



P.L.RAJ IAS & IPS ACADEMY

Building Bureaucrats Since 2006

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1. The Supreme Court has directed the Central Government and the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) to respond to petitions challenging the policy that makes the three-language formula compulsory for Class IX students in CBSE schools.

i. Background

- In April, CBSE issued a circular making the three-language policy mandatory for Class IX students from July 1. The move was introduced as part of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCF-SE) 2023. According to the policy:
- Students must study three languages.
- At least two of them must be Indian languages.
- A foreign language may be chosen as the third language.

ii. For Class X students, CBSE clarified that there will be no board examination for the third language, with the objective of reducing academic pressure and enabling students to focus better on their studies.

iii. The circular drew widespread criticism from various sections of society. Subsequently, in June, CBSE issued another circular stating that:

- The requirement of studying at least two Indian languages under the new three-language policy will be implemented from Class VI onwards.
- The revised policy will not apply to students who are currently studying in Classes VII to IX.
- These students may continue with the language combination they have already chosen until Class X.
- Students entering Class X have also been exempted from the new three-language policy.

iv. Although current Class IX students are required to study three languages, CBSE has provided a one-time concession, allowing them to choose two foreign languages and one Indian language. Following this, Amandeep Kaur and Arban Roy Chowdhury filed

petitions before the Supreme Court challenging the CBSE policy.

v. The petitions were heard on Tuesday (July 14) by a Bench comprising:

- Chief Justice Surya Kant
- Justice Jaymalya Bagchi
- Justice V. Mohana

Senior advocates Anand Grover and Gopal Sankaranarayanan, appearing for the petitioners, argued that:

- CBSE has issued illegal circulars that violate the Right to Education (RTE) Act.
- Languages are being imposed on students without making adequate alternative arrangements.
- They are representing the interests of students studying in Classes VI and IX.
- Earlier, a State had pointed out that textbooks should be available in all 22 scheduled languages from July 1.
- However, textbooks have so far been published in only three languages.
- There is also a severe shortage of teachers, creating significant human resource challenges.

Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for another petitioner, Yashika Bhandari, submitted that:

“If a Class IX student who has so far studied only English and French is suddenly required to learn Tamil, where will the teachers come from?”

Taking note of these concerns, Chief Justice Surya Kant directed the Central Government, CBSE, and the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) to file their responses.

The next hearing has been scheduled for July 29.

2. [The Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement \(CETA\) between India and the United Kingdom officially comes into force on July 15, 2026. It is regarded as one of India's most significant bilateral trade agreements in recent history.](#)

i. Key Features and Market Access

- Under the agreement, 99% of Indian products will enter the UK market duty-free.
- Negotiations began in 2021 under the India–UK 2030 Roadmap.

- After 14 rounds of negotiations, the agreement was finalized in May 2025 and signed in London in July 2025.
- India's share in the UK's US\$928.9 billion global import market currently stands at only 1.6% (US\$15.2 billion).
- Likewise, the UK's share in India's total exports is only 3.4%, indicating substantial potential for expanding bilateral trade.

ii. Benefits for Indian Export Sectors

The elimination of high tariffs is expected to significantly boost several Indian industries.

- Processed foods: Tariffs of up to 70% have been removed.
- Seafood: Tariffs of 21.5% have been eliminated.
- Engineering goods and automobile components: Tariffs of 18% have been removed. Exports are expected to double to US\$7.5 billion within the next four to five years.
- Leather and footwear: 16% tariff eliminated.
- Textiles and garments: 12% tariff removed. India currently accounts for only 6.1% of the UK's US\$21.3 billion apparel import market.
- Gems and jewellery: Exports are expected to grow by 230%, reaching US\$2.5 billion over the next three years.
- Chemicals and pharmaceuticals: 8% tariff eliminated.

iii. Benefits for Professionals and the Services Sector

One of the most significant provisions of the agreement is the avoidance of double payment of social security contributions.

- Indian professionals temporarily working in the UK, along with their employers, will no longer be required to contribute to social security systems in both countries.
- The exemption period has been extended from three years to five years.
- This measure is expected to benefit more than 75,000 professionals and around 900 Indian companies.
- The UK has opened its market to Indian companies in 137 services sub-sectors, including:
 - Information Technology
 - Financial services
 - Engineering

- Healthcare
- Education
- Telecommunications
- For the first time, an annual quota of 1,800 professionals has been introduced for:
 - Indian chefs
 - Yoga instructors
 - Practitioners of traditional Indian music (Carnatic and Hindustani)

iv. Strategic Safeguards and Steel

- Around 85% of India's steel exports to the UK have been exempted from new trade restrictions.
- The remaining exports will be managed through a quota system.
- To safeguard domestic farmers, India has excluded several sensitive agricultural products from tariff concessions, including:
 - Dairy products
 - Cereals
 - Millets
 - Edible oils
 - Apples
 - Various vegetables

v. Economic and Strategic Importance

- Union Minister Piyush Goyal stated that the agreement would create significant opportunities for small businesses, farmers, and women entrepreneurs.
- The agreement comes into force on July 15, which also marks the 11th anniversary of the Skill India Mission, an initiative focused on youth empowerment.
- The agreement is regarded as a major step toward realizing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of "Viksit Bharat 2047" (Developed India 2047).

3. Fresh clashes between the Saudi Arabia-led coalition forces and the Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen have once again heightened tensions in West Asia.

i. Background

- In 2014, the Houthi rebels captured Sanaa, the capital of Yemen, triggering a civil war

in the country.

- In support of Yemen's internationally recognized Government, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and other Gulf countries formed a military coalition and intervened in the conflict.
- ii. A temporary ceasefire was brokered by the United Nations in 2022, bringing relative peace to the region. However, hostilities have now resumed, leading to renewed fighting between the two sides.

4. Harmanpreet Kaur has become the most successful captain of the Indian women's cricket team in Test matches.

- Under her captaincy, India has played 5 Test matches and won 4.
- She surpassed the previous Indian record held by Mithali Raj, who had led India to 3 Test victories.

At the international level, Harmanpreet Kaur is now the second-most successful captain in women's Test cricket in terms of victories.

- Lyn Larsen holds the record for the most Test wins (5) as a women's Test captain.
- Harmanpreet Kaur occupies second place with 4 victories.

5. NASA astronaut Anil Menon, who is of Indian origin, departed for the International Space Station (ISS) on Tuesday along with a Russian male astronaut and a Russian female cosmonaut.

i. Launch

The crew lifted off aboard Roscosmos' Soyuz MS-29 spacecraft from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan.

ii. Crew Members

Accompanying Anil Menon on the mission are:

- Pyotr Dubrov – Russian cosmonaut
- Anna Kikina – Russian cosmonaut

iii. Spaceflight Experience

- This is Anil Menon's first mission to the International Space Station.
- It is the second ISS mission for both Pyotr Dubrov and Anna Kikina.

iv. Duration of Mission

The three astronauts are expected to remain aboard the ISS for approximately eight months.

v. Mission Objectives

NASA stated that Anil Menon will conduct scientific research aimed at:

- Advancing human space exploration.
- Producing scientific knowledge that will benefit life on Earth.

vi. Return to Earth

The crew is scheduled to return to Earth in April next year.

6. India has welcomed the 2016 ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which held that China cannot claim sovereignty over the South China Sea, according to Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal.

i. Earlier, on July 12, the United States, the European Union, the United Kingdom, and several West Asian countries jointly issued a statement supporting the 2016 arbitral award. China opposed the statement.

ii. During a media briefing, Randhir Jaiswal was questioned on several issues, including:

- The South China Sea dispute.
- The Election Commission of India's Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls.
- The acceptance of passports as proof of citizenship during the revision process.

Responding to these questions, he said:

- India's position on the South China Sea has always been consistent.
- India supports freedom of navigation and unimpeded lawful commerce in accordance with UNCLOS.
- The 2016 arbitral award, delivered nearly a decade ago, is a historic milestone in the peaceful settlement of maritime disputes under international law.
- India therefore welcomes the ruling.

iii. Randhir Jaiswal further stated:

- Passports are issued by the Government of India under the Passports Act, 1967.
- A passport is a document that regulates the international travel of Indian citizens.

- Passports are issued only after due verification.
- At present, less than 8% of India's population possesses a passport.

It may be recalled that last month, officials of the Ministry of External Affairs had stated that "a passport is primarily a travel document and not, by itself, conclusive proof of citizenship." This statement had triggered widespread political debate.

7. External Affairs Minister S.Jaishankar's address at the UN:

- i. Protection of Seafarers: India has declared that the safety of seafarers and the maintenance of a rules-based, transparent maritime order are among its highest priorities. This comes in response to increasing threats to commercial vessels in West Asian regions, which have resulted in deaths and injuries to Indian sailors.
- ii. Protection of Marine Resources: India advocates for the protection of shared marine resources as a central pillar of its global approach. The nation emphasizes that a safe and uninterrupted maritime trade environment is essential for global economic stability and the security of supply chains.
- iii. Non-Permanent Seat in UN:
 - These maritime security priorities were highlighted as India officially launched its campaign for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council for the 2028–29 term. India aims to use this position to amplify the "Voice of the Global South" and find solutions to complex global conflicts.
 - The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) consists of 15 member states, including 5 permanent members and 10 non-permanent members. India has served as a non-permanent member of the UNSC eight times so far. Most recently, India held this position during the 2021–2022 term.
 - The election to choose the non-permanent members of the UNSC for the 2028–2029 term will be held in June next year. In the Asia-Pacific Group, India and Tajikistan are contesting for one available seat.
 - India has previously served as a non-permanent member of the UNSC during the following terms:
 - 1950–1951
 - 1967–1968

1972–1973

1977–1978

1984–1985

1991–1992

2011–2012

2021–2022

iv. Global Security Contributions:

- To safeguard these interests, India actively deploys naval forces across the North and South Arabian Sea, the Gulf of Aden, and the Malacca Strait to combat piracy and trafficking. Additionally, India remains a major contributor to global peace, with 4,300 personnel currently serving in 10 different UN peacekeeping missions.

8. Analysis of India's ambitious national river-linking project, historical precedents, and current progress.

i. Vision and Historical Context

- The vision of Mahakavi Bharathi, who a century ago, dreamed of India as a single entity where surplus water from one region (like the Ganga) would be used to irrigate arid lands in other parts of the country.
- In the 1970s, Captain Dastur proposed the "Garland Canal Project" to link India's rivers.
- Real momentum began during Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's tenure, with the formation of a high-level committee led by Suresh Prabhu to study the feasibility of linking 30 major rivers.

ii. National Water and Geographical Statistics

- India possesses only 2.4% of the world's land area and 4% of global water resources, yet it supports 18% of the world's population.
- Approximately 83% of India's water is consumed by the agricultural sector.
- While one part of India often suffers from devastating floods that wash water into the sea, other regions face severe drought. Linking rivers is proposed as the only solution to balance this water distribution.

iii. The National River-Linking Plan (NRLP)

- The plan involves linking 14 Himalayan rivers and 16 Peninsular rivers, totaling 30 river

links.

- The proposed route for the major chain includes: Brahmaputra – Manas – Sankosh – Teesta – Ganga – Damodar – Subarnarekha – Mahanadi – Godavari – Krishna – Pennar – Cauvery – Vaigai – Gundar.
- For Tamil Nadu, extending these links beyond the Cauvery to include the Vaigai, Thamirabarani, Nambiyar, and Karumeniyar rivers to strengthen the entire southern water grid.

iv. Progress on Key River Links

- Ken–Betwa Link:
 - This is the first major project under the 30–river plan currently in progress.
 - Estimated at ₹44,605 crore.
 - It will benefit 13 districts in Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, specifically revitalizing the backward Bundelkhand region.
 - It aims to provide irrigation for 9.8 lakh hectares, drinking water for 6.2 million (62 lakh) people, and generate 103 MW of hydropower and 27 MW of solar power.
 - The project is expected to be fully operational by 2030.
- Detailed project reports for five other links have been finalized: Damanganga–Pinjal, Par–Tapi–Narmada, Godavari–Krishna, Krishna–Pennar, and Pennar–Cauvery.

v. Impact and National Benefits

- Completion of the National Grid could provide irrigation facilities to an additional 2.5 crore hectares of land.
- The project would eliminate flood damage in western states and drought/famine in peninsular states, saving the Government thousands of crores currently spent on disaster relief.

vi. Historical Precedent: The Kalingarayan Canal

- The work of Kalingarayan (born Theengaiyak Gounder), a local chieftain in the Kongu region who built a dam across the Bhavani River 750 years ago.
- Using his own resources, he constructed a 56-mile (90 km) long canal that winds through multiple villages to reach the Noyyal River.
- Known as the "Zig-zag canal" (Kona Vaikkaal) because of its path designed to maximize reach, it still irrigates 15,743 acres today.

- If a chieftain could achieve such a feat 700 years ago, modern India must show similar "Bhagiratha-like" determination to link its national rivers for future prosperity.

9. Analysis of the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) that officially begins on July 15, 2026. This agreement is regarded as one of India's most significant bilateral trade deals in recent history.

i. Key Highlights and Market Access

- Under this agreement, 99% of Indian products can now enter the British market without any customs duty.
- The process began in 2021 under the "2030 Roadmap," involving 14 rounds of talks before being finalized in May 2025 and signed in London in July 2025.
- Currently, India's share of Britain's \$928.9 billion global import market is only 1.6% (\$15.2 billion), and Britain accounts for just 3.4% of India's total exports, indicating significant potential for expansion.

ii. Benefits to Indian Export Sectors

The removal of high customs duties is expected to provide a major boost to various industries:

- Processed Foods: Elimination of duties that were as high as 70%.
- Seafood: Removal of a 21.5% duty.
- Engineering and Auto Parts: An 18% duty has been removed, with exports projected to double to \$7.5 billion within 4–5 years.
- Leather and Footwear: Elimination of a 16% duty.
- Textiles and Garments: A 12% duty has been removed. Currently, India holds only a 6.1% share of the UK's \$21.3 billion garment import market.
- Jewelry: Exports in this sector are expected to grow by 230%, reaching \$2.5 billion over the next three years.
- Chemicals and Medicines: Removal of an 8% duty.

iii. Professional and Service Sector Advantages

- A critical part of the deal is the avoidance of double social security contributions. Indian professionals on temporary duty in the UK (and their firms) no longer need to pay social security taxes in both nations.

- The exemption period for these contributions has been increased from 3 years to 5 years, benefiting over 75,000 professionals and 900 Indian companies.
- Britain has opened its market to Indian firms in 137 service sub-sectors, including IT, finance, engineering, medicine, education, and telecommunications.
- For the first time, an annual quota for 1,800 specialists has been set, specifically including Indian cooks, yoga instructors, and classical musicians (Carnatic and Hindustani) to work in the UK.

iv. Strategic Protections and Steel

- Roughly 85% of India's steel exports to the UK will remain outside new trade restrictions, with the remainder managed via a quota system.
- To protect domestic farmers, India has excluded sensitive items from duty concessions, such as dairy products, grains, millets, cooking oil, apples, and various vegetables.

v. Economic and Strategic Significance

Union Minister Piyush Goyal noted that the agreement would create massive opportunities for small businesses, farmers, and women entrepreneurs. The implementation date, July 15, marks the 11th anniversary of the "Skill India" mission, emphasizing the focus on youth empowerment. The deal is viewed as a vital step toward achieving Prime Minister Modi's goal of a "Developed India 2047".