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1. Australia to Export Uranium to Support India's Nuclear Power Programme

- i. A historic Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement has been signed between India and Australia, paving the way for the export of Uranium from Australia to support India's nuclear power generation programme.

The agreement was signed following high-level bilateral talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese.

- ii. In addition, agreements were signed to expand cooperation in areas such as maritime security and critical minerals (rare earth and strategic minerals).
- iii. These agreements assume added significance amid growing concerns over China's increasing influence in the Indo-Pacific region.
- iv. A high-level bilateral meeting was held between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese. Apart from delegation-level discussions, the two leaders also held one-on-one talks. During the discussions, both leaders extensively reviewed ways to further strengthen bilateral cooperation in several sectors, including:
 - Trade and investment
 - Defence
 - Nuclear energy
 - Critical minerals
 - Education
 - Legal migration
 - People-to-people ties

They also exchanged views on regional and international issues of mutual interest.

v. Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement

Several agreements were signed, including the landmark Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement, which enables the commercial supply of Australian uranium for India's nuclear power generation projects.

vi. A Free and Stable Indo-Pacific

Prime Minister Modi stated that the Indo-Pacific is not merely the meeting point of two oceans but also represents the shared aspirations of like-minded democracies such as India and Australia.

He emphasized that a free, open, stable, and secure Indo-Pacific is of vital importance. A Joint Declaration on Defence Cooperation was also issued.

Under the India-Australia Defence Innovation Corridor Initiative, both countries will work together to strengthen collaboration between defence innovation companies and industries.

Prime Minister Modi further stated that the India-Australia Maritime Security Cooperation Action Plan will provide fresh momentum to their shared efforts in the Indo-Pacific region.

The two countries will also collaborate in:

- Shipbuilding
- Ship repair
- Ship maintenance

vii. Uranium Export for Peaceful Purposes

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese stated:

“Australia will export uranium for India’s peaceful civilian purposes. This will help India expand its non-fossil fuel electricity generation capacity while also providing additional markets for Australia’s natural resources.”

viii. Eighteen Agreements and Major Decisions

Following the bilateral talks, India and Australia concluded 18 agreements and major decisions, covering areas such as:

- Civil nuclear cooperation
- Maritime security
- Capacity building in mining technology
- Establishment of a campus of Victoria University (Australia) in Gurugram
- Establishment of a campus of Flinders University in Bengaluru
- Innovation and technology
- Science and research cooperation

The two countries also released:

- A Joint Declaration on Defence Cooperation
- A Joint Statement on Energy Cooperation

- An Action Plan on Cyber Security
- Cooperation in Critical Technologies
- Supply Chain Cooperation

Both sides also agreed to expedite negotiations on the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) and the Investment Protection Agreement.

ix. Ancient Tamil Idols to Return to India

Australia has announced that it will return three ancient Tamil idols, currently preserved in the National Gallery of Australia and the Art Gallery of New South Wales, to India.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese made the announcement after his meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

He also welcomed the progress made in returning the remains of an Australian Indigenous ancestor, currently preserved at the Government Museum, Chennai, to Australia.

According to the Ministry of External Affairs, the following artefacts from Tamil Nadu will be repatriated from Australia:

- A stone Nandi idol (11th–12th century CE)
- A bronze idol of Bhadrakali holding a trident (11th century CE)
- A stone idol of Lord Shanmuga (Murugan) (12th century CE)

2. The body of Khamenei was laid to rest at the Imam Reza Shrine, one of the holiest sites of Shia Muslims, located in his hometown of Mashhad, Iran.

3. Turkish President Gifts Handguns to NATO Leaders

- i. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan presented a handgun as a gift to every head of State and Government who attended the NATO Summit held in Ankara, the capital of Türkiye.

The gift package included a traditional revolver-style pistol along with live ammunition. The move was intended to showcase Türkiye's defence manufacturing capabilities to the world and also formed part of the country's broader foreign policy strategy.

- ii. According to a research report, Türkiye exported small arms worth nearly US\$3 billion during the 2019–2024 period. As a result, it has emerged as the world's third-largest exporter of small arms, after the United States and Italy.

- iii. Turkish defence manufacturers have entered the European market by offering low-cost handguns, posing strong competition to long-established firearms manufacturers in Italy and Belgium.

4. BSNL Launches Advanced Satellite Phone Service

- i. State-owned telecom company Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) has launched an advanced satellite phone service that enables uninterrupted communication even in remote areas where conventional mobile networks are unavailable. The satellite phone is priced at ₹1,34,166 (inclusive of taxes). The service is primarily intended for:
- Defence personnel
 - Maritime operators
 - Disaster response and rescue teams
 - Mining workers
 - Adventure travellers and expedition teams
- ii. Unlike conventional mobile phones that depend on cellular towers, the satellite phone can provide uninterrupted voice calls and SMS services even in:
- Dense forests
 - Deep-sea regions
 - Other locations beyond the reach of normal telecom towers

5. Centre to Examine Meta's New AI Image Generation Feature Under Existing Legal Framework

- i. The Union Government has announced that it will examine whether Meta's newly introduced AI-powered image generation feature falls within the ambit of existing Indian laws.
- ii. Meta has launched an AI image-generation tool called Muse AI.
- iii. According to reports, the feature could potentially use users' publicly available photographs from platforms such as Instagram without their knowledge, allowing them to be easily modified and reused.
- iv. The Government noted that deepfake technology has already generated several controversies by enabling the creation of realistic but fabricated images.

- v. Against this backdrop, concerns have been raised that Meta's Muse AI feature could pose a threat to individual privacy and personal data protection.

6. India Opposes Proposed Additional U.S. Tariffs Under Section 301

i. India's Arguments Before the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR)

India argued that trade-related objections between India and the United States should be resolved through the bilateral trade negotiation framework, rather than through unilateral tariff measures under Section 301 of the U.S. Trade Act.

India presented its case during a public hearing held at the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) in Washington, D.C. The Indian delegation was represented by Brij Mohan Mishra, Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Commerce.

During the hearing, he stated:

- The USTR has recommended imposing an additional tariff on India on the grounds that the country has allegedly failed to prevent the export of goods produced through forced labour to the United States.
- However, the United States has exempted nearly 1,600 products, which cannot be manufactured or cultivated domestically, from its forced labour investigation. India questioned the rationale behind granting these exemptions.
- These exemptions undermine the stated policy objectives of addressing the impact of forced labour in global supply chains and preventing unfair trade practices.
- Similarly, textile products manufactured using American cotton and cotton-based materials receive preferentially lower customs duties when exported to the United States. India argued that this too represents an arbitrary practice.
- Such preferential treatment influences and restricts the procurement decisions of foreign manufacturers without fully addressing concerns relating to forced labour.
- Therefore, India maintained that imposing a 12.5% additional tariff under Section 301 on imports allegedly linked to forced labour would constitute a unilateral measure and should not be adopted.
- India expressed its willingness to engage in discussions and resolve all concerns related to forced labour through dialogue.

- India further emphasized that the matter should be settled within the framework of India–U.S. bilateral trade negotiations, rather than through unilateral trade actions.

Representatives from leading Indian industry bodies, including the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), also participated in the hearing and presented their views.

ii. Background

- After the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the reciprocal tariffs imposed by President Donald Trump on India and several other countries were invalid, the U.S. Government initiated a fresh investigation under Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974.
- The purpose of the investigation was to assess the extent to which alleged unfair trade practices by countries such as India, China, Japan, and other trading partners had adversely affected American manufacturing.
- Following an extensive review, Jamieson Greer, the U.S. Trade Representative, submitted a recommendation proposing an additional 12.5% tariff on imports from 54 countries, including India.
- The recommendation was based on U.S. regulations aimed at preventing the import of goods allegedly produced through forced labour in foreign countries.
- Under these provisions, a total of 54 countries, including India, were identified for the proposed additional tariff.
- Section 301 of the U.S. Trade Act is a powerful trade enforcement mechanism that authorizes the United States to investigate foreign trade practices and impose tariffs or other trade restrictions where it considers such practices to be unfair.

As the first step in this process, the USTR is currently conducting consultations and investigations with the 54 affected countries regarding the proposed tariff measure.

7. The Tamil Nadu Government has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to establish a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) manufacturing plant in Tirunelveli at an investment of ₹15,037 crore, which is expected to generate employment for 2,670 people.

- i. The agreement was signed at the Secretariat between the Tamil Nadu Department of Industries and Vikram Solar Limited in the presence of Chief Minister Joseph Vijay. According to the official Government release:

- Vikram Solar Group has already established solar photovoltaic (Solar PV) module manufacturing plants at Oragadam and Vallam in Tamil Nadu. It has also set up an integrated manufacturing facility for solar photovoltaic cells and modules at Gangaikondan in Tirunelveli.

In this context, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed in the presence of the Chief Minister for setting up a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) manufacturing plant at the SIPCOT Industrial Park, Gangaikondan, Tirunelveli, with an investment of ₹15,037 crore. The project is expected to create 2,670 employment opportunities.

8. Urgent need for Government regulation over social media giants WhatsApp and Instagram due to rising security and ethical concerns.

i. Global and National Usage Statistics

- Globally, approximately 300 crore (3 billion) people use WhatsApp. India ranks first in the world with 80 crore (800 million) users, followed by Brazil (14 crore), Indonesia (11 crore), the USA (10 crore), and the Philippines (8.8 crore).
- India leads globally in Instagram usage as well, with 55 crore (550 million) users. Other significant user bases include the USA (20 crore), Brazil (15 crore), Indonesia (11 crore), and Japan (6.4 crore).
- India's massive user statistics signify its critical position as a major global hub in the online marketplace, making regulation a national priority.

ii. Policy and Regulatory Context

- In July 2026, the Union Ministry of Information Technology sent consecutive formal notices to Meta, the parent company of WhatsApp and Instagram, seeking explanations for specific platform features and harmful content.
- The Ministry of Home Affairs had issued warnings regarding a surge in online investment fraud conducted through WhatsApp and Telegram, where cybercriminals pose as market experts to lure users into scams.

iii. Security Concerns with New Features

- WhatsApp plans to introduce a "username" facility that would allow communication without revealing a user's phone number. The Indian Government has demanded a full explanation of this feature, fearing it will facilitate the creation of fake accounts and cyber-crimes.
- While WhatsApp claims there are safeguards, the Government remains skeptical, arguing that removing the requirement to share a phone number makes the platform more dangerous and harder to police.

iv. Ethical and Safety Alarms

- A primary reason for the recent Government notice is the appearance of advertisements on Instagram that allegedly encourage the sexual abuse of minors.
- Investigations by an English television channel revealed that Meta's algorithms have inadvertently promoted videos depicting the harassment of children on both Facebook and Instagram.

v. Economic and Data Privacy Realities

- We are in an era where commercial enterprises view customer data, including phone numbers, as a commodity to be sold to third parties.
- Evolving cyber threats such as "Digital Arrest", where criminals use digital tools to extort money from unsuspecting citizens.

Given India's status as the largest market for these platforms, it is essential to place a "bridle"(regulatory control) on these technologies to prevent them from being used for illegal activities.