



DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 08-03-2025

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UN Report on Gender Equality

Syllabus: GS-1: Social Empowerment – Woman.

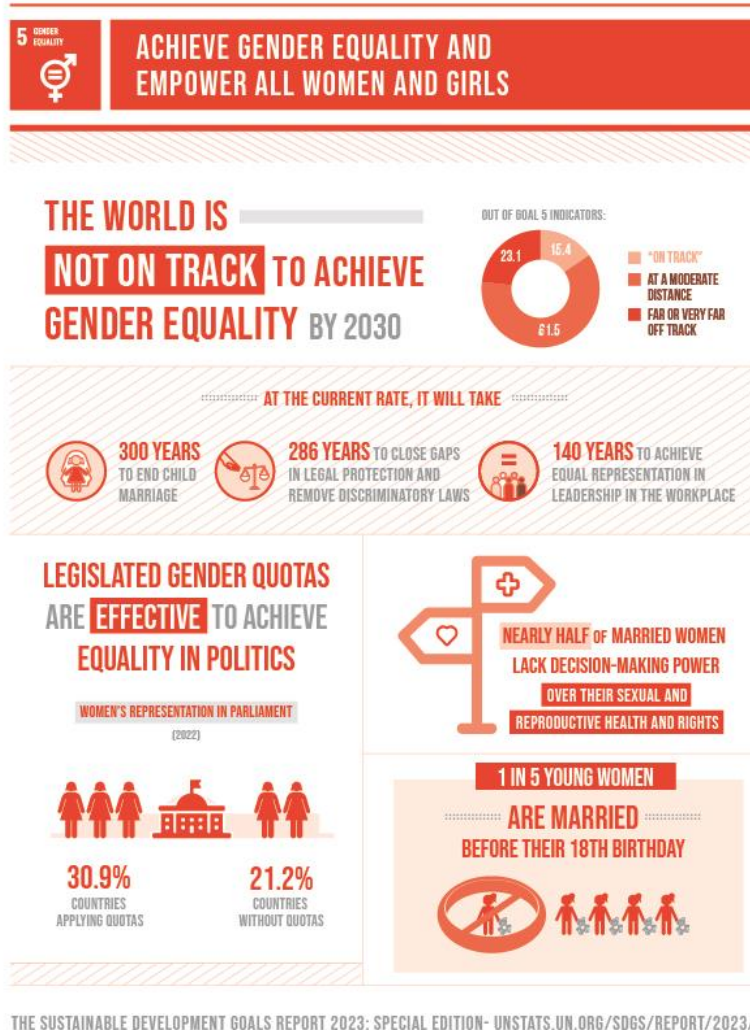
Context:

- United Nations report has reported that women's rights have been weakened in nearly 25% of countries, with growing gender discrimination in political, economic, and social spheres.

Analysis of the UN Report on Gender Equality

Key Issues Identified

- **Legal Inequality**
 - Women globally possess only **64% of the legal rights** that men have.
 - Despite advancements in legal frameworks, discriminatory laws persist, limiting women's economic, social, and political opportunities.
- **Gender-Based Violence (GBV)**
 - **Homicide Rates:** A woman or girl is killed every **10 minutes** by a partner or family member.
 - **Conflict-Related Sexual Violence:** Increased by **50% since 2022**, with **95% of victims** being women and girls.
 - While **88% of countries** have enacted laws against violence, enforcement remains weak in many regions.
- **Underrepresentation in Leadership**
 - Only **87 countries** have ever had a female head of state.
 - Women occupy just **26% of parliamentary seats worldwide**, limiting their influence on policymaking.
- **Education and Workplace Participation**
 - **44% of nations** are making efforts to enhance education and vocational training for women.
 - However, barriers like cultural norms, safety concerns, and financial constraints still hinder progress.
- **Economic Disparities**
 - **10% of women and girls** live in **extreme poverty**, with unequal access to financial resources.
 - Young women (15-24 years) face limited access to **modern family planning**, affecting health and economic independence.



Implications for Global Gender Equality

- The **slow pace of legal and policy reforms** indicates persistent structural discrimination.
- Rising GBV and conflict-related sexual violence demand **urgent international intervention**.
- Women's limited representation in leadership affects policy priorities and governance inclusivity.
- Economic and educational inequalities continue to **restrict women's autonomy and empowerment**.

Way Forward

- **Stronger Legal Protections** – Enforcing gender-equal laws and eliminating discriminatory policies.

- **Enhanced Safety Measures** – Strengthening law enforcement and judicial responses to GBV.
- **Greater Political Participation** – Implementing quotas and affirmative action for women in leadership.
- **Economic Inclusion** – Expanding financial access, skill training, and social security for women.
- **Comprehensive Education Policies** – Ensuring universal education and family planning access.

Supreme Court's Ruling on Online Child Sexual Abuse

Syllabus: GS-2: Supreme Court Judgements.

Context:

- It is an offence: On Supreme Court clarification on online content on child sex abuse.

Key Highlights of the Supreme Court's Ruling

- The Supreme Court has **clearly delineated penal consequences** for accessing or storing sexual material concerning children.
- The ruling aligns with the **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act**, reinforcing the law's letter and spirit.
- A three-judge bench has clarified the legal position and emphasized **the legislative intent of presuming a culpable mental state** for individuals accessing such material.

Terminology Change: From 'Child Pornography' to CSEAM

- The Court has suggested avoiding the term **'child pornography'**, as it trivializes the gravity of the offence.
- Instead, it recommends using **'Child Sexual Exploitative and Abuse Material' (CSEAM)** to reflect the severity of the crime.

Clarification of Legal Provisions

- The judgment settles ambiguities regarding **Sections of the Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000, and POCSO Act** that have been interpreted differently by High Courts.
- The case originated from a **Madras High Court judgment**, which had ruled that merely viewing sexual content involving children in private was not punishable.

- The Supreme Court has now **set aside the High Court's order**, making it clear that even viewing such content is an offence.

Doctrine of Constructive Possession

- The Court invoked the **doctrine of constructive possession**, ruling that:
 - Viewing or displaying CSEAM online **without actual storage** is still considered "**possession**", making it punishable under **Section 15 of POCSO**.
 - If an individual has any degree of **control over such material**, it constitutes possession.
 - Failure to **delete, destroy, or report** such material **implies intent to share or transmit** it.

Strengthening Cyber Laws to Protect Children

- The judgment warns against **narrow interpretations** of legal provisions, ensuring that cyber-offences against children are not diluted.
- It highlights **Section 67B of the IT Act**, terming it a **comprehensive provision** for penalizing online sexual exploitation and abuse of children.

Responsibilities of Online Platforms and Government

- **Online platforms and intermediaries** must take responsibility for:
 - Removing such content from their platforms.
 - Reporting cases to the relevant **law enforcement agencies**.
- The Supreme Court has urged the government to implement **comprehensive sex education programs**, focusing on:
 - The **legal and ethical ramifications** of child sex abuse material.
 - Creating awareness to prevent such crimes.

Conclusion

- The ruling is a **significant step** in strengthening laws related to child sexual exploitation.
- It ensures that both **viewing and possessing** CSEAM are criminal offences, reinforcing **strict accountability** under Indian law.
- The Court's emphasis on **terminology change, legal clarity, and online platforms' responsibility** underscores a **holistic approach** to child protection in cyberspace.

Reciprocal Tariffs

Syllabus: GS-2: Bilateral Relations – Trade and Tariffs.

Context:

- U.S. President Donald Trump criticized high tariffs imposed by India and other countries, calling them “very unfair.”
- Announced **reciprocal tariffs** from **April 2, 2025**, on nations imposing levies on American goods.

Reciprocal Tariffs Strategy

- Trump’s administration will impose **tariffs equivalent to those imposed on U.S. goods** by other countries.
- Countries imposing **non-monetary trade barriers** will face similar restrictions from the U.S.
- Highlighted **China’s average tariff is twice that of the U.S., and South Korea’s is four times higher.**

Impact on India

- Trump has warned PM **Narendra Modi** that **India will not be exempt** from reciprocal tariffs.
- Previously labeled India as **"tariff king" and a "big abuser"** of trade policies.
- The U.S. trade deficit with India stands at **\$100 billion.**
- Acknowledged **India’s recent tariff reductions** but insisted on further negotiations for a fair trading relationship.

Global Retaliation

- **Canada: 25% tariffs** on \$30 billion worth of U.S. goods (effective March 4, 2025).
- **Mexico:** To announce reciprocal action on March 9, 2025.
- **China:** Additional tariffs of **up to 15%** on U.S. farm products.

India-U.S. Trade Relations (2024 Data)

- **Total trade:** \$129.2 billion.
- **U.S. exports to India:** \$41.8 billion (+3.4% from 2023).
- **U.S. imports from India:** \$87.4 billion (+4.5% from 2023).
- **Trade deficit:** \$45.7 billion (+5.4% from 2023).

Reciprocal Tariff - Definition

A **reciprocal tariff** is a trade policy measure where a country imposes **tariffs (import duties) on goods from another country that match the tariffs that country imposes on its goods.** It is based on the principle of **retaliation and trade fairness**, aiming to create a level playing field in international trade.

Key Features of Reciprocal Tariffs

- **Tit-for-Tat Approach:** If Country A imposes high tariffs on Country B's goods, then Country B will impose equivalent tariffs on Country A's goods.
- **Trade Protectionism:** Used to **protect domestic industries** from unfair competition.
- **Negotiation Tool:** Often used as a pressure tactic in trade negotiations.
- **Reduces Trade Imbalances:** Aims to **balance trade deficits** by discouraging imports and boosting domestic production.

Example

- If **India imposes a 70% tariff on U.S. cars**, then the **U.S. may impose a 70% tariff on Indian auto exports** to maintain trade parity.

Implications

- Can lead to **trade wars** if countries engage in continuous retaliatory tariffs.
- May increase **costs for consumers** and businesses.
- Can **influence global trade policies** and lead to renegotiation of trade agreements.

USAID Funding Cuts and Their Impact on India

Syllabus: GS-2: Bilateral Relations – Financial Aid

Context:

- The US administration's January 20, 2025, executive order aims to halt foreign aid, significantly impacting USAID-supported programs in India.

USAID Funding Cuts and Its Impact on India

Introduction

- USAID has been a key contributor to India's health, environmental, and technological sectors.
- Since 2001, it has provided \$2.8 billion in aid.
- The U.S. administration's **executive order on January 20, 2025**, aims to halt foreign aid, affecting India.
- The **U.S. Supreme Court ruling (March 5, 2025)** upheld the decision, raising concerns about critical programs.

USAID's Financial Contribution to India

- **Total Aid:** \$228 million in 2022, making USAID the **fourth largest donor** to India.
- **Health & Population Programs:** \$180 million in 2022 for TB, HIV/AIDS, maternal health, and Covid-19 response.
- **Environmental & Technological Aid:** \$17.12 million in 2024 for clean air, water, and sustainability projects.

Key Developments Leading to Aid Reduction

- **Executive Order on Foreign Aid (Jan 20, 2025)**
 - Reassessment of **5,800 projects**; only **500 retained** to cut spending.
- **Legal Battles Over Funding Cuts**
 - **Feb 13, 2025** – U.S. Federal Court issued a stay on the order.
 - **March 5, 2025** – U.S. Supreme Court overturned the stay, making cuts effective.

Benefits of USAID in India

- **Public Health Strengthening**
 - Supported **polio eradication, TB control, HIV/AIDS prevention** with \$7 million (2022-23).
- **Covid-19 Response Enhancement**
 - Provided **\$120 million** in 2022 for vaccines, medical infrastructure, and pandemic relief.
- **Environmental Sustainability**
 - Funded **pollution control, clean water initiatives, and climate resilience projects**.
- **Economic & Institutional Development**
 - Strengthened **public health systems, research collaborations, and NGO capacity building**.
- **Technology & Digital Infrastructure**
 - Supported **secure 5G O-RAN development**, enhancing telecom security and digital sovereignty.

USAID INDIA PROJECTS UNDER THREAT

HEALTH

Momentum 3B for Overcoming Entrenched Obstacles in Routine Immunization
GOAL: Strengthen immunisation programs, remove bottlenecks in planning, delivery, demand, uptake of immunisation services.
FUNDING: \$20,596,671
SCHEDULED END: June 2026

Reaching Impact, Saturation and Epidemic Control (RISE)
GOAL: Five-year PEPFAR-USAID-funded project to reduce new HIV infections, HIV-related morbidity & mortality.
FUNDING: \$7,163,483
SCHEDULED END: December 2025

Suwasi: Support To Water and Sanitation in India
GOAL: Support sustainable sanitation and safe drinking water in pursuit of sustainable development goals.
FUNDING: \$4,050,001
SCHEDULED END: March 2026

ENVIRONMENT

Strengthening Landscape Management and Conservation
GOAL: Five-year program that supports Government of India, other

stakeholders in protecting landscapes, improving biodiversity conservation.

FUNDING: \$2,695,142
SCHEDULED END: April 2028
Cleaner Air and Better Health

GOAL: Improve air quality and reduce air pollution exposure in selected Indian locations.
FUNDING: \$1,500,000
SCHEDULED END: October 2026

BASIC EDUCATION

Scaling up Early Learning
GOAL: Facilitate creation of reading rooms to improve basic education.
FUNDING: \$2,115,879
SCHEDULED END: September 2025

Udyami: Building Resilience of Women Micro-entrepreneurs
FUNDING: \$3,000,000
SCHEDULED END: November 2027

ENERGY

South Asia Regional Energy Partnership (SAREP)
GOAL: Improve access to affordable, secure, reliable and sustainable energy in South Asia.
FUNDING: \$5,196,278
SCHEDULED END: September 2028

BUSINESS

O-RAN Research Labs
GOAL: To explore creation of a tech platform for secure and trustworthy alternate 5G O-RAN; part of US efforts to facilitate "free and open Indo-Pacific".
FUNDING: \$3,300,000
SCHEDULED END: September 2025

GOVT & CIVIL SOCIETY

Central Tibetan Administration Capacity Building & Sustainability Initiative
GOAL: Strengthen Central Tibetan Administration for delivering services to Tibetans and achieving community self-reliance.
FUNDING: \$2,898,081
SCHEDULED END: August 2026

OTHER SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Development Partnership Activity for Indo Pacific Region
GOAL: USAID-Indian development agencies' partnership to provide technical assistance to Indo-Pacific countries in energy, natural resource management, digital tech, connectivity, trade and competitiveness.
FUNDING: \$1,676,960 (2024), \$962,488 (2023), \$881,455 (2022)
SCHEDULED END: August 2025

Challenges Due to USAID Funding Cuts

- **Health Sector Crisis**
 - **TB, HIV/AIDS, maternal health programs face discontinuation** (previously funded with \$180M in 2022).
- **Increased Disease Burden**
 - **Loss of \$12.13 million for HIV/AIDS** could lead to rising infections and mortality.
- **NGO Funding Shortfall**
 - Organizations like **Karnataka Health Promotion Trust (KHPT)** face uncertainty and layoffs.
- **Strategic Influence Shift**
 - U.S. withdrawal may allow **China to expand economic and geopolitical influence in South Asia.**

➤ **Legal & Policy Instability**

- **March 5, 2025, Supreme Court ruling** creates uncertainty in global aid partnerships.

Way Forward

➤ **Diversify Global Funding Sources**

- Engage with **Japan (\$2.97B), EU (\$383.5M), Germany (\$235M)** to sustain development efforts.

➤ **Enhance Domestic Investment**

- Increase government allocation for **public health, infrastructure, and environment projects.**

➤ **Strengthen NGO & Private Partnerships**

- Collaborate with **corporations, philanthropic organizations, and CSR initiatives** to fill funding gaps.

➤ **Develop Indigenous Technological Capabilities**

- Invest in **R&D for public health, digital infrastructure, and clean energy.**

➤ **Diplomatic Engagement with the U.S.**

- **Negotiate restoration of funds** through diplomatic channels for critical programs.

Conclusion

- **USAID's funding withdrawal poses a challenge** to India's healthcare, environment, and technology sectors.
- **India must enhance self-reliance**, expand global partnerships, and boost domestic investment.
- A **proactive approach** will ensure **public health progress, environmental resilience, and digital transformation.**

Crassolabium Dhritiae

Syllabus: GS-3: Environment – Species in News.

Context:

- Scientists from the **Zoological Survey of India (ZSI), Kolkata**, have discovered a new species of soil-dwelling nematode.

- Named **Crassolabiumdhrithiae**, it was found in the **Deccan Peninsular biogeographic zone**, specifically in **Keonjhar district, Odisha**.
- Named in honour of **Dr. Dhriti Banerjee**, Director of ZSI, for her contributions to **zoology and taxonomic research**.

Key Characteristics of CrassolabiumDhrithiae

- **Body Structure:** Medium-sized, slender body with a rounded lip region.
- **Odontostyle:** Wide and distinct.
- **Pharynx:** Long and well-developed.
- **Reproductive Structures:** Unique female reproductive structures.
- **Tail Shape:** Distinctively shaped, aiding in species identification.
- **Feeding Behavior:**
 - Members of the Crassolabium genus exhibit **predatory and omnivorous behaviors**.
 - Further studies are required to determine its specific feeding habits.
- **Global and Indian Distribution:**
 - The total number of known **Crassolabium species worldwide: 39**.
 - Number of **Crassolabium species recorded in India: 9** (including Crassolabiumdhrithiae).

Key Facts about Soil Nematodes

General Characteristics

- **Nematodes** are tiny invertebrates that play a crucial role in **soil fertility**.
- Present in all soil types; even poor soils contain **millions per square meter**.
- They feed on **plant roots and various soil organisms** like:
 - **Bacteria, fungi, algae, protozoans, rotifers, tardigrades, springtails, arthropods, oligochaetes, and other nematodes**.
- Nematodes can be **beneficial or harmful** to plants.

Types of Soil Nematodes

- **Beneficial Nematodes:**
 - **Free-living nematodes** help in **decomposing organic matter** and **recycling nutrients**.
 - The **bacterial-to-fungal feeding nematode ratio** indicates the **rate of nutrient cycling**.

- **Entomopathogenic nematodes** work with **bacteria** to **control pests**.
- **Harmful Nematodes:**
 - Some species **damage plant roots**, affecting crop productivity.

Importance of Nematodes in Soil Health

- Act as **bio-indicators** for assessing soil conditions.
- Their presence and diversity help in detecting changes due to **pollution or soil disturbance**.

Significance of the Discovery

- Enhances knowledge of **soil biodiversity** and **nematode taxonomy** in India.
- Highlights the **richness of the Deccan Peninsular biogeographic zone** in terms of biodiversity.
- Recognizes the **contribution of Indian women scientists** in zoological research.
- Helps in understanding **soil ecosystem dynamics**, particularly in **agriculture and pest control**.