



● POLITY

● ECONOMICS

● TECHNOLOGY

● ECOLOGY

## India's goods trade deficit at 42-month low following dip in gold, crude imports

ECONOMICS &amp; DEVELOPMENT

In February 2025, India's goods trade deficit dropped to a 42-month low of \$14.05 billion, down from \$22.9 billion in January and \$19.5 billion in February 2024, driven by reduced imports of gold, silver, and crude oil. Gold and silver imports

### Lowering trade deficit

Feb. imports were the lowest since April 2023 and the trade deficit was lower than figures in Aug. 2021



stood at \$2.7 billion, the lowest since June 2024, while crude and petroleum imports were \$11.89 billion, the lowest since July 2023. Overall, exports were valued at \$36.9 billion, marking a 10.84% year-on-year decline, while imports fell to a 22-month low of \$50.9 billion.

### Leap year effect

Aditi Nayar, chief economist at ICRA, attributed part of the year-on-year decline in India's merchandise exports to the leap month's base effect. Imports shrank by 16.3% compared to the same period last year. She noted that the trade deficit was much lower than the average of over \$23 billion during the first 10 months of FY2025. As a result, she expects the current account to show a surplus of around \$5 billion in Q4 of FY2025, about 0.5% of GDP.

## Trade discussions with U.S. 'positive', says official

ECONOMICS &amp; DEVELOPMENT

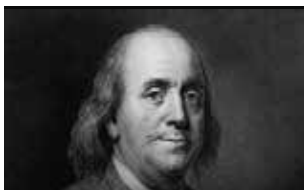
India and the U.S. are actively working to boost trade, according to Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal. He highlighted ongoing discussions on mutually beneficial issues, despite U.S. plans to impose reciprocal tariffs from April 2. Barthwal described recent talks between Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal and U.S. officials as "positive" and part of "Mission 500," which aims to increase bilateral trade from \$200 billion to \$500 billion. Negotiations on a multi-sectoral bilateral trade agreement are also underway.

### Silent on Tesla

Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal declined to comment on tariffs for U.S. premium electric cars like Tesla and the status of India's revised import policy aimed at attracting the automaker. He also did not clarify if tax benefits would extend to Tesla, as the company hasn't shown interest in domestic manufacturing. Under the Scheme to Promote Manufacturing of Electric Passenger Cars (SPMEPC), notified in March 2024, manufacturers setting up production in India can access a reduced customs duty of 15%, provided they achieve 25% domestic value addition by year three and 50% by year five.

### 'Unfair to the U.S'

U.S. President Donald Trump stated that if Tesla built a factory in India to bypass tariffs, it would be "unfair" to the U.S. He also criticized India's high car import duties during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent U.S. visit but agreed to work towards an early trade deal and resolving tariff disputes.



*"If you invest more in your education, then you are likely to get more interest in it."*

—Benjamin Franklin

## India and New Zealand to institutionalise defence, security ties, says Modi

### INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that India and New Zealand would strengthen and institutionalize their defence and maritime cooperation, including joint exercises, training, port visits, and developing a bilateral defence industry collaboration roadmap. He highlighted their joint efforts against global terrorism and cooperation in maritime security through the Combined Task Force-150 in the Indian Ocean. Additionally, Modi revealed plans to celebrate a century of sporting relations between the two nations in 2026.

India and New Zealand signed a broad MoU on defence and began discussions on a mutually beneficial Free Trade Agreement (FTA) to boost trade and investment in sectors like dairy, food processing, and pharma. Prime Minister Modi highlighted their shared stance against terrorism, referencing the 26/11 Mumbai attacks and the 2019 Christchurch attacks. Prime Minister Modi raised concerns about pro-Khalistan activities in New Zealand, particularly their push for an online "referendum" for a Sikh homeland in Punjab. Secretary (East) Jaideep Mazumdar emphasized that India alerts its partners about anti-India elements misusing democratic freedoms to glorify terror and threaten diplomats, noting New Zealand's past responsiveness. Prime Minister Luxon announced plans to expand New Zealand's diplomatic presence in India by over 60%, reaffirming his country's commitment to strengthening ties.

New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon praised the Indian community in New Zealand, highlighting their significant contributions as the third-largest ethnic group, the largest source of skilled migrants, and the second-largest source of international students. He also announced the launch of negotiations for a comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between India and New Zealand, emphasizing that enhanced trade would boost both economies and strengthen the dynamic relationship between the nations, with 300,000 Kiwi-Indians at its core. mere creature of the State".

## India, New Zealand resume trade deal talks after decade

### INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh urged the U.S. to designate the Khalistan separatist group Sikhs for Justice (SFJ) as a terrorist organization during a meeting with U.S. Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard. Singh highlighted SFJ's involvement in terrorist activities and its alleged support from Pakistan's ISI. The meeting also covered defence cooperation, information sharing, and maritime collaboration to strengthen India-U.S. ties.

U.S. Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard is on a three-day visit to India, participating in key discussions, including the 10th Raisina Dialogue. Her meeting with Defence Minister Rajnath Singh reaffirmed the growing India-U.S. defence partnership, highlighting cooperation in military exercises, defence industry integration, and maritime security. The talks also addressed tensions arising from U.S. charges against an Indian citizen over an alleged plot to kill Khalistan separatist Gurbat Singh Pannun. Singh appreciated Gabbard's goodwill toward Indian culture. Gabbard also spoke on concerns over minority persecution in Bangladesh and Islamist terrorism. Later, she met Prime Minister Narendra Modi.





**VEDHIK**  
IAS ACADEMY  
*The New Learning Mantra*

**Comprehensive Coaching For  
568 Government Jobs**

[www.vedhikiasacademy.org](http://www.vedhikiasacademy.org)

## China welcomes Modi's comments, points to 2,000-year history of bilateral exchanges

### INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

China welcomed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent statement that India and China have achieved "normalcy" at the border and are working to restore ties to pre-2020 levels while ensuring differences don't become disputes. This marks a significant shift after years of tensions, including the 2020 Galwan clashes. Modi's remarks contrast with earlier assessments by Indian Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi, who described the situation at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) as "stable but not normal," with a continued military standoff and unresolved troop withdrawal.

#### Friendly exchanges

China welcomed Prime Minister Modi's comments on India-China relations, highlighting their 2,000-year history of exchanges and advocating cooperation through the "Dance of the Dragon and the Elephant." Recent high-level visits and meetings signal potential for increased bilateral engagement, with Modi expected to visit China for the SCO Summit in June. Discussions are ongoing about resuming travel links, business visas, and the Kailash Mansarovar pilgrimage. However, analysts stress that improving ties requires addressing economic issues, like the \$100 billion trade deficit and restrictions on Chinese investments. Public sentiment in India remains negative due to unresolved border tensions, making normalization challenging.

## India and Australia agree to deepen cooperation across maritime, land, air domains

### INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

India and Australia agreed to deepen cooperation across maritime, land, and air domains during the 9th India-Australia Defence Policy Talks in New Delhi. Key focus areas include maritime domain awareness, information sharing, industry collaboration, and joint deployments. Both sides welcomed progress in defence cooperation, highlighted by more complex exercises, key agreements, and participation in major defence trade expos. The talks were led by India's Amitabh Prasad and Australia's Bernard Philip.

## Opposition walks out of RS over EPIC row, delimitation

### POLITY & GOVERNANCE

Opposition MPs from the Congress, Trinamool Congress, and Left parties walked out of the Rajya Sabha after their demand for a discussion on duplicate voter ID numbers and delimitation was denied. Ten MPs submitted notices under Rule 267 to prioritize these issues, but Deputy Chairman Harivansh rejected them, stating they didn't meet procedural requirements. Trinamool and Congress focused on the voter ID issue, while Tamil Nadu parties raised concerns about delimitation's impact on southern states.

#### Slogans raised

Opposition MPs in the Rajya Sabha pressed for discussions on various issues but staged a walkout after Deputy Chairman Harivansh rejected their notices and ruled that their statements wouldn't be recorded. Trinamool and Congress MPs sought a debate on alleged Election Commission lapses regarding duplicate voter ID numbers. DMK and CPI(M) raised concerns about the impact of delimitation on southern states. BJP highlighted atrocities against Scheduled and OBC communities in West Bengal, while CPI raised issues over Airtel and Jio's deals with Starlink. AAP demanded discussions on rising crime in Delhi, and IUML focused on youth drug addiction in Kerala.

# WE AIM TO INSPIRE YOU



## START YOUR JOURNEY WITH THE BEST

**INDIA'S TOP MOST CIVIL SERVANTS FOR COACHING**

# How climate change is affecting India's wheat production cycle

## ECOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

India recorded its warmest February in 124 years this year. The India Meteorological Department has already raised an alarm for March, saying that the month will experience above normal temperatures and more than the usual number of days with heat waves. The period coincides with the beginning of India's wheat harvest season, and extreme heat poses a grave threat for the country's second-most consumed crop, after rice.

### Wheat in India

India's wheat is mainly grown in the northwestern Indo-Gangetic plains, with key producers being Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, and Madhya Pradesh. Wheat is sown between October and December and harvested from February to April in the rabi season. For the 2025-2026 rabi marketing season, the government set a procurement target of 30 million tonnes, despite aiming for a record production of 115 million tonnes in 2024-2025. In 2024, procurement reached 26.6 million tonnes, higher than 2023 but below the 34.15 million tonne target. India banned wheat exports in May 2022 following the Russia-Ukraine war, which disrupted global supply and drove prices up.

### Heat and wheat

Climate variability isn't new, but its impact on crops like wheat becomes concerning when heat waves overlap with the growing season, says Sandeep Mahato of MSSRF. A 2022 study in the *International Journal of Molecular Sciences* highlights that rising global temperatures cause heat stress, which disrupts wheat's growth and reduces grain yield and quality. Heat stress affects key processes such as photosynthesis, respiration, hormone activity, and nutrient absorption, ultimately impacting biomass, tiller count, grain number, and size.

### Stages of wheat growth

According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, stages of wheat growth are defined based on how different organs of the plant develop. This can be broadly grouped into four stages:

Germination to emergence: This includes the growth of the seed until the seedling breaks through the soil surface and the first leaf emerges.

- Growth stage 1: Steps from emergence to double ridge. Shoots appear, and the plant growth shifts focus from producing primordial leaves to flowering structures called spikelets.
- Growth stage 2: This stage lasts from double ridge to anthesis. This is where the focus of the plant shifts from the vegetative to the reproductive stage. This is also one of the stages where the plant is comparatively more susceptible to heat stress.
- Growth stage 3: This stage includes the grain-filling period, from anthesis to maturity.

Experts highlight that the Indian Ocean is warming rapidly, with a 2024 study predicting it could reach a "near-permanent heat wave state" by the end of the century, increasing marine heat waves from 20 to 220–250 days per year. This warming affects India's monsoon, delaying the kharif crop season and pushing the rabi season, including wheat, into hotter months. Rising temperatures shorten wheat's grain-filling period, leading to lighter grains, reduced starch, and lower yields, impacting quality and market prices. Additionally, heat stress drives farmers to overuse fertilizers and other resources, worsening agricultural challenges.

### Adaptation and mitigation

Experts highlight food security as key to tackling heat stress on wheat crops. Farmers often rely on older varieties due to accessibility challenges, while climate-resilient varieties alone aren't a complete solution. Addressing yield gaps and improving resource management are crucial. Immediate support can include compensation, but long-term strategies should focus on early sowing, shorter-duration crops, and better agricultural practices. A multi-pronged approach is needed, combining scientific research, financial aid, technological advancements, and farmer education to protect crops from rising temperatures.

**The  
More  
You Learn,  
The  
More  
You Earn**

[www.vedhikiasacademy.org](http://www.vedhikiasacademy.org)

## Recipe for failure

### INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The U.S. conducted new airstrikes on Yemen, targeting Hodeidah and Al Jawf, in response to Houthi threats to international shipping. This follows earlier strikes that killed 53 people and injured 98. President Trump blamed Iran for supporting the Houthis, warning that any future Houthi attacks would be considered Iranian actions and met with severe consequences.

Donald Trump, despite pledging to end wars, began bombing Yemen shortly after taking office, targeting Houthi missile sites and leaders to prevent attacks on Red Sea shipping lanes. The U.S. hinted at a prolonged campaign, while the Houthis reported casualties and retaliated by launching missiles and drones at U.S. warships.

The Houthis, who seized Sana'a in 2014, declared war on Israel in 2023 after Israel's Gaza offensive. They've attacked over 100 vessels in the Red Sea, pausing briefly after a January 19 ceasefire. The U.S. struck the Houthis, suspecting plans to resume attacks, aiming to send a message to Iran, their backer. Trump's strikes risk deepening conflict, as past bombings by Saudi Arabia, the U.S., and Israel failed to weaken the Houthis, who control half of Yemen. The article argues that diplomacy, not bombing, is key to stabilizing the region.

## A job in time

### POLITY & GOVERNANCE

With rising seasonal influenza cases in Delhi-NCR, experts stress the need to promote adult vaccination. Predominant strains this season are Influenza A and B. Though flu symptoms resemble the common cold, they stem from different viruses and can lead to severe illness or death if untreated. In India, flu peaks occur from January to March and August to October. The country has a robust surveillance system for Influenza-like Illness (ILI) and Severe Acute Respiratory Infections (SARI), enhanced post-COVID-19. Monitoring circulating strains is crucial for timely vaccination and managing seasonal outbreaks.

Governments need to prepare for influenza outbreaks by focusing on high-risk groups like children, senior citizens, and those with chronic respiratory conditions. Increasing awareness about flu vaccination is crucial, with periodic shots benefiting all age groups. While child vaccination is prioritized, adult immunization is often neglected and depends on State initiatives. Targeted, urgent awareness campaigns are essential to highlight that vaccines save lives.

## New Delhi's perilous recalibration with the Taliban

### INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

India is strengthening ties with the Taliban, with reports that Prime Minister Modi may allow the regime to appoint a new envoy to its embassy in New Delhi. This follows a high-level meeting in January between Indian and Taliban officials to discuss political and economic relations. India reopened its Kabul embassy in 2022, but accepting a Taliban diplomat would mark a major shift, signaling near-recognition of the regime. Most countries avoid this due to the Taliban's harsh treatment of women, described as "gender apartheid" by the UN. India sees this as a strategic move to gain influence in Afghanistan.

### China's quick moves

China has strengthened ties with the Taliban, becoming the first country to accept a Taliban envoy and funding infrastructure projects in Afghanistan. Beijing is also considering integrating the Taliban into its Belt and Road Initiative, boosting its influence. Meanwhile, India sees an opportunity to outpace rival Pakistan, whose once-close relationship with the Taliban has soured as the regime seeks independence and builds ties with China, Russia, and Central Asian nations, leaving Pakistan with little sway in Kabul.

### A wave of terror

Engaging with the Taliban poses risks for India, as Afghanistan has become a hub for terrorism under Taliban rule. The Islamic State (IS) has carried out deadly attacks targeting the Taliban and its allies, including China and Russia. Pakistan's ties with the Taliban have collapsed over the regime's failure to curb terror groups like Tehrik-e-Taliban, which has intensified attacks on Pakistani soil. India is also a target, with IS claiming responsibility for an attack on its consulate in Jalalabad and reportedly seeking to recruit operatives for large-scale attacks in India.

# WE AIM TO INSPIRE YOU

**Need for caution**

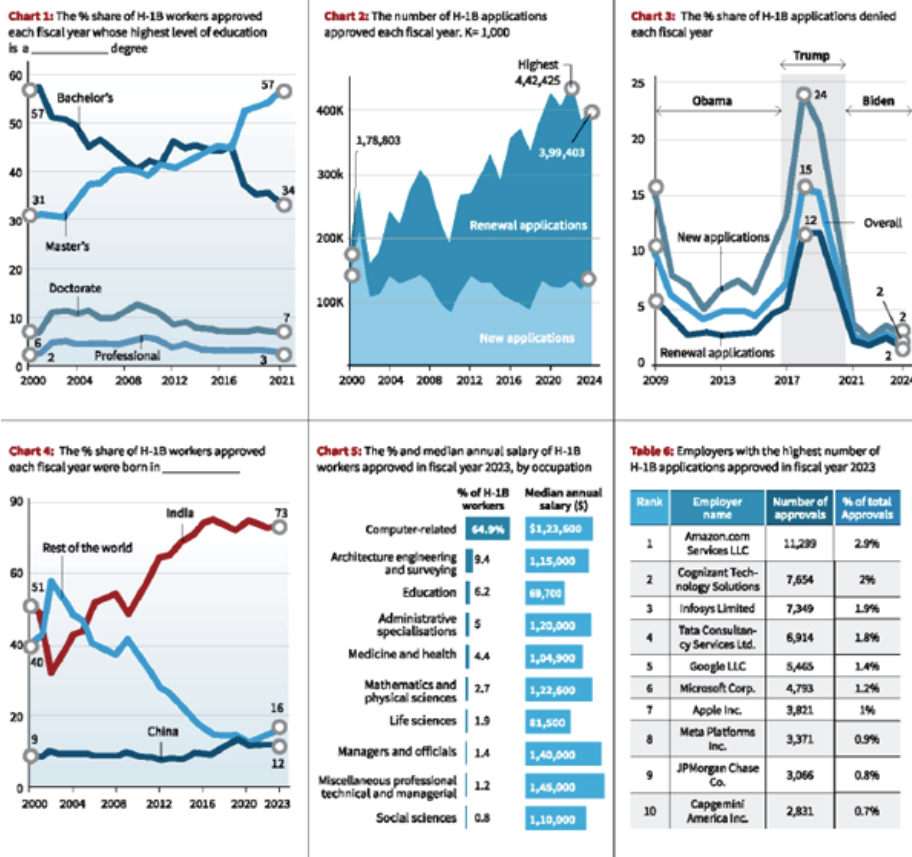
India should prioritize demands for a terrorism-free Afghanistan before deepening ties with the Taliban, urging cooperation against the Islamic State and a break from the Tehrik-e Taliban. Afghanistan's long history of instability and terrorism makes engagement risky. India should learn from China and Pakistan's troubled experiences with the Taliban and carefully weigh the dangers, considering its own history of terrorism.

# H-1B workers with master's degree doubled in 2020s from 2000s

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

### A profile of H-1B workers

The charts are sourced from Pew Research Centre's "What we know about the U.S. H-1B visa program"



The landscape of H-1B visa approvals has undergone a dramatic transformation over the past two decades, according to data collated by the Pew Research Survey.

At the start of the millennium, 57% of approved H-1B workers had a bachelor's degree, while only 31% had a master's degree. By 2021, these numbers had flipped — only 34% held a bachelor's degree and 57% had a master's degree (Chart 1). This means that a four-year degree has become less sufficient for securing a visa.

In the 2000s, about 10% of approved H-1B applications were renewals, while most were new. By the 2020s, renewals had grown to one-third of all approvals (Chart 2). So, it has become increasingly tough for new applicants to secure a H-1B visa.

The denial rate for H-1B applications dropped to a record low of around 2% under former President Joe Biden, down from a peak of 15% during Donald Trump's first term. Under Barack Obama, it had fluctuated between 5% and 10% (Chart 3). This data gains prominence with Mr. Trump serving a second term as President, though Republicans are divided over the skilled immigration issue.

In the 2000s, Indians had accounted for 40-50%

of approvals. This rose to over 70% from the mid-2010s (Chart 4).

In 2023, 65% of approved H-1B workers were hired for computer-related jobs. They also received a higher median annual salary than other job types, though managers had a significantly higher average salary (Chart 5).

In 2023, Amazon sponsored the highest number of H-1B visas (2.9% of total approvals), followed by Cognizant Technology Solutions, Infosys, Tata Consultancy, and Google (Table 6).

# WE AIM TO INSPIRE YOU

The More You Learn, The More You Earn



www.vedhikiasacademy.org

# The barriers faced by construction workers

## POLITY & GOVERNANCE

Construction is India's fastest-growing sector, contributing 9% to the GDP and projected to reach \$1.4 trillion by 2025, with around 3 crore workers expected by 2030. However, Larsen and Toubro's N. Subrahmanyam recently raised concerns over labour shortages, attributing it to workers' reluctance to relocate due to welfare schemes. This view oversimplifies the structural issues faced by construction workers.

### A fragmented journey

Construction workers, especially migrants, face job insecurity, poor working conditions, and difficulty accessing welfare benefits despite the BOCW Act, 1996. Though 5.65 crore workers are registered with State construction boards, much of the ₹70,000 crore collected for their welfare remains unutilised due to systemic challenges. Key barriers include the lack of permanent addresses, making it hard to obtain identity and residence proofs. Workers must also provide an 'employment certificate' proving 90 days of work annually, which contractors often refuse to issue. Inconsistent verification processes across States further complicate access to welfare.

Despite State governments collecting a 1-2% construction cess under the BOCW Act, about 75% remains unutilised due to fragmented worker databases, inconsistent verification, and complex registration processes. Seasonal disruptions like heat waves and construction bans leave workers without timely financial relief due to administrative delays and a lack of digital infrastructure for quick disbursement. Migrant workers face added challenges as welfare benefits aren't transferable across States, disrupting support and discouraging registration.

### Proposed solutions

To tackle labour shortages in construction, key reforms are proposed: creating a unified national labour ID system to enable inter-State portability of welfare benefits, integrating BOCW registrations with e-Shram for easier access. State governments should adopt digital platforms for streamlined welfare delivery, using Aadhaar for verification and real-time tracking. Simplifying documentation and easing verification protocols can improve registration, supported by on-site camps for bulk enrolment. Additionally, investing in skill development and ensuring safer, more dignified work conditions will boost productivity and worker retention. Addressing these systemic barriers is crucial for building a stable, skilled workforce.

# Why are electoral reforms necessary?

## POLITY & GOVERNANCE

The Election Commission (EC) has invited political parties to discuss strengthening the election process. This is in wake of the allegations of manipulation of electoral rolls during the recently concluded assembly elections and issues raised with respect to duplicate Electoral Photo Identity Card (EPIC) numbers in different States.

### What are the legal provisions?

Article 324 of the Indian Constitution grants the Election Commission (EC) authority over electoral rolls and election conduct, guided by the Representation of the People Act, 1950, and related rules. Voting methods have evolved significantly since 1952. Initially, voters dropped blank ballots into candidate-specific boxes. In 1962, ballot papers listing candidates' names and symbols were introduced. Since 2004, Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) have been used nationwide, and since 2019, EVMs have been backed by 100% Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) slips in all constituencies.

### What are the issues?

Several issues have been raised regarding the voting and counting process. A Public Interest Litigation (PIL) sought a return to paper ballots and 100% VVPAT-EVM count matching, but the Supreme Court dismissed both demands in April 2024. However, the Court allowed candidates who placed second or third to request verification of the burnt memory in 5% of EVMs per assembly segment within seven days of result declaration, to be conducted by engineers from EVM manufacturers if tampering is suspected.

Two major concerns have been raised about electoral rolls. First, before the Maharashtra and Delhi Assembly elections, opposition parties alleged that fake voters were added to benefit the ruling party. Second, identical EPIC numbers were found for voters in different States, raising further suspicions. The Election Commission (EC) explained that this duplication resulted from the earlier decentralised system before transitioning to the centralised ERONET platform and clarified that voters can only cast their vote at their designated polling station.

The election campaign process in India faces several major issues. First, star campaigners often use abusive language, appeal to caste or communal sentiments, and make unsubstantiated allegations. Second, candidates frequently

exceed expenditure limits, while political parties face no spending caps, contributing to rising election costs — estimated at ₹1,00,000 crore in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections — which fuels corruption. Third, criminalisation of politics is a serious concern, with 46% of elected MPs in 2024 having criminal cases, and 31% facing serious charges like rape, murder, and kidnapping.

**What are the required reforms?**

Free and fair elections is part of the basic structure of our Constitution as declared by the Supreme Court in various cases.

To improve the electoral process, several reforms are suggested for EVM and VVPAT handling. The sample size for EVM-VVPAT matching should be scientifically determined by dividing each State into large regions, with a full VVPAT count in any region where errors occur to boost confidence. Introducing 'totaliser' machines, as recommended by the EC in 2016, could aggregate votes from 14 EVMs before revealing candidate-wise counts, enhancing voter secrecy. Additionally, candidates placed second or third should use the Supreme Court's direction to request verification of 5% of EVMs if tampering is suspected, addressing concerns and curbing political speculation.

To improve the electoral process, several reforms are proposed. For voter verification, linking Aadhaar with EPIC cards could be considered after addressing privacy concerns, while the EC should remove duplicate voter IDs to ensure unique EPIC numbers. Campaign reforms include empowering the EC to revoke "Star Campaigner" status for serious Model Code of Conduct violations and enforcing stricter actions against parties under Paragraph 16A of the Symbols Order. Election expenditure laws should limit financial assistance from parties to candidates and set ceilings on party spending. Additionally, strict enforcement of the Supreme Court's mandate for candidates and parties to disclose criminal records three times before elections would help voters make informed choices.

The EC and various political parties should engage in a meaningful discussion on all these aspects so that the campaign and electoral processes instil confidence in voters at large.

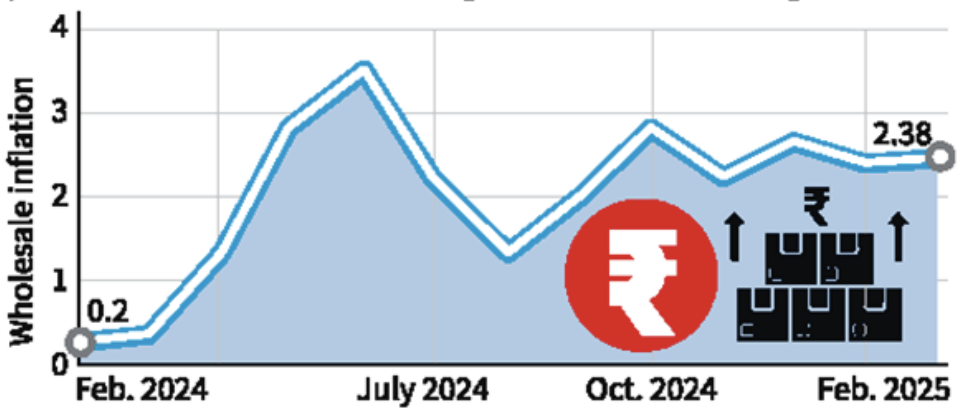
## Manufactured items hasten Feb. WPI inflation to 2.38%

### Economics & Development

ECONOMICS & DEVELOPMENT

#### Slight rise

**WPI increased marginally after 3 consecutive months of decline as prices of some food items like vegetable oils and beverages rose**



Source: CMIE

Wholesale price inflation rose to 2.38% in February from 2.31% in January, driven by higher costs of manufactured food products, according to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. Manufactured product prices hit a two-year high at 2.86%, while core WPI inflation (excluding food) increased to 1.3% from 1% in January, partly due to rising international metal prices. Primary articles continued to dis-inflate for the sixth month at -2.81%, and food price inflation dropped to a four-month low of 3.38%. Non-food primary inflation rose to 4.84%, mainly due to a lower base. The fuel and power sector remained in deflation for the seventh month, with prices falling 0.71% in February, compared to a 2.78% drop in January.



**VEDHIK**  
IAS ACADEMY  
*The New Learning Mantra*

**START YOUR JOURNEY WITH THE**  
**BEST**

INDIA'S TOP MOST CIVIL SERVANTS FOR COACHING



# Infosys eyes space-tech entry via bid for satellite systems

## SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY



Infosys is exploring opportunities in India's space tech sector, joining a consortium with GalaxEye and another R&D firm to compete for IN-SPACE's ₹1,500 crore satellite constellation project. Six private teams, including consortiums with companies like SatSure, Pixxel, Dhruva Space, Astra, Bharat Electronics, Tata Advanced Systems, Centum, and Ananth Technologies, have been shortlisted through an Expression of Interest process. The shortlisted teams must submit financial and operational plans by March 31, after which IN-SPACE will select one team. Infosys stands out as an IT services company venturing into the geospatial sector.

### Geospatial data

India's private sector is set to play a larger role in providing geospatial data, traditionally managed by

ISRO. If selected, Infosys and its consortium, including GalaxEye, will handle the end-to-end design, building, and operation of a satellite constellation under a PPP model, gaining access to valuable space data and boosting their presence in the global geospatial market. IN-SPACE invited proposals in July 2024, with the chosen entity expected to oversee satellite design, launch, monitoring, and data processing. Infosys previously invested \$2 million in GalaxEye, recognizing the potential for AI-driven insights across industries. GalaxEye is currently working on its proposal.

# Bangladesh's Yunus to visit China, meet President Xi Jinping

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Bangladeshi leader Muhammad Yunus will visit China from March 26-29 to strengthen bilateral ties as relations with India cool following the ouster of Sheikh Hasina. Yunus is set to meet President Xi Jinping, receive an honorary doctorate from Peking University, and explore investment opportunities to position Bangladesh as a manufacturing hub. Talks may also cover the Rohingya refugee crisis.

China has previously mediated between Bangladesh and Myanmar on Rohingya repatriation, though progress stalled due to Myanmar's resistance. Bangladesh's interim Foreign Minister visited China in January, marking his first official trip abroad. China has expressed strong support for Bangladesh's sovereignty. Meanwhile, UN Secretary-General António Guterres recently visited Bangladesh to assess the Rohingya refugee situation and discussed domestic reforms with leader Muhammad Yunus, praising Bangladesh's cooperation with the UN and its peacekeeping contributions.

# Trump to speak with Putin today on ending Ukraine war

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



U.S. President Donald Trump is set to speak with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday, aiming to advance efforts to end the war in Ukraine. Trump mentioned the planned conversation while traveling on Air Force One, and the Kremlin confirmed Putin's participation. Trump hinted at possible developments, noting significant work over the weekend to push for peace.

### Little details

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov confirmed that Trump and Putin will speak on Tuesday but provided no details. Meanwhile, Ukraine launched a drone attack on southern Russia, causing a fire at an oil refinery, while Russia targeted Ukraine with nearly 200 drones.



# VEDHIK

## IAS ACADEMY

*The New Learning Mantra*

# START YOUR JOURNEY WITH THE BEST

**INDIA'S  
TOP MOST  
CIVIL SERVANTS  
FOR COACHING**

[www.vedhikiasacademy.org](http://www.vedhikiasacademy.org)

*Head Office:*

**Vedhik IAS Academy**  
Mercy Estate,  
MG Road, Ravipuram,  
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.

*GCC Office:*

**Bobscoedu,**

Bobsco Educational Solutions WLL  
Office No: 201, Floor: 2  
AL RAYA SHOPPING CENTRE WLL  
Bldg. 517, Road 2408, Area 324,  
Al Fateh, Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain  
[www.bobscoedu.com](http://www.bobscoedu.com)