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The Analyst

CURRENT AFFAIRS Handout

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CONTEXT: U.S. has announced steep tariffs on imports from China, Canada and Mexico. These can have serious implications for World Trade inc. India.

What is a Trade War?

- 'when **countries impose tariffs or other trade barriers on each other** to **protect domestic industries** or retaliate against **trade practices perceived as unfair**'

Trade Wars - But Why? - History

- Post 2nd WW - US - LIO
- Characterised by:
 - Free trade (WTO, GATT).
 - Multilateral cooperation (UN, IMF, World Bank).
 - Open markets & Globalization
 - RBO - International Governance
- Perceived Shift - Especially after GFC
- More prominently - Trump's Campaign - First Term

Reasons:

- **Shift in Global Leadership & Decline of US-led Multilateralism** - Indo-Pacific; Rise of China, BRICS; RCEP>TPP
- **Job Losses & Deindustrialization** - outsourcing; 'Detroit'; Immigrants - Skilled & Unskilled - fuelled resentment
- **Trade Deficit Concerns** - Imports>Exports; China - \$383 billion (2023)
- **National Security & Strategic Competition** - China - RE - IP Violations - AI, SCs, Battery Systems; Critical Minerals
- **COVID-19 & Supply Chain Disruptions** - exposed US reliance - "Reshoring"

Key Protectionist Measures taken by US

- Tariffs on China - Chinese steel, aluminum, and electronics - Huawei
- USMCA Agreement (Revised NAFTA) - auto manufacturing and labor stds.

- 'Buy American' Policies - esp. Govt. Procurement
- Inflation Reduction Act (2022) - U.S. green energy firms
- CHIPS & Science Act (2022) - Aimed for - 'tech decoupling'
- Tariffs on Canada's Lumber
- Tariffs on Mexican agricultural products

The story so far:

U.S. President Donald Trump has sought to deliver, in the early days of his second term in office, on his most vociferous campaign promise - to slap a range of the U.S.'s trading partners with significant tariffs in a bid to tamp down on undocumented migrant and illicit drug inflows, while presumably incentivising companies to favour creating jobs on U.S. soil. His administration's initial action in the space, to use executive orders to impose a 25% tariff on Canadian and Mexican goods and a 10% tax on energy products from Canada and a wide range of goods from China, roiled stock markets across the world, especially in Asia.

What followed the announcement?

As Beijing vowed to file a lawsuit with the World Trade Organization against the U.S. for "wrongful practice" and Ottawa and Mexico City announced plans for retaliatory tariffs, Mr. Trump appeared to back down from his position. Following discussions with Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum and Canadian officials, Mr. Trump said the White House had agreed to "pause" the tariff action for a month in the wake of Mexico committing 10,000 National



Trump's 'Trade Wars'



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Guard troops to man its northern border and a longer-term bilateral deal in the works. Similarly, a 30-day pause on tariff action would be applied to Canada given its Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's commitment to "work together" as his government sought to appoint "a fentanyl czar, list Mexican cartels as terrorist groups and launch a Canada-U.S. Joint Strike Force to combat organised crime, fentanyl and money laundering."

While the tariffs on Chinese goods are in force, Mr. Trump temporarily exempted small-value packages imported from there after the U.S. postal service was plunged into chaos as it struggled to deal with new regulations.

What is the broader context for the tariffs?

Although in the traditional macroeconomic policy context, tariffs are imposed to rectify trade imbalances due to artificial price barriers, the justification given by the Trump White House for their tariff plan was that it would address the "national emergency" resulting from "the extraordinary threat posed by illegal aliens and drugs, including deadly fentanyl."

This expansive reasoning for imposing tariffs across the board potentially risks blowback from other nations' inevitable retaliatory tariffs. The resulting trade war could seriously dampen world trade at a precarious time for global economic growth prospects. The irony is that escalating tit-for-tat tariffs will likely exert strong upward pressure on the prices that U.S. consumers pay for imported products, and ignite a broader inflationary trend through higher input prices across industries.

The second cause for concern of the Trump administration's tariff plan is that it tacitly endorses the weaponisation of tariffs as a countermeasure against unrelated inter-country disputes – in this case the inflow of unsanctioned migration and illegal drugs – rather than rely on traditional law enforcement activity to ensure less porous borders.

How have Mexico and Canada responded?

According to the White House, Mexican drug trafficking organisations have an "intolerable alliance with the government of Mexico", and that the latter has "afforded safe havens for the cartels to engage in the manufacturing and transportation of dangerous narcotics, which collectively have led to the overdose deaths of hundreds of thousands of American victims."

The Trump administration has also said that there is a "growing presence of Mexican cartels operating fentanyl and nitazene synthesis labs in

Canada," with a recent study recognising Canada's "heightened domestic production of fentanyl, and its growing footprint within international narcotics distribution." These facts, according to Mr. Trump's administration, suggest that this is an alliance that endangers the national security of the U.S., requiring the eradication of the influence of these "dangerous cartels."

Perhaps emboldened by his success in forcing Colombia to accept deportees from the U.S. flown to Bogota via military aircraft, Mr. Trump has used tariffs to bring Mexico and Canada to the negotiating table, even if his proposal violates the terms of the U.S.-Mexico-Canada free trade pact. Mexico has now already

Where does China stand?

Mr. Trump's 10% tariff levy on Chinese products is relatively modest compared to the 60% tariff rate that he had earlier threatened to hit Beijing with. Nevertheless, China was quick to announce a 15% counter-tariff to be levied upon imports of U.S. coal and liquefied natural gas, crude oil, agricultural machinery and certain cars – measures that are set to kick in on February 10.

In a more expansive counterattack, the Chinese government further opened an antitrust probe into Google, placed several top U.S. fashion and biotech companies on an "unreliable entities" list, and set limits on exports of critical minerals for high-tech products.

Nevertheless, analysts suggest that both sides have refrained from excessive or knee-jerk reactions, even though the 10% U.S. tariff on China adds to pre-existing levies imposed by Mr. Trump during his first term, and this leaves room for manoeuvre in negotiations that may follow when Mr. Trump meets Chinese President Xi Jinping in the near future.

However, with Mr. Trump promising stringent tariff action against the EU and other "reciprocal" tariffs against all trading partners of the U.S. in the days ahead in his mission to level the playing field, the risk of trade skirmishes derailing global growth prospects remains high.



Trump's 'Trade Wars'



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Impact of Trade War:

- Global Economic Slowdown - IMF - 0.8% Global GDP
- Declining industrial production and investments - US & China - More in some sectors
- Price Hikes for Consumers - US
- Food Inflation in China - Soybean
- Weakened Multilateral Trade System
- Strengthening of Regional Trade Blocs
- China's Shift Towards Other Markets

For India:

Positive-

- American firms - diversifying SCs - Greater FDI - May benefit Indian Manufacturers
- Indian Exporters - Competitive Edge
- Agricultural & Dairy Exports

Negative-

- Tough competition from SEA - EODB, Lower PC
- US-China trade war - disrupt global oil markets
- China - dumping - excess goods
- Trade uncertainty - strengthen the US dollar
- Higher Inflation

Way Forward

- **Strengthening Multilateralism:** WTO & G20
- **Balanced Approach:** US - Protect strategic industries ~ free trade.
- **Regional Partnerships:** Strengthening Quad, IPEF, and Indo-Pacific SCs
- **Fair Trade, Not Isolation:** WTO rules > unilateral tariffs.
- **Domestic Investment in Technology & Innovation**

For India

- **Domestic Manufacturing - PLI - SCs, RE Systems, EVs**
- **Diversify Trade Partnerships - CEPAs, etc**
- **Boost Infrastructure & Logistics - Connectivity; Gati Shakti, Digital Connectivity**
- **Explore New Markets: EU, ASEAN, and Africa.**

MAINS PRACTISE QUESTION

"The trade wars initiated by the United States, have had significant implications for global trade, economic stability, and emerging economies like India. Analyze the key reasons behind these trade wars and discuss their impact on the global economy, with a special focus on India. Also, suggest measures India can adopt to mitigate any negative consequences and leverage emerging opportunities."

(15 Marks, 250 words)



Are Freebies & Welfare Schemes different?

CONTEXT: All three major political parties in the Delhi Assembly elections, won by the Bharatiya Janata Party, unveiled a barrage of freebies or subsidies to woo voters. Can they be considered welfare measures?

What are Freebies?

- Short-term handouts aimed at voter appeal
- Often lack sustainability aspect - lasting Socio-Economic well-being
- E.g. free laptops, TVs, bicycles, electricity and water, etc.
- PM - Criticised - "Revdi Culture"

How to distinguish with 'Real' Welfare?

- Welfare schemes - Target Population
- Std. of Living & Resource Access
- In line with - DPSPs
- Promote Long-term Human Dev.
- PDS, MGNREGA, MDM, POSHAN

Positive aspects of Freebies:

- **Cater specially to Lower Class/Lower strata**
- **Serves as a 'Foundation' for several welfare measures** - MDM - K. Kamaraj; NFSA - N.T. Rama. Rao; Telangana's Rythu Bandhu and Odisha's KALIA schemes - PM-KISAN
- **Boost Livelihood/Production** - sewing machines, cycles - Productive Investment
- **Enhanced Social Welfare** - Vulnerable sections - essential services and goods; e.g. free bus passes for women
- **Increased Access to Education and Skill Development** - Improve accessibility; e.g. Free Laptops - enhance skills; NITI Aayog - BIHAR & WB - Bicycles - Red. Drop-out rates
- **Strengthening Political Engagement and Public Trust** - Demonstrate enhanced responsiveness - CPR - BIHAR & UP



The National Food Security Act, enacted by the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government in 2013, transformed key welfare schemes such as the mid-day meal, the Public Distribution System, and child development services into legal entitlements. According to data released by the Centre, the law's beneficiaries include 75% of the rural population and 50% of the urban population - roughly 800 million people in total.

A 2023 study by the Centre for Financial Inclusion (CFI) found that carefully designed cash transfer programmes, which channel funds directly to women on behalf of their households, not only empower women but also help mitigate the risks of intimate partner violence.

According to Dr. Kailash, welfare provisions - unlike freebies - enhance human capabilities and freedoms, aligning with the "capability approach" to development propounded by Nobel laureate Amartya Sen. "For instance, access to nutritious, free food through mid-day meal schemes strengthens immunity, and enables individuals to lead dignified lives. In contrast, poor health not only causes personal suffering but also burdens public resources by increasing the demand for hospitals and medical treatment. Investing in nutrition from an early age yields significant long-term benefits for both individuals and society," he explained.



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FREEBIES Vs MERIT GOODS

FREEBIES



Free power



Free water



Free consumption goods



Free public transportation



Waiver of pending utility bills



Farm loan waivers



moneycontrol

MERIT GOODS

- Public distribution system
- Employment guarantee schemes
- States' support for education and health
- Spending towards sustainable growth
- Spending against climate change
- Expenditure on more efficient public transport systems

that while such schemes stimulate market activity by boosting consumer spending, they ultimately fall short of creating genuine economic opportunities. Freebie-driven politics poses a serious fiscal threat, particularly to heavily indebted State governments. The RBI's latest report on State finances highlights how such measures have led to a sharp increase in subsidy expenditure. It further urges States to rationalise these subsidies to ensure they do not displace critical investments.

Does the judiciary have a role?

In August 2022, the Supreme Court referred a series of petitions challenging the constitutional validity of electoral freebies to a three-judge Bench. The lead petition, filed by BJP leader Ashwini Upadhyay, contended that such populist measures undermine the constitutional guarantee of free and fair elections.

During the proceedings, a Bench led by former Chief Justice of India (CJI) N.V. Ramana even suggested forming an expert panel to solicit recommendations from key stakeholders. This marked a significant departure from the Court's earlier position. In *S. Subramaniam Balaji vs Government of Tamil Nadu* (2013), the Supreme Court ruled that such matters fell within the domain of legislative policy and were beyond judicial scrutiny. It further underscored that such expenditures could neither be deemed unlawful nor characterised as a "corrupt practice," particularly since they sought to advance the Directive Principles of State Policy.

Negative aspects of Freebies:

- **Burden on Public Finances:** Costs ~ 0.1% to 2.7% of GSDP; Andhra Pradesh and Punjab > 10%.
- **Against Free and Fair Election:** 'undue influence' on Voters; Small parties - disadvantages; similar to giving bribes
- **Distortion in Resource Allocation:** Misallocation of resources - diversion of funds. NITI Aayog criticised subsidies - laptops in UP - comprehensive education reforms
- **Dependency Culture:** Discourages self-reliance, initiative entrepreneurship
- **Reduced Accountability:** Distract from systemic issues and failures
- **Environmental Impact:** Overuse of natural resources - water and electricity; Punjab - Soil degradation



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Way Forward

- **Strengthening Democratic Institutions:** ECI - effective monitoring and regulation of freebies
- **Enhancing Voter Awareness:** informed decisions - long-term development agendas
- **Shifting Policy Focus:** Encouraging political parties - sustainable, long-term policy planning and development > populism
- **Ensuring Transparent Governance:** accountability - implementation - reduce corruption - public trust
- **Strengthening Social Security Systems:** comprehensive measures - quality healthcare, robust education systems, job creation, poverty alleviation programs

According to senior advocate Sanjay Hedge, there is little that courts can do to distinguish welfare measures from populist sops and pre-election inducements. "It is the legislature's prerogative to rein in unchecked competitive populism. The judiciary should not intervene in the choices made between voters and their elected representatives," he said.

FREE IS NOT FAIR

> SC says distribution of freebies influences all people. 'It shakes the root of free and fair elections to a large degree'

> Petition relates to sop war in TN. Against DMK's promise of free colour TVs in 2006, AIADMK in 2011 announced free mixers, laptops & gold mangalsutras

> Political parties argue they have a right to project their

policies & economic and political priorities. Say voters decide on basis of promises in manifesto

> Court says assemblies, Parliament should decide on legitimacy of freebies



MAINS PRACTISE QUESTION

"The rising culture of freebies in India has sparked debates on fiscal sustainability and governance, often being contrasted with genuine welfare measures. Critically analyze the impact of freebies on economic stability and democratic accountability. How can policymakers strike a balance between welfare and fiscal prudence?"

(15 Marks, 250 words)



Future of Chabahar Port?

SYLLABUS : GS 2: International Relations
Newspaper : The Hindu Page Number : 13

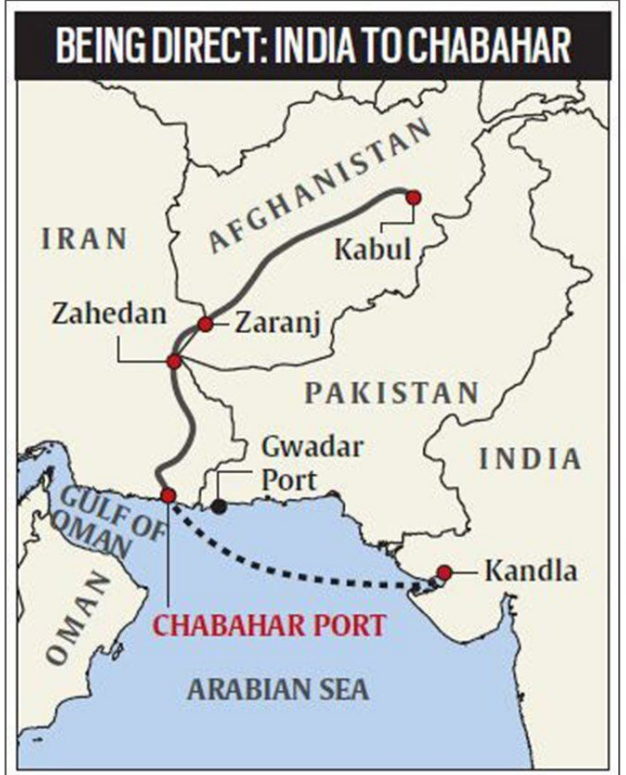
U.S. President Donald Trump has taken aim at many countries around the world in the first few weeks of his presidency – with Iran being perhaps the most predictable target, much as it was during his first tenure. So, while it came as no surprise when he issued a Presidential National Security Memorandum (PNSM-2) on February 4, calling for “maximum pressure” on Iran, as what he called the “world’s leading state sponsor of terror”, his decision to name the Chabahar Port in particular sent shock-waves through New Delhi.

Chabahar’s Shahid Beheshti port terminal is after all India’s first international port, its alternative trade route to Iran, Afghanistan, Central Asia and beyond, and part of its plans for regional leadership. So why

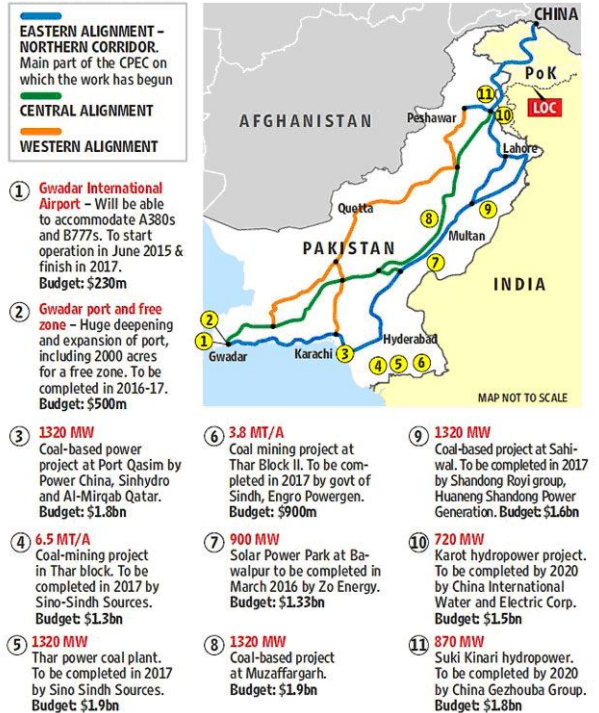
India had an interest in developing a terminal for trade to bypass Pakistan’s land route and Karachi port route. Chabahar not only provides a quick sea route from India’s west coast, but the plan fits in with India’s development assistance to the Afghan republic, especially through the construction of the Za-

ranj-Delaram highway in 2009, that could take Indian goods around the country.

In time, India could develop Chabahar as a counter to Pakistan’s Gwadar port, that is funded by China. In recent years China showed its interest in Chabahar as well, as a part of its Belt and Road Initiative and signed a 25-year cooperation agreement in 2021 with a potential investment of \$300 billion.



The routes and main China-sponsored projects along the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor



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Between 2010 and 2015, the U.S. encouraged India to increase energy contracts with Iran, to build up the Shahid Beheshti terminal at Chabahar and even to invest in a rail line connecting Chabahar to the Afghan border – as it wanted to use this as leverage in its high-stakes negotiations for the 6-nation Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on Iran’s nuclear capabilities. The thinking for the U.S. administration was that Indian investment would give Iran incentives to join the international mainstream with the JCPOA signed.

Addition of waivers

In November 2018, the Trump administration decided to add waivers to the U.S.’s Iran Freedom and Counter-Proliferation Act (IFCA 144(f)), stipulating that all consignments through Iranian ports were subject to sanctions, except those meant for humanitarian aid for Iran, and for Afghanistan reconstruction. The waiver was welcomed by New Delhi, and it spurred a new round of interest in Chabahar.

When Donald Trump was elected in November 2016, the U.S.’s relations with Iran had soured, and Mr. Trump walked out of the JCPOA, enforcing sanctions on any country importing oil or trading with Iran. India submitted to the sanctions on oil, stopping its imports of cheaper Iranian crude in 2018, but it lobbied hard to keep its stake in Chabahar alive.

Over the next few years, India’s trade and aid through Chabahar grew. While the collapse of the Ghani government and the takeover by the Taliban reduced the U.S.’s engagement, India has tried to forge ties with the Taliban leadership through the supply of aid.

The diagram shows the JCPOA agreement between the USA, UK, Russia, France, China, and Germany (P5+1, Permanent members of UNSC) and Iran. It is titled "non-proliferation" and lists two goals: 1. to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and technology falling in wrong hands, and 2. to use nuclear technology for peaceful civilian purposes. Below the diagram is a section titled "What is JCPOA agreement? Iran's nuclear deal" with a background image of a radiation symbol.

The map is titled "HELPING HAND" and shows India's pledged assistance to Afghanistan, totaling \$3.1 billion since November 2001. It highlights five infrastructure projects with Indian help: 1. A 218 km road project from Zaranj to Delaram in south-western Afghanistan. 2. A 220 kV DC transmission line from Pul-e-Khumri to Kabul. 3. The Salma Dam power project in Herat province. 4. The Afghan parliament and the Indira Gandhi Institute of Child Health and Habibia School, both in Kabul. 5. A 220/110/20 kV substation at Chimtala. The map also shows neighboring countries like Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Pakistan, and Iran, and cities like Mazar-e-Sharif, Baghlan, Herat, Farah, Delaram, Tarin Kowt, and Kandahar.

In May 2024, even as India was in the throes of an election campaign, the Modi government sent Shipping Minister Sarbananda Sonowal to Tehran to sign a 10-year contract for Chabahar to invest approximately \$120 million in equipment for the port and a credit window of \$250 million. External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar extolled the agreement, indicating India wanted to connect its Chabahar port to the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) so as to trade with Central Asia and Russia.

Given that the order came just days ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s U.S. visit, South Block officials hope they can once again negotiate for an exception for India’s plans for Chabahar port. The question is what kind of bargain Mr. Trump wants to strike, now that Chabahar is once again in U.S. cross-hairs.



National Mission on Manuscripts

09th February 2025

SYLLABUS : GS 1 : Art & Culture

Newspaper : The Hindu Page Number : 07

Steps have been initiated to make the National Mission for Manuscripts (NMM) autonomous, with the Centre allocating nearly ₹500 crore over the next six years separately to the institution through a Special Finance Committee.

The NMM was established in February 2003 by the Ministry of Tourism and Culture. A unique project in its programme and mandate, the Mission seeks to unearth and preserve the vast manuscript wealth of India.

From this year, the NMM has been again put under a Central sector scheme. For Central sector schemes, all initiatives are wholly sponsored and implemented by the Central agencies. The NMM was till now functioning as a part

the body till 2031.

However, sources said it was not yet clear whether the new 'Gyan Bharatam Mission' for manuscripts, announced in the Union Budget last week, would be a part of the NMM or be a separate entity.

According to the Budget document, the Gyan Bharatam Mission intends to

cover more than one crore manuscripts.

It would undertake the "survey, documentation and conservation" of India's manuscript heritage lying with academic institutions, museums, libraries, and private collectors, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said in her budget speech on February 1.

The Hindu had reported last October that the Union Culture Ministry was set to "revive and relaunch" the NMM, and was mulling the formation of an autonomous body to help preserve ancient texts.

According to the Ministry, the NMM has documented around 5.2 million manuscripts across the country.

It has conserved 90 million folios of manuscripts and digitised 3.5 lakh manuscripts that contain 3.5 crore pages.

The Union Budget 2025-26 announced the Gyan Bharatam Mission, under which one crore manuscripts will be conserved and documented.

About Gyan Bharatam Mission

- It is a special mission for the **survey, documentation, and conservation of India's manuscript heritage** lying with academic institutions, museums, libraries, and private collectors.
- It intends to cover more than one crore manuscripts.
- A **key component** of the Gyan Bharatam Mission is the **national digital repository of the Indian knowledge system**.
- It will serve as a platform for **knowledge sharing**.
- This storehouse will help in **digitising and centralising** India's **traditional knowledge**.
- It will be **accessible** to researchers, students, and institutions worldwide.

What is a Manuscript?

- A manuscript is a **handwritten composition on paper, bark, cloth, metal, palm leaf**, or any other material **dating back at least seventy-five years** that has significant **scientific, historical, or aesthetic value**.



SYLLABUS : GS 2: International Relations
Newspaper : The Hindu Page Number : 13

executive orders since, Donald Trump, along with billionaire friend and advisor Elon Musk, moved to freeze all foreign funding for 90 days. The ramifications of this stop-work order were far-reaching, affecting countries as diverse as Syria, Thailand, Ukraine, and South Africa, where the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the country's premier humanitarian aid agency, was actively involved.

Not stopping at that, the U.S. President, along with Mr. Musk, who heads the newly formed Department for Government Efficiency (DOGE), has sought to tighten the choke-hold by trimming the USAID's 10,000-strong workforce to a mere 294 – a move temporarily put on hold by a court on Friday.

The next best outcome would be the absorption of the USAID into the U.S. State Department – a move driven by Secretary of State Marco Rubio's takeover of the agency's Acting Director role after accusing it of 'insubordination'.

Allegations galore

To justify their actions, the trio has said the USAID's functioning did not align with the President's 'America First' policy.

A statement put out by the White House has criticised the agency's \$1.5 million grant to an LGBTQ group in Serbia and \$2.5 million assistance to an electric vehicle manufacturer in Vietnam.

Separately, Mr. Trump has levelled allegations of corruption against the USAID. He also accused the

However, the fact of the matter is that the U.S. remains the largest contributor of the foreign aid, despite that amount not being the highest in terms of the fraction of a country's annual budget (0.6% of \$6.75 trillion). The USAID is the primary source of that assistance. Of the \$68 billion spent by the country on international aid in 2023, the USAID accounted for \$40 billion.

The agency has operations in 130 countries. It takes care of the education of schoolgirls in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan while monitoring the Ebola outbreak in Uganda. It is also responsible for PEPFAR, an HIV/AIDS control programme that began under President George W. Bush in 2003 and is credited with saving more than 20 million lives in Africa.

As Mr. Musk and Mr. Trump chip away at the USAID with the acumen of two businessmen, 'cutting costs and trimming the flab', experts say China will step in to fill the void left by the agency. But China's priority has so far been 'visible programmes', or infrastructure projects it undertakes in the form of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). These can never supplant the USAID.

Sadly, the price for the Trump administration's domestic interests end up being paid by the deprived people across the globe.

Of late, the agency's primary focus has been Ukraine where it buys produce from farmers and sells it in other parts of the world; it also provides prosthetic limbs to soldiers. It boasts a famine prevention programme that can predict crises in regions. In India, the agency works in areas such as health, education, sanitation and environment.

Soft power

The USAID was established in 1961 by Democratic President John F. Kennedy during the Cold War era to counter Russian influence. While it functioned under the State Department initially, Congress made it an independent agency in 1998. Hence, experts say, the power to dissolve the USAID wrests with Congress.

The U.S. has benefited from this independent stature for it could maintain bridges with non-friendly nations such as Iran and North Korea, where the agency undertook humanitarian work. However, the public in the U.S., mainly Republicans, have always sided with slashing foreign spending.



SYLLABUS : GS 2: Regulatory Bodies
Newspaper : The Hindu Page Number : 04

What Exactly is the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC)?

- It is a **government organisation** (HQ in Bangalore) in India established in **1994** in response to recommendations of **National Policy in Education (1986)**.
- It is an **autonomous** body that **assesses and accredits** Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) such as colleges, universities/other recognised institutions to derive an understanding of the 'Quality Status' of the institution.
- It is **funded by the UGC** and evaluates the institutions in terms of their performance related to the teaching-learning processes, faculty, research, infrastructure, governance, financial wellbeing, student services, etc.

What is the NAAC's Accreditation Process?

- The first step involves an applicant institution submitting a **self-study report (SSR)** based on quantitative and qualitative metrics.
- **The data is subjected to validation** by expert teams of NAAC, with quality reviewed during site visits by peer teams.
- According to the Government of India, of the 1,113 universities and 43,796 colleges in the All-India Survey on Higher Education Report 2020-21, **NAAC accredited 418 universities and 9,062 colleges as on January 31, 2023.**

The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), the autonomous accreditation body for higher education institutes, on Saturday announced that its **executive committee (EC) has decided to not only cancel the current process of accreditation of the Koneru Lakshmaiah Education Foundation (KLEF) in Guntur, Andhra Pradesh, but also debar its university for five years from applying for accreditation.**

It has also decided to debar all the seven members of the peer team for **lifetime in assessment or any other activities of NAAC**

with immediate effect.

The case involves the CBI investigation into the alleged bribery of a NAAC team by the KLEF in exchange for an A++ rating for its university.



SYLLABUS : GS 3: Conservation
Newspaper : The Hindu Page Number : 07

Rahul Karmakar
GUWAHATI

The mithun, a semi-wild bovine creature, will soon start wearing fluorescent collars to be visible enough for drivers on a major highway in central Arunachal Pradesh's Siang district.

The mithun (*Bos frontalis*) is a free-ranging animal and stays mostly in the jungles. Seeking warmth, mithuns usually spend winter nights on the roads, leading to accidents fatal for humans and animals.

"Unlike cows, mithuns have a black or deep brown hide, making them less visible at night on poorly lit highways, especially in foggy stretches. The death of at least 30 mithuns in road accidents, some dragged for miles by vehicles, made us think of something that may save them," Niyang Pertin, Circle Officer of Pangin, told *The Hindu* on Saturday.



A mithun owner displaying a fluorescent collar received from the Pangin Circle Officer and PWD (Highways) Executive Engineer in Arunachal Pradesh's Siang district. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Pangin is about 20 km from Pasighat, the nearest major town, and headquarters of East Siang district.

Inspired by the fluorescent jackets of construction workers, Ms. Pertin located a vendor in New Delhi who sells glow-collars. Along with Okep Dai, Executive Engineer, Public Works Department (Highways),

Pasighat Division, she purchased 200 collars for the mithuns.

A series of meetings with the mithun owners and *gaonburas* (village chiefs) preceded the collar distribution programme on Friday. Pangin's Additional Deputy Commissioner Gamtum Padu presided over the event.

Mithun owners were

presented with the collars after they were convinced that their animals would be safer at night. "We thought we had too many collars. As it turned out, we could not give the collars to quite a few mithun owners," Ms. Pertin, who is also in charge of the Kebang Circle, said.

"We wanted the mithuns to be as safe as the humans who use the roads. We hope our initiative will serve the purpose," Mr. Dai said.

The mithun collar idea has caught on, officials in Pangin said. There have been enquiries from mithun owners from other parts of the State, seeking guidance to procure the fluorescent collars.

In Arunachal Pradesh, the mithun holds immense cultural significance, serving as a symbol of wealth and social status, is often used as a form of currency for barter trade, and is especially seen as a crucial part of the bride price in tribal marriages.



- The Mithun or gayal (*Bos frontalis*) is a heavily built, semi-domesticated bovine species.
- Mithun is believed to have originated more than 8000 years ago and is considered to be a descendent of wild Indian gaur or bison.
- It is known as the 'cattle of the mountain'.
- **Distribution:**
 - The highest concentration of mithuns in the world is spread over the North Eastern (NE) region of India, with Arunachal Pradesh having the highest population.
 - It is also found in parts of Southeast Asia, viz., Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Bhutan.
 - The geographic zone is covered with tropical evergreen rain forests.
- It is the state animal of Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland.
- The 'Soulung' festival is observed annually by the Adi tribes of Arunachal Pradesh to commensurate the birth and arrival of Mithun on this earth.
- **Physical Features:**
 - Mithun appears somewhat similar to that of Guar (Indian bison) but is smaller in size.
 - Like Guars, they are strongly built, large-sized fleshy animals with an average weight of 400- 650 kg.
 - The characteristic feature of Mithun lies in the head, which has a well-developed, broad frontal bone with a flat-shaped face and from the front view, it appears like an inverted triangle from where two horns emerge from the lateral sides.
 - Horn colour varies from whitish yellow to salty black in most animals.
 - The young mithuns are light to dark brown in colour, which darkens with age.
 - In adult mithuns, the most common colour is black with white markings and white with black marking. Other than these two, albino or pure black is also found.
- **Conservation Status:**
 - IUCN Red List: Vulnerable
 - CITES: Appendix I



Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC)?

1. It is an autonomous body that assesses and accredits Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).
2. It is funded by the UGC and evaluates the institutions in terms of their performance related to the teaching-learning processes, faculty, etc.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: c

Q2. Consider the following statements :

1. Freebies are short-term, populist measures with a long-term vision.
2. Freebies differ from welfare measures, which enforce the Directive Principles of State Policy.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: b

Q3. Arrange the following locations from North to South:

1. Zaranj
2. Zahedan
3. Chabahar Port
4. Kandla Port

Select the correct code from the options given below:

- a) 1,2,3,4
- b) 2,4,3,1
- c) 3,4,2,1
- d) 4,3,2,1

Answer: a

Q4. Consider the following statements regarding the Gyan Bharatam Mission:

1. It is a special mission for the survey, documentation, and conservation of India's manuscript heritage lying with academic institutions, museums, libraries, and private collectors.
2. It will only be accessible to researchers, students, and institutions of India.

Which of the statements given above is/are NOT correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: b

Q5. Which of the following is known as "cattle of mountain"?

- a) *Bros Frontalis*
- b) *Lama glama*
- c) *Capra aegagrus hircus*
- d) *Ovis aries*

Answer: a





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