

# Current Edge: Daily Brief

15<sup>th</sup> September 2025

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## QUOTES OF THE DAY

"The heart of a statesman should be in his head." – **NAPOLEAN BONAPARTE**

## WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"General Assembly resolutions are not binding, but they blaze the path to realizing the idea of a Palestinian state. Israel must stop the war in Gaza, obtain the release of the hostages, withdraw from the Strip and reopen the political path." – **HAARETZ, ISRAEL**

### Rationalise tariffs, independent of US pressure, and raise productivity

*Irrespective of Trump's charges, India should take a rational approach towards imports, invest in innovation and build efficient value chains.*

IE Explained; By Ashok Gulati, Tanay Surtwal;  
Syllabus: Pre/Mains – International Relations, Economy [Link](#)

- **For non-agriculture:** India ~9.2% (trade-weighted), less extreme but still high relative to major trading partners.

## Why in News?

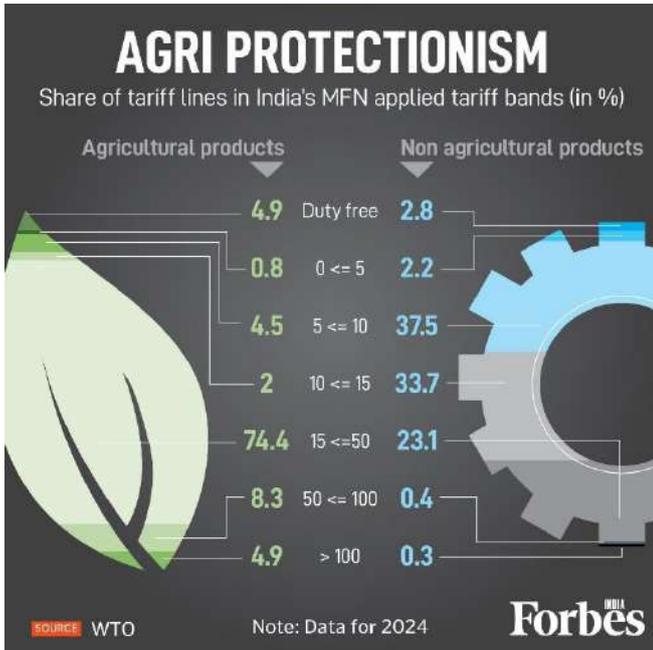
India is under pressure from the US for having high tariffs, especially on agricultural goods, being labelled “**tariff king / tariff maharaja**”—sparking debate over reform.

## India’s Tariff Profile Compared Globally

- Among G20, **India has high simple average tariff** (~16.2%) and very high trade-weighted average tariff (~12%) on all goods.
- **For agriculture:** trade-weighted tariff ~64.3%, simple average ~36.7%, much above US (~4-5%) and EU/China.

## Examples of Irrational / Uneven Tariffs

- Edible oils (≈ one-third of agri-imports) get only ~10% duty.
- Cotton, yellow peas: negligible tariffs.
- Almonds <15%, whereas walnuts & chicken legs >100%.
- Apples ~50%, blueberries ~30%, skimmed milk powder ~60%.
- Food preparations (e.g. soft drink concentrates, custard powder, lactose syrup) ~150%.
- Rice imposes ~70% duty despite India being the world’s largest exporter of rice.



**Agri vs Industry:** India’s agricultural imports face a much steeper tariff curve than industrial goods. Over 8 percent of farm products attract tariffs between 50–100 percent, compared to just 0.4 percent for non-agri items. Here’s how India’s trade barriers stack up.

## Proposed Reforms & Recommendations

- **Rationalise tariff structure independent of US pressure:**
  - Cap duties: raw materials at 0-10%; non-sensitive goods 10-20%; sensitive goods 20-35%; luxury items 35-50%, no duty to exceed 50%.
  - Use tariff rate quotas (TRQs) for sensitive agricultural goods to protect farmers while allowing some imports.
- **Raise domestic productivity:**
  - Double agricultural R&D to at least 1% of agri-GDP.
  - Focus on precision agriculture.
  - Rationalise fertiliser subsidy via direct benefit transfer (DBT); free up fertiliser pricing.
- **Strengthen value chains:** enhance efficiency in post-harvest, logistics, “farm to fork” movement.

## Key Trade-Offs & Justifications

- **Agriculture protection is high** due to large share of workforce ( $\approx 46\%$ ) in agriculture,

small farm sizes ( $\sim 1$  hectare), food security concerns.

- **But excessive protection hurts** competitiveness, trade negotiations, invites retaliation.
- **Imports can be part of growth strategy:** comparative advantage, not just shield domestic producers

### Test Your Knowledge 01

**Q1. In the context of tariff policies, “tariff rate quotas (TRQs)” are best understood as:**

- A system where tariffs are imposed only on luxury goods, not on essential goods.
- A mechanism that allows a specified quantity of a commodity to be imported at lower duty, with higher duty imposed on imports beyond that quantity.
- A WTO provision under which developed countries can unilaterally impose duties on agricultural imports.
- A subsidy scheme for exporters to neutralize the effect of import tariffs.

**Hint:** TRQs combine both quota and tariff features—lower duty up to a limit, higher duty beyond it.

### How serious is the global plastic pollution crisis?

What role should governments and individuals play in curbing plastic use?

TH Text & Context; By Prakash Nelliya; Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Environment [Link](#)

## Why in News?

World Environment Day 2025 focused on “**Ending Plastic Pollution**”, highlighting urgent need for global action.

## Scale of the Crisis

- **Rising production & waste:** Plastics doubled 2000–2019; 460 MT produced, 353 MT waste.
- **Short lifespan:** 2/3rd used <5 yrs; 40% packaging, 12% consumer goods, 11% textiles.
- **Poor waste handling:** 9% recycled, 19% incinerated, 50% landfilled, 22% unmanaged.
- **Future risk:** Waste may triple to 1.2 billion tonnes by 2060.

- **Marine impact:** 11 MT enter oceans yearly; 200 MT already present; plastics may exceed fish by mid-century.



### Test Your Knowledge 02

Q2. With reference to global plastic pollution, consider the following:

- 1) Plastics production has more than doubled between 2000 and 2019.
- 2) Nearly half of global plastic waste generated is from clothing and textiles.
- 3) Less than 10% of plastic waste is recycled worldwide.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

**Hint:** Production has surged since 2000 (true); packaging, not textiles, dominates waste (false); recycling rate is below 10% (true).

### Why It Matters?

- **Non-biodegradable:** Breaks into micro- & nano-plastics, contaminating soil, water, air.
- **Health hazards:** Enters food chain, drinking water, human bloodstream.
- **Climate link:** Plastics = 3.4% of global GHG emissions; may reach 19% of carbon budget by 2040.
- **Ecosystem loss:** Threat to biodiversity, fisheries, tourism, agriculture.
- **Socio-economic cost:** Impacts food security, livelihoods, public health expenditure.

### Solutions Proposed

- **Global treaty:** UN resolution for legally binding pact to end plastic pollution.
- **Production limits:** Reduce virgin plastic, phase out single-use, promote alternatives.
- **Waste management:** Recycling innovations, profitable secondary plastic markets.
- **Economic tools:** Landfill/incineration taxes, deposit-refund, pay-as-you-throw, Extended Producer Responsibility.
- **Design shift:** Eco-friendly packaging, biodegradable materials, circular economy.
- **Individual role:** Reduce consumption, prefer reusables, support recycling.
- **Awareness & media:** Behaviour change, campaigns, nudging sustainable lifestyle.