



BAJIRAO IAS ACADEMY

THE HINDU ANALYSIS

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**PARTICULARLY
VULNERABLE TRIBAL
GROUPS(PVTGs)**



Countering the U.S Tariff

Countering the tariff



JAYANT DASGUPTA

US action violates its commitments under WTO. India must diversify its export basket and destinations

THE US HAS imposed "secondary tariffs" of 25 per cent on Indian products (barring a few exceptions) with effect from August 27. This is in addition to the "reciprocal tariff" of 25 per cent imposed from August 7. The Trump orders exclude pharmaceuticals, semiconductors and mobile phones, lumber and some chemicals from their purview for the time being.

Following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's White House meeting with President Donald Trump on February 13, an ambitious plan to elevate bilateral goods trade to \$500 billion by 2030 was announced. Negotiations for a two-tranche bilateral trade agreement to give concrete shape to the target were to commence immediately. As a show of its earnestness, India almost immediately reduced its tariffs on bourbon, high-end motorcycles and electric vehicles. It also withdrew the equalisation levy for offshore entities, which had been objected to by successive US administrations.

From Trump's press statements, it appears that India offered zero or near-zero duty tariffs on a wide range of goods, which included not only almost all industrial products but some agricultural products as well. It needs to be borne in mind that in global trade, the shares of industrial products vis-à-vis agricultural products are roughly 90:10. Thus, by all accounts, India offered a very attractive deal to the US.

As far as its "red lines" are concerned, Delhi made it clear from the start that it would not be able to negotiate on the access to genetically modified food (GMO), soya, maize and some other cereals and dairy products, because of its serious concerns relating to its vast numbers of small and marginal agriculturalists and dairy farmers, their livelihoods and food security.

A few other points have a bearing on this subject. First, the US focus has moved from GMOs and other agricultural products to the purchase of Russian oil. It has not imposed tariffs on the EU and China, the two largest buyers of energy from Russia. Even if India had stopped the purchase of Russian oil, the geopolitical stakes could have easily shifted to stopping purchases of Russian defence equipment, walking out of BRICS and not trading in the currencies of its other bilateral partners. Second, India is reported to have offered to

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buy more energy from the US to reduce the bilateral trade deficit, which was a major Trump concern. Third, in a bilateral trade agreement, there has to be mutual benefit, and India is understood to have sought a reduction of US tariffs on certain products of its interest. Fourth, other potential FTA partners like the EU would also have sought similar concessions. Thus, India could not have gone overboard in its offers without factoring in medium-to-long-term consequences.

It has been estimated that 55 per cent of the \$89-billion goods exports to the US will be hit by the tariffs. India's major exports to the US comprise pharmaceuticals, mobile phones, electronic items, other engineering goods, gems and jewellery and textiles and clothing. Barring pharmaceuticals and mobile phones, the other industries, especially the labour-intensive ones, are going to be badly affected. Since our competitors from South and Southeast Asia enjoy substantially lower tariffs, most of our low-to-medium-valued orders are likely to be diverted to them. Also, because of the 90-day extension granted to China on August 12 and the 30 per cent tariff rate, it is likely to benefit from the situation.

India's major imports from the US are mineral fuel and mineral oil, uncut and unpolished diamonds, capital goods and machinery, organic chemicals and plastics, edible fruits and nuts. Most of these products are used as raw materials or intermediate products. Retaliating against the US by raising tariffs will only hurt our own domestic and export markets. Also, tariff retaliation can result in cross-sectoral retaliation in services, which needs to be avoided.

The way other major countries, barring China, have all succumbed to US pressure and agreed to face tariffs of 10 per cent (only the UK) or more, the chances of India getting a reprieve in the short-term appeal are slim. What could, however, happen is that inflationary pressures, job losses and a pushback from Trump's base in the run-up to the mid-term elections in November 2026 result in a tempering of his actions. The other possibility is that the tariffs could be declared beyond the authority of the US President by the judiciary, which could take the matter to the US Supreme Court. Also, even if the administration loses the case in the Supreme Court, it

might be tempted to use other pieces of legislation to achieve the same ends.

The WTO has a two-stage dispute settlement system, with the second stage appeal being decided by three members of a seven-member permanent body called the Appellate Body (AB). All seven members of the AB have to be selected by consensus by WTO members. President Trump, in his first term, had persistently blocked the nomination of new members to the body. Since 2019, the AB has had no members. Thus, the dispute settlement system has become non-functional. Therefore, filing a dispute against the US may only serve as a symbolic gesture.

The tariffs violate the US's binding commitments to all the members of the WTO. They also violate the Most Favoured Nation principle — not discriminating between different countries in terms of tariff, except under a free trade agreement. President Trump's actions and the silent but willing acquiescence of all the developed countries show that the consensus which had led to the setting up of the GATT in 1947 (which later transformed into the WTO in 1995) lies in shambles.

There are some steps India can take to minimise the effects of the tariffs.

India's export basket is not very broad and spans only a few sectors. We are also heavily dependent on the US; 17 per cent of our goods exports (and the EU). The most important thing which needs to be done is to diversify both our export basket and destinations. This will require, of course, at least a few years and will need industry-public-private partnerships.

Second, we need to conclude our FTA with the EU as quickly as possible and deepen and widen our existing FTAs with Japan, Korea, ASEAN and Australia. Third, we must explore expanding trade with the BRICS countries. Finally, we need to bring in multi-sectoral domestic reforms spanning both the Centre and the states to provide the impetus to economic growth.

This turn of events should not be viewed as a disaster but as a wake-up call. It is an opportunity to reform and grow, as we did in 1991.

The writer served as India's ambassador to the WTO (2010-14).



What's Happening?

- Trump imposes additional 25% tariffs, taking total duties on Indian goods to 50%
- Penalty over India's Russian oil purchases
- New tariffs apply only to India, not to China or Turkey

US Tariff Actions and Impact

- ❑ The US imposed new tariffs on Indian exports such as **pharmaceuticals, semiconductors, mobile phones, and chemicals**, in addition to earlier tariffs, disregarding multilateral trade rules.
- ❑ India and the US had earlier set an ambitious bilateral trade goal of **\$500 billion by 2030**, but immediate tariff escalation undermines that trajectory.
- ❑ These tariffs contradict **WTO's Most Favoured Nation (MFN)** principle, violating rules of non-discrimination in trade practices.



Most-Favored Nations (MFN) Clause

['mōst 'fā-vərd 'nā-shən 'klôz]

A requirement that countries providing a trade concession to one trading partner extend the same treatment to the others.

 Investopedia

India's Challenges and Constraints

- ❑ Nearly 60% of India's exports to the US are concentrated in pharmaceuticals, mobile phones, gems and jewellery, and engineering goods, making India vulnerable to targeted tariffs.
- ❑ Competitors from South and Southeast Asia, with diversified low-to-medium value exports, may replace Indian exporters in the US market.
- ❑ Farmers, small industries, and workers dependent on affected export sectors face immediate livelihood risks.

Way Forward for India

- ❑ India must expand its export destinations beyond the US and EU, building stronger trade ties with ASEAN, Africa, BRICS, and Latin America.
- ❑ India should pursue trade diversification while simultaneously engaging in WTO dispute mechanisms to safeguard its interests.
- ❑ Broader domestic reforms in competitiveness, logistics efficiency, and technological upgrading are critical to withstand global trade shocks.

Curbing Online Gambling addiction



ALISHA LALLJEE

ADDICTION, NOT PLAY

Ban on online real-money gaming will protect mental health of the young

THE EDITORIAL ON the ban on online real-money gaming ('The wrong answer,' IE, August 25) presents an account of the move's economic, legal, and regulatory implications. But it overlooks one of the most critical dimensions of this issue: Mental health, particularly of children and adolescents.

Online gaming, especially real-money gaming, operates on psychological principles nearly identical to gambling: Variable rewards, intense engagement loops, and the pursuit of rapid gratification. These mechanics are designed to sustain play, extract payments, and create dependency. When introduced to young, impressionable users, it often leads not to leisure, but to addiction.

Parents often discover the problem too late — when credit card bills spike, academic performance collapses, or a child's mental health has begun to deteriorate. Families describe a toxic home atmosphere, filled with secrecy, arguments, and emotional distress. In such cases, therapy is not enough. Prevention through regulation or, when necessary, prohibition is a legitimate and urgent public health response.

Online gaming today is not what it was a decade ago. What appears to be harmless entertainment is, in reality, designed to keep users hooked. These games are not simply "fun distractions". They are immersive environments that condition the brain to crave more play, more wins, more risk. The line between skill and chance blurs rapidly. Many adolescents

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DEAR EDITOR,
I DISAGREE

A column in which we invite readers to tell us why, when they differ with the editorial positions or news coverage of 'The Indian Express'

India's youth deserve more than just a firewall. They deserve understanding, support, and care. By reframing online gaming addiction as a behavioural and mental health issue, and by combining thoughtful regulation with robust counselling, the country can create a safer digital environment.

lose track of time, lie about usage, steal to fund gameplay, or suffer from anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation when they lose or are forced to stop. The resulting tension often spills into the household, straining relationships and eroding trust between parents and children.

This addiction is not theoretical. Across India, there are numerous cases of children draining family bank accounts, falling into debt, or spiralling into behavioural and emotional distress. In some tragic instances, the consequences have included suicide. Despite these human costs, the mental-health dimension of this crisis is too often absent from policy discussions and public commentary.

A ban can seem like a protective measure, removing the source of harm. It also offers families an immediate sense of relief by reducing conflicts and financial losses. Partial bans or stricter age-gating can be particularly effective, helping protect minors while allowing informed adults to engage responsibly. By limiting exposure for younger users, partial restrictions can delay the onset of addictive behaviours and offer parents a safer environment to guide healthy digital habits.

However, the psychology of addiction is rarely that simple. When compulsive behaviour is forcibly interrupted without therapeutic intervention, it often re-emerges in other forms, a phenomenon known as psychological displacement. Children who lose their primary coping mechanism may turn to more

harmful behaviours such as compulsive pornography consumption, social media overuse, or even substance abuse. Without guidance, the family environment can remain tense, with children seeking escape in even less regulated spaces.

Children caught in the grip of addiction often become irritable, secretive, or aggressive when access is restricted. To truly protect children and adolescents, any form of ban must be accompanied by a comprehensive mental health framework. This means integrating routine mental health screenings in schools, expanding access to child-friendly counselling services, and training educators and parents to recognise warning signs of distress. Awareness campaigns on digital addiction must target students and caregivers alike.

By treating this issue as a behavioural health challenge rather than a purely disciplinary problem, India can begin to heal the emotional rifts that gaming addiction creates within families. India's youth deserve more than just a firewall. They deserve support and care. By and by combining thoughtful regulation with robust counselling and prevention programmes, the country can create a safer digital environment, one where families find balance, and children grow up with healthier relationships to technology.

The writer is a psychologist and special educator



GAMES BANNED IN INDIA

You can end up in JAIL with 1 CRORE fine for playing online games in India!

- ✗ Fantasy apps (Dream11, MPL)
- ✗ Rummy, Poker, Teen Patti
- ✗ Any real-money online game

new online gaming bill 2025 passed!

The government has imposed a ban on online real-money gaming, citing concerns over its mental health impact, particularly on children and adolescents.

Psychological and Social Risks

- ❑ Real-money online games use reward systems, variable reinforcements, and risk–reward cycles **similar to gambling**, fostering compulsive behaviour.
- ❑ Adolescents often experience **secrecy**, **academic decline**, and strained family relationships when addiction takes hold.
- ❑ **Mental Health Concerns** as there are Cases of anxiety, depression, and even suicidal tendencies have been linked to compulsive gaming behaviour.

Ways & Means

Many using non-real money gaming versions of poker, rummy

Betting on WhatsApp groups with friends, family for apps like JJPoker, PPPoker

VPN being employed to mask geolocation and IP address

Telegram groups for games like Ludo sometimes have over 16,000 members

Taking the help of proxy to register, complete KYC and share login details

Experts say many getting into illegal sports betting



Sweeping measures

The Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Bill, 2025 prohibits offering, operation, facilitation, advertisement, promotion and participation in online money games

- 'Real money gaming' refers to platforms such as Dream11 and PokerBaazi where players risk their money for winnings
- The industry has argued that fantasy games are those of 'skill' and cannot be regulated by States as gambling

- The Bill makes the distinction between games of chance and skill irrelevant, as it seeks to ban all "online money gaming"
- The industry says it has annual revenues exceeding ₹31,000 crores and that it employs over two lakh people



PUNISHMENTS

- The Bill proposes imprisonment up to three years and/or fine of up to ₹1 crore for entities offering or facilitating online money gaming
- The Bill also seeks to prohibit advertisement related to online money games and bars banks and financial institutions from transferring funds for any of such games
- Advertising can attract imprisonment up to two years and/or fine up to ₹50 lakh. Facilitating financial transactions can lead to imprisonment up to three years and/or fine up to ₹1 crore

TYPES OF ONLINE GAMING



FANTASY SPORTS

USERS CREATE VIRTUAL TEAMS USING PROXIES OF REAL PLAYERS FROM SPORTS SUCH AS CRICKET AND FOOTBALL, AMONG OTHERS



E-SPORTS

USUALLY PLAYED IN A MULTI-PLAYER FORMAT. THESE ARE MORE POPULAR AMONG PROFESSIONAL GAMERS AND GENERALLY INVOLVE TOURNAMENTS. THESE INCLUDE PUBG AND LEAGUE OF LEGENDS



CASUAL GAMES

SKILL-BASED GAMES SUCH AS CHESS, LUDO, CANDY CRUSH, TEMPLE RUN, ETC.



EDUCATIONAL GAMING

GAMES DESIGNED WITH AN EDUCATIONAL PURPOSE SUCH AS QUIZZES AND PUZZLES

Family and Societal Impact

- ❑ Families **discover the problem late**, usually after financial or academic crises, by which time intervention is difficult.
- ❑ Addiction contributes to **secrecy, aggression, and behavioural problems**, eroding trust within households.
- ❑ The issue **imposes costs** such as therapy, suicide prevention, and the need for long-term rehabilitation.

Way Forward

- ❑ A **balanced regulatory framework** treating gaming addiction as a behavioural and mental health issue is essential.
- ❑ Screening in schools, counselling, and **digital literacy campaigns** can help prevent harmful outcomes.
- ❑ **Combining robust regulation with awareness** and family guidance can ensure healthier relationships with technology.

Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups

MAPPING THE MARGINS

Tribal ministry does well to propose that Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups be counted separately

ON JULY 17, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) wrote to the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India (RGI), requesting it to consider including Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) — the most marginalised tribal groups in the country — in the upcoming Census exercise. As reported in this newspaper, the MoTA has asked RGI to separately count the number of PVTG households and individuals, along with their distinctive cultural, demographic and socio-economic features. If this is done, it will be the first time that the PVTGs are enumerated separately since the category was introduced. Earlier, in the 2011 Census, 40 PVT groups were counted within the broader category of Scheduled Tribes (STs). Currently, there are 75 PVT groups across 18 states and one Union Territory. The MoTA's initiative to count the most marginalised groups separately to facilitate targeted policies of uplift and redress is a welcome move.

The PVTGs entered political discourse for the first time after the Dhebar Commission was constituted to investigate and report "on the problems of the Scheduled Tribes"; the committee submitted its report in 1961. It identified the inequalities within the tribal groups. This led to the creation of the category Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) in 1973, based on four criteria — pre-agricultural level of technology, low level of literacy, economic backwardness and a declining or stagnant population. In 2006, the name was changed to PVTG, as the word "primitive" was seen as problematic. The female literacy rate among the PVTGs is the lowest in India. A recent study that surveyed research work on 13 PVT groups in Odisha between 2000 to 2023, published in the *Journal of Health, Population and Nutrition* (2024), highlighted their precarious health indices. In 2023, the Centre launched the Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM JANMAN) to provide basic facilities to PVTGs. For the successful implementation of any developmental scheme, sociological mapping is necessary, and the proposed inclusion of PVTGs as a separate category in the Census would help serve this purpose.

Alongside, the government could consider rethinking the definition of PVTG ahead of the enumeration exercise. The existing criteria are decades old and risk excluding some communities, as ground realities have changed due to the intervention of state and non-state actors. For example, the use of "pre-agricultural level technology" — modernisation of technology has equipped many marginalised communities to use "developed" tools. A careful step towards not only identifying but also addressing PVTGs is necessary to facilitate social inclusion, instead of assimilation.

Who are PVTGs?

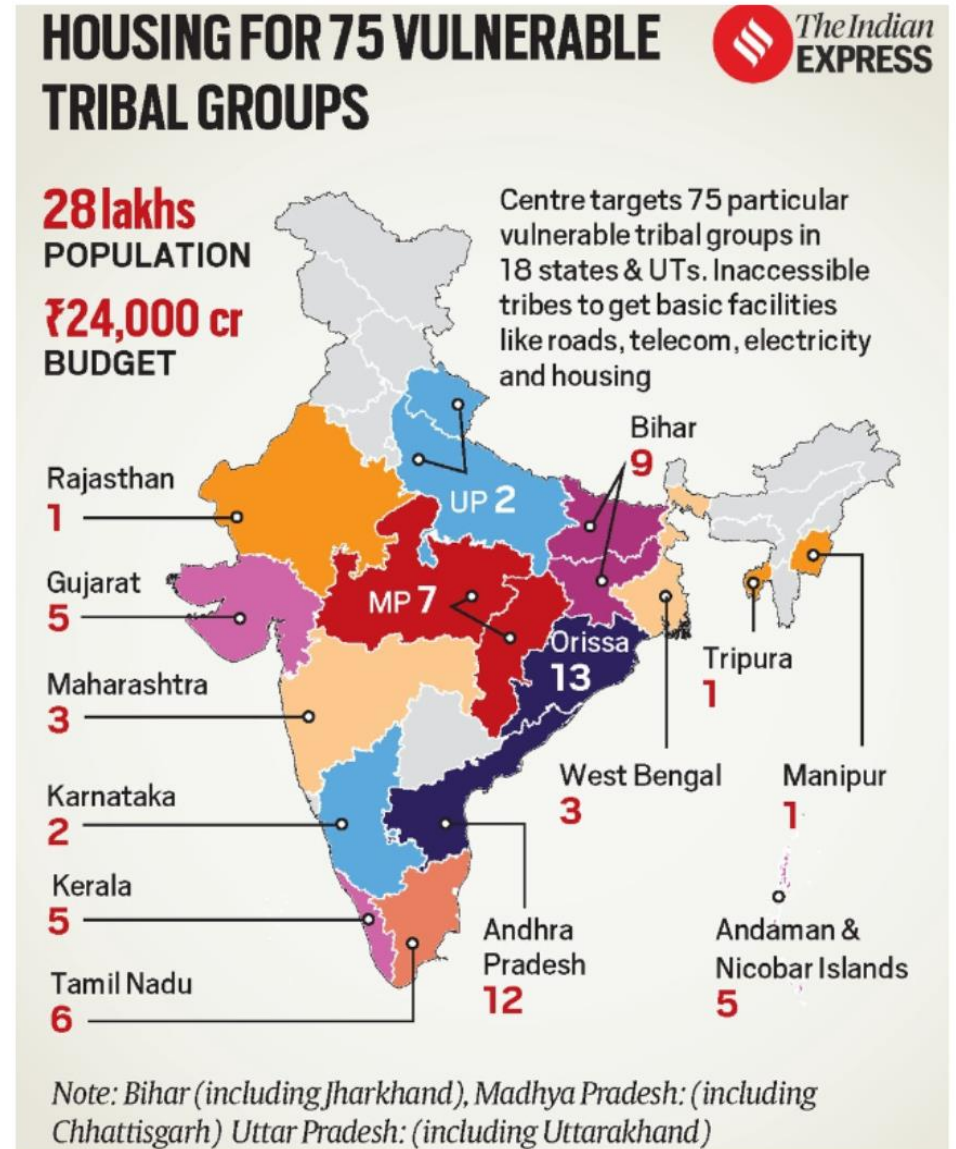
- PVTGs are the most vulnerable categories among tribal groups. They have declining or stagnant population, low literacy level, pre-agricultural level of technology and are economically backward.
- **Status:** PVTGs inhabit isolated, remote and difficult areas in small and scattered hamlets/ habitats.
- 75 such groups of tribals in 18 States and 1 Union Territory have been identified and categorised as PVTGs.

Context

The Ministry of Tribal Affairs has requested the Registrar General of India to **enumerate Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)** separately in the upcoming Census to improve welfare targeting.

Historical and Policy Background

- ❑ PVTGs, the most marginalized within Scheduled Tribes, were identified in 1973 based on criteria such as pre-agricultural level of technology, low literacy, economic backwardness, and stagnant population.
- ❑ In 2011, 40 PVTG groups were enumerated within the broader Scheduled Tribe category, but no separate data was maintained.
- ❑ Presently, there are 75 PVTGs across 18 States and one Union Territory, yet they remain inadequately represented in official statistics.



Socio-Economic Vulnerabilities

- ❑ Female literacy among PVTGs is the lowest in India; a recent Odisha study (2020–23) revealed alarming literacy and health gaps.
- ❑ PVTGs face high malnutrition and poor access to health facilities, as highlighted in the *Journal of Health, Population and Nutrition* (2024).
- ❑ Despite targeted schemes like PM-JANMAN launched in 2023, progress remains slow due to lack of precise data and monitoring.

The Way Forward

- ❑ Separate enumeration will provide disaggregated data to design precise welfare measures and track socio-economic conditions of PVTGs.
- ❑ The outdated “pre-agricultural technology” definition must be revisited, as modernization has altered socio-economic realities of many communities.
- ❑ Beyond counting, addressing exclusion through education, health, skill development, and culturally sensitive tools is vital for empowerment.



Thank you

Address

**B-47, Main Road Shivalik Enclave, Block-
B, Shivalik Colony, Malviya Nagar, New
Delhi-110017**

Phone Number +91 8178833167