



# TRUMP THREATENS 100% TARIFFS ON BRICS IF THE DOLLAR IS UNDERMINED

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

**CONTEXT:** Tensions escalated between the U.S. and the BRICS nations over the dominance of the U.S. dollar in global trade, with U.S. President-elect Donald Trump threatening 100% tariffs on BRICS countries if they pursue alternatives to the dollar, amid growing dissatisfaction with American financial hegemony and Russian advocacy for a non-dollar trade system.

### Trump's Threat of Tariffs on BRICS Nations

- U.S. President-elect Donald Trump has threatened 100% tariffs on BRICS nations if they take actions to undermine the U.S. dollar.
- Targeted nations include Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and the UAE.
- Trump demands a commitment from BRICS countries to avoid creating a new currency or replacing the U.S. dollar in trade.

### Dominance of the U.S. Dollar

- The U.S. dollar constitutes 58% of global foreign exchange reserves (IMF data).
- It is the primary currency for international trade and commodities like oil.
- Developing nations, including BRICS members, express dissatisfaction with U.S. financial dominance.

### BRICS's Push for Alternatives

- The BRICS bloc is leveraging its growing share of global GDP to challenge dollar dominance.
- Plans include conducting trade in non-dollar currencies and exploring alternative financial systems.

### Russia's Position

- Russian President Vladimir Putin accuses the U.S. of "weaponizing" the dollar through sanctions and restrictions.
- Putin emphasizes the necessity of finding alternatives, advocating for a payment system independent of SWIFT.

### Dollar's Future as a Global Reserve Currency

- Research indicates that, despite challenges, the U.S. dollar's position as the primary global reserve currency remains secure in the near term.

### Analysis: Why Trump is threatening 100% sanctions against BRICS?

- Trump's stance against BRICS reflects a strategic effort to safeguard the U.S. dollar's dominance as the cornerstone of the global financial system, which underpins America's economic and geopolitical influence.
- BRICS's growing economic clout and moves toward non-dollar trade challenge the dollar's status as the primary reserve currency, potentially reducing U.S. leverage in international trade and diminishing its ability to enforce sanctions.
- By threatening tariffs, Trump aims to deter BRICS nations from accelerating their de-dollarization initiatives.
- His approach underscores the U.S.'s reliance on dollar hegemony to maintain its competitive advantage and mitigate the risk of alternative financial systems eroding its dominance.



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# PLASTIC TREATY NEGOTIATIONS FAIL WITH COUNTRIES SPLIT OVER PRODUCTION CUTS

## ECOLOGY ENVIRONMENT

**CONTEXT:** The international community failed to reach a consensus on a global plastic pollution treaty, with significant divisions between countries favouring production cuts and those prioritizing economic interests.

### GLOBAL EFFORTS TO CURB PLASTIC POLLUTION STALLED

- **Failed Negotiations:** The fifth and final round of talks at the Intergovernmental Negotiations Committee (INC) in Busan, South Korea, ended without a global agreement to address plastic pollution.
- **Divisions Among Nations:** Countries were divided on key issues, particularly the need to reduce virgin plastic production.
- **Economic Concerns:** Some nations, including India and Saudi Arabia, expressed concerns about the potential impact of production cuts on their economies and development.
- **Future of Negotiations:** Despite the setback, countries have agreed to continue negotiations under the INC-5.2 framework.
- **Disappointment and Frustration:** Delegates expressed disappointment over the lack of progress and the politicization of the issue.

# BANGLADESH UPHEAVAL HAS NOT LED TO A SPIKE IN BORDER INTERCEPTIONS: DATA

## INTERNAL SECURITY

**CONTEXT:** Despite significant political changes in Bangladesh, the number of undocumented people intercepted at the India-Bangladesh border has not seen a notable increase.

### BORDER SECURITY REMAINS STEADY AMIDST POLITICAL TURMOIL IN BANGLADESH

#### No Significant Surge in Undocumented Crossings

- **Data Analysis:** Recent political changes in Bangladesh have not led to a noticeable increase in undocumented individuals crossing the India-Bangladesh border.
- **Consistent Interception Rates:** The number of Bangladeshi nationals apprehended by the Border Security Force (BSF) has remained relatively stable compared to previous years.
- **Diverse Cross-Border Movement:** Apart from Bangladeshi nationals, Indian citizens and individuals from other countries have also been intercepted while attempting to cross the border illegally.

#### Heightened Vigilance by BSF

- **Enhanced Security Measures:** The BSF has increased its surveillance and security measures along the India-Bangladesh border following the recent political developments in Bangladesh.
- **Strict Border Control:** The BSF has been instructed to strictly enforce border regulations and prevent unauthorized entry.
- **Monitoring Minority Communities:** The BSF is closely monitoring the situation, particularly regarding potential movements of minority communities who may seek refuge in India.



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# PM FLAGS CYBERFRAUDS, PORT SECURITY AT ANNUAL POLICE MEET

## POLITY & GOVERNANCE

**CONTEXT:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasized addressing digital frauds, cybercrimes, and emerging security challenges while advocating technological advancements and enhanced professionalism at the 59th All India Police Conference.

### Prime Minister Modi's Concerns and Recommendations

- **Digital Frauds and Cybercrimes:**
  - Expressed concern over threats from digital frauds, cybercrimes, and advancements in AI technology.
  - Highlighted the disruptive potential of deepfakes on social and familial relations.
- **Port Security:**
  - Stressed the need to expand focus on port security.
  - Called for developing a detailed plan of action to address vulnerabilities.

### Urban Policing and Technological Integration

- **Urban Policing Initiatives:**
  - Appreciated successful urban policing strategies.
  - Recommended compiling and implementing these initiatives across 100 cities nationwide.
- **Technological Advancements in Policing:**
  - Advocated for using technology to reduce the workload of constables.
  - Proposed making police stations focal points for resource allocation.

### Tribute to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel

- Recalled Patel's significant contributions to the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- Encouraged the police force to honor Patel's 150th birth anniversary by improving their image, professionalism, and capabilities through achievable goals.

### Key Discussions at the Conference

- **Emerging and Existing Challenges:**
  - Counter-terrorism, left-wing extremism, cybercrime, economic security, coastal security, and narco-trafficking.
  - Addressed border security concerns with Bangladesh and Myanmar.
- **Trends and Strategies:**
  - Discussed urban policing trends and strategies to counter malicious narratives effectively.

# 'THERE WAS NO SUDDEN VOTER SURGE IN MAHARASHTRA POLLS'

## POLITY & GOVERNANCE

**CONTEXT:** Maharashtra's Chief Electoral Officer, S. Chockalingam, addressed concerns about EVM integrity, voting trends, and alleged voter list discrepancies during the state's Assembly elections, emphasizing transparency, legal remedies, and adherence to established electoral procedures.

### Concerns Raised Post Maharashtra Assembly Elections

- Allegations of irregularities in EVMs, voting numbers, and postal ballots.
- Claims of mass additions and deletions in the voter list.

### Polling Day Procedures

- **Mock Polls:**
  - Conducted from 6 a.m. to 7 a.m. in the presence of polling agents.
  - Ensures proper functioning of EVMs and VVPATs by simulating voting.
- **Voting Process:**
  - Voting begins after a successful mock poll.
  - Voting percentages are collected every two hours from over 1 lakh polling stations.

- Voters in the queue at 6 p.m. are allowed to vote, with updates completed by midnight.
- **Post-Poll Procedures:**
  - EVMs are secured in strongrooms post-voting.
  - Scrutiny is conducted in the presence of candidates or their agents to identify discrepancies.
  - Re-polls are arranged if necessary.

### Voting Percentage vs. Actual Numbers

- **Voting Data Sharing:**
  - Voting percentages are collected for informational purposes only, not as legally binding data.
  - Form 17C, containing detailed vote numbers, is shared with polling agents at the end of the day.
- **Data Transparency:**
  - Form 17C is a legal document used during counting for verification.
  - Discrepancies between counted votes and Form 17C can be challenged in court.

### No Discrepancies Found in Legal Counting

- No objections or discrepancies reported between Form 17C and counted votes in the state.
- Issues raised are based on informal data, not legally validated figures.

### Clarifications on Voter Surge Allegations

- **Voting Trends:**
  - No unusual surge between 5 p.m. and 6 p.m.; numbers align with historical trends.
  - In urban areas, evening voting is a common pattern.
  - Average voting rates (76 voters per booth) are consistent with earlier elections.

### Complaints and Election Commission Responses

- **Received Complaints:**
  - Requests for verification of burnt EVM memory chips in almost every district.
  - Allegations of mass voter additions and deletions, primarily on social media.
- **EC's Response:**
  - Clear remedies, such as election petitions, are available for grievances.
  - Random EVM checks are permitted to verify vote accuracy.

### Claims of Mass Voter Additions and Deletions

- **Deletion Processes:**
  - Mass deletions are not conducted during an election year.
  - Deletions occur only after door-to-door verification in non-election years.
- **Voter Additions:**
  - Two summary revisions and special camps are organized to add new voters.
  - Additions, deletions, and modifications follow a transparent challenge process.





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# 40 YEARS AFTER BHOPAL GAS TRAGEDY, UNION CARBIDE'S TOXIC WASTE YET TO BE REMOVED

## POLITY & GOVERNANCE

**CONTEXT:** Despite numerous court orders and government pledges, the toxic waste left behind by Union Carbide in Bhopal remains a major environmental and health hazard, with no concrete plan for its safe disposal, even after 40 years of the devastating gas tragedy.

Forty years after the devastating Bhopal gas tragedy, the legacy of Union Carbide's toxic waste persists. Despite multiple court orders and government pledges, the safe disposal of hundreds of tonnes of hazardous waste remains unaddressed. The government has allocated funds for a small portion of the waste, but the majority, including contaminated soil and mercury, remains unattended. This inaction has led to ongoing groundwater contamination and poses significant health risks to the local population. The slow pace of remediation and lack of comprehensive assessment highlight the systemic failure to address this pressing environmental and humanitarian issue.

# SHOCK DIAMONDS: SUPERSONIC HEAT NUGGETS

## SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

### FORMATION OF SHOCK DIAMONDS

#### Supersonic Exhaust

- **High-speed Exhaust:** When a rocket or jet engine expels exhaust at supersonic speeds, it interacts with the surrounding atmosphere.
- **Pressure Fluctuations:** The exhaust pressure oscillates between higher and lower than atmospheric pressure.

#### Shock Wave Formation

- **Compression and Expansion:** The exhaust undergoes cycles of compression and expansion as it interacts with the atmosphere.
- **Wave Generation:** These pressure fluctuations create shock waves within the exhaust plume.

#### Shock Diamond Appearance

- **Inward Flow and Combustion:** When the atmospheric pressure forces the exhaust to flow inward, it increases the pressure and temperature in that region.
- **Bright Spots:** The increased temperature causes the fuel in that area to combust, creating bright spots or shock diamonds.
- **Visual Pattern:** The alternating pattern of shock waves and combustion zones results in the distinctive appearance of shock diamonds in the exhaust plume.

# REVANCHIST SUITS

## POLITY & GOVERNANCE

The recent violence in Sambhal district, sparked by a controversial court order, underscores the growing trend of motivated litigation aimed at altering the religious character of historical places of worship, potentially leading to communal tensions and social unrest.

### A DANGEROUS PRECEDENT: THE SAMBHAL MOSQUE CASE

#### The Incident

- **Motivated Litigation:** A controversial court order led to violent protests in Sambhal, Uttar Pradesh.
- **Loss of Life:** Four individuals lost their lives during clashes between protesters and authorities.
- **Questionable Court Order:** The lower court's order was passed without hearing the mosque committee, sparking local outrage.

#### The Larger Issue: Revanchist Claims

- **Targeting Historical Mosques:** A growing trend of legal challenges seeks to alter the religious character of ancient mosques.
- **Bypassing Legal Protections:** Courts are often overlooking the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991, which

safeguards the status quo of religious places.

- Stoking Communal Tensions: Such actions can lead to increased religious polarization and social unrest.

### The Need for Judicial Caution

- Scrutinizing Motivated Claims: Courts must be vigilant against frivolous lawsuits aimed at disrupting communal harmony.
- Upholding Legal Frameworks: The judiciary should strictly adhere to the provisions of the Places of Worship Act.
- Prioritizing Peace and Harmony: The courts have a crucial role in maintaining peace and preventing the escalation of religious tensions.

### Analysis:

- The Sambhal mosque case reflects a troubling trend of using litigation to challenge the religious identity of historical places of worship, often ignoring the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991, which protects the status quo of religious structures as of August 15, 1947.
- Such motivated claims threaten India's secular ethos, escalating communal tensions and undermining social harmony.
- The judiciary must act cautiously, ensuring that legal processes are not misused to provoke unrest.
- Upholding the Act is essential to prevent historical revisionism, safeguard minority rights, and maintain the constitutional promise of secularism.
- Judicial oversight and adherence to legal frameworks are imperative.

## ON THE FREEDOM OF RELIGION IN BANGLADESH

### INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

**CONTEXT:** The constitutional framework of Bangladesh highlights its commitment to secularism and religious freedom despite historical amendments declaring Islam as the state religion. It underscores the contradictions between the constitutional guarantees of equality and the contemporary challenges faced by religious minorities, thereby urging the interim government to uphold these principles to ensure trust and communal harmony.

### THE GIST

- Though the original Bangladesh constitution was secular, the military dictator Ziaur Rahman in 1977 removed 'secularism' from it, and in 1988, General Ershad got Article 2A inserted in the constitution which laid down Islam as the state religion.
- On June 30, 2011, the constitution was again amended through the 15th amendment and the term 'secular' was reinserted. The amendment removed the expression 'absolute faith and trust in Allah' from the preamble but retained above the preamble expression 'in the name of Allah, the beneficent, the merciful' that was added in 1997.
- Like our Article 26, Article 41(b) gives the right to every religious community or denomination to establish, maintain and manage its religious institutions.

### Freedom of Religion in Bangladesh: An Overview

#### Constitutional Framework

The preamble of the Bangladesh Constitution underscores nationalism, democracy, socialism, and secularism as its foundational principles. Article 41 guarantees freedom of religion, stating that every citizen, "subject to public order and morality," has the right to profess, practice, or propagate any religion.

#### Historical Shifts in Secularism

##### Erosion of Secularism

- The original 1972 Constitution was secular, reflecting the liberal ideals of Bangla nationalism.
- In 1977, military dictator Ziaur Rahman removed "secularism" from the Constitution.
- In 1988, General Ershad inserted Article 2A, declaring Islam as the state religion.

##### Reaffirmation of Secular Principles

- The 15th Amendment of 2011 reinstated the term "secular" while retaining the phrase "in the name of Allah, the beneficent, the merciful" from earlier amendments.
- The amendment sought to balance secularism and religious recognition by including "in the name of Creator, the merciful."

## Legal Protections and Contradictions

### Article 2A and Its Challenges

While Islam is the state religion, Article 2A ensures "equal status and equal rights" to other religions. This duality contrasts with classical secular frameworks and raises practical concerns about the equal treatment of minorities.

### Fundamental Rights in Practice

- Article 41(b): Grants every religious community the right to establish, maintain, and manage their institutions.
- Article 41(c): Ensures no person in educational institutions is compelled to receive religious instruction of another faith.
- Article 28(1): Prohibits discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth.

### Judicial Interventions

#### Key Verdicts

- The Supreme Court and High Court invalidated amendments undermining secularism in 2005 and 2010.
- The courts emphasized that secularism was integral to Bangladesh's identity and freedom struggle.

### Implications

The judiciary reinstated secular provisions and prohibited religion-based political parties, reinforcing the nation's commitment to equality and religious harmony.

### Current Concerns: Minority Rights

#### Violations of Constitutional Promises

- Recent incidents, such as the desecration of Hindu temples and the arrest of Hindu monk Chinmoy Krishna Das, violate constitutional guarantees and international human rights norms.
- Bangladesh's interim government has failed to take substantial steps to address these issues, apart from symbolic gestures like visiting temples.

### Impact on Minorities

With 20 million Hindus, Christians, Buddhists, and Ahmadiyyas, minorities in Bangladesh face challenges from Islamist majoritarianism. This undermines their trust in constitutional protections and the government.

### Lessons from History

#### Secularism and National Identity

Bangladesh emerged from the partition of Pakistan, rejecting the religious nationalism of the two-nation theory. Its founding ideals were rooted in secular and inclusive nationalism, as reflected in the 1972 Constitution.

### International Comparisons

Similar contradictions exist in other nations with state religions, such as Sri Lanka and Bhutan. However, Bangladesh's judicial interventions and constitutional provisions offer hope for a more inclusive future.

### Call to Action

#### For the Interim Government

- Honor constitutional commitments to ensure equality and harmony.
- Take decisive action against communal violence and discrimination.

#### For the Judiciary

- Continue proactive interventions to uphold secularism and protect minority rights.

**CONCLUSION:** Bangladesh's secular framework is a cornerstone of its democracy, and adherence to its principles is vital to fostering trust, peace, and equality among all citizens.

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# HOW 'GREEN' IS STEEL MADE OUT OF DISMANTLED SHIPS?

## ECOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

**CONTEXT:** The environmental impact of ship recycling for **green steel production** in South Asia, highlighting safety and pollution concerns despite international regulations like the **Hong Kong Convention**.

### Green Steel and Ship Recycling

Green steelmaking uses electric arc furnaces powered by renewable energy to reduce CO2 emissions, with scrap from dismantled ships and automobiles as key raw materials. The steel industry contributes 8% of global carbon emissions, and scrap-based furnaces can cut emissions by up to 75%. Ship recycling in South Asia, particularly in India (Alang), Bangladesh (Chattogram), and Pakistan (Gadani), provides a major source of scrap for green steel production.

### Environmental and Safety Concerns

However, ship recycling is one of the most polluting sectors, with hazardous practices like beach dismantling harming both the environment and workers. To avoid liability for pollution, European ship owners use 'Flags of Convenience' (FOC) in countries like Panama. While the Hong Kong Convention aims to improve safety standards, it does not prohibit environmentally harmful practices like beach dismantling, which continues in South Asia.

### The Future of Green Steel

For true environmental sustainability, India may need to explore alternative methods of green steel production, rather than relying on ship-sourced ferrous scrap.

# OVERHANGING STORM OVER THE RED SEA

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

**CONTEXT:** The Houthi militants' attacks on commercial ships in the Red Sea have significantly disrupted global trade, forcing rerouting of ships around Africa, raising freight rates, and delaying cargo deliveries.

### Impact of Houthi Attacks on Red Sea Shipping:

- **Disruption in Global Trade:**

Houthi attacks on commercial ships in the Red Sea have led to significant disruptions, forcing ships to reroute around the Cape of Good Hope instead of using the Suez Canal.

- **Decline in Suez Canal Traffic:**

Before the attacks, 12% of global trade passed through the Suez Canal. By July 2024, this share dropped by 66%, and now over 70% of traffic avoids the Suez Canal.

- **Shipping Companies' Response:**

CMA-CGM and Maersk, prioritizing safety, have opted to reroute vessels around Africa, with no indication of a near-term return to the Red Sea.

- **The Start of the Crisis:**

The crisis began with the hijacking of the Galaxy Leader cargo ship in November 2023, followed by similar attacks, leading to extended disruptions in global supply chains.

- **Global and Regional Impact:**

Shipping lines are forced to reroute around Africa, leading to longer transit times, steep freight rates, and changing competition dynamics, with regional carriers gaining an advantage over global giants.

- **Financial Losses:**

The Suez Canal has lost nearly \$6 billion in revenue in 2024, with an estimated total loss of \$9-10 billion by year-end.

- **Export Delays and Rising Costs:**

Delays in cargo delivery are causing concerns for exporters, especially for goods bound for the U.S. east coast and Europe, with agricultural produce facing increased risks. The rerouting has also raised export costs for India.

### ANALYSIS

The Houthi militants' attacks in the Red Sea have severely disrupted global shipping, forcing vessels to reroute around Africa and leading to delays and higher freight rates.



For India, this has resulted in increased export costs and delays, particularly for agricultural products and goods bound for the U.S. East Coast and Europe.

The Suez Canal's reduced traffic further exacerbates the situation.

To counter this, the Indian government has been promoting regional shipping alternatives and improving port infrastructure to ensure smoother transit.

Additionally, efforts are being made to support local carriers and enhance the efficiency of Indian ports.



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Ernakulam-682 015,

Corporate office:  
Vedhik IAS Academy  
Samkalp Bhawan, Plot No.15,  
Sector 4, Rama Krishna Puram,  
New Delhi, Delhi-110022

Regional office  
Vedhik IAS Academy  
202, Raheja Chambers, 12,  
Museum Road. Bangalore -  
560001. Karnataka, India.

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