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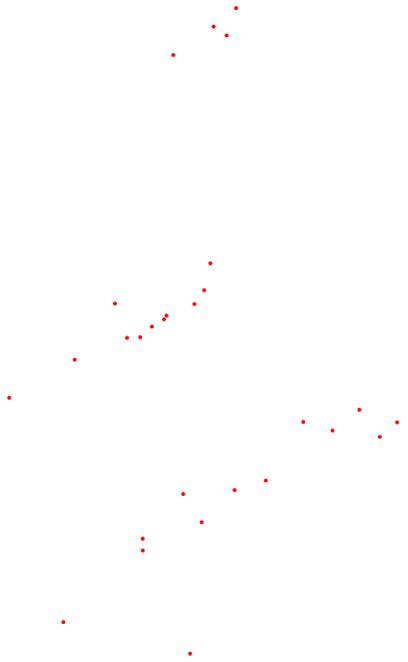
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West Asia war escalates, spikes oil, strands flyers

Iran targets U.S. assets, Israel, Arab states; 3 jets fell in Kuwait 'friendly fire', says U.S.; Tehran claims shooting down one; Qatar takes down 2 Iranian bombers; U.S. 'will no longer be safe' warns Iran

Associated Press
DUBAI

Iran and allied armed groups fired missiles at Israel, Arab states, and U.S. military targets around the region on Monday, while Israel and the U.S. pounded the West Asian country as the war expanded to several fronts and death toll grew on all sides.



Warning phone: Smoke rises from a warehouse in Shanghai City in the wake following Iranian strikes.

Three American warplanes were downed in Kuwait, which the Pentagon said were hit by Kuwaiti "friendly fire", while Iran claimed it shot down a U.S. jet.

The conflict, in its third day, was already having far-reaching consequences, with previously safe havens in the Gulf seeing incoming fire, hundreds of thousands of airline passengers stranded around the globe, and oil prices shooting up by more than \$40 a barrel mark as of mid-day on Monday.

"mistakenly shot down" three American F-35E strike fighters while Iranian attacks were under way. Iranian Armed Forces said they have shot down an advanced U.S. F-35 fighter jet near the border with Kuwait. Qatar's Air Force downed two Iranian bombers, its Defence Ministry said.

"We will not negotiate with the United States", Iran's top security official, Ali Larjani, said on Monday after several air strikes hit Tehran, even as Iran's Revolutionary Guards accused the U.S. of "no longer be safe".

India, Canada ink uranium deal as Carney meets Modi

Sahasrabhusan
NEW DELHI

India and Canada on Monday agreed to a \$1.4-billion, 10-year uranium supply deal for Indian nuclear power reactors, and agreed to conclude the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) this year, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi held talks with Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney in New Delhi in an effort to establish "strategic trust" and reset the rapport over the past few years.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with his Canadian counterpart Mark Carney in New Delhi on Monday.

India and Canada announced a number of agreements including a Strategic Energy Partnership in the fields of renewable energy, LNG and uranium supplies, and cooperation in critical and emerging technologies, as well as MoUs on education and other areas.

They also issued the "Terns of Reference" for the CEPA or free trade negotiations, aiming to double bilateral trade by 2030. Canada also decided to join the India-led multilateral International Solar Al-

President unveils women-centric welfare schemes



President Droupadi Murmu on Monday launched several key welfare schemes introduced by the Delhi government with the aim of empowering women and girls. The President said these initiatives are important steps towards making women self-reliant.

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HC sets aside stay on IVC chief's bail in protest case

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Monday set aside the stay imposed on the bail granted to IVC president Uday Kumar Chharia, who was arrested in connection with the "shuts off" protest at the AIJ summit in New Delhi.

IIP growth in January slows down to 4.8%

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

India's industrial activity slowed to a three-month low of 4.8% in January 2020, dragged down by a broad-based slowdown across manufacturing, mining, electricity, and construction sectors, official data showed.

Growth in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) slowed from a 26-month high of 7.8% in December 2019, which was later revised upwards to 8%.

Within the index, the manufacturing sector saw growth slow to 4.8% in January from 4.4% in December 2019 and 4.6% in January 2020. The only broad sector to show accelerating growth was infrastructure, which quickened to 13.7% in January 2020, the highest since August 2017.

The mining sector saw growth slow to 4.3% in January, after accelerating in the previous two months. The electricity sector, too, saw growth slowing to 5.1% in January, down from 6.9% in December 2019. This was, however, faster than the 2.4% growth seen in the same month of last year.

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Thank you ForumIAS Residential Coaching for transforming the life of my young son Ashish, who secured Rank 38 in the exam which guided him from day one to the final result. I give my gratitude and thanks to your staff for their support.

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Shri A.K. Sharma, Haryana teacher

Devika S. IIPPS, Police Women's College Alumni

The learning environment, respect, mentors, and a competitive and serious peer group at ForumIAS helped me clear my first attempt, securing rank 38 in CSE 2019.

Shruti Aurora, IAS, St. Stephen's Alumnus

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India, Canada ink uranium deal as Carney meets Modi

Suhasini Haidar

NEW DELHI

India and Canada on Monday agreed to a \$1.9 billion, 10-year uranium supply deal for Indian nuclear power reactors, and agreed to conclude the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) this year, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi held talks with Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney in New Delhi in an effort to establish “strategic trust” and reset ties ruptured over the past few years.

However, issues over the killing of Canadian-Khalistani activist Hardeep Singh Nijjar persisted after new reports that Canadian investigative agencies believe two officials in the Indian Consulate in Vancouver were linked to the case, a charge that India rejected.

After the talks between the Prime Ministers, India



Fruitful talks: Prime Minister Narendra Modi with his Canadian counterpart Mark Carney in New Delhi on Monday. ANI

and Canada announced a number of agreements including a Strategic Energy Partnership in the fields of renewable energy, LPG and uranium supplies, and cooperation in critical and emerging technologies, as well as MoUs on education and culture.

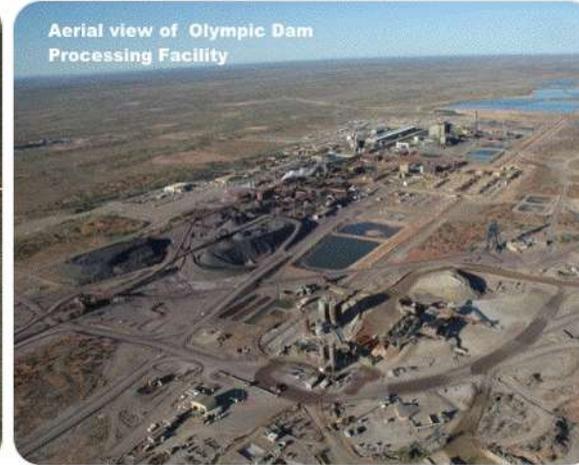
They also issued the “Terms of Reference” for the CEPA or free trade negotiations, aiming to double bilateral trade by 2030. Canada also decided to join the India-led multilateral International Solar Al-

liance (ISA) and Global Bio-fuel Alliance as a member.

The two leaders discussed the escalation of the conflict in West Asia, although they didn’t put out any joint understanding on the issue. Mr. Modi described the situation as one of “deep concern” and called for “diplomacy and dialogue” to resolve it. India had always called for peace and stability to be maintained, he said.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 10

🏆 Top 3 Uranium Producing Countries



Rank	Country	Approx Share of Global Production	Key Mining Areas	Important Fact
1	Kazakhstan	~40–43%	Steppe in southern Kazakhstan (in-situ leaching)	World's largest producer since 2009
2	Canada	~13–15%	Saskatchewan (Cigar Lake, McArthur River)	Highest-grade uranium ore globally
3	Namibia	~11–12%	Rossing, Husab mines	Major African producer

 **Top 3 Countries – Uranium Reserves (Reasonably Assured Resources)**

Rank	Country	% of Global Reserves	Key Region	Remark
1	Australia	~28%	Olympic Dam, Ranger	Largest known uranium reserves
2	Kazakhstan	~13–15%	Central Asia region	Major producer & exporter
3	Canada	~10%	Saskatchewan Basin	High-grade deposits



Aspect	Details
Chemical Symbol	U
Atomic Number	92
Nature	Radioactive heavy metal
Main Isotope Used	Uranium-235 (fissile)
Other Isotope	Uranium-238 (fertile)
Use	Nuclear power generation, nuclear weapons, medical isotopes
Energy Property	1 kg uranium \approx energy of \sim 1,500 tonnes of coal (approx.)
Mining Methods	Open pit, underground, in-situ leaching
Enrichment Required	Yes (for nuclear reactors & weapons)
Major International Body	International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)
Environmental Concern	Radioactive waste, tailings management

Indian context -
Parameter

Details

Major Mines

Jaduguda (Jharkhand), Tummalapalle
(Andhra Pradesh)

Managing Body

Uranium Corporation of India Limited
(UCIL)

India's Share in Global Reserves

~2% (approx.)

Nuclear Power Share in India

~3–4% of total electricity

Key Reactor Type

PHWR (Pressurised Heavy Water
Reactor)

Import Sources

Kazakhstan, Canada, Russia, Australia

Parameter

Details

Total Bilateral Trade (2022–23 approx.)

~USD 8–9 Billion

India's Exports to Canada

~USD 4–5 Billion

India's Imports from Canada

~USD 4–5 Billion

Trade Nature

Largely Balanced

Target

Doubling trade by 2030 (under CEPA discussions)

Trade Type

Merchandise + Services

2 Major Indian Exports to Canada

Sector	Key Products
Pharmaceuticals	Generic medicines, vaccines
Textiles & Apparel	Garments, fabrics
Engineering Goods	Machinery, auto parts
Gems & Jewellery	Diamonds, gold jewellery
IT & Services	Software, business services
Organic Chemicals	Specialty chemicals

3 Major Indian Imports from Canada

Sector	Key Products
Pulses	Lentils (Canada is major supplier)
Fertilizers	Potash
Uranium	For nuclear reactors
Wood & Pulp	Timber products
Coal	Coking coal
Edible Oils	Canola oil

6 Strategic Trade Areas

Area	Importance
Critical Minerals	Lithium, uranium cooperation
Clean Energy	Nuclear fuel supply
Agriculture	Pulses & agri-trade
Education	300,000+ Indian students in Canada (economic linkage)
Technology	AI, clean tech collaboration

7 Trade Challenges

Issue	Impact
Diplomatic Tensions (Nijjar Issue)	Temporary slowdown in negotiations
Visa Restrictions	Impact on services trade
Agriculture Disputes	Tariff issues
CEPA Delay	Missed trade expansion opportunity



Period	Trend
Pre-2015	Moderate trade growth
2015–2019	Strengthening ties, uranium deal
2020–2021	Pandemic disruption
2022–2023	Recovery & record trade levels
2024–2025	Political tension but strategic trade continuity

1 Uranium Supply Agreement (10 Years)

- India and Canada signed a **\$1.9 billion, 10-year uranium supply deal** for Indian nuclear power reactors.

भारत और कनाडा ने भारतीय परमाणु ऊर्जा संयंत्रों के लिए **1.9 अरब डॉलर का 10-वर्षीय यूरेनियम आपूर्ति समझौता** किया।

- The deal strengthens India's civilian nuclear energy program under international safeguards.
यह समझौता अंतरराष्ट्रीय सुरक्षा मानकों के तहत भारत के असैन्य परमाणु कार्यक्रम को मजबूत करता है।
 - Canada is one of the world's largest uranium producers (notably Saskatchewan region).
कनाडा विश्व के प्रमुख यूरेनियम उत्पादकों में से एक है (विशेषकर सस्केचेवान क्षेत्र)।
-

2 Strategic & Diplomatic Reset

- PM Narendra Modi and Canadian PM Mark Carney met in New Delhi to rebuild "strategic trust."
प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी और कनाडा के प्रधानमंत्री मार्क कार्नी ने नई दिल्ली में "रणनीतिक विश्वास" बहाल करने हेतु मुलाकात की।
 - Relations had deteriorated after the killing of Khalistani activist Hardeep Singh Nijjar in Canada.
कनाडा में खालिस्तानी कार्यकर्ता हरदीप सिंह निज्जर की हत्या के बाद संबंध खराब हो गए थे।
 - India rejected allegations linking its officials to the case.
भारत ने इस मामले में अपने अधिकारियों की संलिप्तता के आरोपों को खारिज किया।
-

3 Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)

- Both countries agreed to conclude CEPA negotiations this year.
दोनों देशों ने इस वर्ष CEPA वार्ता पूरी करने पर सहमति जताई।
 - Target: Double bilateral trade by 2030.
लक्ष्य: 2030 तक द्विपक्षीय व्यापार को दोगुना करना।
 - Canada joined India-led International Solar Alliance (ISA) and Global Biofuel Alliance.
कनाडा ने भारत-नेतृत्व वाले अंतर्राष्ट्रीय सौर गठबंधन (ISA) और वैश्विक जैव ईंधन गठबंधन की सदस्यता ली।
-

4 Energy & Economic Dimensions

- India imports nearly 85% of its crude oil; nuclear energy reduces energy vulnerability.
भारत लगभग 85% कच्चे तेल का आयात करता है; परमाणु ऊर्जा ऊर्जा निर्भरता कम करती है।
- Nuclear energy helps India achieve net-zero target by 2070.
परमाणु ऊर्जा 2070 के नेट-जीरो लक्ष्य में सहायक है।
- Canada gains a stable long-term export market.
कनाडा को स्थिर दीर्घकालिक निर्यात बाजार मिलता है।

5 Historical Background

- India conducted nuclear tests in 1974 (Pokhran-I), after which Canada suspended nuclear cooperation.
1974 के पोखरण-I परीक्षण के बाद कनाडा ने परमाणु सहयोग निलंबित किया।
 - Relations normalized after India-US Civil Nuclear Deal (2008) and NSG waiver.
2008 के भारत-अमेरिका असैन्य परमाणु समझौते और NSG छूट के बाद संबंध सामान्य हुए।
 - Canada earlier supplied uranium to India under safeguards in 2015 agreement.
2015 के समझौते के तहत कनाडा ने भारत को सुरक्षा प्रावधानों के तहत यूरेनियम आपूर्ति की थी।
-

6 Geopolitical Context

- West Asia tensions discussed but no joint statement issued.
पश्चिम एशिया के तनाव पर चर्चा हुई पर संयुक्त बयान जारी नहीं हुआ।
 - India maintains policy of strategic autonomy.
भारत रणनीतिक स्वायत्तता की नीति अपनाता है।
 - Canada balances relations with US, India and domestic Sikh diaspora politics.
कनाडा अमेरिका, भारत और अपने सिख प्रवासी समुदाय की राजनीति के बीच संतुलन रखता है।
-

7 Political & Security Implications

- Issue of Khalistan activism remains sensitive.
खालिस्तान गतिविधियों का मुद्दा संवेदनशील बना हुआ है।
- Diplomatic engagement indicates pragmatic reset over confrontation.
कूटनीतिक संवाद टकराव की बजाय व्यवहारिक पुनर्संतुलन दर्शाता है।

Consider the following statements:

1. Canada is among the top global producers of uranium.
2. India's 1974 nuclear test led to suspension of nuclear cooperation by Canada.
3. CEPA aims to double bilateral trade by 2025.
4. Canada has joined the International Solar Alliance.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 1, 2 and 4 only
- C. 2 and 3 only
- D. 1, 3 and 4 only

West Asia war escalates, spikes oil, strands flyers

Iran targets U.S. assets, Israel, Arab states; 3 jets fell in Kuwaiti 'friendly fire', says U.S., Tehran claims shooting down one; Qatar takes down 2 Iranian bombers; U.S. 'will no longer be safe' warns Iran

Associated Press

DUBAI

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The conflict, in its third day, was already having far-reaching consequences, with previously safe havens in the Gulf seeing incoming fire, hundreds of thousands of airline pas-



Warning plume: Smoke rises from a warehouse in Sharjah City in the UAE following Iranian strikes. AP

sengers stranded around the globe, and oil prices shooting up by more than 8% to hover around the \$80 a barrel mark as of mid-day on Monday.

The Iranian Red Crescent Society said that the U.S.-Israeli strikes have killed at least 555 people. In Israel, where several locations were hit by Iranian

missiles, 11 people were killed. The Iranian-backed Hezbollah militant group also targeted Israel, which responded with strikes on Lebanon, killing more than two dozen people. Four U.S. troops have also been killed.

The chaos of the conflict became apparent when the U.S. said Kuwait had

"mistakenly shot down" three American F-15E Strike Eagles while Iranian attacks were under way. Iranian Armed Forces said they have shot down an advanced U.S. F-15 fighter jet near the border with Kuwait. Qatar's Air Force downed two Iranian bombers, its Defence Ministry said.

"We will not negotiate with the United States", Iran's top security official, Ali Larijani, said on Monday after several air strikes hit Tehran, even as Iran's Revolutionary Guards warned the U.S. that it will "no longer be safe".

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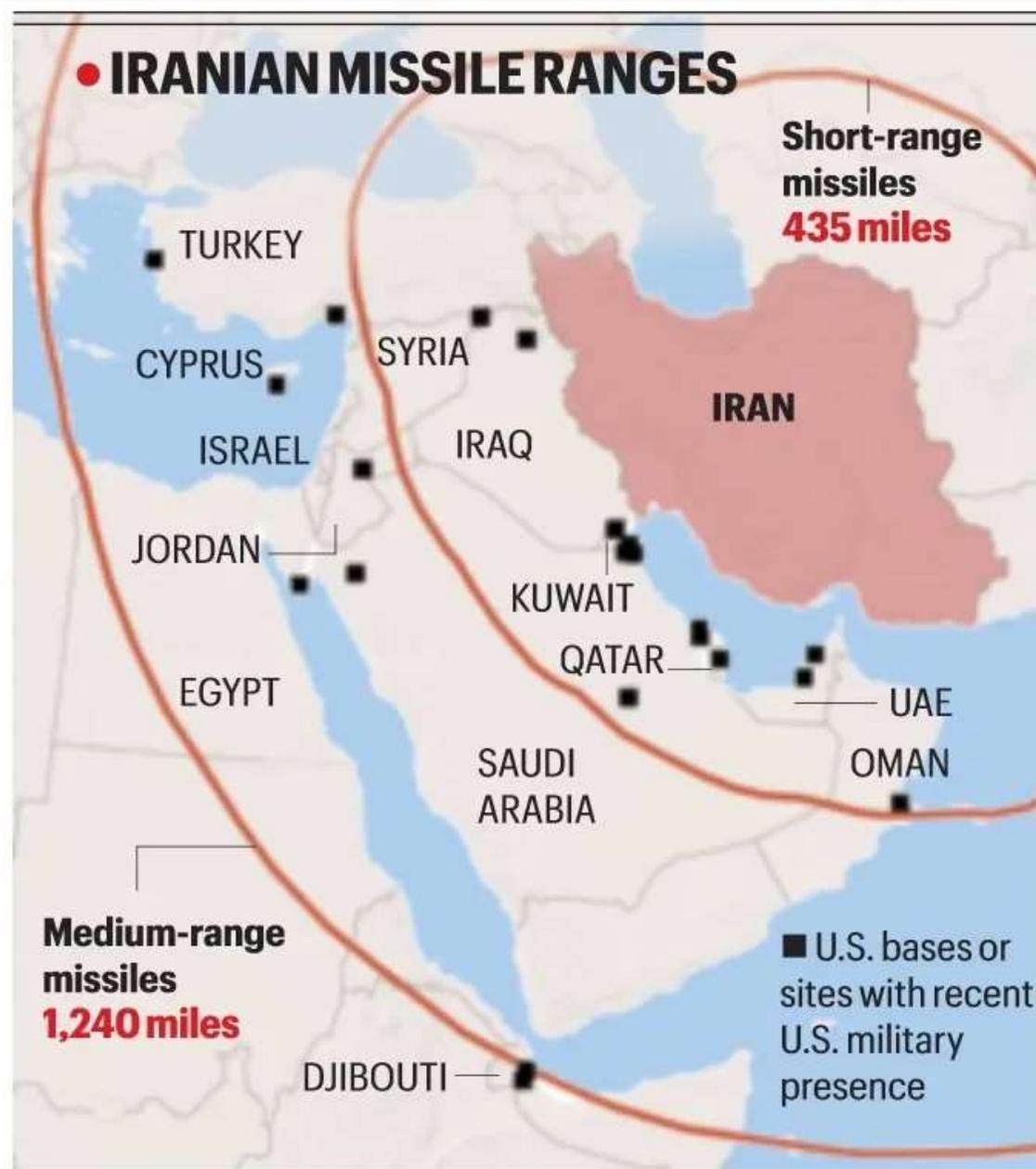
» **PAGES 10, 13, & 14**

WAR FOR UNIPOLAR REGION

» **PAGE 6**

Factors behind the US-Israel Joint Attack on Iran

- **Talks Breakdown:** Nuclear talks in **Geneva** collapsed over U.S. demands that Iran dismantle the **Fordow and Natanz nuclear facilities** and **permanently ban uranium enrichment**.
- **Shia Crescent:** Iran's attempt to build a **Tehran-Iraq-Syria-Lebanon land corridor** alarmed U.S.-backed allies over a shift in the regional power balance.
- **Proxy Strategy:** By backing the **Houthis in Yemen** and **Hezbollah in Lebanon**, Iran opened multiple pressure fronts against Israel and challenged U.S.-protected **Red Sea routes**.
- **Power Alignment:** Iran's closer ties with **Russia** and **China** raise Western concern over a potential nuclear-backed strategic alignment.
- **Sectarian Divide:** **Shia-majority Iran** and the **U.S.-aligned Sunni Arab bloc** remain locked in a long-standing contest for dominance in **West Asia**.
- **Existential Threat:** Iran's rejection of Israel's legitimacy makes Tel Aviv treat any Iranian military buildup as an **immediate survival threat**.



NOTE: MINIMUM RANGE ESTIMATES FOR SOME OF IRAN'S MISSILES ARE SHOWN.

SOURCE: CSIS MISSILE DEFENSE PROJECT, THE NEW YORK TIMES

What are the Key Defence Systems Deployed in the US–Israel–Iran Conflict?

United States

- **THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense):** THAAD intercepts short- and intermediate-range ballistic missiles in the terminal phase at high altitudes using hit-to-kill technology, protecting bases and cities.
- **Patriot Missile System:** Provides last-line defence against ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and aircraft, widely used to protect critical infrastructure and military installations.
- **SM-3 & SM-6 (US Navy):** Sea-based interceptors. SM-3 destroys ballistic missiles during midcourse flight, while SM-6 targets missiles, aircraft, and drones in the terminal phase.
- **Indirect Fire Protection Capability (IFPC):** Uses AIM-9X (a premier, short-range, infrared-tracking, air-to-air, and surface-launched interceptor missile) to defend bases from drones and rockets, helping conserve expensive Patriot missiles.

Israel

- **Arrow-2 & Arrow-3:** Long-range ballistic missile defence. Arrow-3 intercepts missiles outside the atmosphere (exo-atmospheric), while Arrow-2 operates within the atmosphere.
- **David's Sling:** Designed to intercept medium- to long-range rockets, cruise missiles, and tactical ballistic missiles, bridging the gap between Arrow and **Iron Dome**.
- **Iron Dome:** Short-range defence system effective against rockets, artillery shells, and drones, with high success rates against low-speed threats.
- **Iron Beam:** Directed-energy laser system that destroys drones and small projectiles at low cost, reducing reliance on expensive interceptors.

United Arab Emirates

- **Cheongung II:** South Korean medium-range air defence system with 360° radar and vertical launch capability, effective against low-flying cruise missiles and tactical ballistic threats over the **Persian Gulf**.



Iran

- **Bavar-373:** Long-range air defence system designed to intercept aircraft and ballistic missiles, comparable to advanced surface-to-air missile systems.
 - **Sevom-e-Khordad:** Mobile air defence system capable of targeting aircraft and cruise missiles, enhancing survivability through rapid relocation.
 - **Tor-M1:** Short-range system used to intercept precision-guided munitions, drones, and low-flying cruise missiles.
 - **Majid & Azarakhsh:** Systems designed to counter drones and low-flying aerial threats, protecting critical facilities.
- 

- United States and Israel launched a joint offensive against Iran under Operation Epic Fury (U.S.) and Operation Lion's Roar (Israel).

How Dalit voting patterns have changed across elections

Post the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, Dalit voters have increasingly been consolidated by the BJP, away from the Congress

DATA POINT

Sanjay Kumar
Vibha Attril

Hindu Dalit voters have long been an important vote bank in Indian elections, shaping party strategies, coalitions, and welfare policies. Their choices influence the outcomes of both national and State level elections, yet their political alignment remains fluid. An analysis of Lok Sabha elections from 1996 to 2024, alongside recent State Assembly trends, reveal shifting loyalties, regional variation, and emerging competition.

In the 1990s, the Congress held a clear advantage among Hindu Dalits (Table 1). In 1996, it secured 34% of the vote, compared to 14% for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). This lead continued in 1998 and 1999, with Congress and its allies ahead of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). The gap narrowed in the 2000s but remained in the Congress's favour.

A decisive shift was noticeable during the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, when the BJP doubled its standalone share from 12% to 24%, and the NDA rose from 15% to 30%, overtaking the United Progressive Alliance (UPA), which declined to 20%. By 2019, the NDA had consolidated its Dalit support base further, reaching 41%. In 2024, the NDA slipped slightly to 36%, while the Congress-led INDIA bloc climbed to 32%, narrowing the gap. However, State-level patterns remained uneven. In the analysis that follows, BJP and Congress are used throughout but it implies support either for the party alone or the party plus its alliance – depending on how they contested (Table 2).

In Bihar, the BJP's support among Dalits surged in 2019 before declining in 2024, while the Congress rebounded over the same period. In Uttar Pradesh, support among the Dalits stayed relatively stable for the BJP, but the

Congress made notable gains by 2024. Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan saw closely fought contests, with leads alternating between the BJP and the Congress across elections. Haryana, Jharkhand, and Uttarakhnad moved markedly towards the Congress in the most recent elections. In West Bengal, the BJP's 2019 gains were partly reversed by 2024, whereas Congress support declined sharply. In the south, Congress expanded in Karnataka and Telangana, indicating that Dalit voting patterns are shaped more by State dynamics.

State-level election patterns

Dalit voting in State Assembly elections often diverges from national trends. In Uttar Pradesh, the BJP consolidated support after 2017, aided by the Bahujan Samaj Party's decline, while the Congress remained far behind (Table 3).

Haryana witnessed swings: the Congress led in 2014, but by 2024, the BJP made gains, though the Congress retained a slight edge. Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan remained favourable to the Congress, with the BJP trailing modestly. In Chhattisgarh, Dalit vote leaned towards the Congress, though the BJP strengthened its position in 2023. In Gujarat, the Congress led in 2017 but lost ground to the BJP and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) by 2022. Southern States highlight the role of regional dynamics: the Congress expanded Dalit support in Karnataka from 51% in 2018 to 63% in 2023, while the BJP declined slightly. In Telangana, Congress gained, though the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) retained a significant share of Dalit votes. Overall, Dalit voting has shifted from Congress dominance to increasing BJP consolidation. By 2024, no party commands unchallenged support. State-level alliances continue to shape outcomes alongside national trends.

Sanjay Kumar is a professor and political analyst. Vibha Attril is a researcher with the Lokniti-CSDS. Views expressed are personal.

Shifting patterns

The data for the tables were sourced from various Lok Sabha and State Assembly election studies conducted by the Lokniti-CSDS

The figures for all the tables are in %



TABLE 1: Hindu Dalit votes for BJP and Congress in Lok Sabha elections

Lok Sabha Elections	BJP	BJP allies	NDA	Congress	Congress allies	UPA/INDIA
1996	14	1	15	34	-	34
1998	14	7	21	28	1	29
1999	14	11	25	30	5	35
2004	12	12	24	26	9	35
2009	12	3	15	27	7	34
2014	24	6	30	19	1	20
2019	34	7	41	20	6	26
2024	31	5	36	19	13	32

TABLE 2: State-wise Hindu Dalit votes for BJP and Congress in LS polls

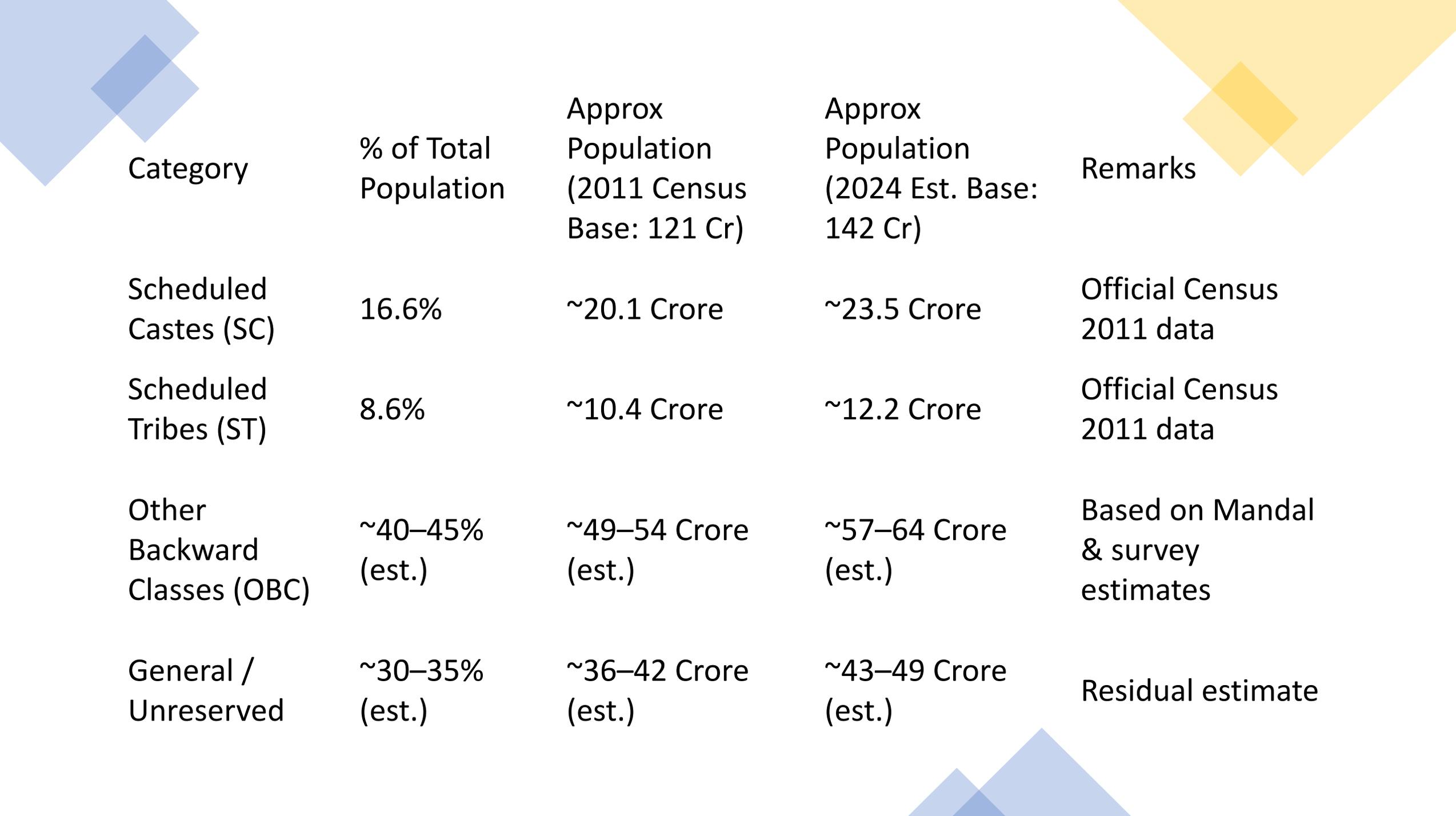
	BJP/NDA			Congress/UPA/INDIA		
	2014	2019	2024	2014	2019	2024
Bihar	43	86	60	11	5	40
Uttar Pradesh	23	27	25	7	3	38
M.P.	43	38	53	42	50	36
Rajasthan	44	43	37	44	51	46
Chhattisgarh	38	61	58	42	27	42
Gujarat	35	28	54	50	66	46
Haryana	19	51	25	39	25	67
Delhi	32	43	49	18	20	48
Himachal	31	65	31	63	32	64
Jharkhand	37	50	29	10	41	69
Uttarakhand	42	44	34	33	53	64
Assam	84	51	69	16	7	11
West Bengal	22	61	48	8	4	2
Odisha	17	35	46	42	8	16
Karnataka	37	44	31	42	47	66
Telangana	20	6	24	20	36	45

Other parties who received significant Dalit votes, but not included in the table are: Bihar-JDU(J) (20% in 2014), Haryana-INLD (17% in 2014), Delhi-AAP (42% in 2014, 22% in 2019), Jharkhand-JVM (24% in 2014), Odisha-BJD (38% in 2014, 53% in 2019, 38% in 2024), Uttar Pradesh-SP (6% and BSP-62% in 2014, SP+BSP+RLD-62% in 2019), West Bengal-AITC (41% in 2014, 27% in 2019, 39% in 2024), Left Front (26% in 2014, 6% in 2019, 9% in 2024), Telangana-TRS (30% in 2014, 51% in 2019, and BRS-71% in 2024)

TABLE 3: Hindu Dalit voting patterns in the last two State Assembly elections. Figures in %

	Year of Election	BJP/NDA	Congress/INDIA/MGB
Bihar	2020	33	33
	2025	60	28
Uttar Pradesh	2017	21	8
	2022	28	2
Madhya Pradesh	2018	34	48
	2023	33	46
Rajasthan	2018	34	38
	2023	33	48
Gujarat	2017	50	53
	2022	44	32
Chhattisgarh	2018	25	42
	2023	38	48
Haryana	2014	20	27
	2024	40	42
Delhi	2020	26	5
	2025	35	5
Himachal Pradesh	2017	47	48
	2022	34	53
Jharkhand	2019	35	36
	2024	39	39
Uttarakhand	2017	37	23
	2022	26	47
Assam	2016	70	19
	2021	72	14
West Bengal	2016	11	43
	2021	55	8
Karnataka	2018	27	51
	2023	23	63
Telangana	2018	4	28
	2023	8	38

The table does not include parties, from other alliances than the ones mentioned above, even if they received significant votes in the elections



Category	% of Total Population	Approx Population (2011 Census Base: 121 Cr)	Approx Population (2024 Est. Base: 142 Cr)	Remarks
Scheduled Castes (SC)	16.6%	~20.1 Crore	~23.5 Crore	Official Census 2011 data
Scheduled Tribes (ST)	8.6%	~10.4 Crore	~12.2 Crore	Official Census 2011 data
Other Backward Classes (OBC)	~40–45% (est.)	~49–54 Crore (est.)	~57–64 Crore (est.)	Based on Mandal & survey estimates
General / Unreserved	~30–35% (est.)	~36–42 Crore (est.)	~43–49 Crore (est.)	Residual estimate

Highest SC Population States (2011)

Rank	State	SC %
1	Punjab	~31.9%
2	Himachal Pradesh	~25%
3	West Bengal	~23%
4	Uttar Pradesh	Highest in absolute numbers

Highest ST Population States (2011)

Rank	State	ST %
1	Mizoram	~94%
2	Lakshadweep	~94%
3	Meghalaya	~86%
4	Madhya Pradesh	Highest in absolute numbers

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Indian warships on standby for humanitarian operations

Saurabh Trivedi

NEW DELHI

India is closely monitoring the evolving security situation in parts of West Asia following the recent escalation of tensions, with Indian Navy ships deployed in the region under Operation Sankalp placed on standby for possible humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) operations.

A senior defence official on Monday confirmed that developments are being tracked closely and updates are being shared with the concerned departments for further direction.

“Under Operation Sankalp, two Indian Navy ships [a frigate and a des-



Ready to assist: *INS Surat*, as part of a regional maritime security engagement, is currently in Bahrain. @INDIANNVY X

troyer] are already deployed in the Gulf of Aden and the Gulf of Oman. They have been deployed for anti-piracy operations and the safety of merchant vessels since 2019. If required, these ships could be utilised for HADR operations. The Navy has prior experience in such missions,” the official said.

The deployment under Operation Sankalp was initiated to safeguard Indian-flagged vessels and ensure maritime security in the region amid rising threats to commercial shipping.

The official also stated that *INS Surat* is currently in Bahrain as part of a regional maritime security engagement.

Year	Operation Name	Location	Type	Key Details	Significance
2016	Operation Sankat Mochan	South Sudan (Juba)	Evacuation	Evacuated ~600 Indians during civil war violence	Demonstrated rapid air evacuation capability
2018	Operation Samudra Maitri	Indonesia	Disaster Relief	Relief after Sulawesi earthquake & tsunami	Strengthened India-ASEAN humanitarian ties
2018	Operation Nistar	Yemen (Socotra Island)	Evacuation	Evacuated Indians after cyclone Mekunu	Indian Navy HADR capability
2019–Present	Operation Sankalp	Gulf of Oman & Strait of Hormuz	Maritime Security / HADR standby	Protection of Indian-flagged vessels amid Iran tensions	Ensured energy & trade security
2020	Operation Vanilla	Madagascar	Cyclone Relief	Relief materials after Cyclone Diane	SAGAR doctrine in action
2020	Mission Sagar (I)	Maldives, Mauritius, Seychelles, Madagascar, Comoros	COVID-19 Relief	Supplied medicines & food aid	Regional leadership during pandemic
2021	Mission Sagar-II & III	Indian Ocean Region	COVID Aid	Medical teams, vaccines, oxygen supplies	Vaccine diplomacy
2021	Operation Devi Shakti	Afghanistan	Evacuation	Evacuated Indians & Afghan partners after Taliban takeover	Strategic evacuation under crisis

2022	Operation Ganga	Ukraine	Evacuation	Evacuated ~22,500 Indians during Russia-Ukraine war	Largest evacuation in recent years
2023	Operation Dost	Türkiye & Syria	Earthquake Relief	NDRF teams, field hospital, medical aid	Quick global disaster response
2023	Operation Kaveri	Sudan	Evacuation	Evacuated ~4,000 Indians during Sudan conflict	Multi-modal evacuation (air & sea)
2023	Operation Ajay	Israel	Evacuation	Brought back Indians amid Israel-Hamas conflict	Civilian evacuation amid war
2024	Operation Indravati	Haiti	Evacuation	Evacuated Indian nationals amid gang violence	Caribbean evacuation operation
2024	HADR Mission to Myanmar	Myanmar	Cyclone Relief	Relief after severe cyclone	ASEAN humanitarian outreach
2025	West Asia HADR Standby (Operation Sankalp extension)	Gulf Region	HADR / Maritime Security	Indian Navy ships on standby amid regional tensions	Protecting Indian diaspora & trade

1 Immediate Context – West Asia Security Situation

- India is closely monitoring the evolving security situation in West Asia amid rising tensions.
भारत पश्चिम एशिया में बढ़ते तनाव के बीच सुरक्षा स्थिति पर करीबी नजर रख रहा है।
 - Indian Navy ships under **Operation Sankalp** are placed on standby for possible Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) operations.
ऑपरेशन संकल्प के तहत भारतीय नौसेना के जहाज संभावित मानवीय सहायता एवं आपदा राहत (HADR) अभियानों के लिए तैयार रखे गए हैं।
 - Objective: Safeguard Indian-flagged vessels and ensure maritime security.
उद्देश्य: भारतीय ध्वज वाले जहाजों की सुरक्षा और समुद्री मार्गों की रक्षा।
-

2 Deployment Details

- Two ships (a frigate and a destroyer) are deployed in the **Gulf of Aden and Gulf of Oman**.
एक फ्रिगेट और एक विध्वंसक जहाज अदन की खाड़ी और ओमान की खाड़ी में तैनात हैं।
- These ships have been conducting anti-piracy operations since 2019.
ये जहाज 2019 से समुद्री डकैती विरोधी अभियान चला रहे हैं।
- **INS Surat** is currently stationed in Bahrain under regional maritime security engagement.
आईएनएस सूरत वर्तमान में क्षेत्रीय समुद्री सुरक्षा सहयोग के तहत बहरीन में तैनात है।

3 Operation Sankalp – Background

- Launched in 2019 after attacks on oil tankers near the Strait of Hormuz.
2019 में होर्मुज जलडमरूमध्य के पास तेल टैंकरों पर हमलों के बाद शुरू किया गया।
 - Focus: Protection of Indian merchant vessels in the Persian Gulf region.
फोकस: फारस की खाड़ी क्षेत्र में भारतीय व्यापारिक जहाजों की सुरक्षा।
 - Part of India's larger maritime security doctrine in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).
यह हिंद महासागर क्षेत्र (IOR) में भारत की व्यापक समुद्री सुरक्षा नीति का हिस्सा है।
-

4 Geographical Significance

- **Gulf of Aden** connects Arabian Sea to the Red Sea via Bab-el-Mandeb Strait.
अदन की खाड़ी अरब सागर को लाल सागर से बाब-एल-मंदेब जलडमरूमध्य के माध्यम से जोड़ती है।
 - **Strait of Hormuz** is a critical chokepoint for global oil trade (~20% of world oil passes).
होर्मुज जलडमरूमध्य वैश्विक तेल व्यापार का महत्वपूर्ण मार्ग है (लगभग 20% तेल यहीं से गुजरता है)।
 - Instability in West Asia directly impacts India's energy security.
पश्चिम एशिया की अस्थिरता भारत की ऊर्जा सुरक्षा को सीधे प्रभावित करती है।
-

5 Humanitarian & Strategic Dimensions

- Indian Navy has strong HADR track record (e.g., evacuation operations in Yemen, tsunami relief, cyclone relief).

भारतीय नौसेना का मानवीय सहायता अभियानों में मजबूत रिकॉर्ड है (यमन निकासी, सुनामी राहत, चक्रवात सहायता)।

- Deployment signals India's commitment to "Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR)" doctrine.

यह तैनाती "सागर" सिद्धांत के प्रति भारत की प्रतिबद्धता दर्शाती है।

- Demonstrates India's capability as a net security provider in the region.

यह भारत की क्षेत्र में "नेट सिक््योरिटी प्रोवाइडर" की भूमिका को दर्शाता है।

6 Political & Economic Implications

- Ensures confidence of Indian shipping and trade companies.

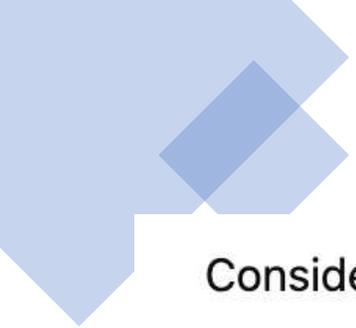
भारतीय व्यापारिक कंपनियों और शिपिंग उद्योग का विश्वास बनाए रखता है।

- Protects remittances and diaspora interests in Gulf countries.

खाड़ी देशों में भारतीय प्रवासियों और उनकी धनराशि की सुरक्षा सुनिश्चित करता है।

- Strengthens India's defence diplomacy with Gulf nations like Bahrain and Oman.

बहरीन और ओमान जैसे देशों के साथ रक्षा कूटनीति को मजबूत करता है।



Consider the following statements:

1. Operation Sankalp was launched to protect Indian merchant vessels in West Asia.
2. Strait of Hormuz is a major global oil transit chokepoint.
3. Indian Navy ships deployed under Operation Sankalp are primarily engaged in nuclear deterrence missions.
4. The Gulf of Aden connects the Arabian Sea to the Red Sea.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- A. 1, 2 and 4 only
 - B. 1 and 3 only
 - C. 2 and 3 only
 - D. 1, 2, 3 and 4
- 

IN BRIEF



2,600 evacuated as gas leaks from chemical unit in Palghar

A major leak of hexachloro ethane gas at a chemical unit in Maharashtra's Palghar district on Monday led to the evacuation of over 2,600 people, including 1,600 school students, while three persons complained of minor eye irritation, officials said. The incident occurred at a unit of Bhargava Industries Ltd. in the Bolnar MIDC area on the outskirts of Mumbai. The leak from a 2,600-litre drum (storing sulphuric acid) tank created a dense cloud of white fumes that spread rapidly due to strong winds, affecting areas within an estimated 3 km radius and causing panic among residents and workers.

Tribes Arts Fest kicks off in Delhi, opens to public today

Union Tribal Affairs Minister Jai Ghani inaugurated the government's 12-day Tribes Art Festival at Vigyanika Palace in New Delhi on Monday. The event brings together more than 75 tribal artists and over 1,000 works of art representing more than 30 tribal art traditions from across the country. Mr. Ghani said platforms such as the 'ART' move beyond synthetic celebration by creating structured market ecologies, connecting artists with collectors, galleries, corporations and institutions, thereby transforming cultural heritage into sustainable and profitable livelihoods. The event is open to the public from Tuesday.

EPF interest rate can be retained at 8.25%: EPFO

The Central Board of Trustees (CPT) of the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation on Monday recommended that the Union government retain the interest rate on EPF deposits at 8.25% for 2025-26.

The CPT, during a meeting, also approved a number of reform measures of the provision fund such as a pilot project for direct deduction of claim settlement in cooperative accounts, an amnesty scheme for exempted establishments, approval of new Employees' Provident Fund, Employees' Pension Scheme, and Employees' Deposit-Linked Insurance in tune with the Code on Social Security, and a new simplified standard operating procedure on EPF exemption.

SC to look into feasibility of NAT for blood transfusion

Petitioner says safe blood transfusion is a fundamental part of right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution; Bench asks petitioner to file affidavit on whether State hospitals use NAT

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has decided to look into whether blood banks should compulsorily conduct Nucleic Acid Test (NAT) for identification of diseases.

NAT is a highly sensitive molecular technique that detects the genetic material for viruses such as HIV, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C in the blood.

A Bench of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justices Jayaprakash Narayan and Vipul Mehta asked advocates A. Venkatesh, counsel for petitioner-NGO for vision, Mangalam Foundation, about the cost effectiveness of NAT compared with the more commonly used Enzyme-Linked Immunosorbent Assay (ELISA) test.

The Chief Justice questioned if all the States could afford NAT in government blood banks and hospitals. Mr. Venkatesh said the costs were comparatively low for NAT.

He said, "In States who are struggling hard to pay the salaries to their employees or unable



NAT is a highly sensitive molecular technique that detects genetic material for viruses such as HIV, in the blood. REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE

to pay their electricity charges, would this be another financial burden on them?" the Bench asked.

The court asked the petitioner to research more on whether State hospitals use NAT, if so, to how many hospitals and in what States. The Bench asked the petitioner to file an affidavit with these details and report the case for further hearing on March 13.

The petitioner argued that the right to safe blood transfusion was a fundamental part of the right to life under Article 21 of the

Constitution. In addition, the plea drew the court's attention to NAT as a mechanism to ensure the supply of safe and infection-free blood to recipients.

'Preventable tragedy' The petitioners highlighted the case of Thalassemia patient in the local blood bank in Chulabha, in West Singhbhum, Jharkhand, had transfused HIV-infected blood. During an inquiry by a medical team, a few days later, four more children were found to be HIV positive from the same blood transfusion.

"Thalassemia is an inherited blood disorder which

is caused by the body's inability to produce enough haemoglobin, the protein in red blood cells that transports oxygen from the lungs to the tissues and carries carbon dioxide to the lungs. In India, the largest case load of Thalassemia is in the southern state of Tamil Nadu. In October last year, the medical education regulator in Tamil Nadu, Tamil Nadu State Council of Higher Education, had issued a circular to all hospitals in the state to ensure that blood transfusion services are provided only through the State Blood Transfusion Centre.

The case takes significant importance as it highlights the need for a standardised test to screen blood donations," the petition noted.

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NMC warns against 'fake' patients in medical colleges

Hindu Bhawan Varanasi
NEW DELHI

Medical colleges admitting 'fake patients' can see their applications for new postgraduate courses or additional seats immediately rejected, the National Medical Commission (NMC) warned in a recent order.

The commission said some medical colleges admit people who do not require any treatment to fulfil the requirement of bed occupancy and investigation. It said "fake patients" will invite punishment if it is reported during an assessment.

The NMC approves additional medical college seats through a stringent assessment and process conducted by the Medical Assessment and Rating Board (MARB). Experts note that key aspects include adherence to the Postgraduate Medical Education Regulations, and Undergraduate Medical Education Regulations. Standard Requirements, with strict deadlines for submission.

The NMC said that detection of fake patients may result in having the institution from starting new courses or from increasing the number of seats for a period specified by the MARB. It can affect the renewal of UG and existing PG courses.

Fake patient practices may lead to rejection of requests for new courses, additional seats, says NMC

led by the MARB. It can affect the renewal of UG and existing PG courses.

The commission has laid down guidelines to identify 'fake patients'. These include patients admitted on the day of, or just before, an assessment. Those who have minor ailments that can be treated on an outpatient basis, and those admitted without X-ray, blood reports or any in-patient treatment such as intravenous cannula, injections, and catheterisation will be treated as 'fake' patients. Multiple patients from the same family being admitted, and patients admitted in large numbers through preventive health check-up camps are also 'fake', in paediatric wards, playrooms, and admissions without any significant problem will be categorised as 'fake'.

The NMC said the assessment will consider the faculty, infrastructure, clinical material/indicators, and quality of education of the college.

Dharmendra Pradhan pitches for global collaborations in education

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Monday pitched for international collaborations in education while addressing dignitaries and diplomats from over 30 countries at the 'Study in India Edu-Diplomatic Conference', stressing that India's greatest strength was its vibrant knowledge ecosystem, a demographic dividend and fast growing economy.

In his address at the conclave at Indira Nagar, Pradhan said "education remains the most enduring bridge between societies in a world marked by uncertainty and rapid change." "India seeks to build strong knowledge bridges with partner-countries," he added. A government statement on Monday said the conclave was being organised by the Education Ministry to bring together Ambassadors, High Commissioners, representatives of diplomatic missions and Ministry officials to deliberate on strengthening international cooperation in higher education.



Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan speaking at the 'Study in India Edu-Diplomatic Conference' in New Delhi on Monday.

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the theme of "Indian knowledge systems as a global academic offering." "Artificial intelligence and advanced technologies", and "Bharat Innovation 2026", among others.

Academic partnerships The topics of discussion among the delegates included those on academic partnerships through the government's SPARC.

(Scheme for Promotion of Academic and Research Collaboration) and GIAN (Global Initiative for Academic Networks) initiatives, the Union Education Minister's 2025 regulations for foreign university campuses in India, international branch campuses and enabling frameworks, and internationalisation of India's skill architecture.

Through National Education Policy, 2020 and the Study in India initiative, the country is expanding global partnerships for students, researchers and institutions. From artificial intelligence, biotechnology and semiconductors to sustainable energy, India is emerging as a global innovation partner, advancing a global growth model based on collaboration, capacity building and shared knowledge, Mr. Pradhan said.

Tamil got wide global recognition under Modi govt., says Vice-President

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Releasing 13 books published by the Publication Division under the Union Information and Broadcasting Ministry on Tamil heritage, culture and literature, Vice-President C. Radhakrishnan on Monday said the language had got wide global recognition under the Narendra Modi government.

The Vice-President said the Prime Minister spoke more of Tamil than his mother tongue, Gujarati. "This should be a matter of pride for every Tamil people," he said, citing the influence of the Tamizhazhavar on the Indian society. Referring to the works of Saint Ramana, the Vice-President said the message of equality was spread through so many languages and works against casteism.

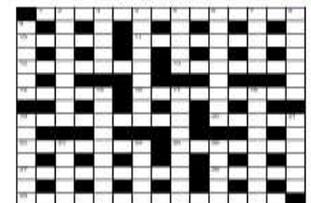


C. P. Radhakrishnan, Ashwanth Varshney and I. Mangal at the release of various publications in New Delhi on Monday. govindia/s

Radhakrishnan said the language had got wide global recognition under the Narendra Modi government. The Vice-President said the Prime Minister spoke more of Tamil than his mother tongue, Gujarati. "This should be a matter of pride for every Tamil people," he said, citing the influence of the Tamizhazhavar on the Indian society. Referring to the works of Saint Ramana, the Vice-President said the message of equality was spread through so many languages and works against casteism.

Radhakrishnan said the language had got wide global recognition under the Narendra Modi government. The Vice-President said the Prime Minister spoke more of Tamil than his mother tongue, Gujarati. "This should be a matter of pride for every Tamil people," he said, citing the influence of the Tamizhazhavar on the Indian society. Referring to the works of Saint Ramana, the Vice-President said the message of equality was spread through so many languages and works against casteism.

CROSSWORD 14731



- Across**
- One's annoyed with article on communism being inclusive (6, 3, 4)
 - Transition for English behind schedule (6)
 - See, bit of onion in soup makes it deadly (6)
 - Author's 'caveat' Request (4, 4)
 - Inscribe names everyone out, bring money equivalent (7)
 - Instructions to get primarily strong muscles (6)

Order this puzzle online and receive hints. Purchase at <https://www.thehindu.com/crossword>

- Minimum out in highway to boat and make a car part (5, 4)
 - Deceptive food, one tends to refuse hungry (6)
 - Discussion is featuring Trump essentially (5)
 - Once, sports right for a small generator (7)
 - Paragon, physician goes to service victims money for the most part (1)
 - Henry is in, 100 to make to first contender (6)
 - Insane, bring out slaughter and escape (6)
 - Detective inspector's date becomes a disaster (1, 4)
- Down**
- Persistent second defendant in trial contained the French republic's motto (6)
 - Overweight cat becomes healthy (5)
 - Interest story by Stokes on 5th wicket (6)
 - One in many gets case (5)
 - Look, the along with it assembles a genre of furniture (6)
 - Issue in first class with oil heating (5)
 - Some grade servers to justify (7)
 - Retired school teacher's cat in the front is in pieces (6)
 - See, football player is in small bar (5, 4)
 - Relative nearly ox-like plant to get a robot (6)
 - Buffoon casts mud, ten, and some else (6)
 - Discouraged police officer absent, strayed (7)
 - Pill, fished gem located on book by Henry regularly (6)
 - Buffoon casts mud, ten, and some else (6)
 - Grave character traps smart animal (5)
 - San leading side with enthusiasm (6)

SUDOKU

2	8	7		2				
			4	6	1	9		8
7					8			
	2	8				7	6	5
		4						
4			2	5		6	8	
	7	6						
			7			1	3	4

Difficulty Rating: ★★★★★

6	4	3	8	7	1	2	9	5
2	9	8	5	3	6	4	7	1
7	1	6	9	4	8	3	2	5
8	2	4	1	9	5	6	7	3
3	5	7	1	2	9	8	6	4
4	6	1	2	3	9	5	7	8
5	1	6	3	8	7	9	1	4

FAITH
Naichya bhava

Naichya bhava is very important among devotees, said Akaraband Siddhi in a discourse. Naichya is to think about our laws and to speak of them, it is to humble ourselves and to not be status-conscious. Naichya bhava also means we should never blame others for our mistakes. We do not have the right to speak ill of others. If something goes wrong, we must not look for someone to blame. We have no one to blame but ourselves. We must learn to attribute a failure to our karma, and not find fault with others. We should think of our selves as inferior to others, and never assume an air of superiority. He who thinks of himself as the lowest among Lord Narayana's multitude of devotees, will be celebrated as one of His best devotees. The Lord looks upon humble people with kindness, pride in our looks, our education, our wealth, our status in society - none of this will help us cross the ocean of samsara. On the contrary, they will be obstacles in our journey towards liberation. A voice of Kailash will help us understand this better. A small ant is busy carrying bits of sugar, and in course of time has a significant quantity of sugar. But look at what a proud elephant does. It scrounge mud with its trunk and shows itself with the mud. Parashara Bharti's naichya bhava is evident in his works. In one verse in Sri Ranganga Stava, he says Lord Ranganga has been praised by the Vedas. But he chooses to remain His image by listening to Bharata's verses, like an elephant which put mud on its head. Parashara Bharti was a great scholar. He wrote a commentary on the Yajurveda. And yet, he spoke humbly of his achievements. Works of Adhwars and Acharyas reflect their naichya bhava.

SC to look into feasibility of NAT for blood transfusion

Petitioner says safe blood transfusion is a fundamental part of right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution; Bench asks petitioner to file affidavit on whether State hospitals use NAT

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has decided to look into whether blood banks should compulsorily conduct Nucleic Acid Test (NAT) for identification of diseases.

NAT is a highly sensitive molecular technique that detects the genetic material for viruses such as HIV, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C in the blood.

A Bench of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M. Pancholi asked advocate A. Velan, counsel for petitioner-NGO Sarvesham Mangalam Foundation, about the cost-effectiveness of NAT compared with the more commonly used Enzyme-Linked Immunosorbent Assay (ELISA) test.

The Chief Justice questioned if all the States could afford NAT in government blood banks and hospitals. Mr. Velan said the costs were comparatively low for NAT.

"Delhi can afford it. In States who are struggling hard to pay the salaries of their employees or unable



NAT is a highly sensitive molecular technique that detects genetic material for viruses such as HIV, in the blood. REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE

to pay their electricity charges... would this be another financial burden on them?" the Bench asked.

The court asked the petitioner to research more on whether State hospitals use NAT, if so, in how many hospitals and in what States. The Bench asked the petitioner to file an affidavit with these details and posted the case for further hearing on March 13.

The petitioner argued that the right to safe blood transfusion was a fundamental part of the right to life under Article 21 of the

Constitution. In addition, the plea drew the court's attention to NAT as a mechanism to ensure the supply of safe and infection-free blood to recipients.

'Preventable tragedies'
The petitioner highlighted the case of Thalassemia patients who require frequent blood transfusion and were vulnerable to transfusion of infected blood. The petition described such medical mishaps as "preventable tragedies".

"Thalassemia is an inherited blood disorder which

is caused by the body's inability to produce enough haemoglobin, the protein in red blood cells that transports oxygen from the lungs to the tissues and carbon dioxide to the lungs. As India is the Thalassemia capital of the world, there is a need to strengthen blood safety practices across the country...particularly the need for a standardised test to screen blood donations," the petition noted.

The case takes significance in the background of the reported case of at least six children found to be HIV positive in Madhya Pradesh's Satna allegedly due to contaminated blood transfusions at the district hospital during treatment for Thalassemia in December 2025.

In October last year, the family of a seven-year-old Thalassemia patient had alleged that the local blood bank in Chaibasa, in West Singhbhum, Jharkhand, had transfused HIV-infected blood. During an inquiry, by a medical team, a few days later, four more children were found to be HIV-positive from botched blood transfusion.

1 Core Issue Before the Court

- The Supreme Court has decided to examine whether blood banks should compulsorily conduct **Nucleic Acid Test (NAT)** for detecting infections.

सर्वोच्च न्यायालय यह जांच करेगा कि क्या रक्त बैंकों को संक्रमण की पहचान के लिए **न्यूक्लिक एसिड टेस्ट (NAT)** अनिवार्य रूप से करना चाहिए।

- The petition argues that safe blood transfusion is a part of the **Right to Life under Article 21** of the Constitution.

याचिका में तर्क दिया गया है कि सुरक्षित रक्त संक्रमण **अनुच्छेद 21** के तहत जीवन के अधिकार का हिस्सा है।

2 What is NAT?

- NAT is a highly sensitive molecular diagnostic technique that detects the genetic material (RNA/DNA) of viruses.

NAT एक अत्यंत संवेदनशील आणविक तकनीक है जो वायरस के आनुवंशिक पदार्थ (RNA/DNA) का पता लगाती है।

- It can detect infections such as **HIV, Hepatitis B, and Hepatitis C** at an early stage (window period).

यह एचआईवी, हेपेटाइटिस बी और सी जैसी बीमारियों का प्रारंभिक चरण (विंडो पीरियड) में पता लगा सकती है।

- It is more sensitive than the commonly used **ELISA test**, which detects antibodies.

यह सामान्यतः उपयोग होने वाले **ELISA परीक्षण** से अधिक संवेदनशील है, जो एंटीबॉडी का पता लगाता है।

3 Court Proceedings

- The Bench led by Chief Justice Surya Kant asked about the **cost-effectiveness** of NAT compared to ELISA.
मुख्य न्यायाधीश सूर्यकांत की अध्यक्षता वाली पीठ ने NAT की लागत-प्रभावशीलता पर प्रश्न उठाया।
 - The Court asked whether all States can afford NAT in government blood banks.
न्यायालय ने पूछा कि क्या सभी राज्य सरकारी रक्त बैंकों में NAT लागू कर सकते हैं।
 - Petitioner was directed to file an affidavit detailing which State hospitals use NAT.
याचिकाकर्ता को यह विवरण देने हेतु शपथपत्र दाखिल करने का निर्देश दिया गया कि किन राज्यों में NAT उपयोग हो रहा है।
-

4 Background & Trigger Events

- The issue gained urgency after reports of children testing HIV-positive allegedly due to contaminated blood transfusions.
दूषित रक्त संक्रमण से बच्चों के एचआईवी संक्रमित होने की खबरों के बाद यह मुद्दा गंभीर हुआ।
- India is known as the "Thalassemia capital of the world," where patients require frequent transfusions.
भारत को "थैलेसीमिया की राजधानी" कहा जाता है, जहाँ रोगियों को बार-बार रक्त चढ़ाने की आवश्यकता होती है।
- Thalassemia is an inherited blood disorder affecting haemoglobin production.
थैलेसीमिया एक आनुवंशिक रक्त विकार है जो हीमोग्लोबिन उत्पादन को प्रभावित करता है।

5 Constitutional & Legal Dimension

- Article 21 guarantees protection of life and personal liberty.
अनुच्छेद 21 जीवन और व्यक्तिगत स्वतंत्रता की सुरक्षा की गारंटी देता है।
 - Supreme Court has previously expanded Article 21 to include right to health and medical care.
सर्वोच्च न्यायालय ने पहले भी अनुच्छेद 21 के दायरे में स्वास्थ्य और चिकित्सा देखभाल को शामिल किया है।
 - The case may determine whether safe blood screening is a mandatory public health obligation.
यह मामला तय कर सकता है कि सुरक्षित रक्त जांच सार्वजनिक स्वास्थ्य का अनिवार्य दायित्व है या नहीं।
-

6 Economic & Public Health Implications

- NAT is costlier than ELISA but reduces risk of transfusion-transmitted infections.
NAT, ELISA से महँगा है, पर संक्रमण के जोखिम को कम करता है।
- Mandatory NAT may increase financial burden on State hospitals.
NAT अनिवार्य होने पर राज्यों के अस्पतालों पर वित्तीय बोझ बढ़ सकता है।
- However, prevention reduces long-term treatment costs for HIV/Hepatitis.
लेकिन रोकथाम से दीर्घकालीन उपचार लागत कम होती है।

Consider the following statements:

1. NAT detects viral genetic material directly, reducing the diagnostic window period.
2. ELISA test is more sensitive than NAT in detecting early-stage infections.
3. The petition before the Supreme Court links safe blood transfusion to Article 21.
4. Thalassemia patients require frequent blood transfusions.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- A. 1, 3 and 4 only
- B. 1 and 2 only
- C. 2 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, 3 and 4

IN BRIEF

Rupee crashes 41 paise to settle at 91.49 against USD

The rupee saw a steep less of 41 paise to settle at 91.49 against the U.S. dollar on Monday after U.S. and Israeli attacks on Iran intensified worldwide risk aversion, setting crude oil prices on fire and demand for the American currency soaring. "The Indian rupee saw its sharpest one-day drop since late January. The currency remains under pressure as investors move toward safe-haven assets," said Dilip Parmar, senior research analyst, HDFC Securities.

West Asia: Nasscom's travel advisory to member-firms

Nasscom, the tech industry apex body, has issued a travel advisory for its member-firms on Monday in the context of the evolving situation in West Asia. "As a precautionary measure, Nasscom has advised member companies to defer travel to affected areas. Member companies have also been advised to enable work from home arrangements for employees currently in the region," the tech industry apex body said in a communique.

West Asia export goods stuck, exporters seek govt. support

Engineering and textile exporters have sought government intervention to ease West Asian countries are stranded because of the war. A. Sakthivel, chairman, Apparel Export Promotion Council, said due to the unforeseen developments export consignments are stranded at multiple airport cargo terminals across India and requested the DGCA to consider issuing suitable instructions to Cargo Terminal Operators to grant waivers of demurrage charges.

AI Express CEO Singh set to step down

Jaurin Chandra
NEW DELHI
Air India Express CEO Akhilesh Singh announced his tenure will conclude later this month — a move that is part of a planned management realignment. While a new CEO has yet to be named, chief operating officer Vishish Maxwell will assume the regulatory responsibilities of account-holding manager. Mr. Singh said in an internal mail reviewed by *The Hindu*. Mr. Singh took over as CEO in November 2020 and was additionally appointed MD in March 2023. During his tenure, he steered the airline through

Stocks slip, oil, gold rise on war

Nifty faced its most volatile day in eight months with India VIX index up 23.54%; markets plunged 2% on opening on reports of Iran shutting down the Strait of Hormuz, disrupting about a fifth of the global oil supply before recovering a tad

Ashokamithran T. MURALI
Benchmark stock index in response to U.S.-Iran conflict, which dragged NSE Nifty 50 down 1.24% to 24,865.99 and BSE Sensex 30 by 1.3% to 80,238.88. The markets plunged 2% in the opening session following reports of Iran shutting down the Strait of Hormuz, disrupting about a fifth of the global oil supply before recovering a tad. Featuring Nifty Midcap and Nifty Pharma, all other NSE sectoral indices slid. Of the 1,299 stocks traded on the index, just 681 advanced. BHEL, Hindalco, TCS, Sun Pharma and ONGC gained while Indigo,



Eye of storms Analysts say the war and subsequent events would sustain short-term volatility in stocks

L&T, Adani Ports, Maruti Suzuki and Asian Paints declined. Nifty faced its most volatile day in eight months with the India VIX index—rising 23.54% to 16.9. This is also the first

market may stage a reversal, said Shrikant Choudhary, head, equity research at Kotak Securities. "Any attempt by Iran to disrupt or close the Strait of Hormuz (SOH) represents a key upside risk to crude oil, related oil prices and LNG prices," chief investment officer, Axis Mutual Fund Aditya Gupta wrote in a note.

Brent flares
Brent Crude Futures rallied to an almost one-year high of \$79.15. "A sustained upside in prices will likely materialise only if oil flows through the Strait of Hormuz remain disrupted for an extended period, potentially 4-5 weeks as per President Trump's campaign," said Kayan Chaitwala,

ANP Commodities Research. "If trade on the Strait improves, price spikes may prove temporary, if it does not, supply shock could be significantly more pronounced," she said. **Gold glitters**
Gold, too, rallied 3% to \$2,405.7 per troy ounce on the global commodities exchange COMEX. "Safe-haven demand has already been building on Friday after China and the U.S. issued evacuation advisories urging their citizens to leave Iran and Israel, reflecting growing concern over the expanding conflict... A decisive breakout to new highs would likely require a major escalation worse than Netanyahu's campaign," she said.

Govt., exporters review West Asia crisis disruption

The Hindu Bureau

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry on Monday held a meeting with all stakeholder ministries, key logistics and trade facilitation partners to review the emerging geo-political situation due to the conflict in West Asia and its potential impact on India's export import cargo flows, government said. The meeting was chaired by representatives from logistics operators and shipping lines and forward-



A various meeting on the supply of oil and natural gas

agencies, the Reserve Bank of India, and various export promotion bodies. "The Government reaffirmed its readiness to facilitate trade operations, including procedural flexibility in export-related authorisations in case of genuine disruptions, coordination with Customs authorities for smoother clearance, engagement with financial and insurance institutions to support exporter interests, and continued inter-ministerial coordination," the Ministry said in a release. During the meeting, the

stakeholders presented an assessment of the impact on operational environment, including routing and transit time changes, vessel scheduling adjustments, capacity constraints, surcharges and equipment availability. India has successfully navigated multiple global disruptions and continues to strengthen its supply chain resilience," the government said. Separately, the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas also said it reviewed Monday the supply of oil, natural gas and other petroleum products.

Tea exports to West Asia take a hit as conflict shows signs of escalation

M. Soudhakar Prasad

With shipping corridors to West Asian countries affected due to the war, tea exports are either stranded with exporters, at Indian ports, or, at destination ports, say exporters. The escalating conflict has led to a sharp decline in India's tea export sector, given that about 45-50% of India's tea exports are shipped to countries in the West Asian region, said Ajay Thipsani, president, the United Planters Association of South India. In 2024, India recorded strong export volumes to



Leading Revenue: Tea exports to the UAE and Saudi Arabia have been on a rise in recent years. (Hindu Bureau)

these regions. **Expensive freight**
Increased freight charges, rising insurance premiums and extended transit times have led to a sharp decline in tea exports to West Asia. The cost of shipping tea to West Asia has increased significantly due to

escalating costs. Trade route uncertainty, particularly through key maritime corridors—many have had to be rerouted, leading to significant delays and extra charges, he said. While the war has eased with the reduction of U.S. tariffs, they now face a new challenge of a full-blown war in West Asia, which has led to a sharp rise in oil prices. The extent of business losses is hard to assess, but the impact on the tea export sector is significant, said the Tea Exporters Association.

Infosys' dealmaker' Ramnani resigns

Mini Talsawani

BENGALURU
Kishore Ramnani, who helped the company build an \$10 billion deal pipeline and a deal win of close to \$1 billion in the last over 10 years, has resigned. Mr. Ramnani, 47, has been instrumental in building an indirect sales engine with 18 channels as direct sales channels was not able to really trigger large deals. He worked on 48 new accounts and put Infosys on the table for 40 mega-deal pursuits which eventually defined the company's digital transformation.

Based on experience at TCS, HCL, he built an indirect sales engine with 18 channels

large deals as it mostly followed a direct sales model. Based on his prior experience at TCS and HCL, he was instrumental in building an indirect sales engine with 18 channels as direct sales channels was not able to really trigger large deals. He worked on 48 new accounts and put Infosys on the table for 40 mega-deal pursuits which eventually defined the company's digital transformation.

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA (DEPARTMENT OF SPACE) CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE DIVISION... EXTENSION OF E-TENDER... On behalf of the President of Space, online EPC tenders are invited through e-tendering for the following work:

KERALA STATE ELECTRICITY BOARD (KSEB) - TENDER NOTICE... On the Chief Engineer (C.E.) & C.E. (Supply Division), Thiruvananthapuram... On the Executive Engineer (E.E.) (Supply Division), Thiruvananthapuram...

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE BANGALORE-560 012... Tender Notifications: EPC Tender-CL/22/2023-24... Indian Institute of Science invites bids on two construction projects through e-procurement platform: https://eprocure.gov.in

COAST GUARD... EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FOR BEACH FRONT LAND LEASE... Cochin Port Authority invites Expression of Interest (EOI) for development of Beach Front Land parcels at Pattanam Beach on long-term lease basis.

NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITY ODISHA, CUTTACK... Advt. No.: NLU/OCR-01/2023-03-03... APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHANCELLOR... The Search Committee recommends the appointment of the Vice-Chancellor in the field of Law who are interested to serve NLUO as the Vice-Chancellor.

Kobbele Municipal Corporation... INVITATION FOR BID... Kobbele Municipal Corporation invites bids for Project Execution: KMC-SHAR, 20A, A.J.S. Road, 2nd Floor, Kobbele-760 017, West Bengal.

NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITY ODISHA, CUTTACK... Advt. No.: NLU/OCR-01/2023-03-03... APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHANCELLOR... The Search Committee recommends the appointment of the Vice-Chancellor in the field of Law who are interested to serve NLUO as the Vice-Chancellor.

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Ashokamithran T.

MUMBAI

Benchmark stock indices plunged in response to U.S.-Iran conflict which dragged NSE Nifty 50 down 1.24% to 24,865.70 and BSE Sensex 30 by 1.3% to 80,238.85.

The markets plunged 2% in the opening session following reports of Iran shutting down the Strait of Hormuz, disrupting about a fifth of the global oil supply before recovering a tad.

Barring Nifty Metal and Nifty Pharma, all other NSE sectoral indices slid.

Of the 3,296 stocks traded on the index, just 651 advanced. BHEL, Hindalco. ITC, Sun Pharma and ONGC gained while Indigo,



Eye of storm: Analysts say the war and subsequent events would sustain short-term volatility. REUTERS

L&T, Adani Ports, Maruti Suzuki and Asian Paints declined. Nifty faced its most volatile day in eight months with the India VIX index— that measures volatility— rising 23.54% to 16.9 points. This is also the fas-

test increase in volatility in a day since April 7, 2025.

Analysts say the war and a subsequent event would sustain short-term volatility. As long as Nifty 50 and Sensex 30 stayed above 24,750 and 80,000, the

market may stage a reversal, said Shrikant Chouhan, head, equity research at Kotak Securities.

“Any attempt by Iran to disrupt or close the Strait of Hormuz (SoH) represents a key upside risk to crude oil, refined products and LNG prices,” chief investment officer, Axis Mutual Fund Ashis Gupta wrote in a note

Brent flares

Brent Crude Futures rallied to an almost one-year high of \$79.15. “A sustained upside in prices will likely materialise only if oil flows through the Strait of Hormuz remain disrupted for an extended period, potentially 4-5 weeks as per President Trump’s campaign,” said Kaynat Chainwala,

AVP Commodity Research.

“If traffic on the strait improves, price spikes may prove temporary; if it does not, supply shock could be significantly more pronounced,” she said.

Gold glitters

Gold, too, rallied 3% to \$5,409.7 per troy ounce on the global commodities exchange COMEX. “Safe-haven demand had already been building on Friday after China and the U.S. issued evacuation advisories urging their citizens to leave Iran and Israel, reflecting growing concern over the expanding conflict.... A decisive breakout to new highs would likely require a major escalation” wrote Ms. Chainwala in her research note.

1 Immediate Market Reaction

- Benchmark indices declined sharply due to escalating U.S.–Iran tensions.
अमेरिका–ईरान तनाव बढ़ने से प्रमुख शेयर सूचकांक तेजी से गिरे।
 - NSE Nifty 50 fell around 1.24%, and BSE Sensex declined about 1.3%.
एनएसई निफ्टी 50 लगभग 1.24% और बीएसई सेंसेक्स करीब 1.3% गिरा।
 - Markets plunged nearly 2% at opening after reports of Iran potentially shutting the **Strait of Hormuz**.
ईरान द्वारा होर्मुज जलडमरूमध्य बंद करने की खबरों के बाद बाजार खुलते ही लगभग 2% गिर गए।
 - India VIX (volatility index) jumped 23.54%, indicating heightened uncertainty.
इंडिया वीआईएक्स 23.54% बढ़ा, जो अनिश्चितता में वृद्धि दर्शाता है।
-

2 Why Strait of Hormuz Matters

- Around 20% of global oil supply passes through the Strait of Hormuz.
वैश्विक तेल आपूर्ति का लगभग 20% होर्मुज जलडमरूमध्य से गुजरता है।
- It is a critical chokepoint between the Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea.
यह फारस की खाड़ी और अरब सागर के बीच एक महत्वपूर्ण समुद्री मार्ग है।
- Any disruption raises crude oil, LNG, and refined product prices globally.
इसमें व्यवधान आने से कच्चे तेल, एलएनजी और परिष्कृत उत्पादों की कीमतें बढ़ती हैं।

3 Oil Market Reaction

- Brent crude futures surged close to a one-year high (~\$79/barrel).
ब्रेंट कच्चा तेल लगभग एक वर्ष के उच्च स्तर (~79 डॉलर प्रति बैरल) पर पहुंचा।
 - Sustained price rise depends on prolonged disruption (4–5 weeks or more).
कीमतों में स्थायी वृद्धि तभी होगी जब व्यवधान 4–5 सप्ताह या उससे अधिक समय तक रहे।
 - Temporary spikes may reverse if maritime traffic normalizes.
यदि समुद्री यातायात सामान्य हो जाए तो कीमतें वापस गिर सकती हैं।
-

4 Gold as Safe Haven

- Gold rallied about 3% to around \$5,409 per troy ounce on COMEX.
कॉमेक्स पर सोना लगभग 3% बढ़कर लगभग \$5,409 प्रति ट्रॉय औंस हुआ।
 - Investors shifted to safe-haven assets amid geopolitical uncertainty.
भू-राजनीतिक अनिश्चितता के कारण निवेशकों ने सुरक्षित निवेश साधनों की ओर रुख किया।
 - Evacuation advisories by U.S. and China increased panic sentiment.
अमेरिका और चीन की निकासी सलाहों ने घबराहट बढ़ाई।
-

5 Sectoral Impact in India

- Broad-based selling except select sectors like metals and pharma.
धातु और फार्मा जैसे कुछ क्षेत्रों को छोड़कर अधिकांश क्षेत्रों में गिरावट।
 - Energy companies like ONGC benefited from higher crude prices.
ओएनजीसी जैसी ऊर्जा कंपनियों को ऊंचे तेल दाम से लाभ।
 - Import-dependent sectors (aviation, paints, auto) faced pressure.
आयात-निर्भर क्षेत्रों (विमानन, पेंट, ऑटो) पर दबाव।
-

6 Economic & Geopolitical Implications

- India imports ~85% of its crude oil needs.
भारत अपनी कच्चे तेल की लगभग 85% आवश्यकता आयात करता है।
 - Rising oil prices can widen current account deficit (CAD).
तेल की बढ़ती कीमतें चालू खाते के घाटे (CAD) को बढ़ा सकती हैं।
 - Inflationary pressures may rise if fuel prices increase.
ईंधन कीमतें बढ़ने से महंगाई दबाव बढ़ सकता है।
 - Prolonged escalation may impact global trade and supply chains.
लंबा संघर्ष वैश्विक व्यापार और आपूर्ति श्रृंखलाओं को प्रभावित कर सकता है।
-

7 Volatility & Market Psychology

- India VIX measures expected market volatility.
इंडिया वीआईएक्स बाजार की संभावित अस्थिरता को मापता है।
- Sharp rise indicates investor fear and hedging activity.
तेज वृद्धि निवेशकों की आशंका और हेजिंग गतिविधि दर्शाती है।

New GDP series pushes up debt ratio substantially

THE REVISED GDP series with base year 2022-23 raises debt-to-GDP and fiscal deficit ratios across FY23-FY27 compared with the old series. Debt ratios are likely to increase by 1.4-2.3 percentage points, while deficits may rise modestly by 0.1-0.2 points during the period. This indicates recalculated GDP size, making fiscal indicators appear weaker.

—Prasanta Sahu



New GDP series vs old series

Debt-GDP (%)

Under old series Under new series
Change



Fiscal deficit (% of GDP)

Under old series Under new series
Change



Word of the day

Trepidation:

a feeling of alarm or dread

Synonyms: worry, unease, panic

Usage: *She waited with trepidation for the phone call.*

Pronunciation: newsth.live/
trepidationpro

International Phonetic Alphabet: /trɛpɪdeɪʃən/

Word of the day

Reticent:

temperamentally disinclined to talk

Synonyms: restrained, secretive, cautious

Usage: *She felt reticent about sharing her opinion.*

Pronunciation: newsth.live/reticentpro

International Phonetic Alphabet: /retɪsənt/

V.V. Ramanan

QUESTION 1

How many different teams prior to Jammu & Kashmir have won the Ranji Trophy?

QUESTION 2

Which bowler finished the season with 60 wickets?

QUESTION 3

Which team made it to the semifinals for the first time in its history?

QUESTION 4

Who won the Plate Championship for the 2025-26 season by defeating Manipur by a

massive margin of 568 runs in the final?

QUESTION 5

What remarkable feat did Arjun Sharma and Mohit Jhangra of the Services achieve for the first time in the 91-year history of the Ranji Trophy in the match against Assam?

QUESTION 6

The highest individual score in the 2025-26 Ranji Trophy season was the 299 recorded by a batter from a team which made the last four. Name the batter and team.

QUESTION 7

Who was named Player-of-the-tournament?



Visual Question:

Name this batter who amassed the most runs this season (950). EMMANUAL YOGINI

Happy Holi

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9. Awards & Honours

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Thank you 😊