



PrepAlpine

— Preparation Meets Precision —

CURRENT AFFAIRS

For UPSC Civil Services Examination Aspirants



RESEARCH-DRIVEN
CONTENT



DAILY COVERAGE
WITH MAINS FOCUS



EXAM-READY
APPROACH

Stay **Informed**. Stay **Ahead**. Succeed.

Copyright © 2025 PrepAlpine

All Rights Reserved

No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means—whether photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods—without the prior written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain non-commercial uses permitted by copyright law.

For permission requests, please write to:

PrepAlpine

Email: info@PrepAlpine.com

Website: PrepAlpine.com

Disclaimer

The information contained in this book has been prepared solely for educational purposes. While every effort has been made to ensure accuracy, PrepAlpine makes no representations or warranties of any kind and accepts no liability for any errors or omissions. The use of any content is solely at the reader's discretion and risk.

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS DATED 12.07.2026

GS Paper II: International Relations

1. India–New Zealand Strategic Partnership

a. Introduction

India and New Zealand have agreed to elevate their relationship to a Strategic Partnership, adopting a Roadmap to 2030 and signing a series of agreements covering defence, maritime security, counter-terrorism, trade, sports and Antarctic research. The development marks a significant expansion of bilateral cooperation across strategic, economic and scientific domains.

The establishment of a Strategic Partnership reflects the growing convergence of interests between India and New Zealand. Examining the key developments provides insight into the expanding scope of this bilateral relationship.



b. Key Developments

India and New Zealand have formally agreed to establish a Strategic Partnership, creating a comprehensive framework for expanding cooperation across multiple sectors.

The two countries have adopted a Roadmap to 2030, which outlines long-term priorities and provides a structured framework for future collaboration.

Several agreements have been concluded in the following areas:

- Defence and maritime security.
- Counter-terrorism cooperation.
- Sports.
- Antarctic research.

Both sides have also agreed to work towards doubling bilateral trade, reflecting their commitment to strengthening economic ties, promoting investment and expanding commercial engagement.

These initiatives extend beyond individual agreements and collectively enhance India's strategic, economic and scientific engagement with an important Indo-Pacific partner.

c. Significance of the Strategic Partnership

- **Strengthening Indo-Pacific Cooperation:** The partnership reinforces cooperation between two democratic maritime nations committed to a free, open, inclusive and rules-based Indo-Pacific. It supports regional stability, maritime security and adherence to international law.
- **Enhancing Counter-Terrorism Cooperation:** Institutional mechanisms for counter-terrorism cooperation will strengthen intelligence sharing, capacity building and operational coordination against terrorism and violent extremism. The partnership also reflects shared concerns regarding transnational extremist and separatist networks.
- **Expanding Economic Engagement:** Greater trade and investment can diversify economic partnerships, reduce dependence on a limited number of markets and strengthen resilient supply chains amid an increasingly uncertain global economic environment.
- **Promoting Scientific Collaboration:** Cooperation in Antarctic research will advance climate science, polar research and the understanding of environmental change. It also strengthens collaboration in the governance of global commons.
- **Deepening People-to-People Relations:** Collaboration in sports, education, cultural exchanges and the contributions of the Indian diaspora in New Zealand can strengthen long-term bilateral goodwill and societal linkages.

Beyond these immediate benefits, the Strategic Partnership also holds wider geopolitical significance for India's evolving foreign policy priorities.

d. Strategic Importance for India

- **Expanding India's Indo-Pacific Engagement:** The Strategic Partnership broadens India's engagement with Pacific partners and reinforces its vision of a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific.
- **Complementing India's Strategic Autonomy:** The partnership complements India's cooperation with like-minded countries through regional and plurilateral platforms while preserving its long-standing policy of strategic autonomy.
- **Strengthening Maritime Security:** Enhanced defence and maritime cooperation supports India's objective of maintaining a secure and stable maritime environment across the Indian and Pacific Oceans.
- **Diversifying Strategic Partnerships:** Closer engagement with New Zealand contributes to India's broader strategy of diversifying diplomatic, economic and security partnerships across the Indo-Pacific region.

While the partnership presents significant opportunities, its long-term success will depend on effectively addressing existing constraints.

e. Challenges

- **Limited Bilateral Trade:** Despite positive political relations, bilateral trade remains modest and does not reflect the full economic potential of the partnership.
- **Geographical Distance and Connectivity:** The considerable geographical distance between the two countries and limited connectivity continue to constrain trade, tourism and business exchanges.
- **Effective Implementation:** The success of the Strategic Partnership will ultimately depend upon the timely implementation of agreed initiatives, sustained political commitment and effective institutional coordination.

Addressing these challenges requires a structured implementation strategy supported by regular dialogue and long-term policy commitment.

f. Way Forward

- Implement the Roadmap to 2030 through clearly defined sector-specific action plans supported by measurable timelines and periodic review mechanisms.

- Deepen cooperation in defence, maritime domain awareness, cyber security and emerging technologies to strengthen strategic resilience.
- Accelerate trade negotiations while promoting investment in agriculture, clean energy, education, digital technologies and innovation.
- Expand collaboration in Antarctic research, climate resilience and environmental sustainability to address shared global challenges.
- Strengthen institutional dialogue, parliamentary exchanges, academic partnerships and people-to-people contacts to sustain long-term bilateral cooperation.
- Encourage greater engagement between businesses, universities, research institutions and innovation ecosystems to broaden the scope of economic and technological collaboration.

Conclusion

The elevation of India–New Zealand relations to a Strategic Partnership marks a significant milestone in India's Indo-Pacific engagement. By expanding cooperation across defence, trade, counter-terrorism, science and people-to-people exchanges, the partnership strengthens both bilateral ties and regional stability. Effective implementation of the Roadmap to 2030 will be essential to translating shared aspirations into tangible outcomes, while reinforcing India's vision of a free, open, inclusive and rules-based Indo-Pacific.

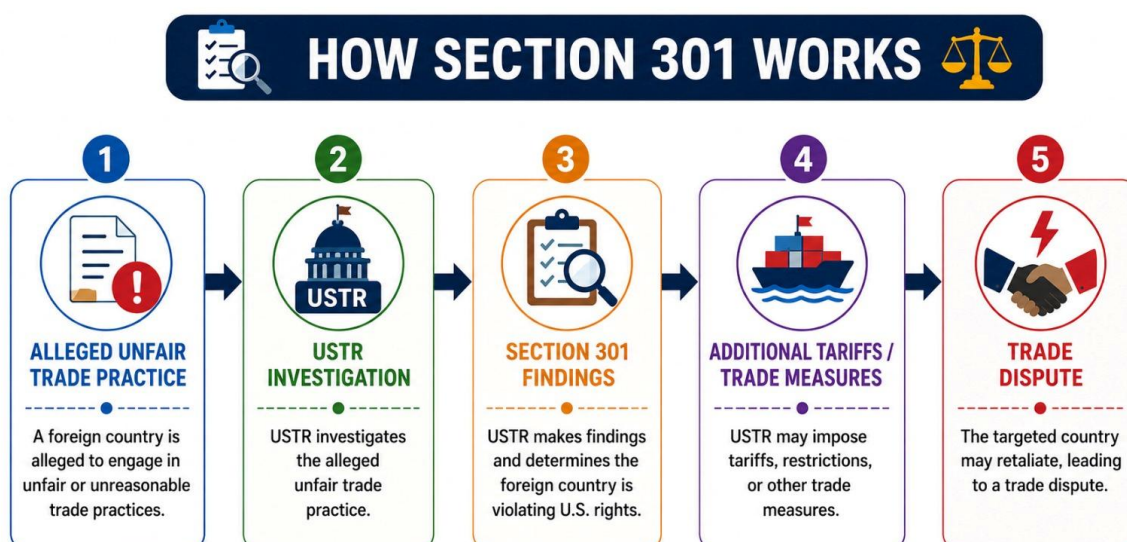
GS Paper III: Economics

2. India Challenges Proposed United States Tariffs under Section 301

a. Introduction

India has sought a review of the proposed 12.5 per cent tariff imposed by the United States under a Section 301 investigation relating to alleged imports linked to forced labour. India has argued that the proposed action lacks an adequate legal and evidentiary basis and should be reconsidered.

Understanding the legal basis of the proposed tariff is essential to appreciate the broader trade dispute and its implications for India–United States economic relations.



b. What is Section 301?

Section 301 of the United States Trade Act, 1974 empowers the United States Trade Representative (USTR) to investigate and respond to foreign trade practices that are considered unfair, unreasonable or discriminatory and that adversely affect United States commerce.

The provision authorises the United States to impose unilateral trade measures, including additional tariffs, following the completion of an investigation.

The use of Section 301 has frequently generated international debate because such unilateral actions may bypass the multilateral dispute settlement framework of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

The present dispute has emerged from the application of these powers against certain imports from India, leading to differences over both the legal basis and evidentiary standards of the proposed tariff.

c. Key Issue

The United States Trade Representative (USTR) has proposed an additional 12.5 per cent tariff on certain imports from India following a Section 301 investigation concerning alleged links with forced labour.

India has opposed the proposal on several grounds.

- The investigation does not provide country-specific or sector-specific evidence establishing that Indian exports are connected with forced labour.
- The proposed tariff does not satisfy the legal standards required under Section 301.
- Trade-related concerns should be addressed through constructive bilateral negotiations rather than unilateral tariff measures.

India's response reflects not only concerns over the immediate tariff proposal but also its broader commitment to a fair, evidence-based and rules-oriented international trading system.

d. India's Position

- **Commitment to Labour Rights:** India has emphasised that the elimination of forced labour is consistent with both its constitutional values and its international commitments.
- **Existing Domestic Regulatory Framework:** The Government has highlighted that domestic regulatory mechanisms already exist to prevent exports produced through forced labour and to ensure compliance with applicable labour standards.
- **Lack of Adequate Evidence:** India has argued that the proposed tariff is based on broad assumptions rather than verifiable evidence specifically relating to Indian exports or individual sectors.
- **Preference for Bilateral Resolution:** India has urged that any unresolved concerns should be addressed through the ongoing India–United States trade negotiations, which provide a more appropriate institutional framework for resolving trade-related issues.

Beyond India's legal objections, the proposed tariff could also have important economic implications for both countries.

e. Economic Implications

- **Reduced Export Competitiveness:** The proposed tariff could reduce the competitiveness of Indian exports in the United States market by increasing their landed cost relative to competing products.
- **Supply Chain Disruptions:** Higher tariffs may increase input costs for American industries that rely on Indian intermediate goods, thereby affecting production efficiency and supply chain resilience.
- **Sectoral Impact:** Export-oriented sectors such as petrochemicals and agricultural products could face disruptions if additional trade barriers are imposed.
- **Impact on Bilateral Economic Relations:** The growing use of unilateral tariff measures may adversely affect the expanding India–United States economic partnership, weaken investor confidence and create uncertainty for businesses.

The dispute also reflects a wider transformation in global trade policy, where labour and sustainability concerns are becoming increasingly intertwined with market access.

f. Broader Trade Dimension

- **Growing Importance of Labour Standards:** The dispute reflects the increasing incorporation of labour rights, environmental considerations and sustainability standards into international trade policy.
- **Challenges to the Multilateral Trading System:** While promoting ethical supply chains is an important objective, unilateral trade restrictions raise concerns regarding consistency with the principles of a rules-based multilateral trading system under the World Trade Organization.
- **Balancing Ethics and Trade:** The issue highlights the broader challenge of balancing legitimate labour concerns with predictable, transparent and non-discriminatory international trade rules.
- **Rising Trend of Trade Policy as a Strategic Instrument:** The increasing use of unilateral trade measures illustrates how trade policy is increasingly being employed to pursue strategic, labour and geopolitical objectives alongside traditional commercial interests.

Addressing these concerns requires a cooperative approach that strengthens labour standards while preserving the stability and predictability of global trade.

g. Way Forward

- Resolve the dispute through constructive bilateral negotiations that recognise the strategic importance of the India–United States economic partnership.
- Continue strengthening transparency, traceability and due diligence across export supply chains to address concerns relating to labour standards.
- Enhance bilateral cooperation on labour rights and sustainable production while avoiding protectionist trade measures that could undermine mutually beneficial trade.
- Diversify India's export markets to reduce vulnerability to unilateral tariff actions by any single trading partner.
- Reaffirm the commitment of both countries to a transparent, predictable and rules-based global trading system consistent with the principles of the World Trade Organization (WTO).
- Strengthen institutional dialogue between trade authorities to resolve future disputes through consultation, evidence-based assessments and mutually agreed solutions.

Conclusion

The proposed Section 301 tariff highlights the growing intersection of trade policy, labour standards and geopolitics in the global economy. While concerns relating to ethical supply chains deserve serious attention, trade measures must be based on transparent evidence and remain consistent with the principles of the World Trade Organization. A negotiated and rules-based resolution would strengthen not only the India–United States strategic partnership but also confidence in the multilateral trading system.

GS Paper III: Science and Technology

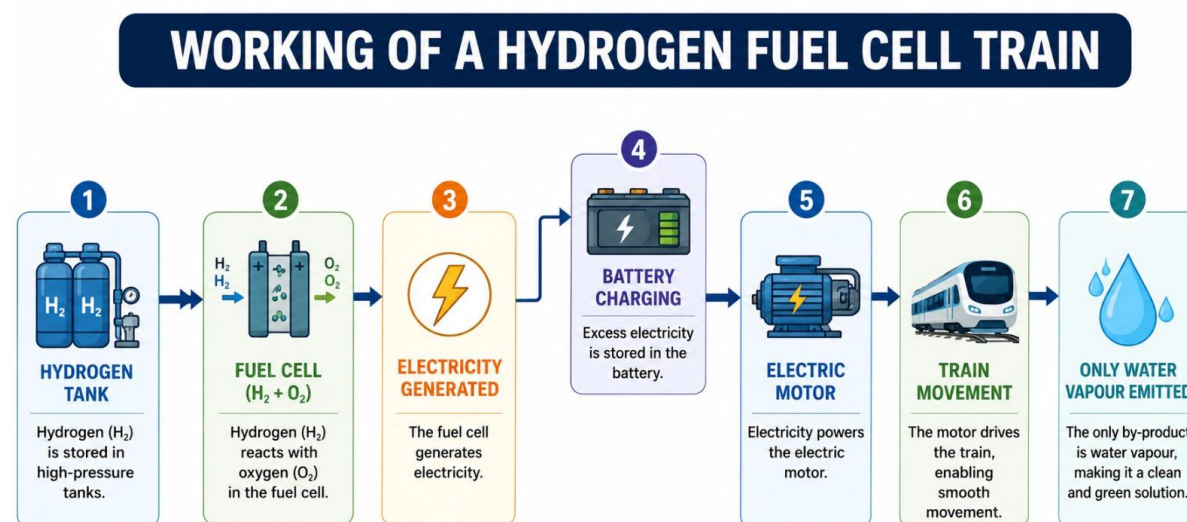
3. India's First Hydrogen-Powered Passenger Train

a. Introduction

The Prime Minister is scheduled to inaugurate India's first hydrogen-powered passenger train on the Jind–Sonipat route in Haryana. With a power output of 2,400 kilowatts, it is among the world's

longest and most powerful hydrogen-powered trainsets, marking an important milestone in India's transition towards clean and sustainable transportation.

The launch of India's first hydrogen-powered passenger train demonstrates the practical application of green hydrogen technology. Understanding its working mechanism is essential to appreciate its significance for clean mobility and sustainable infrastructure.



b. How Does a Hydrogen Train Work?

A hydrogen-powered train generates electricity through a hydrogen fuel cell instead of relying on a conventional diesel engine.

The process involves the following stages:

- Hydrogen stored onboard reacts with oxygen from the atmosphere inside the fuel cell.
- The electrochemical reaction generates electricity, with water vapour being the only direct emission.
- The electricity powers the train's electric motors while simultaneously charging onboard batteries.
- During periods of high power demand, such as acceleration or climbing gradients, the fuel cell and battery operate together to provide additional power.
- During normal operation, surplus electricity produced by the fuel cell recharges the batteries, thereby improving overall energy efficiency.

This combination of zero-emission energy generation and battery-assisted propulsion makes hydrogen trains an attractive alternative for sustainable rail transport.

c. Significance of Hydrogen-Powered Trains

- **Supporting Decarbonisation of Rail Transport:** Hydrogen-powered trains produce zero tailpipe emissions, making them an environmentally friendly alternative to diesel locomotives. Their adoption contributes to India's efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the transport sector.
- **Enhancing Energy Security:** Replacing diesel with domestically produced green hydrogen can reduce dependence on imported fossil fuels, thereby strengthening India's long-term energy security.
- **Promoting the Green Hydrogen Economy:** The project demonstrates the practical application of hydrogen fuel-cell technology and supports the objectives of the National Green Hydrogen Mission by creating demand for hydrogen-based energy systems.

- **Encouraging Indigenous Technological Development:** The initiative provides an opportunity to develop domestic capabilities in hydrogen production, fuel-cell technology and clean mobility, thereby advancing the objectives of Atmanirbhar Bharat and Make in India.
- **Providing a Clean Alternative for Non-Electrified Routes:** Hydrogen-powered trains can be deployed on railway routes where installing overhead electrification is technically difficult or economically unviable, providing a viable clean-energy alternative for non-electrified sections.

While hydrogen-powered railways offer substantial environmental and strategic benefits, several technological and economic challenges must be addressed before large-scale deployment becomes feasible.

d. Challenges

- **Hydrogen Storage and Safety:** Hydrogen is highly flammable and has a low volumetric energy density. It must therefore be stored either under very high pressure or at cryogenic temperatures, necessitating stringent safety standards and specialised storage systems.
- **Infrastructure Requirements:** Hydrogen-powered rail operations require dedicated production, storage, transportation and refuelling infrastructure, which is currently limited in India.
- **High Costs:** Green hydrogen production remains significantly more expensive than conventional fossil fuels. In addition, fuel-cell systems involve high manufacturing, operational and maintenance costs.
- **Technology Dependence:** Several critical components, particularly advanced fuel cells, hydrogen storage systems and associated technologies, continue to depend on imports, highlighting the need for greater domestic manufacturing capability.
- **Limited Commercial Experience:** Globally, hydrogen-powered trains remain at an early stage of commercial deployment and are primarily operated on short, non-electrified railway routes. Their long-term operational reliability and economic viability are still being evaluated.

The experiences of other countries provide useful insights into both the opportunities and practical challenges associated with hydrogen-based rail transport.

e. Global Context

- Germany introduced the world's first commercial hydrogen-powered passenger train through the Alstom Coradia iLint, demonstrating the operational feasibility of hydrogen-based rail transport.
- Countries such as Japan, China and the United States are also testing hydrogen rail technologies as part of their broader clean mobility strategies.
- Despite growing global interest, large-scale deployment remains limited because of the high cost of green hydrogen production and the substantial investment required for supporting infrastructure.

These international experiences indicate that technological success must be complemented by supportive policy, infrastructure investment and long-term economic viability.

f. Way Forward

- Accelerate the production of green hydrogen using renewable energy sources to reduce production costs and improve commercial viability.
- Promote domestic manufacturing of fuel cells, hydrogen storage systems and related technologies under the Make in India initiative to reduce import dependence.
- Develop dedicated hydrogen production, storage and refuelling infrastructure along selected railway corridors to support large-scale deployment.
- Prioritise the deployment of hydrogen-powered trains on non-electrified routes where conventional electrification is technically challenging or economically inefficient.

- Encourage research, innovation and public-private partnerships to improve fuel-cell efficiency, reduce costs and strengthen India's hydrogen technology ecosystem.
- Integrate hydrogen rail technology with India's broader strategy for clean energy, sustainable transport, industrial decarbonisation and energy security, ensuring that investments generate long-term economic, environmental and technological benefits.

Conclusion

India's first hydrogen-powered passenger train marks a significant milestone in the country's transition towards clean, low-carbon transportation. Beyond demonstrating technological capability, it reinforces India's commitment to the National Green Hydrogen Mission, energy security and sustainable infrastructure. With continued investment in green hydrogen production, indigenous technology development and supporting infrastructure, hydrogen-powered railways can become an important component of India's long-term strategy for achieving net-zero emissions by 2070 while promoting innovation-led economic growth.

Reader's Note — About This Current Affairs Compilation

Dear Aspirant,

This document is part of the PrepAlpine Current Affairs Series — designed to bring clarity, structure, and precision to your daily UPSC learning.

While every effort has been made to balance depth with brevity, please keep the following in mind:

1. Orientation & Purpose

This compilation is curated primarily from the UPSC Mains perspective — with emphasis on conceptual clarity, analytical depth, and interlinkages across GS papers.

However, the PrepAlpine team is simultaneously developing a dedicated Prelims-focused Current Affairs Series, designed for:

- factual coverage
- data recall
- Prelims-style MCQs
- objective pattern analysis

This Prelims Edition will be released separately as a standalone publication.

2. Content Length

Some sections may feel shorter or longer depending on topic relevance and news density. To fit your personal preference, you may freely resize or summarize sections using any LLM tool (ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, etc.) at your convenience.

3. Format Flexibility

The formatting combines:

- paragraphs
- lists
- tables
- visual cues

—all optimised for retention.

If you prefer a specific style (lists → paras, paras → tables, etc.), feel free to convert using any free LLM.

4. Monthly Current Affairs Release

The complete Monthly Current Affairs Module will be released soon, optimized to a compact 100–150 pages — comprehensive yet concise, exam-ready, and revision-efficient.

PrepAlpine