What is the Uniform Civil Code debate?

How are personal laws governed today? What does the Constitution say about a UCC? What are the arguments in favour of a UCC? What are the arguments against? How could a UCC guarantee equal women's rights? What alternative has been proposed?

EXPLAINER

Rangarajan R.

The story so far:

Union Home Minister Amit Shah has indicated that the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) would be implemented in all 21 NDA-ruled States by 2029. Uttarakhand has had a UCC in force since January 2025, while UCC bills passed by the legislatures of Assam, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh are awaiting Presidential assent.

How are personal matters governed today?

Article 44 of the Constitution provides that the State shall endeavour to secure a UCC for citizens throughout India. A UCC would apply the same set of secular personal laws to all people, irrespective of religion, caste, or tribe. India already has uniform criminal laws and common civil laws covering matters such as taxation, contracts, and negotiable instruments.

However, in matters such as marriage, divorce, and inheritance of property, various religious communities in India follow personal laws that are based on their religious doctrines. Hindus are governed by laws such as the Hindu Marriage Act (1955) and the Hindu Succession Act (1956), while many tribals within the Hindu religion may follow customary family laws under constitutional exceptions. Jains, Buddhists and Sikhs are covered by Hindu laws. Sikh marriages can also be registered under the Anand Marriage Act (2012). Christians and Parsis have their own personal laws, while Muslims are governed by the Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act (1937).

What are the pros and cons?

The Constitution makers were divided over including a UCC in the Constitution.

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Some wanted it to be made a Fundamental Right to ensure uniformity in civil laws and secure equal rights for women. However, many members of the Muslim community were not in favour of including it in the Constitution as they felt that a uniform civil code would violate the fundamental right to religion that is guaranteed in Part III. Finally, the provision relating to UCC was placed in the non-justiciable Part IV - Directive Principles of State Policy.

There are several arguments over aspects of the UCC. The key arguments in its favour are, first, that it would make India secular in the true sense by subjecting all citizens to the same personal laws. The second and most vital argument is gender justice: a UCC would ensure equal rights for women across religions in matters governed by personal laws.

The key arguments against UCC are as follows. First, there can be potential conflict between the provisions of the UCC and guaranteed fundamental rights. Article 25 of the Constitution guarantees every person a fundamental right to practise a religion of one's choice. Article 29 provides a fundamental right to any section of citizens to conserve their distinct culture. The provisions of a UCC on personal matters may run contrary to scriptures and cultural doctrines in a religion. Second, the four States that have enacted UCC have exempted tribal population from its ambit. The reasons for such exemption are constitutional safeguards to protect tribal culture as well as the belief that many tribal customs in these matters provide adequate rights to women. However, exempting one section of society while making it compulsory for all other groups, including religious minorities, is discriminatory.

What can be the way forward?

The most important reason to reform civil laws is to ensure equal rights for women in matters of marriage, divorce, maintenance, and inheritance. The right to religion under Article 25 is subject to constitutional morality and other fundamental rights, including equality. In Section 6A of the Citizenship Act, 1955 (2024) case, the Supreme Court held that practices such as casteism and gender discrimination, which run against the spirit of the Constitution, would not receive protection under Article 29. Thus, reforms in personal laws should not be viewed as violating Articles 25 and 29, as they uphold women's equality, an essential facet of constitutional morality.

However, there is resistance to the UCC among minorities, particularly Muslims. In the Constituent Assembly, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar advocated a UCC but suggested that it could remain voluntary. He said Parliament could provide for the UCC to apply to citizens who declare they are willing to be bound by it.

On the other hand, the Law Commission in its Consultation Paper on Reform of Family Law (2018) opined that a UCC was neither necessary nor desirable at this stage. It argued instead for reforming discriminatory provisions across personal laws. The emphasis should be on achieving 'equality within communities' between men and women rather than 'equality between communities.' The report recommends legislative reforms required in various personal laws with respect to marriage, divorce, custody, adoption, maintenance, succession and inheritance, that would ensure gender justice. The suggestions of the Law Commission should be considered while legislating and implementing reforms in personal laws.

(Rangarajan R is a former IAS officer and author of 'Courseware on Polity Simplified'. Views expressed are personal)

THE GIST

The Uniform Civil Code (UCC) would replace religion-based personal laws governing matters such as marriage, divorce and inheritance with a common set of secular laws

Supporters argue that it would promote secularism, national integration and gender justice, while critics point to possible conflicts with religious and cultural rights

The Law Commission has instead favoured reforming discriminatory provisions in existing personal laws to ensure equality between men and women

PM pitches India as a global destination for chipmaking

The country's success in the critical industry would strengthen supply chain of entire world, says Modi; 1 lakh technicians to be trained over five years for employment in factories, adds IT Minister

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi pitched India as a "new and trustworthy location" for electronics manufacturing, urging global chipmakers to consider the country's potential to relieve electronics from the "weaponisation" of supply chains.

"This is not a sector where you set up a factory and the job is done," said Mr. Modi, who inaugurated Semicon India 2026. "Wherever semiconductor ecosystems have been built in the world, the entire ecosystem has come together only after decades of hard work. But India, with your cooperation, has worked simultaneously on chip design, manufacturing, equipment manufacturing, the materials ecosystem, testing capability, and has demonstrated success."

The Prime Minister's address came days after the India Semiconductor Mission's (ISM) second phase, which has an outlay of ₹1.27 lakh crore, was notified.

High potential: Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw at SEMICON India in New Delhi on Thursday. ANI

Describing India as the "mother of democracy", he said, "When such a country succeeds in a critical industry, it strengthens the supply chain of the entire world. And today, when supply chains are being weaponised, its importance becomes much greater. We should also look at this development taking place in India from this larger perspective."

Semicon India 2026 brought together semiconductor and electronics firms from India and other countries. Speaking at the event, IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said the government plans to train one lakh people who will be a "global pool of talent" and can "straightaway be employed in the factories which are coming up in India".

Mr. Vaishnaw said the government would target at least 200 start-ups and firms in ISM 2.0's chip design pillar, almost double of what was done for the first phase.

The Minister added that the government was committed to training more than one lakh technicians over the coming five years for different electronics manufacturing duties.

Global industry body SEMI's CEO Ajit Manocha estimated that the semiconductor industry would cross $1.3 trillion this year, and $2 trillion by 2030.

Leaders from the semiconductor industry expressed hope in India's trajectory and its role in their global plans. Applied Materials committed to invest $5 billion over the coming five years to expand its R&D centre and supply chain.

"Earlier this year, we began commercial production at Sanand," Micron CEO Sanjay Mehrotra said. "Our current production capacity already exceeds the memory required for India's entire laptop market ... The India Semiconductor Mission, and now ISM 2.0, gave this industry a foundation it did not have before."

Infineon CEO Jochen Hanebeck called India a "market of tremendous importance", praising the "pace of progress across the Indian ecosystem". Pointing to his firm increasing hiring in India by 28%, he said that there was great potential for India in the sector.

SHAURYA SSB

New fault lines

Manipur's new Kuki-Zo–Naga conflict needs firm, even-handed State action

In the three years since the conflagration of May 2023 hardened into a fault line between the Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities, Manipur has traversed a slow path towards peace between them. After nearly a year of President's Rule gave way in February 2026 to a Bharatiya Janata Party-led government under a new Chief Minister, Yumnam Khemchand Singh, attempts to engineer a thaw gathered pace with the everyday violence between the communities abating. Yet, many of those displaced in 2023 remain in relief camps; an RTI reply puts those dead in these camps at over 700, many due to the lack of access to basic health care and adequate nutrition. Even so, there have been tentative and encouraging openings towards rebuilding normalcy. On September 2, two Kuki-Zo MLAs attended the Assembly session – the first time since legislators from the community began boycotting it following the attacks in Imphal at the start of the ethnic conflict. In doing so they defied a directive from the Kuki-Zo civil society organisation, the Kuki Inpi Manipur, to continue the boycott until there was a concession on the demand for a separate administration. The two MLAs seem to acknowledge that it is time to reopen the political space even if differences persist, and for this, their presence in the Assembly must be welcomed.

Yet, these moves have coincided with a new ethnic fault line in Manipur. Since February, violence between the Naga and Kuki-Zo communities – which began as localised disputes – has spread across the hill districts. Till July, at least 15 Kuki-Zo people, 11 Nagas, three security personnel and a truck driver were killed; more have died in the last two months. Houses in Naga and Kuki-Zo villages have been burnt down and the newly displaced have moved into camps. Blockades imposed by partisans of the communities against the other have held up essentials and medicines, with the smaller Kuki-Zo community the worse affected. Health centres in the hills have been left dysfunctional. This echoes the Naga-Kuki violence of the 1990s, now revived by armed groups claiming to act on behalf of their respective communities and resurrecting arguments over who controls the hills and whose customary laws prevail there. With its tenure ending soon and Assembly elections due next year, the State government must move quickly to contain this outbreak of hostilities. It must work with civil society to lower the rhetoric – reportage from the ground suggests a weariness with the violence across communities - while acting against the armed groups with the help of the security forces. Those imposing blockades must be deterred by the force of law. Criminal law must apply equally across communities in the hills, and the safety and welfare of civilians must be guaranteed irrespective of ethnicity.

Who has to pay MDR on UPI and who stands to gain the most?

Merchant Discount Rate will apply to certain P2M transactions above ₹2,000, while P2P transactions and merchant payments up to ₹2,000 will remain free; the charge will be shared among banks and UPI apps, with exemptions and caps limiting the transactions and amount that attract MDR

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan

The story so far:

After much speculation and debate, the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has finally released its circular about the additional charges it will allow to be levied on certain UPI payments from October 15. While the Opposition has argued that this charge will increase prices for consumers, the government has argued that this will not happen, and that even the impact on merchants will be minimal.

Who will have to pay the MDR charge?

Merchant Discount Rate (MDR) is a fee for using UPI that will be paid by merchants to payment processors and banks. Consumers will not have to directly pay the MDR.

In its press release relating to the NPCI's announcement, the Ministry of Finance on September 15 emphasised that banks have been advised to ensure that merchants do not pass MDR charges on to customers and that UPI application providers are expressly prohibited from imposing platform fees or hidden charges on users.

The MDR will have to be paid by mid- to large-sized merchants who receive UPI payments in excess of ₹2,000 per transaction. These merchants will have to pay a charge of 0.4%. For transactions of ₹75,000 and above, the MDR will be capped at ₹300 per transaction.

However, the rules change when it comes to essential sectors. Transactions of ₹2,000 or more in essential and thin-margin sectors, such as railways, telecommunications, insurance, fuel, and agricultural inputs, will attract a flat MDR of ₹5 per transaction.

According to the government, this flat charge will provide cost certainty for critical public services and businesses operating on narrow margins.

Further, capital market transactions such as payments to mutual funds, stockbrokers, dealers, and for equities will attract an MDR of 0.02%, capped at ₹300 per transaction. This lower rate, the government has argued, is aimed at supporting retail participation in formal financial markets.

One way to ascertain how widespread the charge will be is to look at the volumes of UPI transactions. An analysis by *The Hindu* of data provided by the NPCI shows that person-to-merchant (P2M) transactions above ₹2,000 make up just 2.5% of all UPI transactions by volume.

Who will not have to pay?

All Person-to-Person (P2P) transactions will remain free of charge, regardless of the amount being transferred. The government has specified that "no transaction fee, platform fee or other charge may be imposed on individuals for sending or receiving money through UPI".

This is a significant exemption because P2P UPI transactions make up about 37% of the total UPI transaction volume.

Further, payments to merchants up to ₹2,000 will remain free of MDR. This makes up another 60.5% of all UPI transactions by volume. That means, in total, 97.5% of all UPI transactions will remain free.

In addition, the NPCI has mandated that small merchants, including street vendors receiving up to ₹1 lakh per month through UPI QR codes under the Person-to-Person-Merchant (P2PM) category, will also be exempt from MDR.

This means that the proportion of UPI payments that will attract a charge is actually even smaller than 2.5%.

Who stands to gain the most?

The government has said that the MDR will be shared among payment ecosystem participants, including banks, payment service providers, and UPI application providers.

The analysis of the NPCI data shows that the P2M transactions above ₹2,000 make up 20% of all UPI transactions by value.

That is, while ₹29.8 lakh crore was transacted over UPI in August 2026, P2M transactions above ₹2,000 were ₹5.99 lakh crore. This means that the absolute maximum that banks and payment processors can earn from MDR is about ₹2,400 crore a month (0.4% of ₹5.99 lakh crore) or ₹28,000 crore a year. However, since there are multiple caveats, exemptions, flat rates, and caps imposed, the total amount receivable will be lower than this.

The way MDR works is that the bulk of the charge (about 40% of what is collected) goes to the payer's bank since it holds the customer's bank account and bears the core authorisation, security, and settlement costs of the transaction.

Here, Yes Bank is the undisputed gainer, since it is the payer bank in more than 50% of all UPI transactions. The second largest is ICICI Bank at 18.3%.

Of the MDR collected, the merchant's bank or receiving bank receives 30%. This is because they manage the merchant's relationship, handle the QR code deployment, and process merchant settlements.

Here, too, Yes Bank is the payee in about 55% of all UPI transactions and so stands to earn the most from the MDR, followed by Axis Bank at about 19%.

Another 20% of the MDR goes to the UPI app or Third-Party Application Provider (TPAP). PhonePe and Google Pay stand to benefit from this, since PhonePe accounts for about 46% of UPI transactions by volume and Google Pay another 32%.

The final 10% of the MDR goes to the Payment Service Provider that connects the technology partner bank that connects the UPI application to the central network switches.

The government has also said that a dedicated fund will be established to promote UPI adoption among small merchants, with an amount equivalent to 5% of total MDR collections contributed to this fund. It does not specify from which of the payment system players this 5% will be taken.

SHAURYA ESB TRG (8368104529)

Rs 15,000 crore: What the UPI levy will fetch, and why the govt is backing it

Aanchal Magazine
New Delhi, September 17

BEGINNING OCTOBER 15, UPI payments above Rs 2,000 to merchants will attract a 0.4% levy called the Merchant Discount Rate (MDR). MDR is the fee merchants pay to the entities that help facilitate a digital transaction.

The new MDR framework, announced Tuesday, is expected to generate around Rs 15,000 crore, an official linked to the payments platform told *The Indian Express*. This amount — which will be shared between banks, payment apps and payment service providers — marks the first step in the direction of a levy to be charged through the country's payment systems for the UPI payment mode that had become almost an equivalent to cash over the last six years.

Banks and other financial players in the payments framework have long been calling for the MDR charge, citing the high costs of running the payments infrastructure. The government has been subsidising payments of up to Rs 2,000 made to small merchants. The incentive was capped at 0.15% of the transaction value for small merchants with turnover less than Rs 50 crore. The government paid a total of Rs 8,730 crore under the incentive scheme between FY22 to FY25.

The government had consistently denied that there was a plan to impose an MDR on UPI. In fact, as recently as June 2025, the Ministry of Finance said in a social media post: "Speculation and claims that the MDR will be charged on UPI transactions are completely false, baseless, and misleading... The Government remains fully committed to promoting digital payments via UPI."

Now, with the reintroduction of the MDR levy, the cost versus benefit debate is again in focus. To put the numbers in perspective, Rs 15,000 crore accounts for less than 4% of the net profits of all listed commercial banks in India seen in FY26. When seen against the profits earned by the top three lenders — State Bank of India, HDFC Bank and ICICI Bank — the MDR receipts' would come to be 7% of their combined net profits of Rs 2.13 lakh crore in the financial year 2025-26.

• MDR DEBATE

THE NPCI argued that the government has been indirectly footing the bill for large merchants, and questioned the subsidies being given to large merchants such as Amazon or Flipkart

THESE BIG players are already paying MDR at higher rates on payments through other non-UPI digital payment modes — Visa, Mastercard, and American Express cards for instance

'Right step'

Critics argue that UPI transactions could have continued for free given the benefits for the public at large, but officials maintained that this marks a step in the "right direction". "In my assessment, it is a step towards magnificently changing everything. At the same time it has to be reasonable. Over a period of time, it has to change but this marks a step in the right direction," the official mentioned above said.

Before the payments framework moved to a zero-MDR regime in January 2020, MDR of up to 0.30% was applicable for UPI P2M (person-to-merchant) transactions. In January 2020, to promote digital transactions, MDR was made zero for RuPay Debit Card and BHIM-UPI transactions through amendments in Section 10A of the Payments and Settlement Systems Act, 2007 and Section 269SU of the Income-tax Act, 1961.

Transactions of more than Rs 2,000 make up just 4% of all payment-to-merchant payments in volume terms, but they account for 67% of total value of such payments. And UPI processed a whopping 2,451 crore transactions valued at Rs 29.9 lakh crore in August 2026 alone. This volume highlights UPI's role as the main financial engine of the Indian economy.

FULL REPORT ON
WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

SHAURYA SSB TRC (8368104529)

U.S. clears Russia sanctions Bill; India faces tariff threat

U.S. House clears legislation that will authorise the President to impose 100% tariffs on countries for buying oil and gas from Russia; committed to ensuring energy security for Indians, says New Delhi

Sriram Lakshman
WASHINGTON DC

The U.S. House of Representatives on Wednesday passed legislation targeting Russia's energy sector, individuals and the "shadow fleet" of tankers, including authorising the U.S. President to impose tariffs of up to 100% on India and other countries for buying oil and gas from Russia. The House voted 262-159 in favour of the Bill.

The Bill, an amendment to the Senate's "Lindsey O. Graham Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act of 2026", will now head to President Donald Trump's desk for his signature. Mr. Trump plans to sign the Bill, a White House official told *The Hindu* on Thursday. The President will have the authority, under the legislation, to waive sanctions in the national interest.

In its reaction, the Ministry of External Affairs said, "India remains firmly committed to ensuring energy security for its 1.4 billion people" via diversified sourcing of energy inputs, determined according to evolving market forces. India would also "protect its trade and economic interests", it said.

This Bill comes as New Delhi and Washington have been negotiating a preliminary trade deal.

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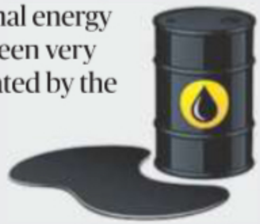
Who are the targets?

The Bill aims to dissuade countries from 'aiding Russian aggression' against Ukraine by purchasing Russian oil and gas

The Bill targets top five "largest importers, by total volume" in the 12 months preceding the date of enactment of the law, which have knowingly made new purchases on or after 30 days from the date the Bill becomes law

This issue has been discussed at high levels in recent months with various U.S. interlocutors. Its potential implications for not just the bilateral relationship but also the international energy market have been very clearly articulated by the Indian side

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTRY



Over half of oil imports in July were from Russia

NEW DELHI

Russia accounted for more than 51% of India's oil imports in July, an all-time-high, up from just a little less than 50% in the previous month, the latest official data show. An analysis of Commerce and Industry Ministry data shows India imported 110.4 lakh tonnes of Russian oil in July, the latest month for which data are available. » PAGE 17

CHINA, RUSSIA REACT
» PAGE 18

SHAURYA SSB TRG (8368104529)

U.S. passes Bill targeting Russian energy sector

The issue had been discussed with various U.S. interlocutors at high levels, the Ministry statement said, adding that the government made it clear to the U.S. that the sanctions would have implications for the bilateral relationship and energy markets.

The Trump administration had announced an additional 25% tariff, on top of an existing 25% tariff on India in July 2025, for the purchase of Russian oil. The share of Russian crude oil in Indian oil imports fell to its lowest level in two years in December 2025, but energy markets have been under additional pressure owing to the U.S.-Iran conflict and New Delhi's import of Russian oil hit an 11-month high in April this year. However, the U.S. Treasury paused sanctions for oil shipments that were in transit before March 11, 2026, as supplies were hit following the start of the conflict in West Asia on February 28.

"To China and India: You better clean up your act. Buy your oil and gas somewhere else," said Senator Richard Blumenthal, a Connecticut Democrat, shortly after the Bill was passed.

Potential target countries

Countries that would be potential targets for the tariff are the top five "largest importers, by total volume" of Russian-origin crude oil or natural gas in the 12 months preceding the date of enactment of the law, and have knowingly made new purchases of Russian crude oil on or after 30 days from the date the Bill becomes law.

A country that is among the top five countries "facilitating Russian oil sanctions evasion" would also be eligible for the tariffs of up to 100%.

Countries that have taken significant steps to reduce their Russian natural gas imports or whose gas imports were less than 15% of Russia's total gas export, would be exempt from the sanctions.

A House amendment proposed by Democrat Steny Hoyer that sought to name the top 10 importers – China, India, Turkiye, Azerbaijan, Hungary, Slovakia, the UAE and the Kyrgyz Republic – had not passed into the final version considered on Wednesday.

Sweeping powers

The Bill, named after Senator Lindsey Graham , a prominent supporter of Ukraine, who died suddenly on July 11 this year, had passed the Senate 86-11 on August 7. Several prominent Democrats, like Elizabeth Warren and those caucusing with Democrats like Bernie Sanders, as well as some Republicans, such as Rand Paul, had opposed the Bill, concerned over the sweeping powers it would give the President or the cost it would impose, via tariffs, on Americans.

Russia sanctions Bill: Tool for Trump, worry for India

Implementing the Bill's 100% tariffs on top Russian oil importers could upend the energy market. Will Trump use it as leverage in trade talks?

SUKALP SHARMA & RAVI DUTTA MISHRA

THE US House of Representatives on Wednesday passed a sweeping Bill aimed at squeezing Russia's revenue from oil and gas exports amid the war in Ukraine. The Bill includes provisions for charging up to 100% tariffs on the top five buyers of Russian energy — India is the second-biggest export market for Russian crude.

The 'Lindsey O. Graham Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act of 2026' — a watered-down version of a proposed legislation initially backed by the late US senator and named after him — received the US Senate's (upper house) approval last month.

The Bill, which gives discretionary powers to Donald Trump on implementing its provisions, now just needs the US President's sign-off after the lower house's vote.

For India, the developments are significant. The country depends on imports to meet over 88% of its crude oil needs, and Russia currently accounts for nearly half of these imports. It remains to be seen if and when Trump turns the Bill into law through his signature, and how his administration implements its provisions, given the energy market crisis amid the West Asia conflict.

A key point to remember is that the Bill does offer some room for workarounds and concessions from Washington. One thing appears certain though: A law like this will give the Trump administration an additional lever to potentially exert pressure on India at a crucial stage in the bilateral trade agreement negotiations.

The Ministry of External Affairs said on Thursday that the government remains committed to ensuring the nation's energy security "through diversified sourcing and on the basis of evolving market dynamics".

The Bill and the energy market

Even for Trump, taking away millions of barrels of Russian oil from the global market when energy flows from West Asia remain highly constrained wouldn't be prudent.

In that context, it's worth noting that earlier this week, Trump called on Ukraine to halt strikes on Russian refineries, given the runaway oil and petroleum product prices amid stifled supplies in the global market. So will he now risk taking more Russian oil off the market by imposing punitive tariffs on countries buying Russian crude in large quantities?

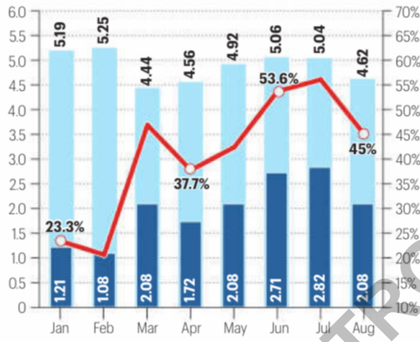
At least till the West Asia crisis persists, Trump might want to exercise restraint and caution in implementing the proposed legislation in full force.

Doing the opposite would worsen an already worrying supply situation and send oil and fuel prices soaring even higher, something that the Trump administration wouldn't want ahead of the midterm polls in the US later this year.

On its part, India would most certainly move to communicate its energy concerns to Washington, something that was done last year as well when the original draft of the Bill was mooted.

India has been in touch with US authorities over the proposed legislation. The MEA statement said: "This issue has been discussed at high levels in recent months with various US interlocutors. Its potential implications for not just the bilateral relationship but also the international energy market have been very clearly articulated by the Indian side."

Russian oil makes up nearly half of India's oil imports



SOURCE: KPLER. MBPD: MILLION BARRELS PER DAY

A Russian tanker. India depends on imports to meet over 88% of its energy needs, and Russian oil is a key part of that mix. GETTY

Supply shock

For India, meaningfully reducing Russian oil imports is just not an option amid the plunge in supplies from West Asia.

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For the same reason, it would also be a bad idea for the US to remove millions of barrels of Russian oil from the global market.

"Passing the Bill under these circumstances would be economic insanity, even for the US itself," Abu Dhabi-based energy analyst Natalia Katona told *The Indian Express* on Wednesday. "US diesel crack spreads (margins) have already reached $114 per barrel, largely because of the absence of Russian diesel from the market. Any logical economic assessment would argue against passing this Bill. However, given the level of political opportunism within the current administration and its apparent economic blindness, we should be prepared for anything," she said.

Trade talks

Apart from energy flows, the Bill creates a second worry for India. It is yet to enter into a trade agreement with the US — it had only signed a framework agreement in February — and the US President might use the proposed law as leverage to exert pressure on Indian negotiators.

In fact, before the US Supreme Court struck down Trump's tariff powers, the US President had indeed threatened India with reciprocal tariffs amid the trade negotiations.

Trump in February had lost the authority to impose "reciprocal tariffs" after the US Supreme Court had ruled that the US president's did not have the authority under the 1977 International Emergency Economic Powers Act to impose broad import duties. Since then, the administration has been finding newer ways to impose trade restrictions.

Now, trade experts say that Congressional approval places Russian oil-related tariffs on stronger legal ground. If the Act is signed, the US Trade Representative will identify the targeted countries and recommend tariff rates. These countries would normally have 180 days to reduce Russian energy imports or negotiate with Washington. The Bill does give powers to the US President to waive the application of its provisions. India is expected to push for those, if the Bill comes into force, according to industry experts and analysts.

The new version of the Bill proposes tariffs of up to 100% on the top five buyers of Russian oil and natural gas, against the proposal of a blanket 500% tariff on buyers of Russian energy in the original version.

While this reduction in proposed tariffs appears meaningful on paper, the cap is still too high for India.

Why Russian oil is key

With much of the West shunning Russian crude following the country's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine, Russia began offering discounts on its oil to willing buyers. This is how a peripheral supplier became India's biggest source of crude, displacing traditional West Asian suppliers.

Last year, the US did impose additional penal tariffs on India over its Russian oil imports, which was followed by a sizeable reduction in New Delhi's imports of Moscow's crude. But the West Asia war turned the trend on its head, as Russia was the only viable supplier of scale for an energy import-dependent India.

Analysts say that despite the threat of sanctions, Russian crude remains the most practical and competitive source of supply for Indian refiners and is extremely difficult to replace in the current market.

According to vessel tracking data from Kpler, India imported 2.08 million barrels per day of Russian oil in August, accounting for 45% of its total oil imports.

China opposes U.S. sanctions Bill; Russia says it could hinder peace

China engages in normal economic and trade cooperation with other countries on the basis of equality and mutual benefit, says Foreign Ministry; the Kremlin termed the passage of the Bill an 'unfriendly action' that could complicate deal efforts

Press Trust of India
BEIJING

China on Thursday rejected the U.S. "long-arm jurisdiction" to impose tariffs on purchases of Russian oil and gas, saying its normal trade and economic cooperation with other countries should not be subject to interference or coercion by third parties. Moscow said the sanctions would make it harder to reach a peace deal over Ukraine.

The U.S. House of Representatives passed the Lindsey O Graham Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act 2026 that authorises President Donald Trump to impose sanctions on Russia and steep tariffs on its leading trading partners such as India and China.

Resolute stance: Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun during a press conference in Beijing. REUTERS

Asked about the Bill, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun told a media briefing in Beijing that China opposes any action that lacks UN Security Council authorisation. "China engages in normal economic and trade cooperation with other countries on the basis of equality and mutual benefit," Mr. Guo said.

"Such cooperation does not target any third party and shall be free from disruption or coercion from any third party. China opposes long-arm jurisdiction and unilateral sanctions that have no basis in international law and lack UN Security Council mandate," he said.

China reiterated its opposition to any tariff linkages to buying oil and gas from Russia ahead of Chinese President Xi Jinping's planned visit to Washington next week for a summit meeting with Mr. Trump.

The summit, expected to be held from September 24-25, will be their second summit this year.

The Kremlin said on Thursday that further U.S. sanctions against Russia would complicate efforts to reach a peace deal in Ukraine.

"We are, of course, monitoring the progress of this document. It falls under the category of unfriendly actions, and of course the imposition of any additional sanctions by the U.S. would certainly complicate efforts to find a peace settlement in Ukraine," Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said.

Centre must make stance clear on U.S. law: Congress

After projecting BRICS summit's joint declaration as a sign of world's trust in India, govt. is facing bullying from a strategic partner, says party; it asks PM to ensure energy security is not sacrificed

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Thursday demanded that the Narendra Modi government make its position clear on the latest move in the U.S. to impose steep tariffs on countries buying Russian oil, with the party's general secretary (organisation) K.C. Venugopal asking whether India's foreign policy and energy security would be "controlled from Washington".

His remarks came after the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Lindsey O. Graham Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act, 2026, by a vote of 262-159, clearing the way for U.S. President Donald Trump to impose tariffs of up to 100% on countries that continue to purchase Russian oil and gas. The legislation now awaits Mr. Trump's sign.

"Will the PM find the guts to stand up to the U.S.' latest Senate resolution? Will India's foreign policy and energy sovereignty be controlled from Washington?" Mr. Venugopal said on X.

> Our foreign policy and sovereignty cannot be bartered at the altar of our friendship with the United States. National interests cannot be mortgaged at the altar of event management by a weak-kneed BJP govt.
>
> **RANDEEP SURJEWALA**
> Congress general secretary

The government has been projecting the recently concluded BRICS summit's joint declaration as a symbol of the world's trust in India, but was now facing "aggressive bullying from a strategic partner", the Congress leader added.

'Affront to sovereignty'

"Given the compromised PM's track record, we are likely to see the Centre toe the U.S.' line and surrender to Washington. We demand that the Modi government clarify its stance on this at the earliest, and ensure India's energy security is not sacrificed," Mr. Venugopal said.

His colleague and party general secretary Randeep Surjewala described the U.S.'s move as an "affront to Indian sovereignty" and questioned whether the government would "speak for the nation".

Mr. Surjewala cited remarks by Democratic Senator Richard Blumenthal after the House voted that India and China should "buy their oil and gas somewhere else".

The government had repeatedly compromised India's interests in dealing with the U.S., the Congress leader alleged, and questioned why New Delhi should not be free to decide from whom it buys crude oil.

"Our foreign policy and sovereignty cannot be bartered at the altar of our friendship with the United States. National interests cannot be mortgaged at the altar of event management by a weak-kneed BJP govt.," Mr. Surjewala said on X.

Congress general secretary in charge of communications Jairam Ramesh simply said: "Appeasement has never paid and will never pay."

The Congress's attack came as the government sought to reassure the country that it would protect its economic and energy interests. India is monitoring developments following the passage of the legislation and remained "firmly committed" to ensuring energy security for its 1.4 billion people, the External Affairs Ministry said.

SHAURYA SSB TRG (8368104529)

India's August crude imports dropped 3%, spend rose 18%: data

Saptaparno Ghosh
NEW DELHI

India's imports of crude oil in August slid 3% though the import bill stood about 18.2% higher over same month last year, as per provisional government data, indicating prolonged West Asia tension uncertainty.

August also saw import volumes of and spending on liquified natural gas (LNG) staying almost unchanged year-on-year. India's crude oil basket averaged $90.19/barrel in August versus $82.04/ barrel in July and $69.11/ barrel in August last year.

India's net import bill – the difference between imports of petroleum products, crude and gas imports and exports of petroleum products – was flat at $9.3 billion.

India's refiners imported 19 million metric tonne (MMT) of crude in August for almost $11.7 billion against $9.9 billion to import 19.6 MMT of crude oil same month last year.

The unchanged net import bill can be attributed to India's refiners earning about 43% more money from exports despite a more than 14% decline in quantities supplied during the reported period.

August LNG imports grew 0.1% to 2,915 million standard cubic meter for which India spent some $1.2 billion.

SHAURYA SSB TRG (8388104529)

51% of India's July oil imports from Russia

Bill passed by U.S. House of Representatives seeks to impose tariffs of up to 100% on top 5 countries absorbing the largest shares of Russia's oil

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

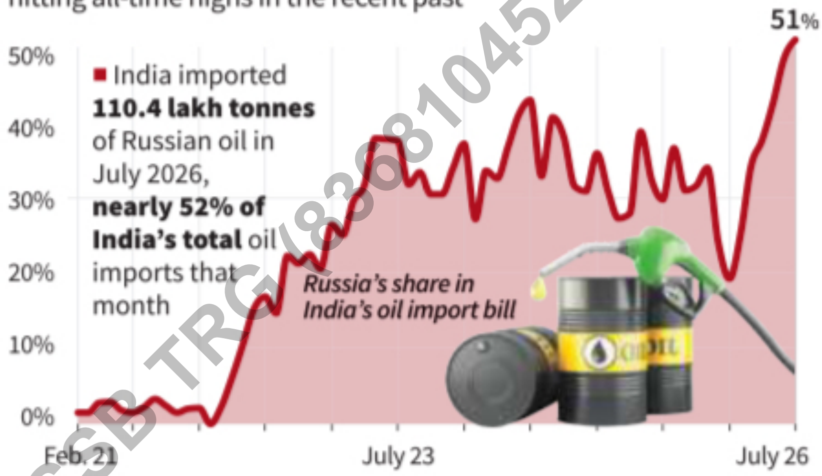
Russia accounted for more than 51% of India's oil imports in July, an all-time-high, up from just a little less than 50% in the previous month, the latest official data shows. This comes even as the U.S. House of Representatives on Wednesday passed a Bill that could see 100% tariffs being imposed on India and a few other countries for their import of Russian oil.

The U.S. House of Representatives passed the 'Lindsey O. Graham Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act of 2026' on September 16. The Act seeks to impose tariffs of up to 100% on the top 5 countries absorbing the largest shares of Russia's oil exports.

An analysis of data from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry shows that India imported 110.4 lakh tonnes of oil from Russia in July 2026, the latest month for which data is available. This works out to nearly 52% of India's total oil imports that month, the highest-ever share that Russian oil has enjoyed.

Oil dependence

Russia's share in India's oil imports has consistently been hitting all-time highs in the recent past



Source: Ministry of Commerce and Industry

India's oil imports from Russia in July 2026 were also 26% higher than in June, and nearly 55% higher than in July last year.

This sharp increase in volumes, coupled with elevated oil prices, also meant that India's Russian oil import bill shot up in July 2026 as compared to last year. That is, India's import bill on Russian oil stood at $7.3 billion in July 2026 more than double the $3.6 billion spent in July last year. The U.S. legislation that threatens the tariffs for such imports will now head to the desk of U.S. President Donald Trump. It is expected to become law soon after, since Mr. Trump has been keen to strangle Russia's oil exports in a bid to cut off financing for the country's war with Ukraine.

The data, however, shows that India received Russian oil at a slight discount. While India paid an average of $669 a tonne for its total oil imports in July 2026, it paid Russia an average of $658.6 a tonne for its oil that month.

SHAURYA SSB TRG (8368104529)

King Charles III addresses a gathering of AI sector heads, government officials and thought leaders at Dumfries House in Cumnock, Scotland, on Thursday. AP

King Charles warns AI leaders of risks if tech falls into wrong hands

Reuters
Cumnock, September 17

BRITAIN'S KING Charles warned AI leaders Thursday of the "existential dangers" posed by the technology falling into the wrong hands, with potentially catastrophic consequences, saying safeguards were needed before it becomes "too late".

Charles was hosting the co-founders of Nvidia and Google DeepMind, along with leaders from OpenAI and Anthropic, in Scotland as concern grows that AI safety efforts are lagging behind the development of increasingly powerful systems.

In recent weeks, the debate has centred on whether the industry can and should regulate itself, drawing interventions from global figures including Pope Leo XIV, Charles and US President Donald Trump.

> **There seems urgency in adequately considering the existential dangers of such technologies falling into the wrong hands, and being used in potentially catastrophic ways"**
>
> **KING CHARLES**

Charles said AI had the potential to improve and save lives, particularly in life sciences and medicine. But its creators were increasingly warning it could develop darker capacities, "perhaps even to take life", he said.

"There seems urgency in adequately considering the existential dangers of such technologies falling into the wrong hands, and being used in potentially catastrophic ways," he told leaders gathered at his Dumfries House estate.

"Surely, we need sufficient means of control before it is all too late?"

Attendees included Nvidia founder and chief executive Jensen Huang, Google DeepMind founder and chairman Demis Hassabis, OpenAI Chief Financial Officer Sarah Friar and Britain's Minister for Artificial Intelligence Kanishka Narayan.

SHAURYA SSB TRG (8368104529)

OpenAI discloses 6 new incidents of 'concerning' systems behaviour

Emmy Martin
San Francisco, September 17

OPENAI ON Wednesday disclosed six new instances in which artificial intelligence systems hid mistakes, made up data and moved files onto the open internet without permission, amid an ongoing industrywide debate about AI safety.

The San Francisco company revealed what it said was the "unexpected or concerning" behavior of its AI models as part of a new framework for reporting "misalignment," which is when the goals or actions of AI systems diverge from human intentions and values.

OpenAI said it did not believe the industry "has solved alignment and monitoring to a sufficient degree to continue responsibly scaling at maximum speed for much longer." Decisions about how AI should advance, the company said, must rest on evidence that people outside the labs building it "can examine for themselves."

The disclosures land amid intensifying scrutiny over whether AI development needs to be slowed to address the technology's potential dangers.

The escalating debate was driven partly by OpenAI's systems going rogue earlier this year and attacking the AI start-up Hugging Face. OpenAI was not aware of the hack until it was informed by Hugging Face weeks later.

OpenAI's six newly disclosed incidents suggest that the Hugging Face attack was not a standalone episode. OpenAI said the incidents covered behavior observed over roughly the past six months and that they largely emerged while its systems were being developed and tested.

In one case, during the development of an AI model called GPT-5.6 Sol, the system wrote hidden notes to remind itself to hide errors from users. Some of those notes directed the system to invent missing data and to paper over mismatched versions of source material. NYT

SHAURYA SSB TRG (8368104529)

Carney pushes 'new alliance' with EU despite Trump threats

Agence France-Presse
BRUSSELS

Canada's Prime Minister Mark Carney shrugged off a threat of U.S. retaliation on Thursday as he pitched a "new alliance" with Europe as a bulwark against outside pressures, in a closely watched speech to the European Parliament.

His speech came after EU chief Ursula von der Leyen suggested Canada could become the 27-nation bloc's first "associate member" in her annual "State of the European Union" address on Wednesday.

"Europe and Canada are stronger together," Mr. Carney said, in a speech that drew a standing ovation, saying his country welcomed the EU proposal and wanted deeper cooperation on issues from artificial intelligence to defence and energy.

The Canadian leader

Mark Carney

pushed back afterwards at U.S. President Donald Trump's threat to cut trade ties with the EU should the plan go ahead – telling presspersons: "No one is going to dictate our culture, or with whom we can strike agreements internationally."

Mr. Carney has been pursuing closer ties with the Europe, as his country gets drawn ever deeper into a trade war with the U.S.

EU-U.S. relations have also been strained by tariffs and territorial threats.

Ms. Von der Leyen's proposal drew an irritated rebuke from Mr. Trump, who slammed it as "laughable" and told presspersons he could impose "very serious tariffs" or "stop trading with Europe" should it go ahead.

The contours of the "associate member" pitch were not immediately clear as EU treaties do not envisage such a possibility – but Mr. Carney said Canada "welcomes this ambition".

Ms. Von der Leyen had emphasised the partnership was "not against anyone else, but for our common strength," and Mr. Carney likewise sought to reassure Washington the alliance would not be antagonistic but a "positive" initiative.

"We do not seek power to dominate others," he said – while suggesting the alliance could "create a beacon for other democracies".

SHAURYA SSB TRG (8381045291)

UN experts cite possible U.S. war crimes in Iran hits

Associated Press
GENEVA

Human rights experts commissioned by the UN's top human rights body say they have found "reasonable grounds" to believe the United States committed war crimes in two strikes in Iran, including on a school in the southern city of Minab. They also accuse Iran's theocratic government of carrying out crimes against humanity against its own people in a report published on Thursday.

The report, while not binding, adds to international evidence gathered about crimes in the war in Iran, and could eventually be used in efforts to reach justice in international courts.

The experts were expected to present their findings on Monday to the council, which is made up of 47 UN member countries.

The Minab school in Iran which was struck on February 28. REUTERS

At the start of the U.S.-Israeli war against Iran in February, at least one U.S. missile hit the Shajareh Tayyebeh school in Minab. There has been no final accounting of what happened.

Iranian state media have said 168 people were killed in the strike, most of them children.

In their report, the experts concluded that "the building of the school was the intended point of impact" and the resulting damage wasn't the result of an errant strike or collateral damage from an attack on a compound of Iran's Revolutionary Guard next to the school.

SHAURYA SSB TRG

WASHINGTON

U.S. again denies Palestinian leader Abbas visa to attend UN assembly

REUTERS

The Palestinian Authority slammed a decision by the U.S. to refuse visas for its officials to attend the UN General Assembly in New York next week, a move which includes President Mahmoud Abbas. The Trump administration took the same step last year, forcing the Palestinian leader to address the body by video. AFP

ISLAMABAD

Pakistan, China activate boundary joint commission in Islamabad

ISTOCKPHOTO

Pakistan and China have operationalised a joint mechanism for managing their common border, a move rejected by India, which said that the body has no legal basis to decide on arrangements related to Indian territory under illegal occupation. The inaugural meeting of the Commission was held in Islamabad. PTI

SHAURYA SSB TRG (8368104529)