

CROSS & CLIMB ROHTAK

School of Research Based Learning & Competition

Current Affairs - 14 May 2026

DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF FOREIGN TRADE



Directorate General of Foreign Trade

- The Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) is an attached office of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- **Mandate:** It is responsible for the **formulation and implementation** of India's Foreign Trade Policy (FTP).

Background:

- Before 1991, DGFT was known as the **Chief Controller of Imports & Exports (CCI&E)**.
- Post-liberalisation, it was restructured as DGFT to act as a trade facilitator.

Headquarter: It is located in **New Delhi** and it operates through a network of 24 regional offices.

Key Functions of DGFT:

- It implements **India's Foreign Trade Policy** (Exim Policy) by issuing various schemes, licenses, and notifications.
- It issues the **Importer Exporter Code (IEC)**—a 10-digit unique code mandatory for all Indian importers and exporters.
- It regulates transit of goods across Indian borders as per bilateral treaties.
- It grants permissions for free export items listed in Schedule 2 of the export policy.
- It sets standard input-output norms to define the quantity of inputs allowed for the export of a specified quantity of output.
- Facilitates regional trade promotion, especially with neighbouring countries.

NATIONAL SPORTS DEVELOPMENT FUND



- It was established in 1998 under the **Charitable Endowments Act 1890**.
- **Purpose:** To impart momentum and flexibility to **assisting the cause of sports**.
- **Objectives of NSDF:**
 - To promote sports in general and specific sports disciplines and individual sports persons in particular for achieving excellence at the National and of International level
 - To **impart special training and coaching** in relevant sports disciplines to sports persons, coaches and sports specialists.
 - To **construct and maintain infrastructure** for promotion of sports and games
 - To **supply sports equipment** to organizations and individuals for promotion of sports and games
 - To identify problems and take up **research and development** studies for providing support to excellence in sports
 - To promote international cooperation, in particular, exchanges which may promote the development of sports
- **Management and Administration of NSDF:**
 - **Council of NSDF:** The Fund is managed by a **Council constituted by the Central Government**.
 - **Chairperson of the Council:** Union Minister of Sports
 - **Members:** It includes senior **Officers of the Department of Sports, Chairman & Managing Directors of Private and Public Sector Companies / Corporations**, representatives of Sports Promotion Boards, etc.
 - The Council decides all policy matters relating to the Fund.

WHY NTA'S ZERO ERROR POLICY FELL SHORT?

Nine days after nearly 22 lakh students appeared for the NEET medical entrance exam, the **National Testing Agency (NTA)** announced that the examination had been compromised and ordered a re-test.

The decision triggered nationwide outrage among aspirants and parents, raising serious concerns about examination integrity and administrative accountability.

The Federation of All India Medical Association (FAIMA) has approached the Supreme Court, demanding either major structural reforms in NTA or its replacement.

Why NTA's 'Zero Error' Promise Failed

- Despite repeated controversies over paper leaks and exam irregularities, the National Testing Agency appears to have struggled to address systemic weaknesses effectively.
- After the 2024 NEET controversy, the then NTA chief was removed, but the agency functioned without a full-time head for over a year, creating concerns about administrative continuity and institutional accountability.
- **The 'Zero Error, Zero Tolerance' Commitment**
 - Under new leadership, NTA promised a strict "Zero Error, Zero Tolerance" approach and claimed robust security measures for NEET-UG 2026, including:
 - sealed handling of confidential materials,
 - GPS-tracked transport with police escorts,
 - CCTV surveillance at exam centres,
 - biometric Aadhaar verification,
 - frisking with metal detectors, and
 - centralised real-time monitoring.
 - The agency also acted against online fraud by blocking numerous Telegram channels allegedly spreading fake question papers and misleading candidates.
- **Security Failure Despite Safeguards**

- Despite these extensive precautions, police investigations indicated that a so-called “guess paper” containing a large number of actual exam questions had reportedly circulated well before the exam, exposing major gaps in the system.
- The controversy suggests that while technological and procedural safeguards were expanded, underlying intelligence, monitoring, and institutional enforcement failures continued to undermine exam integrity.

What the Radhakrishnan Panel Recommended?

- Following the NEET-UG 2024 controversy, the Ministry of Education constituted a high-level committee headed by former ISRO chief **K.Radhakrishnan** to review examination security and reforms.
- The committee identified the traditional pen-and-paper testing model as a major security vulnerability due to the higher risk of question paper leaks and logistical breaches.
- The panel recommended transitioning NEET to a **Computer-Based Testing format**, similar to JEE Main, to improve exam security and reduce leak risks.
- It also proposed a **Computer-Assisted Secure Pen-and-Paper system**, where encrypted question papers would be digitally transmitted to exam centres and printed locally just before the exam.
- **Implementation Gaps**
 - Despite these recommendations, NTA reportedly continued with conventional paper-based arrangements relying on physical transport, GPS tracking, and police escorts instead of adopting the suggested technological safeguards.
 - NTA leadership cited **limited CBT capacity**, stating that existing infrastructure can handle only a fraction of NEET candidates in a single day. Expansion efforts through additional computer centres have reportedly not progressed sufficiently.
 - Moving NEET fully online **requires broader ministerial approval** involving both education and health authorities, and proposals for such a transition have remained pending for years.

WHY INDIA RAISED GOLD AND SILVER IMPORT DUTIES

- The government increased import duties on gold and silver to **conserve foreign exchange reserves** as economic pressures intensify due to the ongoing West Asia crisis.
- The decision is linked to: soaring crude oil prices, disruption in the Strait of Hormuz, and rising pressure on India's external economic stability.
- Gold and silver are viewed as discretionary imports, and the duty hike aims to discourage their purchase so foreign exchange can be preserved for more critical needs.
- The move is part of a precautionary strategy to reduce India's vulnerability to external shocks and prevent further strain on the current account during an uncertain global economic environment.

Declining Forex Reserves Raise Economic Concerns

- India's foreign exchange reserves have fallen significantly since the West Asia conflict began, reflecting growing external economic pressure.
- The decline in reserves, especially foreign currency assets, has increased concerns about India's ability to manage rising import costs.
- In response, the government is prioritising foreign exchange for essential imports such as energy, fertilisers, defence equipment, critical technologies, and industrial inputs, while seeking to curb non-essential imports to protect macroeconomic stability.

Gold Imports Increasing India's External Economic Pressure



- **Heavy Dependence on Imported Gold** - India is the world's second-largest gold consumer and relies heavily on imports to meet domestic demand.
- **Pressure on Foreign Exchange** - Since gold imports are paid for in U.S. dollars, they increase demand for foreign currency, put pressure on forex reserves, and widen the trade deficit.
- **Sharp Rise in Import Bill** - India's gold import bill surged significantly in 2025–26, despite lower import volumes, mainly because of a steep rise in global gold prices.

- **Discretionary Nature of Gold Imports** - Officials view precious metal imports as largely consumption- and investment-driven rather than essential economic imports, making them a target for moderation during periods of external economic stress.
- **Macro-Economic Rationale** - Reducing discretionary gold imports can help: conserve foreign exchange, ease pressure on the external account, and support broader macroeconomic stability during global uncertainty.

Oil Shock and Strait of Hormuz Disruption

- India's import duty hike comes amid a sharp increase in the oil import bill caused by the ongoing West Asia conflict.
- Brent crude prices have risen steeply from pre-conflict levels, significantly increasing India's energy import costs and external economic pressure.
- India imports the vast majority of its crude oil needs, making it highly vulnerable to global supply disruptions and price shocks.
- A large share of India's crude oil shipments passes through or near the Strait of Hormuz, making disruptions in this route a major threat to energy security.
- India also depends heavily on LPG imports, with most supplies sourced through the Gulf region, further increasing exposure to geopolitical instability in West Asia.

Impact of the Duty Hike on Gold Prices

- **Higher Import Costs** - The increase in import duty will raise the landed cost of gold and silver, since India depends heavily on imported precious metals.
- **Cost Passed to Consumers** - Jewellers are expected to transfer the higher import burden to buyers, making jewellery, bullion, and silver products more expensive in the domestic market.
- **Immediate Market Reaction** - Following the announcement, gold and silver prices surged sharply in commodity markets, reflecting expectations of higher domestic prices.
- **Reversal of Earlier Policy** - The move effectively reverses the government's earlier customs duty reduction aimed at supporting the gems and jewellery industry, lowering prices, and discouraging smuggling.



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COAL GASIFICATION



- It is a **thermo-chemical** process that converts **coal** into **syngas**.
 - A synthetic gas composed mainly of **carbon monoxide (CO)**, **hydrogen (H₂)**, **carbon dioxide (CO₂)**, **methane (CH₄)**, and **water vapour (H₂O)**.
 - Coal is reacted at high temperatures (1000–1400°C) with a **controlled amount of oxygen and steam**, producing syngas.
- **Process of Coal Gasification:**
 - **Preparation:** Coal is finely crushed to increase surface area.
 - **Gasification reactor:** The powdered coal is fed into a reactor with limited oxygen/air and steam.
 - **Chemical reactions:** Coal breaks down into syngas components due to **partial oxidation**.
 - **Gas cleaning:** Impurities like tar, sulfur, and dust are removed from raw syngas.
- **Benefits of coal Gasification:**
 - Coal gasification can help **address local pollution problems**.
 - It is **considered a cleaner option** compared to the burning of coal.
 - It will help in **reducing reliance on imports** of natural gas, methanol, ammonia and other essential product.
 - It has the potential to alleviate the environmental burden by reducing carbon emissions and fostering sustainable practices.

THE XI-TRUMP SUMMIT — SHADOW BOXING ON IRAN

- China is Iran's most important economic partner, purchasing the bulk of its oil exports and maintaining significant non-oil trade ties, making Beijing a crucial external influence on Tehran's strategic decisions.

- China's influence is reinforced by:
 - close communication channels involving Pakistan,
 - high-level diplomatic engagement such as Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi's Beijing visit, and
 - broader geopolitical coordination involving Russia.
- These factors make China a potential mediator in the U.S.-Iran standoff.

China's Possible Negotiating Strategy

- Analysts suggest China may use the ongoing Gulf crisis as strategic leverage in negotiations with the United States, calculating that prolonged instability increases Washington's dependence on Beijing's diplomatic help.
- In exchange for helping resolve Iranian resistance, China may seek American concessions on major bilateral issues such as:
 - tariffs and economic sanctions,
 - technology restrictions, and
 - the Taiwan issue.
- Beijing may attempt to position itself as:
 - a mediator or guarantor in a U.S.-Iran settlement, or
 - a key player through a UN Security Council-backed diplomatic framework.
- Any potential settlement could be structured as a gradual diplomatic unwinding over several months rather than an immediate breakthrough.

Trump's Strategic Challenge

- **Need for a Counterstrategy** - The key uncertainty is whether Donald Trump can negotiate Chinese cooperation while limiting concessions, rather than accepting a broader strategic compromise.
- **Risk of a Grand Bargain** - Without a strong counterstrategy, Trump could end up making significant geopolitical concessions—similar to past U.S. compromises with China—simply to secure an exit from a difficult international crisis.



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PALAMU TIGER RESERVE



- **Location:** It is located on the Chhotanagpur plateau in Jharkhand.

- The reserve forms a **part of the Betla National Park**.
- It is one of the first 9 tiger reserves created in the country at the inception of 'Project Tiger'.
- It is the **first reserve** in the world in which a tiger census was **carried out as a pugmark count**, as early as 1932 under the supervision of J.W. Nicholson.
- **Terrain:** The terrain is undulating with valleys, hills, and plains. The geological formation consists of **gneiss and includes granite and limestone**.
- **Rivers:** It is drained by three rivers, namely **North Koyal, Auranga, and Burha**, flow through the valleys.
- The area is drought-prone, with **Burha being the only perennial river**.
- **Vegetation:** The vegetation comprises **moist deciduous and dry deciduous forests**.
- **Flora:** It mainly consists of **Sal and bamboo** as the major components.
- **Fauna:** Some keystone and principal species found in the reserve include Tiger, Asiatic Elephant, Leopard, Grey wolf, Wild dog, Gaur, Sloth bear and four horned antelope.