

BrainBuzz Academy

UPSC Current Affairs - 2-Feb-25

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International Relations

U.S. Imposes High Tariffs on Mexico, Canada, and China, Triggering Retaliation



U.S. Imposes High Tariffs on Mexico, Canada, and China, Triggering Retaliation

Introduction

On February 1, 2025, U.S. President Donald Trump issued an executive order enforcing steep tariffs on imports from Mexico, Canada, and China. This decision, aimed at curbing illegal immigration and fentanyl trafficking, has sparked strong reactions from the affected nations. The move has also raised concerns about inflation, economic growth, and the possibility of escalating trade tensions.

Tariff Details

A 10% tariff was imposed on all imports from China.

A 25% tariff was placed on imports from Mexico and Canada.

Energy imports from Canada, including oil, natural gas, and electricity, were subjected to a 10% tariff.

The order included no exemptions, raising concerns among industries reliant on imported materials such as lumber, steel, and automobiles.

A provision was included to increase tariffs further if retaliatory actions were taken by other nations.

Justification for the Tariffs

President Trump cited national security and economic concerns as the primary reasons for the new tariffs. The administration **aimed to pressure:**

Mexico and Canada to take stronger measures against illegal immigration into the U.S.

All three countries to restrict the manufacturing and export of illicit fentanyl.

The White House defended the decision as necessary to protect American interests, despite acknowledging potential economic risks such as increased costs for businesses and consumers.

Reactions from Canada and Mexico

Canada's Response

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau strongly condemned the move, calling it a betrayal of U.S.-Canada relations.

Canada responded with matching 25% tariffs on \$155 billion worth of U.S. imports, including alcohol and fruit.

Trudeau urged Canadians to prioritize domestic products over American goods.

Mexico's Response

President Claudia Sheinbaum rejected U.S. claims linking Mexican officials to criminal organizations.

Mexico imposed retaliatory tariffs and other economic measures to counteract the U.S. decision.

Economic and Political Implications

Impact on Inflation

Economic experts predict rising prices for groceries, fuel, housing, and automobiles due to increased import costs.

A report from The Budget Lab at Yale estimates an average \$1,170 income loss per U.S. household as a direct consequence of the tariffs.

The Trump administration acknowledged potential fuel and energy price hikes, but emphasized national security priorities.

Potential Trade War Consequences

Analysts warn of an escalating trade war that could slow economic growth across North America.

The tariffs are seen as a direct challenge to free trade agreements such as the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA).

Global economic uncertainty may increase, affecting investments and supply chains.

Political Reactions in the U.S.

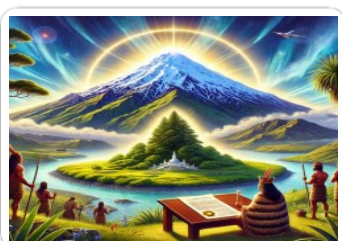
Democrats have strongly opposed the tariffs, arguing that they will worsen inflation and raise consumer costs.

Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer criticized the policy, highlighting its impact on essential goods like tomatoes, cars, and household items.

Conclusion

The U.S. decision to impose high tariffs on Mexico, Canada, and China has sparked a global economic debate, with strong retaliatory measures from affected countries. While the Trump administration justifies the move as necessary for national security, economic experts warn of inflationary risks, slowed growth, and potential trade conflicts. The long-term impact on trade relationships and economic stability remains uncertain, making this a critical issue to watch in the coming months.

Mount Taranaki Granted Legal Personhood: A Landmark Decision in New Zealand



Introduction

On January 30, 2025, New Zealand took a historic step by recognizing Mount Taranaki as a legal person. This unprecedented decision grants the mountain rights equivalent to those of a human being, reflecting its immense cultural and spiritual significance to the Māori people. The move not only acknowledges Indigenous heritage but also sets a precedent for environmental conservation.

The Cultural Significance of Mount Taranaki

Mount Taranaki holds profound cultural and spiritual importance for the Māori tribes. For centuries, it has been revered as an ancestor and an essential part of their identity. Recognizing the mountain as a legal entity aligns with the Māori worldview, which sees nature as a living, interconnected system. This step represents a milestone in honoring Māori traditions and addressing past injustices.

Legal Framework and Governance

Under the new legislation, Mount Taranaki is now legally recognized as "Te Kāhui Tupua," a status that allows it to hold rights, responsibilities, and legal standing. A governing body consisting of local Māori iwi (tribes) and government-appointed representatives will oversee its protection and management. This ensures that Māori communities have a direct role in decision-making, reinforcing their cultural and environmental stewardship.

Environmental and Cultural Benefits

The recognition of Mount Taranaki as a legal person has significant implications for conservation and Indigenous rights:

Legal Protection: The mountain cannot be exploited or sold, safeguarding its ecological integrity.

Māori Cultural Revival: Traditional environmental management practices will be restored, reinforcing the connection between Māori people and their land.

Biodiversity Conservation: The legal status will promote sustainable conservation efforts to protect native wildlife and ecosystems.

Part of a Global Movement

New Zealand's recognition of Mount Taranaki follows similar legal moves worldwide. The country previously granted legal personhood to the Whanganui River in 2017 and Te Urewera forest in 2014. This decision contributes to a growing international movement that seeks to protect natural entities by recognizing their legal rights. Other countries, such as India and Ecuador, have also adopted similar measures for environmental preservation.

Implications for the Future

The unanimous passing of this bill in Parliament signals New Zealand's commitment to Indigenous reconciliation and environmental protection. By granting Mount Taranaki legal rights, the nation not only honors Māori traditions but also strengthens its approach to sustainable development. The recognition of natural entities as legal persons is a step toward fostering harmony between human societies and the environment.

Conclusion

The legal recognition of Mount Taranaki is more than just a policy change—it is a cultural milestone and a powerful statement on environmental ethics. Marked by traditional Māori ceremonies and widespread national support, this decision reinforces New Zealand's commitment to Indigenous rights and ecological preservation. As the world watches, this landmark ruling may inspire other nations to rethink their approach to protecting natural landmarks and sacred sites.



Introduction

The recent socio-economic caste survey in Telangana has provided crucial insights into the state's demographic structure. Conducted over 50 days, the survey covered more than 35 million individuals, marking a significant step towards data-driven governance. The findings indicate that Backward Classes (BCs) form the majority, guiding future welfare initiatives and employment policies.

Survey Overview

Comprehensive Coverage: The Telangana government conducted a Socio-Economic, Educational, Employment, Political, and Caste survey.

Total Population Covered: 3,54,77,554 individuals and 96.9% of households.

Survey Workforce

Enumerators: 94,863

Supervisors: 9,628

Enumeration Blocks: 94,261

Data Entry: Handled by 76,000 operators within 36 days.

Legislative Approval: The initiative stemmed from a resolution passed in the Telangana Assembly in February 2024.

Population Breakdown

Backward Classes (BCs): 56.33% (19.99 million, including 3.58 million BC Muslims).

Scheduled Castes (SCs): 17.43% (6.18 million).

Scheduled Tribes (STs): 10.45% (3.70 million).

Other Castes (OCs): 15.79%.

Muslim Demographics

Total Muslim Population: 4.46 million (12.56% of Telangana's population).

BC Muslims: 10.08%.

OC Muslims: 2.48%.

Significance: This data is crucial for targeted welfare policies.

Implications for Governance

The survey findings will guide Telangana's government in refining welfare schemes.

Enhanced job opportunities for weaker sections.

The government aims to fulfill its 2023 election campaign promises led by Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy.

Challenges Faced During the Survey

103,000 houses were locked during enumeration.

168,000 families were reluctant to participate.

84,137 houses were misclassified, complicating data collection.

Despite these hurdles, high participation rates ensured credible data.

Future Prospects

The survey report is expected to reshape policy-making in Telangana.

Focused upliftment of backward classes and marginalized groups.

The government reinforces its commitment to social justice through data-driven policies.

Conclusion

The Telangana caste survey marks a significant milestone in policy formulation and governance. With insights into demographics and socio-economic conditions, the state is well-positioned to implement inclusive welfare programs that cater to underrepresented communities.

National

India Adds Four New Ramsar Wetlands, Marking a First for Jharkhand & Sikkim



Introduction

India has made a significant advancement in wetland conservation by adding four new wetlands to the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance. With these additions, the total number of Ramsar sites in India has reached 89. Notably, this marks the first-ever Ramsar recognition for Jharkhand and Sikkim, highlighting India's ongoing commitment to preserving its diverse ecosystems.

What Are the Four New Ramsar Sites in India?

The latest additions to India's Ramsar list span across multiple regions:

Udhwa Lake, Jharkhand – The first Ramsar-designated wetland for Jharkhand, emphasizing the state's significant biodiversity.

Sikkim's First Ramsar Site – Recognizing the unique Himalayan ecosystems of the northeastern state.

A Wetland in Gujarat – Further bolstering Gujarat's contribution to wetland conservation.

A Wetland in Northeast India – Strengthening the ecological representation of the region.

These wetlands serve as critical habitats for migratory birds and wildlife, playing an essential role in local and international ecosystems. Their inclusion underlines their ecological significance and international conservation value.

How Do These Wetlands Contribute to India's Environmental Goals?

The recognition of these wetlands aligns with India's broader environmental objectives:

Enhancing Conservation Efforts – Official Ramsar status ensures stronger environmental protections for these ecosystems.

Promoting Sustainable Tourism – Increased international attention can boost eco-tourism, benefiting local communities while preserving biodiversity.

Encouraging Scientific Research – Recognition paves the way for expanded research opportunities, aiding global studies on wetland biodiversity.

These efforts reflect India's dedication to sustainable wetland management and ecological preservation.

India's Progress in Ramsar Designations

India has made consistent strides in identifying and protecting wetlands under the Ramsar Convention:

The total Ramsar sites in India now stand at 89.

In recent years, the country has steadily expanded its Ramsar list, reinforcing its commitment to wetland conservation.

The recognition of Udhwa Lake and Sikkim's first wetland site signals a continued focus on balancing environmental protection and sustainable development.

Chilika Lake in Odisha and Keoladeo National Park in Rajasthan were the first Ramsar sites in India, designated in 1981.

Understanding the Ramsar Convention

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands is an intergovernmental treaty adopted on February 2, 1971, in Ramsar, Iran. It came into force for India on February 1, 1982. Wetlands designated under this convention receive international recognition for their ecological importance.

In 2024, Ramsar designated 10 more Indian wetlands as sites of international importance, further underscoring the country's proactive conservation policies.

Conclusion

India's recent additions to the Ramsar List highlight the nation's growing focus on environmental conservation. The inclusion of Jharkhand and Sikkim's first Ramsar sites, along with wetlands in Gujarat and Northeast India, strengthens India's ecological network. As India continues to expand its Ramsar list, these designations serve as a testament to its dedication to wetland conservation, biodiversity preservation, and sustainable ecosystem management.

Sports

India U19 Women Clinch Second Consecutive ICC U19 Women's T20 World Cup Title



Introduction

India's U19 women's cricket team has created history by securing their second consecutive ICC U19 Women's T20 World Cup title with a dominant 9-wicket victory over South Africa. The final, held at the Bayuemas Oval in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, showcased India's exceptional performance, solidifying their status as a powerhouse in women's youth cricket. Gongadi Trisha emerged as the standout player, delivering an all-round performance that guided India to a comprehensive victory.

Match Summary: India's Commanding Performance

South Africa's Struggles with the Bat

South Africa won the toss and opted to bat first but faced early setbacks.

The Indian bowlers dominated the opening overs, reducing South Africa to 45/5 by the 13th over.

Gongadi Trisha was instrumental with the ball, finishing with impressive figures of 3/15.

Mieke van Voorst was the only resistance, scoring 23 runs with three boundaries.

South Africa managed to play out 20 overs but was bowled out for a modest total of 82 runs.

Gongadi Trisha: The Tournament's Standout Performer

Player of the Tournament: Trisha showcased brilliance with both bat and ball.

She finished as the top run-scorer with 309 runs in seven innings, 133 runs ahead of the next best. Her off-spin bowling yielded nine wickets, including a crucial spell in the final. Her unbeaten 44 runs in the final displayed her composure and skill under pressure, making her an indispensable asset for the team.

Final Scorecard

South Africa: 82/10 in 20 overs (Mieke van Voorst 23, Gongadi Trisha 3/15)

India: 84/1 in 11.2 overs (Gongadi Trisha 44, Sanika Chalke 28*, Kayla Reyneke 1/14*)

Conclusion

India's dominant performance in the ICC U19 Women's T20 World Cup 2025 final marks a new era in women's youth cricket. Their second consecutive title underscores their growing supremacy in the game. With Gongadi Trisha leading from the front, India's young squad has set a high benchmark for future tournaments, promising a bright future for women's cricket in the country.

Important Days

World Wetlands Day 2025: Theme, Challenges, and Role of the Ramsar Convention



Introduction

World Wetlands Day, celebrated annually on February 2, aims to raise global awareness about the essential role wetlands play in biodiversity conservation, human well-being, and cultural heritage. The 2025 theme, 'Protecting Wetlands for Our Common Future', underscores the importance of safeguarding these fragile ecosystems for future generations.

Why in News?

The Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) organized the World Wetlands Day 2025 celebrations at the Parvati Arga Ramsar Site, Gonda, Uttar Pradesh, marking a significant step in wetland conservation efforts. The event, inaugurated by UP CM Yogi Adityanath and MoS (MoEFCC) Shri Kirti Vardhan Singh, emphasized the role of wetlands in ecology, tourism, and livelihoods.

Key Highlights of World Wetlands Day 2025

Theme for 2025: 'Protecting Wetlands for Our Common Future'.

New Ramsar Sites Added:

Udhwa Lake (Jharkhand)

Theerthangal & Sakkarakottai (Tamil Nadu)

Khecheopalri (Sikkim)

Total Ramsar Sites in India: 89.

Top States with Ramsar Sites:

Tamil Nadu (20 sites)

Uttar Pradesh (10 sites)

New Nature-Culture Corridor: The government announced a tourism corridor between Ayodhya and Devi Patan, UP.

Amrit Dharohar Initiative: Launched in June 2023, focusing on species conservation, nature tourism, wetland-based livelihoods, and wetland carbon management.

Parvati Arga Ramsar Site: Significance & Challenges

About: A permanent freshwater wetland consisting of two oxbow lakes—Parvati and Arga—located in Uttar Pradesh's Terai region.

Ecological Importance:

A refuge for critically endangered species like the white-rumped vulture, Indian vulture, and Egyptian vulture.

Migratory birds such as Eurasian coots, mallards, greylag geese, northern pintails, and red-crested pochards visit the site in winter.

Threats:

Invasive species such as the common water hyacinth threaten biodiversity.

Pollution and habitat degradation due to human activity.

Cultural Significance:

Home to the birthplaces of Maharishi Patanjali and Goswami Tulsidas, enhancing its religious and cultural tourism potential.

Government's Commitment to Wetland Conservation

UP CM Yogi Adityanath highlighted the potential of Parvati Arga and Tikri Forest as eco-tourism hubs.

MoEFCC Minister Bhupender Yadav reaffirmed India's commitment to wetland conservation, crediting PM Narendra Modi's emphasis on preserving wetlands.

Shri Kirti Vardhan Singh announced plans for Parvati Arga's development under CM Yogi Adityanath's leadership and proposed Gonda district as a potential 'Wetland City'.

Tikri Jungle is being developed into an open safari zone to boost tourism in the Awadh region.

Key Initiatives Launched

Integrated Management Plan of Parvati Arga Ramsar Site: A strategic framework for biodiversity conservation and wetland management.

Factbook of India's 85 Ramsar Sites: A comprehensive guide on India's wetland conservation progress.

Amrit Dharohar Video Launch: A call to protect wetlands as crucial ecosystems.

Public Engagement & Collaboration

MoU Signed with Amazon: Supporting women entrepreneurs in Gonda district via Amazon Saheli Programme.

Regional Workshop for Northern States: A collaborative session with 9 states & Union Territories to enhance wetland conservation strategies.

Competitions & Awareness Campaigns:

Painting, Quiz & Nukkad Natak competitions on 'Protecting Wetlands for Our Common Future'.

Exhibitions by 25+ exhibitors showcasing wetland conservation, eco-tourism, and sustainability efforts.

International Context: Role of the Ramsar Convention

Established in 1971 in Ramsar, Iran, the Ramsar Convention is an intergovernmental treaty that promotes the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands.

India joined in 1982, actively increasing Ramsar sites from 26 (2014) to 89 (2025).

COP15 (July 2025, Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe) will focus on global wetland conservation goals.

Conclusion

The celebration of World Wetlands Day 2025 at Parvati Arga Ramsar Site underscores the growing global and national focus on wetland conservation. With the addition of new Ramsar sites, eco-tourism projects, and conservation initiatives, India is taking significant steps towards preserving its rich wetland biodiversity. As wetlands continue to face threats, proactive policy measures, public participation, and international collaboration will be crucial in ensuring their long-term sustainability.

