

Editorial of the Day – 19.12.2025**Index**

- 1. Temporary relief– On trade performance, deeper distress ahead(TH) -1**
- 2. A Bold Step Amid an Ambitious Nuclear Energy Target(TH) -2**
- 3. The Teacher’s Red Pen Should Open Minds, Not Shut Doors(IE) -4**

1. Temporary relief– On trade performance, deeper distress ahead(TH)**General Studies 3– Economy**

Topic– Effects of liberalization on the economy; Changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth (Export–Import Policy).

India’s Export Surge and Trade Deficit Dynamics (December 2025)

Introduction– Recent trade data for India presents a paradoxical scenario. While merchandise exports have surged significantly, providing short-term economic relief, this growth rests on fragile foundations. The reduction in the trade deficit, driven partly by a weakening rupee and contracting imports, masks deeper structural vulnerabilities such as unsustainable cost-absorption by exporters and slackening domestic demand.

Strong Headline Numbers vs. Underlying Reality

Significant Export Growth– Merchandise exports witnessed a sharp rise of 19.4% in November 2025, reaching \$38.1 billion—the highest figure for this month in a decade.

Resilience in the US Market– Despite steep tariffs, exports to the United States grew by 22.6% year-on-year to \$6.98 billion (a 10.7% increase from October).

Cautionary Note– While these figures offer relief to the government, they should not lead to complacency as the underlying drivers are precarious.

The Hidden Cost of Tariff Resilience

Absorbing the Tariff Shock– The surge in US-bound exports is occurring despite 50% tariffs. This is largely because Indian exporters are absorbing the extra costs rather than passing them on to buyers.

Strategic Rationale– Exporters are maintaining this strategy in hopes that the tariffs are temporary; they fear that passing on costs now would lead to a permanent loss of customers.

Sustainability Concerns– This financial buffer is finite. If high tariffs persist, exporters will run out of capacity to absorb losses, threatening future volumes.

Structural Stress on MSMEs and Supply Chains

Vulnerability of Small Players– A significant portion of India's exporters are Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) operating in labour-intensive sectors. They lack the deep pockets required to sustain prolonged losses.

Limited Impact of Currency Depreciation– While the weakening rupee helps export competitiveness, it offers only partial relief. It is insufficient to offset the massive tariff disadvantages India faces compared to global competitors.

Supply Chain Rigidity– Reorienting supply chains to new markets takes time and cannot happen overnight. Early indicators suggest a potential drop in orders for January, signalling upcoming stress.

Import Contraction and Domestic Demand

Narrowing Trade Deficit– The reduction in the trade deficit is primarily due to a 1.9% fall in imports (down to \$62.7 billion), rather than a structural improvement in export capabilities.

Sign of Weak Demand– Since India has limited domestic manufacturing capabilities for many goods, a drop in imports typically signals slackening domestic consumption and industrial demand.

Worrying Trend– This contraction is particularly concerning as it follows recent GST rate cuts, which were expected to boost consumption.

Policy Imperatives- Urgency Over Assurances

Need for Action- The government has acknowledged the distress through the Export Promotion Mission, but detailed schemes are still pending.

Specific Recommendations

Credit Guarantee Schemes- Implementation of credit guarantees (similar to those used effectively during COVID-19) is preferred over simple loan repayment moratoriums to provide liquidity.

Contingency Planning- Given the unpredictability of US trade policy, India must prepare for a "worst-case scenario" rather than relying solely on diplomatic resolution.

Conclusion

Sustaining India's export momentum requires moving beyond temporary resilience measures. The convergence of prolonged tariff pressures, weakening domestic import demand, and financial stress on MSMEs demands swift and targeted policy interventions. Prudence lies in balancing the optimism of recent data with rigorous contingency planning to support the export ecosystem.

Source- <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/temporary-relief-on-trade-performance-deeper-distress-ahead/article70411979.ece#~~~text=India's%20merchandise%20exports%2C%20hit%20by.in%20the%20last%2010%20years.>

2. A Bold Step Amid an Ambitious Nuclear Energy Target (TH)

General Studies 3- Economy

Topic- Infrastructure- Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.

The SHANTI Bill, 2025 and India's Nuclear Roadmap

Introduction - Human development has historically tracked closely with energy consumption. As mapped by Earl Cook in his 1971 *Scientific American* paper, energy use has escalated through stages of human progress—from primitive hunting (food energy) to agriculture, industry, and technology. Today, we stand at a new frontier— the digital era, where the digitalization of the economy is creating massive, additional energy demands. The SHANTI Bill, 2025, represents a strategic legislative step to meet these demands through a robust nuclear energy roadmap.

The Correlation- HDI and Energy Consumption

Development Metrics- The Human Development Index (HDI) is a composite measure of income, education, and health.

Energy-HDI Link- There is a strong correlation between HDI and per capita Final Energy Consumption (FEC). This relationship allows policymakers to estimate the energy required to achieve specific development goals.

India's Aspiration- As a G-20 member, India aims to reach an HDI above 0.9 (comparable to developed nations).

Projected Requirement- To achieve an HDI of 0.9, India needs to generate approximately 24,000 TWh of energy annually.

Breakdown- About 60% of this will be consumed as electricity. The remaining portion will likely be used to produce hydrogen via electrolyzers.

Role of Hydrogen- Essential for decarbonising "hard-to-abate" sectors like steel, fertilisers, and plastics. Future electricity needs for hydrogen may decline if alternative low-carbon hydrogen technologies scale up.

Current Status- In 2023-24, India's total electricity generation was ~1,950 TWh with a CAGR of 4.8%. Sustaining this rate would take 4-5 decades to reach the target.

The Dual Challenge- Decarbonisation and Electrification

Transitioning to a high-energy future faces two simultaneous hurdles-

1. Decarbonising the energy mix.

Building Bureaucrats Since 2006

2. Expanding end-use electrification- Currently, electricity accounts for only 22% of Final Energy Consumption (FEC); this must rise significantly.

Limitations of Renewables & Need for Nuclear

India's existing energy mix is heavily fossil-fuel dependent. While low-carbon sources like hydro, solar, and wind are vital, they have inherent limitations-

Resource Constraints

Hydro & Wind- Potential is geographically limited.

Solar- High population density restricts the availability of vast land tracts required for solar photovoltaic deployment.

Intermittency & Storage- Solar and wind are intermittent. Managing seasonal variability requires large-scale storage, which is currently too expensive to be a standalone solution.

Baseload Requirement- To ensure affordable and reliable electricity, the grid requires baseload capacity (sources that operate independently of weather/time).

Conclusion- Nuclear power is the only low-carbon source capable of providing reliable baseload electricity to support renewable integration.

India's Indigenous Nuclear Capabilities

The Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) and Indian industry have successfully indigenised the nuclear supply chain

Self-Reliance- Uranium is the only major input requiring imports due to insufficient domestic reserves.

India has capabilities in fuel fabrication, heavy water production, and reactor equipment manufacturing.

PHWR Mastery- The Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL) has mastered the design and operation of Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors (PHWRs) up to 700 MW capacity.

Status- 3 units operational, 1 nearing completion, 2 in advanced construction.

Expansion- 10 additional 700 MW units were approved in 2017 and are under progress.

Institutional Strength

Regulation- A dedicated regulatory body (AERB) established in the 1980s ensures safety.

Waste Management- Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) has developed technologies for reprocessing spent fuel and managing nuclear waste safely.

The SHANTI Bill, 2025

To back the ambitious target of 100 GW installed nuclear capacity by mid-century, Parliament passed the Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India (SHANTI) Bill, 2025.

Consolidation of Laws- It is an overarching legislation that consolidates provisions from The Atomic Energy Act, 1962 The Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act, 2010

Key Provisions

Legal Continuity- Deems the existing Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB) as constituted under this new Act.

Liability- Clearly assigns primary responsibility for safety, security, and safeguards to the licensee operating the nuclear facility.

Significance- The Bill represents a bold policy signal of political commitment, providing the legal stability necessary to transition India into a developed nation.

Conclusion

Achieving high human development requires energy that is reliable, affordable, and clean. Given India's geographical constraints regarding renewables, nuclear power is not just an option but a necessity for deep decarbonisation. The SHANTI Bill, 2025, provides the critical institutional framework

and policy confidence required to scale nuclear capacity and realize India's developmental aspirations sustainably.

Source- https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/a-bold-step-amid-an-ambitious-nuclear-energy-target/article70412631.ece#google_vignette

3. The Teacher's Red Pen Should Open Minds, Not Shut Doors(IE)

General Studies 2- Governance

Topic- Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

Rethinking Teacher Authority for Inclusive Education

Introduction- The changing landscape of education demands a re-evaluation of the teacher's role, shifting from an authoritarian figure to a facilitator of inquiry. The metaphor, "*The teacher's red pen should open minds, not shut doors,*" encapsulates this necessary transition. While the "red pen" traditionally symbolizes evaluative power, discipline, and control, its rigid application can stifle curiosity and critical thought. This transformation is pivotal as India implements systemic reforms to make education more inclusive and inquiry-based.

Knowledge, Power, and Social Hierarchies

Historical Context- Thinkers like Francis Bacon and Michel Foucault have long established the link between knowledge and power. Historically, education has often served as a tool to reinforce power dynamics rather than dismantle them.

Inequality in Access- Unequal access to knowledge has entrenched social hierarchies, limiting social mobility for marginalized groups. In India, these disparities are visibly evident across lines of caste, gender, language, and region.

Assessment as Exclusion- Rigid assessment practices that focus binary "right or wrong" outcomes tend to reproduce existing hierarchies. When teachers function solely as evaluators, education risks becoming a mechanism of exclusion rather than a means of empowerment.

Pedagogical Shift- From Instructor to Facilitator

Alternative Tradition- The text advocates for a pedagogical approach where teachers act as facilitators, fostering an environment of inquiry, dialogue, and independent thinking.

Alignment with NEP 2020- This shift is in direct consonance with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which prioritizes Development of critical thinking and conceptual understanding. Significant reduction of rote learning. Adoption of formative and competency-based assessments. Establishment of a learner-centric education model.

Assessment for Learning- NEP 2020 explicitly mandates using assessment as a tool for learning improvement rather than mere judgment or gatekeeping.

The Ethical Dimension of Teaching

Core Values- From an ethical standpoint, the profession of teaching is rooted in responsibility, empathy, and fairness.

Dangers of Authoritarianism- Excessive reliance on authority figures discourages moral courage and intellectual autonomy in students.

Democratic Values- A respectful and balanced teacher-student relationship is essential for enhancing student dignity and confidence. This aligns with UNESCO's advocacy for education that promotes freedom of thought, scientific temper, and social responsibility—pillars essential for a pluralistic democracy like India.

Relevance in Contemporary Times

Building Bureaucrats Since 2006

Combating Misinformation- In an era defined by information overload, misinformation, and conformity, the teacher's role is more critical than ever.

Breaking Conditioning- If learners are conditioned "not to question or disrupt," education loses its transformative potential.

BLOOM'S TAXONOMY

THE AFFECTIVE DOMAIN - EMOTION-BASED



Nurturing Key Traits- To prepare citizens who can uphold constitutional values (Liberty, Equality, Fraternity), teachers must actively nurture Curiosity and a questioning attitude. Social awareness. The confidence to challenge unjust norms.

Conclusion

The discourse serves as a timely reminder that the ultimate goal of education is to liberate, not to discipline blindly. The "red pen" of authority must evolve into a tool for guidance rather than a mechanism for gatekeeping. As envisioned by the NEP 2020 and global frameworks, fostering a

humane, inclusive, and dialogic education system is indispensable for India's continued social and democratic progress.

Source- <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/the-teachers-red-pen-should-open-minds-not-shut-doors-10427737/lite/>