



● POLITY

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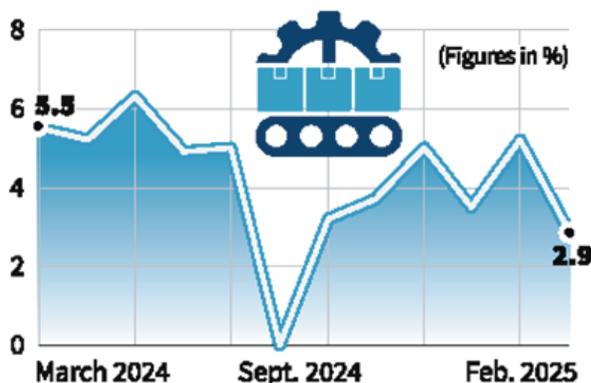
● ECOLOGY

India's Industrial output growth slows to a six-month low of 2.9% in February: Ministry

ECONOMICS & DEVELOPMENT

Slackening growth

India's industrial production growth decelerated to a six-month low of 2.9 per cent in February 2025



The chart shows India's rate of production growth as per the IIP from March 2024 to February 2025

SOURCE: MINISTRY OF STATISTICS AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

In February 2025, the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) grew at its slowest pace in six months, rising by just 2.9%, significantly below the 4% growth expected by Reuters. The slowdown was attributed to a high base effect and weaker growth in key sectors. Mining growth dropped to 1.6% from 8.1% a year earlier, manufacturing slowed to 2.9% from 4.9%, and electricity production declined to 3.6% from 7.6%, according to data from the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.

Capital goods output

In February 2025, capital goods output saw the highest growth among use-based categories, rising by 8.2% compared to 1.7% a year earlier. However, all other categories experienced slower growth. Intermediate goods had the weakest growth at 1.5%, while consumer non-durables output declined by 2.1%, a smaller drop than the 3.2% decline in the same month last year.

Inter-mediate goods saw the weakest growth at 1.5%, while consumer non-durables continued to decline, though at a slower rate of 2.1%.

'Muted nature'

In February 2025, industrial output growth weakened across all use-based sub-sectors compared to the previous month, marking the first such decline in five months and highlighting the volatile nature of industrial growth, according to Paras Jasrai of India Ratings. Manufacturing led the overall slowdown, though increased power demand helped soften the impact. Despite the slowdown, capital and infrastructure goods output remained strong. Aastha Gudwani of Barclays noted that industrial production may have picked up in March due to inventory build-up ahead of U.S. tariff announcements. Intermediate goods saw the weakest growth at 1.5%, while consumer non-durables continued to decline, though at a slower rate of 2.1%.

China imposes 125% tariff on U.S. goods

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Tit-for-tat

April 2: As part of 'Liberation day', Trump imposed an additional 34% tariff on all Chinese imports, bringing the total to 54%

April 4: China responded with an additional 34% tariff on all U.S. products

April 7: Trump retaliated with 50% more tariff, raising total tariffs on Chinese imports to 104%

April 9: China retaliated with an additional 50% tariff, raising total tariffs on U.S. imports to 84%

April 9: Trump once again raised the total tariffs on Chinese imports to 145%



April 11: China responded by hiking its total tariffs on U.S. imports to 125%

On Friday, China raised tariffs on U.S. imports to 125% in response to the U.S.'s total duties of 145%, continuing the ongoing tariff dispute between the two nations. Despite expressing interest in dialogue, China warned that further U.S. tariffs would be economically meaningless and vowed to ignore them while promising firm countermeasures if its interests were seriously harmed. The U.S. had earlier increased tariffs on Chinese goods, including a 20% hike introduced by President Trump after taking office. Trump defended the policy on social media, calling it successful and exciting. Notably, China is now battling the U.S. alone, as Trump paused tariffs on other countries.

Lawsuit filed

China has responded to the U.S.'s increased tariffs by

raising its own duties on American imports to 125% and filing a lawsuit against the U.S. at the World Trade Organization (WTO). Despite this escalation, China signaled openness to dialogue, urging the U.S. to end its pressure tactics for meaningful negotiations. Chinese officials reiterated that China does not seek a trade war but is prepared to defend its interests. The tariff hike follows the U.S.'s move to impose a total of 145% in duties on Chinese goods, including a 20% increase introduced by President Trump earlier in the year.

Jaishankar calls for swift deals with the West

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, speaking at the Carnegie India Global Technology Summit, emphasized the need for India to reassess its openness to the global economy in light of recent U.S. tariffs. He highlighted the importance of advancing free trade agreements with the U.S., EU, and U.K., stating that successful negotiations could significantly shift India's economic position. Jaishankar advocated for stronger partnerships with Western economies, citing their competitiveness and openness. He also stressed the importance of aligning domestic regulations with collaborative frameworks like the U.S.-India iCET. On U.S. protectionist policies, he noted they reflect broader global trends rather than being unexpected.

The Beijing India Report as milestone and opportunity

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Thirty years after the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which set a global agenda for gender equality across 12 areas, India has made progress by enacting key laws like the Domestic Violence Act and the POSH Act. However, despite these efforts, implementation remains weak, leading to a gap between women's legal rights and their everyday realities.

An important integration

Gender inequality and the climate crisis are major challenges that must be addressed together, especially in rural India. The Beijing India Report 2024 lacks a strong climate perspective, missing a key opportunity to integrate gender and climate concerns. Rural women, who are heavily involved in agriculture, face limited access to resources and decision-making. Climate change worsens their vulnerabilities, leading to health issues like infertility and menstrual problems, and economic hardships from reduced agricultural productivity, income loss, and migration. Integrating gender and climate is crucial for achieving equality, sustainability, and human rights.

Climate policies and financing largely focus on clean energy and infrastructure, with minimal attention to gender, poverty, or farmers—only around 6% of policies mention women. In India, climate-related resource scarcity increases women's unpaid care work, already making up 71% of their daily workload, which could rise to 8.3 hours per day by 2050 without climate action. Health impacts are also severe: over half of pregnant women in India are anaemic, often due to food insecurity, which raises anaemia risk by 1.6 times. Additionally, rising temperatures are linked to increased intimate partner violence, with each 1°C increase causing an 8% rise in physical and 7.3% rise in sexual violence.

The role of women in adaptation

Women, especially in rural and indigenous communities, play a crucial role in climate adaptation and mitigation through their traditional knowledge of sustainable agriculture and resource management. They preserve climate-resilient seeds, lead local initiatives, and are often first responders during disasters. Women produce half of the world's food and contribute significantly through collective efforts to improve productivity and protect ecosystems. Urban women may prioritize pollution and waste management, while indigenous women focus on issues like forest-based livelihoods (Mahua), safety in resource conflicts (Mao), and distress migration. The Beijing India Report lacks a strong gender-climate linkage and must include gender-responsive climate action, relevant data, and tailored indicators to address climate change's gendered impacts.

There is a need for gender-responsive climate budgeting to prevent greenwashing and ensure women are not merely used as conduits for resources. Rural women require platforms to participate in climate decision-making, and there is a strong demand for climate support hubs offering disaster, health, safety, migration risk awareness, and sexual and reproductive rights services. Promoting women's leadership in green energy initiatives and local political climate action is vital, as is investing in women's education and capacity for climate action. Addressing human-animal conflict with a gender lens and conducting more research on the gender-climate nexus are essential. Closing the gender gap in agricultural resources could boost food production by 20%-30%, potentially feeding 100-150 million more people.

At the policy level, there is a need for gender-responsive National and State Action Plans on Climate Change (NAPCC and SAPCC), with a focus on grassroots implementation. Key priorities include strengthening disaster preparedness and response for vulnerable women, addressing trafficking risks, and supporting elderly women. Immediate policies

should promote livelihood diversification, non-farm livelihoods, and skill-building opportunities for women to help them adapt to climate change's impacts on agriculture.

Private sector participation is important

Green funds should prioritize women-led innovations, technological interventions, and women's participation in the green economy, supporting the development of green businesses and services. More funds should focus on human capital in climate-vulnerable areas to build resilience. The private sector plays a key role in investing in projects that empower women, promote gender-inclusive practices, and provide access to climate-resilient technologies. Strong partnerships between government, civil society, research institutions, the private sector, and international organizations are essential, with a focus on knowledge sharing, capacity building, and empowering women as leaders in climate resilience for a sustainable future.

Giving shape to the university of the future

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

The National Education Policy aims to transform India's higher education system by creating large, multidisciplinary institutions that encourage cross-disciplinary education, discussion, debate, and research. To achieve this, the existing system must evolve from multidisciplinary campuses to spaces fostering collaborative teaching, research, and integrated disciplinary frameworks. Multidisciplinary involves multiple disciplines working in parallel without interaction, while cross-disciplinary encourages collaboration between disciplines without fully integrating knowledge. An interdisciplinary approach, however, synthesizes methods, insights, and concepts from different disciplines to solve complex real-world problems.

The multidisciplinary campus

To establish multidisciplinary higher education institutions, India can either expand existing single-stream institutes by adding new departments (e.g., IITs incorporating humanities and social sciences) or create university clusters by connecting institutions like a commerce college with an arts and science college. While clustering could be cost-effective and efficient in the short term, challenges arise due to the prevalence of single-stream institutions, especially B.Ed colleges. Additionally, new multidisciplinary universities will need to be created in every district by 2030. Research suggests that having a single multidisciplinary campus per district is more effective for both education and research efficiency than managing multiple campuses across districts.

Cross-disciplinary learning and practice

The university of the future must not only have multiple departments but also foster collaboration and openness to diverse perspectives. To achieve this, both students and faculty should be exposed to different disciplines. Students should take courses outside their core areas, and faculty should engage in cross-disciplinary research to address complex problems. This collaboration can lead to the creation of cross-disciplinary courses, such as a joint course on "Economic changes and class structures in Indian cinema" involving economics, sociology, and film studies. Sustaining such initiatives requires additional funding, as seen in the U.S. National Science Foundation's Integrative Graduate Education and Research Traineeship (IGERT) program, which invests in developing researchers with both broad interdisciplinary skills and deep knowledge in specific fields.

On inter-disciplinary thought

Cross-disciplinary research fosters collaboration, while interdisciplinary research requires deeper integration between disciplines. While some fields, like biotechnology, medicine, and biology, have successfully integrated disciplines, others, such as engineering and architecture, face challenges in publishing integrated research and advancing academically due to a lack of clear disciplinary fit. To overcome these issues, reforms in funding, publishing, and faculty hiring are needed. Implementing these changes will be costly and require long-term public spending reprioritization and careful governance. The goal is to create a higher education system similar to the successful, organically developed U.S. model, which has evolved over a century in a competitive, unregulated environment.



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SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Colossal Biosciences, an American company led by Harvard geneticist George Church, is working on de-extinction to bring back the woolly mammoth to combat global warming. The idea is that reintroducing mammoths to the Arctic tundra, where they once roamed, could help restore grasslands, which absorb less heat than shrub forests and help decelerate warming. As temperatures rise, melting permafrost releases methane, a potent greenhouse gas, and the reintroduction of large, cold-resistant animals aims to mitigate this effect. However, the grasslands can't fully stop warming. Colossal Biosciences is working to revive extinct species like the woolly mammoth by editing genes to create hybrid embryos in elephants. They've also experimented with the dire wolf, though critics argue the result is a "strange-looking gray wolf" due to only 20 gene edits. While the technological achievement is impressive, the idea of using de-extinction for conservation is criticized. Critics argue that focusing on such long-term, speculative projects diverts resources from urgent conservation efforts needed to address the rapid extinction of current species due to habitat loss and human encroachment. The scientific community needs stricter guidelines for using gene-editing technology.

Surrender policy is not a complete solution: Maoists

INTERNAL SECURITY



An unidentified militant was killed in Kishtwar district, Jammu, as an anti-militancy operation entered its third day. The operation, which began on April 9 in the Chhatru forest, involved a joint search and destroy mission by the Army and J&K Police. Despite harsh terrain and weather, the Army continues its efforts. In a separate operation in Udhampur, militants remain untraced after a firefight on April 9. Northern Army Commander Lt. Gen. M.V. Suchindra Kumar praised the White Knight Corps for their swift response, reaffirming the Army's commitment to keeping Jammu and Kashmir terror-free.

Body recovered

The body of Mukhtar Ahmad, a youth missing since February 13, was found in Veshow Nallah, Kulgam, on Friday. Ahmad, along with two others, had disappeared from the Mah

Ashmuji area, and all three were from the Gujjar tribal community. Tribal leaders have protested and accused J&K Police of misconduct during the protests. In response, the J&K government initiated a judicial inquiry into the deaths. PDP leader Guftar Ahmed criticized BJP leader Chander Prakash Ganga's remarks labeling Gujjars as traitors and smugglers, with Ganga calling for strict action against the community for alleged involvement in bovine smuggling and supporting militants.

Developed nations are more reliable trading partners, says Commerce Minister

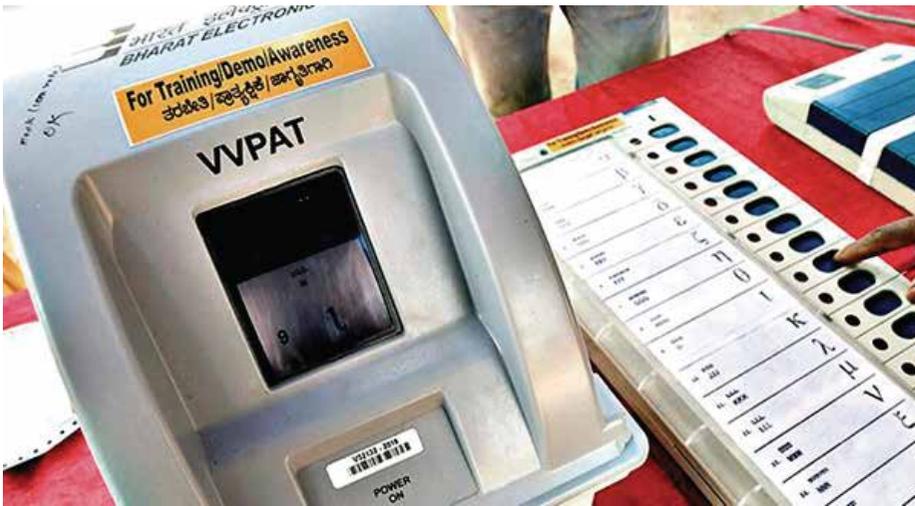
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal expressed a preference for India to strengthen trade ties with European and North American countries rather than China. Speaking at the Global Technology Summit, he noted that India is not encouraging significant Chinese investment and emphasized aligning with developed nations that uphold fair trade, mutual trust, and reciprocity. Goyal also blamed China for the instability caused by U.S. tariffs, reiterating India's aim to partner with countries that offer equal business opportunities and honest practices.

Union Minister Piyush Goyal stated that Indians were largely shielded from the impact of U.S. tariffs and noted industry optimism prior to a 90-day pause in the measures. He criticized wealthy nations, indirectly referring to China, for labeling themselves as "developing" to gain trade advantages. Goyal avoided setting a deadline for the U.S.–India trade deal, stressing the need for a fair and balanced agreement that protects national interests. Regarding Europe, he criticized the EU's imposition of non-trade issues, such as strict climate standards, warning that such conditions could hinder trade agreements with other countries.

Indian EVMs not connected to Internet or Wi-Fi, says EC after U.S. official's comments

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



In response to U.S. intelligence claims by Tulsi Gabbard about the vulnerability of electronic voting systems, the Election Commission of India clarified that its electronic voting machines (EVMs) are secure, functioning like simple calculators without any connectivity to the Internet, Wi-Fi, or Infrared. Unlike systems in other countries that involve complex networks, India's EVMs are standalone devices. Voters can verify their choice via VVPAT slips, and vote counting is fast and tamper-proof, with machines securely stored at all times.

India's Election Commission emphasized that its EVMs have passed Supreme Court scrutiny and are routinely verified by political parties, with over five crore

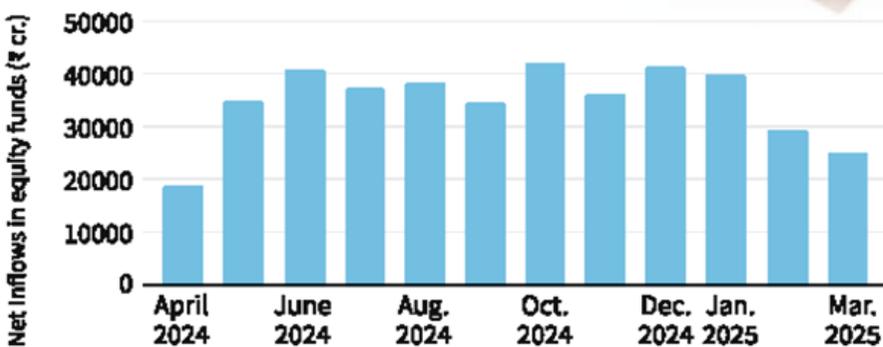
VVPAT slips successfully matched during vote counting. This comes after U.S. official Tulsi Gabbard raised concerns about vulnerabilities in electronic voting systems and called for paper ballots to ensure trust in U.S. elections. Elon Musk also previously advocated for eliminating EVMs due to hacking risks. In response, former Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar clarified that India's EVMs differ from U.S. systems, which use more complex electronic voting mechanisms.

Equity MF inflows sink to an 11-month low amid volatility

ECONOMICS & DEVELOPMENT

Losing appeal

The flows have dipped to an 11-month low in March, registering a 14% decline compared with February



Source: Association of Mutual Funds In India (AMFI)

Net inflows into equity mutual fund schemes in India fell by 14.4% in March 2025 to ₹25,082 crore, continuing a three-month decline amid global market volatility, according to AMFI data. Sectoral and thematic funds saw the sharpest drop, with net inflows plunging 97% to just ₹170 crore — the steepest decline since June 2023. SIP (Systematic Investment Plan) accounts also declined for the third consecutive month, falling to 8.11 crore in March from 8.26 crore in February, with SIP contributions slightly decreasing to ₹25,926 crore.

India 'eyeing win-win interim deal' with U.S. during the 90-day pause

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

India and the U.S. are actively working on finalizing an interim trade deal during the 90-day tariff pause announced by President Donald Trump. Discussions are ongoing through video conferences and planned visits, aiming for a "win-win" outcome. While a 10% baseline tariff remains, the 26% levy on India is temporarily suspended. A broader bilateral trade agreement (BTA) is expected by fall 2025, with the terms of reference already signed. Negotiations include both tariff and non-tariff issues, such as intellectual property, digital trade, data localisation, and government procurement.

Core focus

Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal emphasized that India's national interests will be the top priority in trade negotia-

tions, stating, "We never negotiate at gunpoint." In 2024, India had a trade surplus with the U.S., exporting goods worth \$77.51 billion while importing \$42.19 billion, resulting in a trade imbalance of over \$35 billion in India's favor.

China, EU must 'jointly resist unilateral bullying', says Xi

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



Chinese President Xi Jinping called on the European Union to cooperate with China in opposing U.S. trade tariffs, which he termed "unilateral bullying." During a meeting with Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, Xi emphasized joint efforts to defend legitimate rights and global fairness. Sanchez supported continued EU-China cooperation despite trade tensions and, breaking from the EU stance, urged fair trade and opposed high tariffs on Chinese electric cars. Spain imports €45 billion worth of goods from China but exports only €7.4 billion to it.



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New Delhi, Delhi-110022

Regional office

Vedhik IAS Academy
202, Raheja Chambers, 12,
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GCC Office:

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Office No: 201, Floor: 2
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