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VIRTUAL ROUND TABLE

# TARIFFS AND TRADE



## Navigating Global Trade and Innovation Dynamics

At a time when global trade is being reshaped by shifting tariff regimes and geopolitical realignments, ICTRD convened a timely Virtual Round Table titled "Tariffs & Trade: Navigating US Policies and Their Impact on India's Innovation Economy". The session brought together policymakers, economists, industry leaders, academicians, entrepreneurs, and students to examine how evolving US tariff policies influence India's manufacturing strength, startup ecosystem, innovation capacity, and long-term global competitiveness.

The discussion was anchored in ICTRD's core mission of fostering an innovation-driven knowledge economy by creating a platform where policy, research, industry, and entrepreneurship intersect.

## Leveraging Global Trade Challenges for Innovation-Driven Growth

Dr. Ashish Sasankar emphasized that discussions on tariffs and trade are no longer confined to economics alone—they directly influence innovation, employment, education, and national resilience. He highlighted the need for India to view global trade challenges as opportunities to strengthen domestic capabilities, enhance skill ecosystems, and build globally competitive innovation hubs. The round table, he noted, aimed to generate actionable ideas, collaboration, and policy relevance.

He further stressed the importance of aligning trade strategies with emerging technologies and fostering stronger coordination between government, industry, and academia to support innovation-driven growth in a rapidly evolving global landscape.

## Bridging Technology, Innovation, and Policy Through Collaborative Growth

Dr. Ketan Mohitkar reinforced this vision by stating that ICTRD's long-term objective is to bridge technology, innovation, and policy. He stressed that trade literacy, innovation readiness, and industry alignment must become integral to education systems if India is to emerge as a resilient and self-reliant global economy. Collaboration, he emphasized, is the cornerstone of meaningful national progress.

He also highlighted the need to equip students with practical exposure and future-ready skills that align with evolving global trade dynamics.



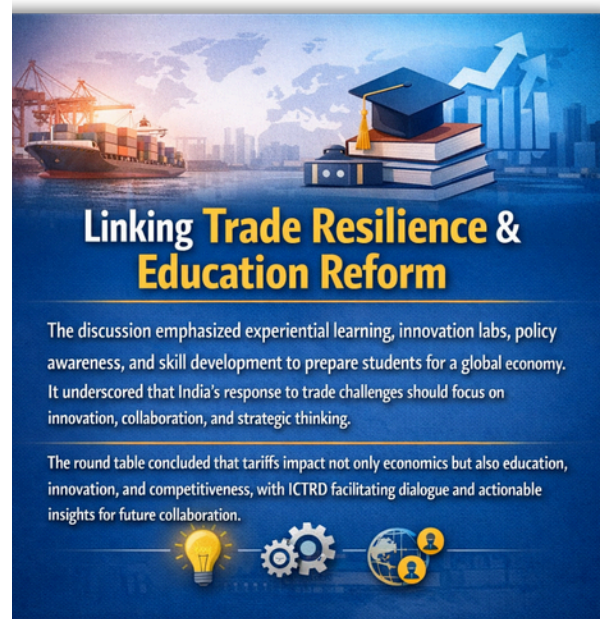
### Entrepreneurship Growth and Macroeconomic Impact of Tariffs

Focusing on entrepreneurship, Dr. Aravind Krishna emphasized that India is increasingly viewed as one of the most attractive markets for global trade and investment. With strong government backing and international interest—particularly from regions like the Middle East, Indian startups are well positioned to scale globally despite tariff barriers.

From a consumer and macroeconomic perspective, Ajay Sudharsan L noted that tariffs can drive inflation and affect essentials like electronics, fuel, and pharmaceuticals. He highlighted the role of startups and MSMEs in creating affordable alternatives and supporting self-reliance.

## Voices from the Round Table

Shajan C Kumar highlighted how tariffs now extend beyond traditional sectors like steel and oil to impact innovation-driven industries such as IT, gaming, and creative sectors. He noted that India's strength lies in its global talent and innovation capacity. While initiatives like Make in India and Startup India provide a foundation, long-term competitiveness depends on skill development, quality improvement, and strategic global engagement.



### ● Impact of Tariffs on Inflation and the Role of Startups in Driving Self-Reliance

From a consumer and macroeconomic lens, Ajay Sudharsan L explained how tariffs indirectly fuel inflation, impacting essentials such as electronics, fuel, and pharmaceuticals. He stressed that startups and MSMEs must play a key role in developing affordable substitutes and driving innovation-led self reliance, while policymakers balance trade negotiations with consumer interests.

## TRADE COMPLEXITY AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

Dr. Meghana Jalgaonkar underscored the growing complexity of modern trade, which now involves data flows, supply chains, and strategic interests. She highlighted the critical role of academia and research in building policy literacy, analytical skills, and real-world exposure among students—creating a future pipeline of capable policymakers and trade experts.

Adding a pragmatic industry view, Aditya Vaidya observed that while US tariffs have created short-term challenges, they have also opened opportunities for Indian manufacturers to diversify markets, improve quality standards, and reduce over-dependence on any single geography. He emphasized that such pressures can strengthen India’s long-term trade resilience.

## EDUCATION, INNOVATION, AND THE ROAD AHEAD

The discussion highlighted the link between trade resilience and education reform, emphasizing experiential learning, innovation labs, policy awareness, and skill development to prepare students for a global economy. It underlined that India’s response to trade challenges should focus on innovation, collaboration, and strategic thinking. The round table concluded that tariffs influence not only economics but also education, innovation, and competitiveness, with ICTRD facilitating dialogue and actionable insights for future collaboration.

## Meet the Speakers

- Mr. Shajan Kumar, Dean
- Dr. Aravind Krishna, Founder, Director
- Mr. Ajay Sudharsan L, Director
- Dr. Meghana Manohar Jalgaonkar, Director
- Mr. Aditya Vaidya, Deputy General Manager- Client Solutions