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US WAIVER OF RUSSIA SANCTIONS - RELIEF FOR INDIA, BUT ENERGY VULNERABILITIES PERSIST

- US President Donald Trump has waived sanctions, restrictions and duties under Lindsey O. Graham Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act, 2026, citing US national interest as the basis for the waiver.
- This has **temporarily eased** the threat of punitive measures against major buyers of Russian oil, including India and China.

What the Graham Act Meant:

- The Graham Act authorised wide-ranging sanctions and restrictions against Russia and countries purchasing Russian oil and gas.
- It provided for **potentially steep duties**—including 100% tariffs on goods from major importers of Russian crude or natural gas under specified conditions. The Act also targeted countries allegedly facilitating sanctions evasion.
- However, Section 115 **empowered the US President** to waive such measures if he certified that doing so was in the national interest of the United States.

Positive Implications for India:

- **Immediate energy-security relief:**
 - The waiver reduces the immediate risk that punitive US tariffs would make Russian crude economically unattractive for Indian refiners.
 - Losing Russian supplies suddenly could have increased India's import bill and intensified inflationary pressures.
- **India-US trade negotiations:**
 - The Russian-oil issue had become a major point of friction in India-US trade negotiations.
 - With the immediate tariff threat receding, the two countries may have **greater room to advance** a bilateral trade agreement.

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Challenges for India:

- **EU remains a concern:**
 - The easing of US pressure does not eliminate India's exposure to Western sanctions. The European Union has separately targeted entities involved in facilitating Russia-related sanctions evasion, creating **compliance risks** for Indian companies.
- **Competition from China:**
 - The US waiver does not guarantee abundant Russian crude.
 - Chinese refiners have increased purchases amid disruptions in Middle Eastern supplies and have reportedly been willing to book Russian cargoes in advance and **pay higher prices**.
 - As a result, Russian crude available to Indian refiners could become tighter and more expensive.
- **Inflationary dimension:**
 - Higher global crude prices can raise transportation, logistics, fertiliser and production costs, thereby generating **cost-push inflation** and worsening the current-account burden.

Way Forward for India:

- India should **pursue strategic diversification** rather than dependence by -
 - Maintaining diversified crude sourcing from Russia, West Asia, the US and other suppliers.
 - **Expanding strategic petroleum reserves.**
 - Increasing renewable energy, electric mobility and energy efficiency.
 - Strengthening domestic refining and storage capacity.
 - Developing resilient payment and shipping mechanisms compatible with international sanctions.
 - Using diplomatic engagement to prevent energy trade from becoming a major source of India-US friction.

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RIGHT TO INTERNET ACCESS - SUPREME COURT RULING ON CHILDREN'S DIGITAL RIGHTS

- On October 15, 2026, the Supreme Court recognised the right to access and use the internet as a fundamental right under **Articles 21 and 19(1)(a)**, rejecting blanket restrictions on children's internet access as a solution to online abuse.

Constitutional Basis of Internet Access

- The Supreme Court, in a Bench comprising Justices J.B. Pardiwala and K. Vinod Chandran, held that the right to access and use the internet is a fundamental right under **Article 21 read with Article 19(1)(a)** of the Constitution.
 - Article 21:** Protects the right to life and personal liberty.
 - Article 19(1)(a):** Guarantees freedom of speech and expression, which can be exercised through digital platforms.
 - Article 19(1)(g):** Protects the freedom to practise any profession or carry on any occupation, trade or business, including through the internet, subject to constitutional restrictions.
- The internet has become an important medium for education, information, communication and creative expression.
- Its significance is particularly high for children in remote areas, where digital platforms may provide access to learning opportunities that are otherwise unavailable.

Child Safety and the Limits of Blanket Restrictions

- The case arose from a petition by the NGO Just Rights for Children Alliance concerning the continued availability of Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Material (CSEAM) on social media platforms.
- The Court held that the primary responsibility lies with those who create, circulate or seek such material and with intermediaries that fail to detect and remove it.
- Denying children internet access because of these failures would shift the burden from the wrongdoers to the victims.

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- **Concerns with blanket restrictions**
 - **Questionable effectiveness:** Children may bypass restrictions and migrate to unregulated platforms that expose them to greater risks.
 - **Reduced reporting:** Fear of punishment for accessing prohibited platforms may discourage children from reporting online threats, grooming or exploitation.
 - **Privacy risks:** Age-verification systems may require the collection and monitoring of sensitive personal data, creating risks of surveillance and misuse.
 - **Digital exclusion:** Broad restrictions may limit access to education, information, creative expression and other legitimate online opportunities.
- The Court therefore considered blanket restrictions disproportionate, while acknowledging that age-appropriate safeguards remain necessary.

Safeguards for Children in the Digital Environment

- **Parental oversight:** Encourage parental consent, guidance and supervision for children's access to social media platforms.
 - **Dedicated child mode:** Develop child-specific accounts with age-appropriate privacy and safety settings.
 - **Privacy by default:** Make children's accounts private by default and restrict contact or messages from unknown adults.
 - **Content moderation:** Strengthen moderation of advertisements and content accessible to children.
 - **Detection and removal:** Improve technological tools used by intermediaries to detect and remove CSEAM.
 - **Digital literacy:** Teach children to recognise online risks, follow safe practices and seek help without fear of reprisal.
- The Court also recognised that the government may restrict children's access to specific categories of services that are inherently harmful, such as adult-content websites.
 - Such restrictions must be distinguished from a blanket ban on internet access.

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CNAP: INDIA'S NEW MANDATORY CALLER NAME IDENTIFICATION SYSTEM

Starting November 1, 2026, telecom operators — Airtel, Jio, Vodafone Idea — must make caller name identification mandatory for mobile users, as per a circular issued by the Department of Telecommunications (DoT).

Technically called **Calling Name Presentation (CNAP)**, this service will display the caller's registered name alongside their number on the recipient's phone screen, even for unsaved contacts.

The move is aimed at helping users make informed decisions before answering calls, and comes amid rising instances of online fraud, including “digital arrest” scams.

What Exactly Is CNAP?

- As per the DoT circular: “Calling name presentation service presents the calling name identity of the calling user on the user terminal of the called user... as recorded in subscriber data record of the originating telecommunication service provider.”
- **Key features:**
 - The originating telecom operator (the network from which the call is made) provides this service **automatically**, with no separate request needed from users.
 - The caller identification display will have **two fields**:
 - **First field:** The caller's **phone number** (existing practice).
 - **Second field:** The caller's **registered name**.
- **Scope and Rollout**
 - Applicable only to 4G networks at present.
 - 2G, 3G networks, and landline connections will be covered under separate rollout plans later.
 - For **saved contacts**, the already-saved name will display as usual.
 - For **unsaved numbers**:
 - **Domestic calls** → shows the name registered in the telecom database.
 - **International calls** → displays simply as “international call.”

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Privacy Safeguards

- The DoT has mandated a security-by-design approach to protect user privacy:
 - Telcos cannot retain the calling name identity after a call ends.
 - Users who have enabled Calling Line Identification Restriction (CLIR) are exempt — their names will not appear under CNAP.
 - Telcos must ensure secure database, network, and connectivity infrastructure.

Provisions for Businesses

- Business and bulk-connection users can display a custom preferred name, different from their registered subscriber name.
- This preferred name must be either:
 - A trademark registered under the Trade Marks Registry (under the Controller General of Patents, Designs and Trade Marks, DPIIT), or
 - A trade name registered on the GST portal.
- Telcos are required to conduct due diligence, maintaining documentary proof of the registered name before assigning it for display.

Why This Matters?

- **Fraud Prevention:** CNAP is a direct response to the surge in phone-based scams, particularly impersonation frauds like “digital arrest” cons, where fraudsters pose as law-enforcement or government officials.
 - **Consumer Protection:** Enables users to identify and verify callers before engaging, reducing vulnerability to unsolicited or fraudulent calls.
 - **Business Transparency:** Allows legitimate businesses to present a recognisable, registered identity, helping distinguish genuine commercial calls from spam or scam numbers.
 - **Balancing Privacy and Transparency:** The CLIR exemption and no-retention policy reflect regulatory care to protect caller privacy even while improving recipient safety.
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FINANCIAL SERVICES INSTITUTIONS BUREAU

FSIB

• It is an **autonomous body of the Government of India** set up under the **Department of Financial Services (DFS), Ministry of Finance**.

- It replaced the erstwhile **Banks Board Bureau (BBB)** in **July 2022**.
- **Structure:**
 - FSIB is **headed by a chairman**, a central government nominee.
 - The board comprises the **Secretaries of the DFS, the chairman of IRDAI, and a deputy governor of the RBI**.
 - Additionally, it will have three **part-time members** who are experts in banking and three more from the insurance sector.
- **Functions of Financial Services Institutions Bureau:**
 - To **recommend persons** for appointment as whole-time directors (WTDs) and **non-executive chairpersons (NECs)** on the **Boards of Directors in Public Sector Banks, financial institutions and Public Sector Insurers**.
 - To **advise the Government** on matters relating to appointments, transfer or extension of term of office and termination of services of the said directors
 - To advise the Government on the desired management structure at the Board level for PSBs, FIs and PSIs
 - To advise the Government on a suitable performance appraisal system for WTDs and NECs in PSBs, FIs and PSIs
 - To advise the Government on formulation and **enforcement of a code of conduct and ethics** for whole-time directors in PSBs, FIs and PSIs
 - To **advise the Government** on evolving suitable training and development programmes for management personnel in PSBs, FIs and PSIs
 - To help PSBs, FIs and PSIs in terms of developing business strategies and capital raising plan etc

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CONFERENCE ON INTERACTION AND CONFIDENCE BUILDING MEASURES IN

ASIA



• It is a forum aimed at **enhancing cooperation** through elaborating multilateral approaches towards promoting peace, **security and stability in Asia.**

- **Background:** CICA was established at the **initiative of President Nursultan Nazarbaev** of Kazakhstan outlined at the 47th UNGA in 1992.
- The **Almaty Act**, serving as the charter of CICA, was adopted at the First CICA Summit Meeting in Almaty, Kazakhstan.
- **Secretariat:** Almaty (Kazakhstan)

Governance:

- The highest decision making organ of CICA is the Council of the **CICA Heads of State or Government (Summit).**
- The CICA Summit is **convened every four years** in order to conduct consultations, review the progress of, and set priorities for CICA activities.
- The **Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs** (Ministerial Council) is the central forum for consultations and examination of all issues related to CICA activities. Its regular meetings are held once every two years.

Member:

- To be a member of CICA, a state must have at **least a part of its territory in Asia.**
- CICA currently comprises **28 Member States.** Ten countries and five multi-national organizations, including the **United Nations**, have **observer status.**
- **India is a founding member** of CICA.

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BRIHADISWARA TEMPLE



• Brihadiswara (Brihadeshwara) is a Hindu temple dedicated to Lord Shiva located in the city of Thanjavur in Tamil Nadu.

- It is also known as Periya Kovil, RajaRajeswara Temple, and Rajarajesvaram.
- It is one of the largest temples in India and is an example of Dravidian architecture during the Chola period.
- It was constructed under the patronage of the Chola emperor Rajaraja I between 1003 and 1010 CE.
- It is part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site known as the “Great Living Chola Temples”, with the other two being the Gangaikonda Cholapuram and Airavatesvara Temple, both constructed by Chola rulers and located northeast of Thanjavur.
- **Architecture:**
 - It is a masterpiece of **Dravidian architecture**, which is characterized by the use of pyramid-shaped towers, pillared halls, enclosed courtyards, and sculpted walls.
 - The **entire temple** structure is made out of **granite**. The construction of the temple out of granite was done **without mortar**.
 - The temple stands amidst **fortified walls** that were probably added in the 16th century.
 - The **central tower, or vimana**, is **66 m high** and is the **tallest in the world**. It is also the most ornate and elaborate, with intricate carvings and paintings.
 - The **Kumbam** (the apex or the bulbous structure on the top) at the **top of vimana** is **carved out of a single rock**.
 - There is a **big statue of Nandi** (sacred bull), **carved out of a single rock**
 - The **temple complex** is **surrounded by two concentric rectangular enclosures (prakarams)** with massive walls.
 - These **enclosures are entered through ornate gateways known as gopurams**.