

1. India Breaks into Top 100 in Global SDG Rankings for the First Time**India Ranks 99th in 2025 SDG Index**

- India has entered the top 100 countries in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Index for the first time.
- Ranked 99th out of 167 nations, India has improved from 109th in 2024 with a score of 67.
- The SDG Index is published by the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network and measures progress toward achieving the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

India's Journey in Sustainable Development Goals

**How India Compares with Other Nations**

- China is ranked 49th with a score of 74.4.
- United States is ranked 44th with 75.2 points.
- Among India's neighbours:
 - Bhutan: 74th (70.5)
 - Nepal: 85th (68.6)
 - Bangladesh: 114th (63.9)
 - Pakistan: 140th (57)
 - Sri Lanka: 93rd
 - Maldives: 53rd

India's Steady Progress Since 2021

- India's past rankings:
 - 2021: 120th
 - 2022: 121st
 - 2023: 112th
 - 2024: 109th
 - 2025: 99th

This consistent improvement reflects India's growing focus on sustainable development.

Global Outlook: Progress Stalled Worldwide

- The report warns that only 17% of SDG targets are on track to be achieved by 2030.
- Reasons include:
 - Conflicts
 - Structural vulnerabilities
 - Limited fiscal space, especially in low- and middle-income countries.

Europe Leads the Index, But Faces Its Own Challenges

- Top three countries:
 1. Finland
 2. Sweden
 3. Denmark
- 19 of the top 20 are European countries.
- However, they too face issues with climate change and biodiversity loss due to unsustainable consumption.

Conclusion: A Milestone for India Amid Global Challenges

India's entry into the top 100 marks a significant achievement in its SDG journey. While the world struggles to stay on course for the 2030 goals, India's upward trajectory offers a positive signal — but continued effort will be crucial to sustain progress.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Organisations

Source: Indian Express

2. Concerns of Sugar and Soybean Industries Over India-US Trade Deal

Introduction

As India and the US move closer to finalising a bilateral trade agreement—before the July 9 deadline to avoid reinstatement of US tariffs—two Indian agricultural industries are raising red flags: the sugar industry and the soybean processing industry.

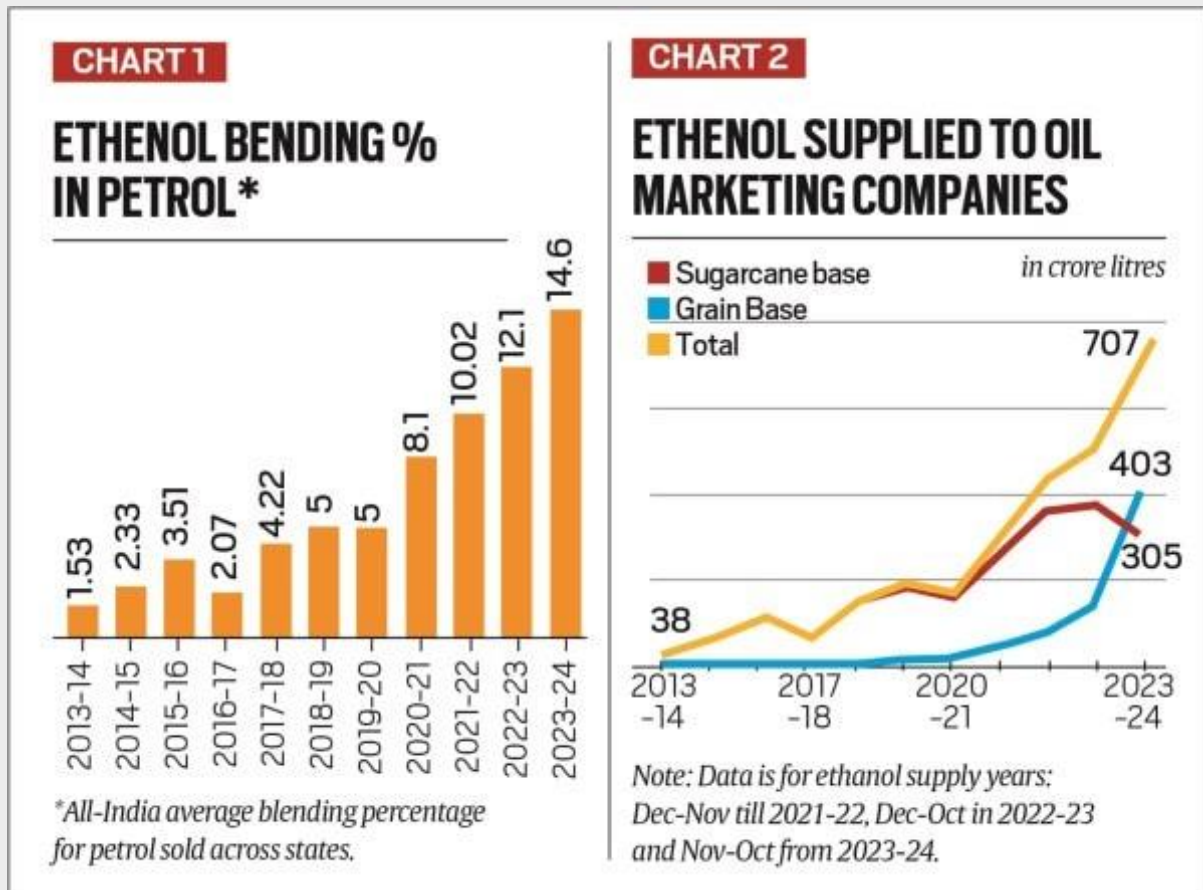
US Pressure to Open Indian Markets

- The US, a major exporter of ethanol, corn, and soybeans, is seeking access to Indian markets.
- The geopolitical goal is to diversify away from China by tapping into India's large consumer base.
- India currently restricts GM crop imports and allows ethanol imports only for industrial, not fuel, use.

Sugar Industry's Concerns: Ethanol Feedstock Threatened

- Ethanol blending success: India has increased ethanol blending in petrol from 1.5% in 2013-14 to 18.8% in 2024-25, aiming for 20% by 2025-26.
- Shift in raw materials: While ethanol was originally made from sugarcane molasses, maize (corn) now accounts for a majority of ethanol production.
- Threat from imports:
 - Cheaper US ethanol could undercut local producers.
 - GM maize imports could further marginalise sugarcane-based ethanol.

- Millers argue sugarcane ethanol doesn't compete with essential food/feed crops like maize.
- India already imported 70.8 crore litres of ethanol from the US in 2024, but only for industrial use.



Soybean Industry's Opposition: Risk to Farmers and Processors

- NITI Aayog proposal: Import GM soybeans, use oil domestically, export GM-rich meal.
- SOPA's counterpoints:
 - Most Indian soybean processing units are inland—far from ports—making imported soybean unviable due to high freight costs.
 - Imports could undermine 7 million Indian soybean farmers.
- Current stats:
 - India crushes 11–12 million tonnes of soybean yearly.
 - 7–7.5 million tonnes of the meal is consumed domestically.
- India lacks the massive feed market like China, which crushes over 100 million tonnes annually for livestock.

Falling Prices and Tariff Cuts Add Pressure

- On May 30, India cut import duties on crude soybean, palm, and sunflower oils from 27.5% to 16.5%.
- Domestic soy oil processors now face increased competition from cheaper imports.
- Soybean prices in local markets are Rs 1,000 below the MSP, prompting concerns of farmers shifting to other crops.

Conclusion: Trade Deal May Disrupt Domestic Agro Industries

As India negotiates trade terms with the US, sugar and soybean processors warn of:

- Market disruption from cheap imports,
- Reduced profitability, and
- Long-term risks to domestic production and farmer livelihoods.

The trade-off between global strategic interests and protecting local industries remains a critical issue as talks progress.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Economics

Source: The Hindu

3. Trump Announces Iran-Israel Ceasefire Amid Calibrated Retaliation and Geopolitical Signals

Iran Retaliates, But With Restraint

- After US strikes on Iran's nuclear facilities, Tehran responded by attacking the Al-Udeid US air base in Qatar.
- Iran gave advance notice to the US and Qatar to avoid casualties — all missiles were intercepted.
- US President Donald Trump called the attack "weak and expected" and thanked Iran for the warning.
- A few hours later, Trump announced a full ceasefire between Iran and Israel.

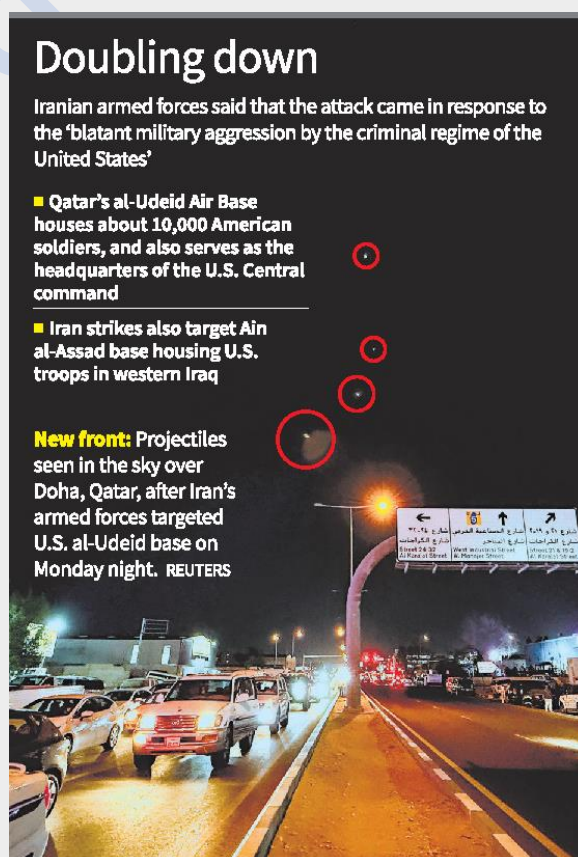
Why Iran Chose Qatar

- Iran's missile strike on Al-Udeid was symbolic and aimed at maintaining credibility without triggering escalation.
- Qatar's ties with Iran and its neutral diplomatic role made it a safe choice for Tehran to send a message without major fallout.
- Qatar closed its airspace an hour before the strike, and the US had already moved out most aircraft from the base.

Strategic Messaging: Iran Avoids Full Escalation

- Iran signaled readiness for nuclear talks, provided Israeli strikes stop.
- Iran withdrew enriched uranium stockpiles from bombed sites ahead of US strikes, preserving assets for future negotiation.
- Despite tensions, Iran did not block the Strait of Hormuz or involve proxy groups like Hezbollah or Hashd-al-Shaabi.

Israel's Heavy Strikes Escalated the Conflict



- **Israel's attacks over 12 days targeted:**

- IRGC leadership
- Air defenses
- Nuclear and energy infrastructure

- Despite suffering damage, Iran managed limited missile responses, including new Kheybar Shekan solid-fuel missiles.

Iran's Proxies Stay Silent

- Hezbollah showed verbal support but kept its military response ambiguous.
- Houthis did not resume attacks despite declaring the end of a ceasefire.
- Hashd-al-Shaabi in Iraq was not activated, mirroring Iran's 2020 playbook of limited direct action and no proxy involvement.

Why Iran Avoided Wider War

- Economic pressure and weakened internal conditions made Iran cautious.
- Tehran seeks to negotiate with the US, hoping for sanction relief and avoiding deeper conflict.
- Not using proxies gives Iran more control and reduces unintended escalation.

What's Next: Ceasefire Holds, But Fragile

- Trump's posts indicate US unwillingness to pursue full-scale war.
- The future hinges on:
 - Whether Israel halts further strikes
 - Whether Iran sees value in de-escalation
- The crisis has likely renewed Arab interest in nuclear deterrence, especially in Saudi Arabia and UAE, despite recent thaw with Israel.

Conclusion: A Calculated Pause in a Volatile Conflict

Iran's early warning, minimal retaliation, and proxy restraint show its desire to avoid total war. Trump's quick announcement of a ceasefire reflects US reluctance for deeper engagement. However, lasting peace depends on whether Israel tones down its offensive and Iran continues to prioritize diplomacy over confrontation.

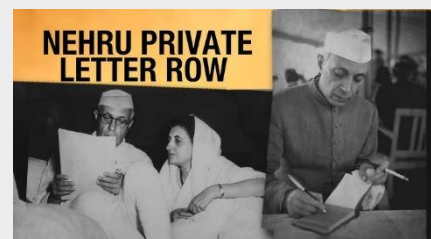
Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: The Hindu

4. Why Sonia Gandhi's Custody of Nehru's Papers Has Sparked a Legal Dispute

Background: Sonia Gandhi Took Back Nehru's Papers in 2008

- In 2008, Sonia Gandhi reclaimed 51 cartons of Jawaharlal Nehru's documents from the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML), now called the Prime Ministers' Museum and Library (PMML).
- She also restricted access to other parts of the collection, which had originally been donated by Nehru's family.
- Now, the PMML Society, chaired by PM Modi, has decided to legally challenge this and seek the return of those papers, calling them a "national treasure."



What Are Private Papers?

- Private Papers are personal documents and correspondence of eminent personalities, often involving public or political matters.
- These are not the same as strictly personal papers (like diaries or family letters) or official government records.
- Nehru's Private Papers cover both pre- and post-Independence periods, and were gradually transferred to NMML from 1971 onward.

PMML's Collection of Private Papers

- PMML holds India's largest collection of Private Papers, from over 1,000 public figures like:
 - Mahatma Gandhi, Ambedkar, Abul Kalam Azad
 - Charan Singh, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, Sundarlal Bahuguna, and more
- These papers offer critical insights into modern Indian history, making them vital for researchers and scholars.

Can Donors Impose Conditions on Private Papers?

- Yes, donors can impose embargoes or restrictions on public access.
- For years, some donors placed undefined or indefinite limits on access.
- In response, PMML recently decided:
 - Embargoes should be limited to 5 years, extendable to 10 years in rare cases.
 - It will now declassify several collections long held in its custody, including papers from G.D. Mavalankar and Nayantara Sahgal.

Legal and Ethical Questions Around Ownership

- Nehru's papers were initially transferred by Indira Gandhi, and more were added by Sonia Gandhi.
- The legal ownership of these documents is contested, especially after their donation to a public institution.
- PMML argues that once donated, they become part of the national historical record and cannot be privately reclaimed.

Who Else Manages Private Papers in India?

- Apart from PMML, the National Archives of India (NAI) also collects private collections — but only if donors agree to make them public.
- NAI holds papers of Rajendra Prasad, Sardar Patel, Mahatma Gandhi, among others.

How Declassification Works in India and Abroad

- In India, official documents are generally declassified after 25 years, as per the Public Records Rules, 1997.
- For Private Papers, the decision to declassify depends on ownership and donor terms.
- In the US, private collections are held by the Library of Congress, while official records are with the National Archives. Public access is often ensured through agreements at the time of donation.

What's Next?

- If the government proceeds legally, it could set a precedent on whether private ownership overrides public access to historically significant documents.

- The outcome may also affect how future donations to archives are handled and whether national interest can override donor restrictions.

Conclusion: Preserving History vs Private Control

This case reflects a deeper debate: Should important historical records be protected by families, or shared with the public? The legal battle over Nehru's papers will shape future policies on access to the private documents of public figures.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: Indian Express

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