 May communication, the projected duty collection was stated as \$1.91 billion.



# Trump's 90-day pause ends with a whimper, iffy deadline; & a breather for India-US talks

ANIL SASI

NEW DELHI, JULY 10

AS THE 90-day "reciprocal tariff" deadline imposed by the Donald Trump administration came and went, three things are now clear: One, that the India trade deal could take more time, perhaps getting pushed back closer to the new August 1 deadline now.

Two, given that trade agreements are extremely complex documents that often take years to finalise, an extension of the deadline is actually a positive thing for India and some of the others who've not been served letters on social media. Three, President Trump is reported to have decided to delay the implementation of his reciprocal tariffs to August 1 after key advisers, including Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, told him he could get trade deals with more time, according to a *WSJ* story quoting people familiar with the matter. Evidently that seems to be the case.

Even this new cut-off date looks iffy, given that Trump vacillated while answering a query during Tuesday's cabinet briefing to effectively convey that even the August 1 deadline was "not a 100% firm". This walking back on this deadline is quite in tune with Trump's past record. Is there even a real deadline, as *Reuters* seemed to suggest in a report, or is this just a negotiating stance conjured up by the Trump administration to keep countries on tenterhooks? Could well be the case. Much of his trade policy has been like a jazz solo: just improvise while playing! And with a half-life of less than ten days, the fickleness in Trump's tariff policy is the only element of certainty in all of this madness.

## "90 deals in 90 days"

In April, Trump's trade adviser Peter Navarro had said that the administration would deliver "90



Donald Trump, President, United States

AP/PTI File

deals in 90 days," a number that was subsequently tempered by Bessent and Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick to about 12 trade deals. That too is an overestimation. Trump has so far reached three deals — with the UK, China, and Vietnam — but over Monday and Tuesday sent out new tariff rates for around two dozen countries. The letters are not deals, but more a threat. So the final tally is way short of the targets they've started out with. Those who've ended up receiving letters include allies such as Japan and South Korea, smaller developing nations including Bangladesh, Cambodia and Laos, most of ASEAN and Brazil, which is facing a 50 per cent tax on goods exports. Again, in Trumpian fashion, these tariffs were announced in letters that were shared on social media. According to Bessent, much of the focus of the administration in these 90 days has been on the 18 countries that are responsible for 95 per cent of America's trade deficit.

And as the 90-day pause expired Wednesday, it is clear that the Trump administration seems to be acknowledging that negotiating trade deals is time-consuming. Trade agreements typically take years to finalise, so an exten-

sion of the deadline now to August 1 came as no surprise. Navarro, on Monday outside the White House, blamed the dragged-out process on other countries for "dragging their heels." As a result, three months after Trump announced the so-called reciprocal tariffs on nearly every country in the world, threatening to dramatically hike tariff rates if trade negotiations were not successful, his administration is effectively come back with three deals and about two dozen letters that he's posted on social media, reiterating that he will slap more or less the same rates that he proposed in April if negotiations are not successful over the next couple of weeks. So, effectively, it's back to square one after ninety days for a majority of countries!

## Sanctity of deals

There are also question marks about the sanctity of any trade deal that this administration was to sign. A new BRICS tariff proposed on a whim, or fresh copper and pharma tariffs, high duties on strategic partners like Japan and South Korea or Trump now reneging on the terms of the USMCA deal that he himself signed with Canada and Mexico in his last term: they're all indicative of the fickleness of any agreement signed by this administration. The future of US trade deals and their perceived sanctity remains vastly uncertain, with potential implications for global economic stability and cooperation. Businesses across the world are left hanging, waiting for some semblance of certainty. Global supply chain experts say that it is both expensive and cumbersome for companies to switch manufacturing to different countries. Given the frequent changes in the policy, it is almost impossible for companies to strategise.

FULL REPORT ON  
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