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From enforcement to extrajudicial action
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RAMBON ON ROAD
Super Kings do the double over Capitals
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INSIDE
Cabinet approves four more judges for top court

NEW DELHI
The Union Cabinet on Tuesday approved an increase in the number of judges of the Supreme Court from 31, including the Chief Justice, to 34. A Bill would be brought in the next session of Parliament to raise the strength, it said.



China urges U.S. to end 'illegal' Cuba sanctions

HONG KONG
China on Tuesday urged the U.S. to immediately end its embargo and sanctions on Cuba, saying the sanctioned measures were "illegal" and violated norms of international relations. ■ PAGE 14

Congress offers support to TVK but with a condition

TNCC says TVK, which emerged as the single-largest party, should not seek support from BJP or its alliance partners, CPI(M) to take a call on backing Vijay, who is likely to call on the Governor today

N. Sri Chandran
CHENNAI

The Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly on Tuesday passed a resolution supporting the TVK, which emerged as the single-largest party in the 234-member House.



TVK chief Vijay says tribune to the party's ideological leaders ahead of a meeting at the party headquarters in Chennai. (P)

The Tamil Nadu Congress Commission (TNCC), after an online meeting with office bearers, said it would extend support to the TVK subject to the condition that it should not seek the support of the lone BJP MLA-designate or any other alliance partners of the BJP. The Congress won five seats in the election.

In New Delhi, All India Congress Committee general secretary K.C. Venugopal confirmed that the TVK had formally sought the Congress's backing.

"The Congress in Tamil Nadu is to be a secular government, committed to protecting the Constitution in letter and spirit. The Congress is determined not to have the BJP or its ally as the ruling government. Accordingly, the party leadership has directed the TNCC to take a final decision on Mr. Vijay's request, keeping in view the sentiments of the State reflected in the electoral verdict," he said.

Won't resign as we did not lose, it is a forcible attempt to defeat us, says Mamata

Shib Banerjee, Trinamool Congress, KOLKATA

A day after her party suffered a massive setback in the House election in West Bengal, Trinamool Congress chairperson Mamata Banerjee said on Tuesday she would not resign from the post as "we did not lose the election".

"The question does not arise. We did not lose the election. It is their forcible attempt to defeat us. Officially, through the Election Commission, they may defeat us. But morally, I am telling you, we won the election," she said.

Addressing a press conference at her residence, her first media interaction after the electoral setback, Ms. Banerjee repeatedly targeted the Election Commission, saying the real contest was not with the BJP but with the poll body.

"They have forcibly captured the State," she said. The BJP won 207 of the 293 Assembly seats counted on Monday, while the Trinamool was reduced to 86 seats. Ms. Banerjee lost the Bhadrakpur constituency to BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari.

Ms. Banerjee was sworn in as Chief Minister for a third term on May 3, 2021, and her five-year term is set to end on Tuesday night. Sources at the State House in Kolkata said there was no hindrance in the formation of a government and that it was just a custom for the outgoing minister to tender resignation.

Experts say it makes little difference whether a Chief Minister formally resigns or not. The Governor and this term expires, everything is null and void. The Trinamool to the BJP in December 2020 and has since risen to prominence within the state.

On Tuesday, BJP supporters staged a "jungle" rally at an aerial place, as he travelled to Kolkata, central slogan in his support.

RELATED REPORTS ON PAGE 8

Congress in a huddle over Kerala CM-designate

M. Abinandhan
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Raging speculation about the Congress's next Chief Minister seemed to consume the party in Kerala on Tuesday, as the party high command comprising Rahul Gandhi, Mallikarjun Kharge, and All India Congress Committee (AICC) general secretary K.C. Venugopal, was reportedly poised to commence preliminary discussions in New Delhi to settle the raging question.

Meanwhile, party vet V.A. Antony weighed in at the national capital, Mr. Venugopal said, regarding the high command's decision on the party's Chief Ministerial candidate was "imminent".



Congress members give a morning reception to V.D. Satheesan, one of the contenders for the CM post, on Tuesday. (A)

Party general secretary M.K. Murali and treasurer Ajay Madan, who have been appointed central observers about which leader is likely to be elected to the post.

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Assam Assembly may not have a Leader of Opposition

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

The 120-member Assam Assembly may not have an officially recognised Leader of Opposition.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its two regional allies secured 102 seats, while the Opposition Alliance managed 21. The Congress won 15 of these and the Bahujan Dal two.

However, according to the rules, an Opposition party must possess at least one-sixth of the total strength of the House for one of its MLAs to be formally recognised as the Leader of Opposition. The minimum number in the Assam Assembly, then, works out to 21.

On February 26, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma claimed that for a party to seek the Leader of Opposition post, it must secure at least 24 seats on its own accord.

Truce with Iran holds despite fresh attacks: U.S.

Associated Press

U.S. military leaders said on Tuesday that a ceasefire with Iran remains in effect, despite fresh attacks in the Strait of Hormuz and the Persian Gulf.

The fragile truce, reached nearly a month ago, appeared to be holding as U.S. forces pressed ahead with efforts to reopen the vital waterway for global energy. On Monday, the U.S. said a tank and a small Iranian boat that had threatened commercial shipping. So far, only two merchant ships are known to have passed through a new U.S.-guarded route,



Shipping officials: A woman works an Iranian flag on front of an oil tanker, off the coast of the Persian Gulf, on Monday. (A)

conference on Tuesday. U.S. officials said an Iranian flag on front of an oil tanker, off the coast of the Persian Gulf, on Monday, was hoisted in violation of the ceasefire.

U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said on Monday that the continuation of the status quo is intolerable for America, while we have not even begun yet," he said.

Dispatching Washington's claim of sinking six boats, an Iranian military commander said two small Iranian cargo boats were hit on Monday, killing five civilians, state TV reported.

"Given the ceasefire was announced, Iran has violated its commercial vessels nine times and sent two container ships, and they've attacked U.S. forces more than 10 times, all below the threshold of restarting major combat operations on this post," Gen. Cairns said.

MIDDLE EAST ATTACKS
■ PAGE 4

BJP gears up to pick Bengal CM; Suvendu Adhikari front runner

Shib Banerjee, Trinamool Congress, KOLKATA

A day after scripting a historic victory in West Bengal, the BJP on Tuesday appointed Union Home Minister Amit Shah as the Congress observer for the selection of the leader of the Legislature Party. Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi has been named the co-observer.

Mr. Shah and Mr. Majhi are likely to arrive in the state in the coming days. The BJP is set to form a government in the State for the first time after ending the 11-year rule of the Trinamool Congress. The party won 207 seats, reducing the opposition to just 86.

BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari, who defeated Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee from Bhadrakpur, is considered the front runner for the post of Chief Minister.

Mr. Adhikari defeated the Trinamool in the BJP in December 2020 and has since risen to prominence within the state.

On Tuesday, BJP supporters staged a "jungle" rally at an aerial place, as he travelled to Kolkata, central slogan in his support.

RELATED REPORTS ON PAGE 8

Violence reported in West Bengal

Mohana Prasad, Kolkata

Post-poll violence and protests have been reported from multiple parts of West Bengal even as the leadership of the BJP avoid its role of violence. ■ PAGE 8

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RELATED REPORTS ON PAGE 8

Cabinet gives nod to make insult to *Vande Mataram* an offence

The Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971 will have to be amended to bring the move into effect and add clauses on punishment

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Tuesday gave the go-ahead to amend the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971 to make any insult or obstruction to the singing of National Song *Vande Mataram* a punishable offence, a government source told *The Hindu*.

At present, insults to the National Anthem *Jana Gana Mana*, the National Flag and the Constitution is mentioned in the 1971 Act and is punishable by imprisonment of up to three years or a fine or both.

The Cabinet decision comes a day after the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) secured a landslide victory in West Bengal winning 207 out of 293 contested Assembly seats and was all set to form the government for the first time in the State.

Vande Mataram, the salutation of India imagined as a mother, was written by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay and published with his novel *Anandamath* in the early 1880s.

In 1937, leaders of the Congress, which was lead-



On February 6, the Union Home Ministry directed the States to play *Vande Mataram* at all official events. FILE PHOTO

ing the national movement, decided to use the first two stanzas at its gatherings, and the Constitution of the modern Republic of India accorded it the status of the National Song.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has accused the Congress of truncating the song to appease the Muslim League during the British rule.

Set of instructions

On February 6, the Union Home Ministry, in a set of instructions to States and government bodies, said that all the six stanzas of *Vande Mataram*, that

comes to a little over three minutes long, should be sung or played at official events. It said that the National Song should be given precedence before the National Anthem, written and composed by Rabindranath Tagore, when both the songs are played at an event.

The Ministry guidelines on *Vande Mataram* are advisory in nature and did not have a statutory backing.

The Cabinet's decision to amend the 1971 Act would make any insult to the national song a punishable offence.

▶ Why in News / चर्चा में क्यों

- Union Cabinet approved amendment to Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971
केंद्रीय मंत्रिमंडल ने राष्ट्रीय सम्मान के अपमान की रोकथाम अधिनियम, 1971 में संशोधन को मंजूरी दी
- Any insult/obstruction to singing of National Song Vande Mataram to become punishable
राष्ट्रीय गीत वंदे मातरम् के गायन में बाधा डालना दंडनीय अपराध बनेगा
- Decision comes after BJP's landslide victory in West Bengal (207/293 seats)
भाजपा की पश्चिम बंगाल में भारी जीत (207/293 सीटें) के बाद यह निर्णय आया
- Home Ministry already directed all states to play Vande Mataram at official events (Feb 6)
गृह मंत्रालय ने 6 फरवरी को सभी राज्यों को आधिकारिक कार्यक्रमों में वंदे मातरम् बजाने का निर्देश दिया था

▶ Simple Meaning / सरल भाषा में

- Vande Mataram = National Song (NOT National Anthem). Jana Gana Mana = National Anthem.
वंदे मातरम् = राष्ट्रीय गीत (राष्ट्रगान नहीं)। जन गण मन = राष्ट्रगान।
- Currently only insults to National Anthem, Flag & Constitution are covered under the 1971 Act
वर्तमान में 1971 अधिनियम में केवल राष्ट्रगान, झंडे और संविधान के अपमान को शामिल किया गया है

▶ Historical Background / ऐतिहासिक पृष्ठभूमि

- Written by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay; published with novel 'Anandamath' (e
बंकिम चंद्र चट्टोपाध्याय द्वारा लिखित; उपन्यास 'आनंदमठ' के साथ 1880 के दशक में प्रकाशित
- First two stanzas adopted as National Song by Congress-led national movement (1
1937 में कांग्रेस के नेतृत्व में पहले दो पदों को राष्ट्रीय गीत के रूप में अपनाया गया
- Constitution of modern India accorded it status of National Song
आधुनिक भारत के संविधान ने इसे राष्ट्रीय गीत का दर्जा दिया
- Composed by Rabindranath Tagore (music); written as salutation of India as mother
रवींद्रनाथ टैगोर द्वारा संगीतबद्ध; भारत माता की वंदना के रूप में लिखा गया

▶ About the 1971 Act / 1971 अधिनियम के बारे में

- Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971 — punishment: imprisonment
राष्ट्रीय सम्मान के अपमान की रोकथाम अधिनियम, 1971 — सजा: 3 वर्ष तक कारावास या जुर्माना या दोनों
- Currently covers: National Anthem, National Flag, Constitution
वर्तमान में शामिल: राष्ट्रगान, राष्ट्रीय ध्वज, संविधान
- After amendment: Will also include National Song (Vande Mataram)
संशोधन के बाद: राष्ट्रीय गीत (वंदे मातरम) भी शामिल होगा

▶ Polity / राजव्यवस्था

- Article 51A(a) — Fundamental Duty to abide by Constitution and respect National Flag & National Anthem
अनुच्छेद 51A(a) — मौलिक कर्तव्य: संविधान का पालन करना, राष्ट्रीय ध्वज और राष्ट्रगान का सम्मान करना
- Part IV-A (42nd Amendment 1976) added Fundamental Duties to Constitution
भाग IV-A (42 वां संशोधन 1976) ने संविधान में मौलिक कर्तव्य जोड़े

▶ History / इतिहास

- Anandamath (1882) — novel set in context of Sannyasi Rebellion against British; contains patriotic songs
आनंदमठ (1882) — ब्रिटिश विरोधी संन्यासी विद्रोह की पृष्ठभूमि पर उपन्यास; देशभक्ति गीत शामिल
- Rabindranath Tagore — Nobel Prize Literature 1913; also composed National Anthem 'Jana Gana Mana'
रवींद्रनाथ टैगोर — 1913 में साहित्य नोबेल; राष्ट्रगान 'जन गण मन' भी रचा

▶ GS-2 Governance / शासन

- Amendment will require Parliamentary approval — legislative process angle
संशोधन के लिए संसदीय अनुमोदन आवश्यक — विधायी प्रक्रिया का पहलू
- Home Ministry advisory guidelines vs statutory backing — difference between advisory and law
गृह मंत्रालय के सलाहकार दिशानिर्देश बनाम वैधानिक समर्थन — सलाहकार और कानून में अंतर

▶ Static GK / स्थैतिक सामान्य ज्ञान

- National Symbols: Anthem = Jana Gana Mana | Song = Vande Mataram | Animal = Tiger | Bird = Peacock | Flower = Lotus | Tree = Banyan | Fruit = Mango | Sport = Hockey (unofficial)
राष्ट्रीय प्रतीक: गान= जन गण मन | गीत= वंदे मातरम् | पशु= बाघ | पक्षी= मोर | फूल= कमल | वृक्ष= बरगद | फल= आम | खेल= हॉकी (अनौपचारिक)

Consider the following statements about Vande Mataram: / वंदे मातरम् के बारे में निम्नलिखित कथनों पर विचार करें:

1. Vande Mataram was written by Rabindranath Tagore and published with his novel 'Anandamath'.
2. The Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971 currently covers insults to the National Flag, National Anthem and the Constitution.
3. The National Song should be given precedence before the National Anthem when both are played at an event.
4. Vande Mataram consists of only two stanzas as adopted by the Constitution of India.

Options: / विकल्प:

- (a) 1 and 3 only
- (b) 2 only**
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 4 only

Explanation: Stmt 1 — WRONG: Written by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, not Tagore (Tagore composed the music). Stmt 2 — CORRECT. Stmt 3 — WRONG: National Anthem takes precedence. Stmt 4 — WRONG: Full song has 6 stanzas; first two used as National Song.

- 1. Written by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, published in Anandamath (1882)**
बंकिम चंद्र चट्टोपाध्याय द्वारा लिखित, आनंदमठ (1882) में प्रकाशित
- 2. National Song ≠ National Anthem (Jana Gana Mana)**
राष्ट्रीय गीत ≠ राष्ट्रगान (जन गण मन)
- 3. Full song: 6 stanzas, ~3 min duration**
पूरा गीत: 6 पद, ~3 मिनट अवधि
- 4. 1971 Act: Insults to Flag, Anthem, Constitution punishable (up to 3 yrs)**
1971 अधिनियम: ध्वज, गान, संविधान के अपमान पर सजा (3 वर्ष तक)
- 5. Proposed amendment: Add Vande Mataram to 1971 Act**
प्रस्तावित संशोधन: 1971 अधिनियम में वंदे मातरम् जोड़ना

- 1. Art. 51A(a) — Fundamental Duty to respect National Anthem and Flag**
अनुच्छेद 51A(a) — राष्ट्रगान और ध्वज का सम्मान: मौलिक कर्तव्य
- 2. Rabindranath Tagore composed the melody of Vande Mataram**
रवींद्रनाथ टैगोर ने वंदे मातरम् की धुन बनाई
- 3. BJP won 207/293 West Bengal seats triggering this Cabinet decision**
भाजपा ने 207/293 पश्चिम बंगाल सीटें जीतीं — इस कैबिनेट निर्णय की पृष्ठभूमि
- 4. Home Ministry guidelines (advisory) ≠ statutory/legal mandate**
गृह मंत्रालय दिशानिर्देश (सलाहकार) ≠ वैधानिक/कानूनी आदेश
- 5. Fundamental Duties added by 42nd Amendment (1976)**
मौलिक कर्तव्य 42 वें संशोधन (1976) द्वारा जोड़े गए

Raghav Das Gaiha wins Malcolm Adiseshiah Award

Raghav Das Gaiha, a visiting scholar at PARC, University of Pennsylvania, U.S., has been named the recipient of the Malcolm Adiseshiah Award, 2026. Professor Gaiha is a former Professor of Public Policy in the Faculty of Management Studies, University of Delhi. Additionally, Kanika Mahajan, Associate Professor of Economics at Ashoka University, Sonapat, has been selected for the Elizabeth Adiseshiah Award, 2026. Presented by the Malcolm and Elizabeth Adiseshiah Trust, the awards recognise social scientists for their outstanding contributions to development studies. Both honours will be presented at an event to be held in Chennai.

Article 2 — Key Facts & Background / मुख्य तथ्य और पृष्ठभूमि

▶ What Happened / क्या हुआ

- Raghav Das Gaiha — Visiting Scholar, PARC, University of Pennsylvania — awarded Malcolm Adiseshiah Award 2026
राघव दास गैहा — PARC, यूनिवर्सिटी ऑफ पेनसिल्वेनिया में विजिटिंग स्कॉलर — मैल्कम आदिसेशियह पुरस्कार 2026 से सम्मानित
- Former Professor of Public Policy, Faculty of Management Studies, University of Delhi
दिल्ली विश्वविद्यालय के प्रबंध अध्ययन संकाय में लोक नीति के पूर्व प्राध्यापक
- Kanika Mahajan — Associate Professor of Economics, Ashoka University, Sonapat — selected for Elizabeth Adiseshiah Award 2026
कनिका महाजन — अशोका विश्वविद्यालय, सोनीपत में अर्थशास्त्र की एसोसिएट प्रोफेसर — एलिजाबेथ आदिसेशियह पुरस्कार 2026 के लिए चुनी गईं

▶ About the Award / पुरस्कार के बारे में

- Presented by: Malcolm and Elizabeth Adiseshiah Trust
प्रदाता: मैल्कम और एलिजाबेथ आदिसेशियह ट्रस्ट
- Purpose: Recognise social scientists for outstanding contributions to development studies
उद्देश्य: विकास अध्ययन में उत्कृष्ट योगदान के लिए समाज वैज्ञानिकों को सम्मानित करना
- Ceremony venue: Chennai
समारोह स्थल: चेन्नई

▶ About Malcolm Adiseshiah / मैल्कम आदिसेशियह के बारे में

- Eminent Indian economist, educationist, and development thinker (1910–1994)
प्रख्यात भारतीय अर्थशास्त्री, शिक्षाविद् और विकास चिंतक (1910–1994)
- Former Deputy Director-General, UNESCO; VP, International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP)
UNESCO के पूर्व उप महानिदेशक; अंतर्राष्ट्रीय शैक्षिक योजना संस्थान (IIEP) के उपाध्यक्ष
- Known as 'Mr. Literacy' — championed adult literacy and functional literacy in India
'श्री साक्षरता' के नाम से प्रसिद्ध — भारत में प्रौढ़ साक्षरता और कार्यात्मक साक्षरता के समर्थक
- Madras Christian College — alma mater; member of Planning Commission, India
मद्रास क्रिश्चियन कॉलेज — उनकी शिक्षा संस्था; भारतीय योजना आयोग के सदस्य

Which of the following statements about the Malcolm Adiseshiah Award is/are correct?

1. It is awarded by the Malcolm and Elizabeth Adiseshiah Trust for contributions to development studies.
2. Malcolm Adiseshiah was a former Director-General of UNESCO.
3. The 2026 award was presented in New Delhi.
4. Kanika Mahajan received the Elizabeth Adiseshiah Award 2026.

Options: / विकल्प:

- (a) 1 and 4 only
- (b) 1, 2 and 4 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 3 and 4 only

Explanation: Stmt 1 — CORRECT. Stmt 2 — WRONG: He was Deputy Director-General (not DG) of UNESCO. Stmt 3 — WRONG: Ceremony in Chennai. Stmt 4 — CORRECT.

1. Malcolm Adiseshiah Award — by Malcolm & Elizabeth Adiseshiah Trust

मैल्कम आदिसेशियह पुरस्कार — मैल्कम और एलिजाबेथ आदिसेशियह ट्रस्ट द्वारा

2. For: Outstanding contributions to development studies

उद्देश्य: विकास अध्ययन में उत्कृष्ट योगदान

3. 2026 Winner: Raghav Das Gaiha (Univ. of Pennsylvania)

2026 विजेता: राघव दास गैहा (यूनिवर्सिटी ऑफ पेनसिल्वेनिया)

4. 2026 Elizabeth Award: Kanika Mahajan (Ashoka University, Sonapat)

2026 एलिजाबेथ पुरस्कार: कनिका महाजन (अशोका विश्वविद्यालय, सोनीपत)

5. Ceremony venue: Chennai

समारोह: चेन्नई

1. Malcolm Adiseshiah (1910–1994) — economist, educationist

मैल्कम आदिसेशियह (1910–1994) — अर्थशास्त्री, शिक्षाविद्

2. Called 'Mr. Literacy' — championed adult literacy

'श्री साक्षरता' — प्रौढ़ साक्षरता के समर्थक

3. Adiseshiah: Deputy DG UNESCO; member Planning Commission India

आदिसेशियह: UNESCO उप महानिदेशक; भारतीय योजना आयोग सदस्य

4. Gaiha: Former Prof, Faculty of Management Studies, Delhi Univ.

गैहा: पूर्व प्राध्यापक, प्रबंध अध्ययन संकाय, दिल्ली विश्वविद्यालय

5. IIEP = International Institute for Educational Planning (UNESCO)

IIEP = अंतर्राष्ट्रीय शैक्षिक योजना संस्थान (UNESCO)

30 banks integrated with UDGAM portal to help legal heirs trace funds

Aaratrika Bhaumik

NEW DELHI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) told the Supreme Court on Tuesday that 30 banks have been integrated into its centralised web portal, UDGAM (Unclaimed Deposits - Gateway to Access InforMation), to enable legal heirs to trace funds belonging to deceased account holders.

A three-judge Bench headed by Justice Vikram Nath was hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) petition filed by journalist Sucheta Dalal, contending that funds lying in dormant or inoperative accounts were increasingly being transferred to government-managed pools.

The petitioner sought directions for the creation of a centralised platform to

provide information on financial assets held by deceased persons.

Senior advocate Ranjit Kumar, appearing for the RBI, submitted that the UDGAM portal had already been operationalised to address the petitioner's concerns. "The UDGAM portal is an interactive platform. There are around 20 lakh registered users who have carried out around 44 lakh searches on the portal as of April 1," he said.

Mr. Kumar added that the 30 banks integrated into the portal account for nearly 90% of the funds held in the Depositors' Education and Awareness Fund (DEAF), a corpus set up by the RBI in 2014 to house unclaimed deposits from commercial and co-operative banks.

The RBI clarified that



30 banks integrated into the portal account for nearly 90% of the funds held in DEAF.

the UDGAM portal that enables individuals to look up unclaimed deposits and accounts, but does not function as a claims settlement mechanism. "The object of the portal is to facilitate the identification and tracing of unclaimed deposits, so that the concerned depositor or claimant may approach the respective bank for settlement of the claim

in accordance with the applicable procedure," it said.

Challenges for heirs

Advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for the petitioner pointed out that deposits held in post offices, provident funds, and insurance schemes had not yet been integrated into the portal, thereby posing challenges for legal heirs seeking to claim such assets.

Taking note of the submissions, the Bench granted one week to the Centre and the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) to place on record the relevant circulars and outline the steps taken to enable the return of unclaimed funds of deceased persons held with banks and financial institutions.

▶ What is UDGAM? / UDGAM क्या है?

- UDGAM = Unclaimed Deposits – Gateway to Access InforMation
UDGAM = अनक्लेम्ड डिपॉजिट्स- गेटवे टू एक्सेस इन्फॉर्मेशन
- RBI's centralised web portal to help legal heirs trace funds of deceased account holders
RBI का केंद्रीकृत वेब पोर्टल – मृत खाताधारकों के उत्तराधिकारियों को धन खोजने में मदद करता है
- Interactive platform with ~20 lakh registered users; ~44 lakh searches done (as of April 1)
इंटरैक्टिव प्लेटफॉर्म – लगभग 20 लाख पंजीकृत उपयोगकर्ता; ~44 लाख खोज हो चुकी हैं (1 अप्रैल तक)
- 30 banks cover ~90% of funds held in DEAF (Depositors' Education and Awareness Fund)
30 बैंक DEAF में जमा लगभग 90% धनराशि को कवर करते हैं

▶ DEAF Fund / DEAF फंड

- DEAF = Depositors' Education and Awareness Fund — set up by RBI in 2014
DEAF = जमाकर्ता शिक्षा और जागरूकता कोष – 2014 में RBI द्वारा स्थापित
- Houses unclaimed deposits from commercial & cooperative banks
वाणिज्यिक और सहकारी बैंकों की अदावी जमाराशियाँ यहाँ रखी जाती हैं
- UDGAM only identifies deposits — it does NOT settle claims (claimant must go to respective bank)
UDGAM केवल जमा की पहचान करता है – दावों का निपटान नहीं करता (दावेदार को बैंक जाना होगा)

▶ Supreme Court Case / सर्वोच्च न्यायालय मामला

- PIL by journalist Sucheta Dalal — funds in dormant accounts transferred to government-managed pools
पत्रकार सुचेता दलाल की PIL – निष्क्रिय खातों की धनराशि सरकारी पूल में स्थानांतरित हो रही थी
- 3-judge Bench: Justice Vikram Nath — gave 1 week to Centre & SEBI to outline steps
3 न्यायाधीशों की पीठ: न्यायमूर्ति विक्रम नाथ – केंद्र और SEBI को 1 सप्ताह की मोहलत
- Challenge: Post offices, provident funds, insurance schemes NOT yet integrated into portal
चुनौती: डाकघर, भविष्य निधि, बीमा योजनाएं अभी पोर्टल से नहीं जुड़ी हैं

▶ Economy / अर्थव्यवस्था

- Unclaimed deposits = financial dormancy; India has ₹42,000+ crore in DEAF (approx.)
अदावी जमा = वित्तीय निष्क्रियता; भारत में DEAF में अनुमानतः ₹42,000+ करोड़
- SEBI = Securities and Exchange Board of India — Regulator for Capital Markets
SEBI = भारतीय प्रतिभूति और विनियम बोर्ड — पूंजी बाजार नियामक

▶ Polity / राजव्यवस्था

- Public Interest Litigation (PIL) — Article 32 (SC) / Article 226 (HC) — right to approach courts
जनहित याचिका (PIL) — अनुच्छेद 32 (SC) / अनुच्छेद 226 (HC) — न्यायालय जाने का अधिकार

▶ Banking Regulators / बैंकिंग नियामक

- RBI Act 1934 — RBI is the central banking institution of India (HQ: Mumbai)
RBI अधिनियम 1934 — RBI भारत का केंद्रीय बैंक (मुख्यालय: मुंबई)
- Dormant/Inoperative Account: No transaction for 2 years (savings) / 1 year (current)
निष्क्रिय/निद्रित खाता: 2 वर्ष (बचत) / 1 वर्ष (चालू) तक कोई लेनदेन नहीं

▶ Key Distinctions / मुख्य अंतर

- Dormant → DEAF after 10 years of inactivity; original depositor/heir can still claim anytime
10 वर्ष की निष्क्रियता के बाद DEAF में जाता है; मूल जमाकर्ता/उत्तराधिकारी कभी भी दावा कर सकते हैं
- Advocate Prashant Bhushan raised concern — post office + PF + insurance not covered yet
अधिवक्ता प्रशांत भूषण ने चिंता उठाई — डाकघर + PF + बीमा अभी तक शामिल नहीं

▶ Static GK — Key RBI Bodies / स्थैतिक सामान्य ज्ञान

- Governor of RBI: Sanjay Malhotra (2024–) | HQ: Mumbai | Founded: 1935 | Nationalised: 1949
RBI गवर्नर: संजय मल्होत्रा (2024–) | मुख्यालय: मुंबई | स्थापना: 1935 | राष्ट्रीयकरण: 1949

With reference to UDGAM portal, consider the following statements:

1. UDGAM portal was launched by SEBI to help legal heirs trace unclaimed deposits.
2. The Depositors' Education and Awareness Fund (DEAF) was set up by RBI in 2014.
3. UDGAM portal also functions as a claims settlement mechanism.
4. 30 banks integrated in the portal account for approximately 90% of funds held in DEAF.

Options: / विकल्प:

- (a) 1 and 3 only
- (b) 2 and 4 only
- (c) 1, 2 and 4 only
- (d) 2, 3 and 4 only

Explanation: Stmt 1 — WRONG: Launched by RBI, not SEBI. Stmt 2 — CORRECT. Stmt 3 — WRONG: It is an identification tool, not a claims settlement mechanism. Stmt 4 — CORRECT.

1. UDGAM = Unclaimed Deposits Gateway to Access InforMation

UDGAM = अनक्लेम्ड डिपॉज़िट्स — गेटवे टू एक्सेस इन्फॉर्मेशन

2. Launched by: RBI | Purpose: Trace deceased person's bank funds

लॉन्च: RBI | उद्देश्य: मृत व्यक्ति की बैंक धनराशि का पता लगाना

3. 30 banks integrated = 90% of DEAF funds covered

30 बैंक एकीकृत = DEAF निधि का 90% कवर

4. DEAF: RBI set up in 2014 for unclaimed deposits

DEAF: RBI ने 2014 में अदावी जमा के लिए स्थापित किया

5. UDGAM = search tool only; NOT settlement mechanism

UDGAM = केवल खोज उपकरण; निपटान तंत्र नहीं

1. ~20 lakh users; ~44 lakh searches by April 2026

~20 लाख उपयोगकर्ता; अप्रैल 2026 तक ~44 लाख खोज

2. Dormant account → DEAF after 10 years of inactivity

निष्क्रिय खाता → 10 वर्ष बाद DEAF में

3. Challenge: PF, post office, insurance NOT yet integrated

चुनौती: PF, डाकघर, बीमा अभी एकीकृत नहीं

4. PIL by Sucheta Dalal; Bench: Justice Vikram Nath

सुचेता दलाल की PIL; पीठ: न्यायमूर्ति विक्रम नाथ

5. RBI Governor: Sanjay Malhotra | HQ: Mumbai | Est: 1935

RBI गवर्नर: संजय मल्होत्रा | मुख्यालय: मुंबई | स्थापना: 1935

How 'bulldozer justice' undermines the law

The slight of a five-year-old getting a toy to Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on March 27 at Gorakhpur made for a tender photo moment. The Chief Minister embraced the gift and asked the child to focus on her studies. A child showing her admiration for a political leader is nothing out of the ordinary, as leaders are meant to be role models for the younger generation. But the five-year-old's choice of toy — a replica of a bulldozer — raises uncomfortable questions. The episode not only shows public approval for "bulldozer justice", it also reflects the institutionalisation of extrajudicial action by the state. What is arguably a problematic political symbol is now part of the state's everyday consciousness and holds the potential to influence impressionable minds.

The much-banned "bulldozer justice" model isn't just a negation of the concept of due process but a direct challenge to it.

Not the first time
Through "bulldozer justice" is now part of India's political lexicon, the concept of bulldozers being used as an instrument of state policy is not new. Instances of bulldozers being used to clear encroachments and demolish unauthorised houses in Old Delhi's Turkhan Gate area in 1976 — when the court issued an Emergency imposed by the then prime minister Indira Gandhi — have been well chronicled.

However, there is a key difference in how such actions have been perceived over time. From being criticised as part of the excesses of the Emergency by a judicial commission, bulldozer actions is now being amplified as a symbol of the state's firmness in dealing with those who break the law. It is perceived as the last judicial processes are unworkable and an immediate recourse in the way of delivering instant retributive justice. In an era of 10-minute deliveries, government authorities



Sandeep Dhanraj

are not immune to the same pressure. And since the judicial process does not follow a fixed timeline, some argue that this pressure is multiplied.

The drive for 'instant justice'
The backlog of cases across all courts in India has crossed 8.8 crore, with the figure in the Supreme Court alone accounting for over 90,000 cases. The India Justice Report 2025 noted that there are only 15 judges for every million Indians, as against a 1997 Law Commission of India recommendation of 80 judges per one million. In 23 of the 25 states, the same report noted, cases pending for over three years in subordinate courts amount to 28% of all pending cases. And across 28 High Courts, the number of cases which are pending for over five years account for 5%.

The burden of proof and the long road to litigation often act as a deterrent and, therefore, convince citizens to seek instant justice. And when government authorities are under constant scrutiny and quick feedback, the pressure of "instant delivery of justice" is quite high.

But what an individual prefers, even a majority of them, cannot be the state's choice. In a state governed by the rule of law, there is no place for mob justice or populism. The tenets of criminal jurisprudence consider any crime against an individual as one against society. And the state can impose justice only in accordance with the law.

The problem with bulldozer justice lies precisely because that it substitutes spectacle for procedure. Demolitions carried out immediately after an alleged offence, often before investigations are completed, blur the distinction between punishment and an extrajudicial action. In such cases, the state assumes the role of investigator, judge and executioner at once. This dissolution of power between the organs of the state undermines the

very principles that underpin a constitutional democracy.

There is another aspect that is often overlooked. If the demolitions of the houses of the accused are as purported violations of land or municipal laws, it begs the question why did the government allow such a structure in the first place? Is it an admission that a corrupt system allowed such a home to be built right before the gaze of law enforcers? But if the demolitions are meant to convey a message of zero tolerance towards crime, then it runs foul of the law. The state cannot reduce itself to the level of vigilante groups, whose main purpose of existence is to hand out "instant justice".

The image of swift destruction creates an impression of decisive leadership, but it also normalises the idea that executive authority can override legal safeguards whenever public anger demands immediate retribution. Over time, this weakens institutional credibility and erodes citizens' trust in lawful processes.

Rejection institutions
The erosion of trust in institutions is another strength after frustration with the justice system has led to a weakening trust in strengthening it. Expanding judicial capacity, filling vacancies, and improving investigative processes would address the underlying causes of delay far more effectively than theatrical displays of executive power. Cases involving innocent or minor must be mandatorily assigned to fast-track courts that are focused on speedy disposal with frequent hearings.

However, a constitutional state derives its legitimacy not from the speed of punishment but from its adherence to legal principles and the fairness of its processes. "Bulldozer justice" may satisfy a demand for instant resolution, but it erodes the foundations of the rule of law and risks reducing the state to a vigilante group.

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Fit to width A shifting political arithmetic in Punjab

The BJP intends to ride solo in the State polls next year

STATE OF PLAY

Vikas Vaundexa
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Supported by electoral victories from Punjab, Assam, and Puducherry, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) seems eager to carry that momentum into Punjab, treating it as the next frontier in its long list of states to conquer. In a bold move, it is sending word to the party across the State polls in Punjab, due in 2027.

The BJP has been present in Punjab since the country's independence. People know what it stands for, what it has done and what it has not done. Before 1992, when the BJP (earlier known as the Bharatiya Jana Sangh) was fighting alone, it secured, on average, 6-7% of the vote share during the Assembly elections. Later, when the BJP merged into an alliance with the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) in 1997, its vote share went up a tad to around 8%, according to the book *Electoral Politics in Punjab*. In 2022, the BJP contested the Assembly elections in alliance with the Punjab Lok Congress and got 8.6% of the vote.

In Punjab, the BJP and the SAD have been in electoral partnership since 1980, and have long displayed cohesive governance. Cases involving innocent or minor must be mandatorily assigned to fast-track courts that are focused on speedy disposal with frequent hearings.

However, a constitutional state derives its legitimacy not from the speed of punishment but from its adherence to legal principles and the fairness of its processes. "Bulldozer justice" may satisfy a demand for instant resolution, but it erodes the foundations of the rule of law and risks reducing the state to a vigilante group.

ready ammunition. The BJP has been quick to capitalise on it.

Meanwhile, the Congress, the Opposition and has been positioning itself as the primary challenger to the ruling AAP. It appears to be struggling with internal discord. In January this year, Congress leader and former Chief Minister Charanjeet Singh Channi called for greater "AAP representation" in the party, pointing out that Haryana was not getting due representation, bringing the discord within the party into public view. In February, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, during his visit to Punjab, gave a stern message to the State unit of the party, asking it to expand into this fractured space. While Punjab presents a distinct political landscape where religion, region and caste-based coalition remain central to the State's electoral arithmetic, the party has already been reaching out to OBCs, Muslims, and Dalits in a bid to pull-off another case of "social engineering" in order to get a foothold in the State. The Scheduled Castes account for 31.9% of the population in Punjab, while the OBCs account for 20%. In such a milieu, the party has also been working to project its pro-Sikh image by propagating the Central government's steps taken in the interest of Sikhs since 2014.

With the BJP buoyed by renewed confidence, the Opposition could not remain silent. In a bid to counter the BJP's momentum, the Congress has been sending out a clear message, implying that those who knew the party best were to walk away. The detour could also spark open factional fights and internal power struggles. The allegation that Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann appointed in a "drunk state" during the State Assembly proceedings on May 1, has handed the Opposition

the sting of a constitutional state. The BJP's State unit believed restricted the party's growth. The detour could also spark open factional fights and internal power struggles. The allegation that Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann appointed in a "drunk state" during the State Assembly proceedings on May 1, has handed the Opposition

the sting of a constitutional state. The BJP's State unit believed restricted the party's growth. The detour could also spark open factional fights and internal power struggles. The allegation that Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann appointed in a "drunk state" during the State Assembly proceedings on May 1, has handed the Opposition

RE meets global electricity demand for the first time

Despite rapid renewable capacity growth globally, geopolitical shocks expose India's dependence on fossil fuel imports from West Asia

DATA POINT

ASSEMBLY

In 2025, global electricity generation increased by roughly 800 terawatt-hours (TWh), according to data from the Ember Energy Institute. This increase was supplied almost entirely by solar and wind energy, contributing 336 TWh and 204 TWh respectively. Other renewables added another 12 TWh. Coal generation and oil remained flat by 67 TWh and 12 TWh respectively. This is the first year in which expanded electricity demand did not require an increase in fossil fuel.

Over the past decade, the cost of solar and wind energy has dropped steeply, and battery storage and grid integration capacities have improved drastically, supporting an uptick in renewable energy sources. In 2025, coal's share of global electricity production fell by just over 1% and solar energy increased by nearly 2%. The dependence on oil also went down.

Major superpowers are embracing the change. China, for instance, saw its fossil fuel generation fall for the first time since 2015. The country saw a strong 5% growth in electricity demand and a 18% growth in clean energy generation, most largely by solar and wind energy. India's electricity demand grew by 40% compared to 2024 and solar energy increased by 38%. Solar energy alone met two-thirds of the increase in the country's electricity demand in 2025, according to a report by Ember Energy.

Fossil fuel demand fell in India as well. Together, the fall in demand in India added up to 7% pushed global fossil fuel generation to stagnation, according to the report. Fossil fuel generation fell in both India (down 4.3%) and China (down 0.3%) driven by clean power usage and demand growth. How is this different from the

earlier years? For two decades, even as renewable electricity capacity grew at double-digit rates, fossil fuel generation remained resilient and kept climbing because absolute electricity demand was rising faster than what renewables could cover. The rising consumption relied on coal and gas-fuelled energy. Even as renewable energy gained market share, it could not displace fossil fuels in absolute terms. However, that pattern reversed in 2025.

Globally, coal's share in electricity production declined from 36% in 2015 to 33% in 2024 (Chart 1). Coal generation fell in absolute terms for the first time last year, as renewables' output surpassed growth. Natural gas also saw a modest 4% TWh increase, entirely offset by renewable gains.

The effect of war
India's crude oil imports fell by 17% year-over-year in March 2025 to 18.9 million tonnes, compared with 22.8 million tonnes in March 2023 (Chart 2). The decline comes amid the closure of the Strait of Hormuz starting March 1 due to the U.S.-Iran conflict with Iran. This narrow waterway handles a significant share of global oil and gas shipments. India imports 85% of its crude oil from mostly Qatar, the UAE and Saudi Arabia. The Indian basket crude (oil) price averaged \$113.49 per barrel in March 2025, compared with \$72.47 in March 2023, a 56% increase year-over-year.

India's primary energy supply consists of coal, followed by oil, natural gas and the renewables (Chart 3). India's natural gas consumption rose in March 2025 despite supply disruptions. Natural gas available for consumption went up by 7% from March 2023. This increase came despite a 4.8% decline in domestic production. The gap was filled by LNG imports, which jumped by 20.5% by March this year. India's LNG imports reached 27 million metric tonnes (mt) in

2024-25, the highest on record and double the 13.5 mtmt imported in 2011-12. India's LPG imports also surged with expanded household access. The Vaalhan Matti Ujwa Yojana increased LPG connections from 62% of households in 2014 to nearly 100% by 2023, driving imports to 18 mtmt in 2023-24 from 16.44 mtmt in 2022-23.

Crude oil, LNG, and LPG are all imported heavily from West Asia and suppliers. The closure of the Strait of Hormuz disrupted all three of India's major energy sources. India's accelerating renewable adoption, maintaining robust oil, output, and paying \$20,000 crore to oil marketing companies in FY 2023-24 to cushion LPG losses. LPG prices rose by 50% per cylinder after the conflict began.

On the flip side, India's renewable capacity grew by over 20% in the past decade. In FY 2024-25, renewable energy accounted for 40% of India's new capacity additions. Yet absolute energy dependence on imports has also deepened. India imports 85% of crude oil, 47% of natural gas, and 28% of coal. Despite being the world's third-largest coal producer, the renewable buildout has not yet reduced India's reliance on imported fossil fuels.

Renewable capacity takes years to translate into reliable, usable energy supply in the instant short-term. When the Strait of Hormuz closed in early March, India could not wait for wind farms to reach completion or battery capacity to scale. It responded by maximising output from existing coal and gas infrastructure, instructing domestic suppliers to prioritise domestic users and accelerating imports of LNG and LPG from alternative suppliers.

The global energy transition advanced significantly in 2025. India's renewable capacity is growing at the fastest rate globally, but import dependence on fossil fuels and conflict zone energy persists alongside clean energy progress in India.

Perilous present, cleaner future



Chart 1: The shift towards renewables for global electricity generation, with an uptick in solar and wind energy (TWh) (%)

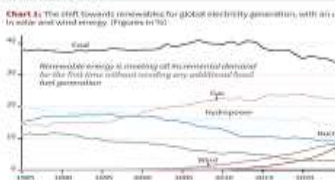


Chart 2: The fall in India's crude oil imports in March 2025



Chart 3: The rise of India's primary energy supply in March 2025

Data for the charts were sourced from Ember (2025), Energy Institute (2025), Ember Energy Institute (2025) with major reporting by The World in 2025), Energy Institute (2025) and The History of Statistics and Planning Implementation.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Hindu

FIFTY YEARS AGO MAY 6, 1976

Supreme Court defines life imprisonment

New Delhi, May 6: The notion that life imprisonment implies imprisonment for 20 or 25 years is wrong. Life imprisonment means "imprisonment for the entire life of the prisoner" unless the Government chooses to remit the same after a certain period, it is to stay rigid.

A sentence of life imprisonment did not automatically come to an end after 20 years. After serving a jail term of 20 years, including a charge of murder and sentenced to life imprisonment on October 16, 1967. He appeared for a transfer to Anwar in Punjab. The same was granted.

On May 7, 1973, the petitioner made a representation to the Government seeking release. The Punjab Government forwarded the representation to the Madhya Pradesh Government and the latter, rejected it.

The prisoner then filed a writ petition under Article 226 of the Constitution before the Punjab and Haryana High Court on the ground that having already served sentence of more than 20 years, he was entitled to be released "as a matter of course" under the provisions of the Jail Manual and the Prison Act.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MAY 6, 1926

The British Gazette

London, May 4: The Government is publishing a penny newspaper called "The British Gazette". The first issue to emerge will be distributed in the whole of London area. The "British Gazette" is being distributed at Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle and the surrounding districts by air.

Perilous present, cleaner future



Towards sustainability: Solar panels being placed at the CNNC Tianwan tidal flat photovoltaic power plant in Lianyungang, in China's eastern Jiangsu province, on April 19.

Chart 1: The shift towards renewables for global electricity generation, with an uptick in solar and wind energy (Figures in %)

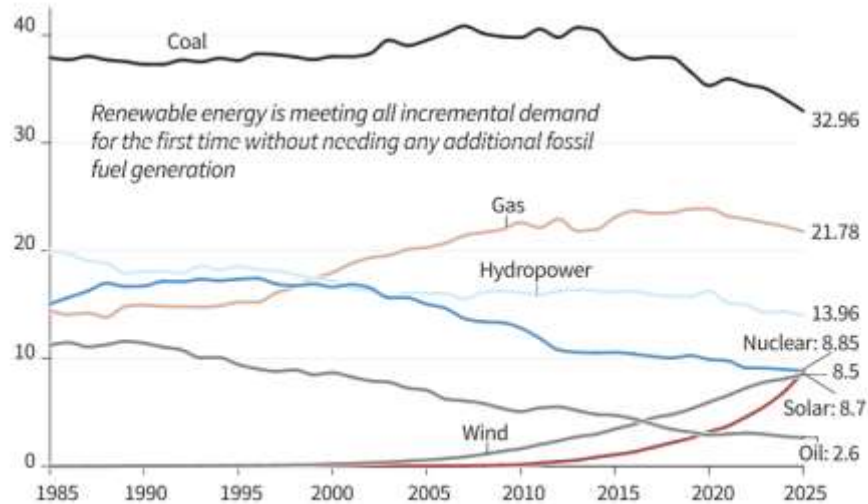
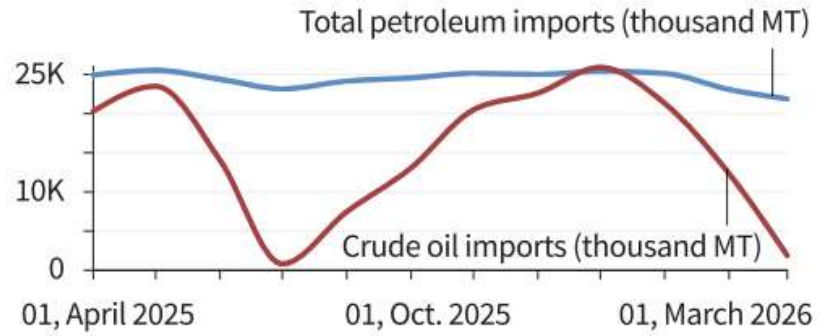
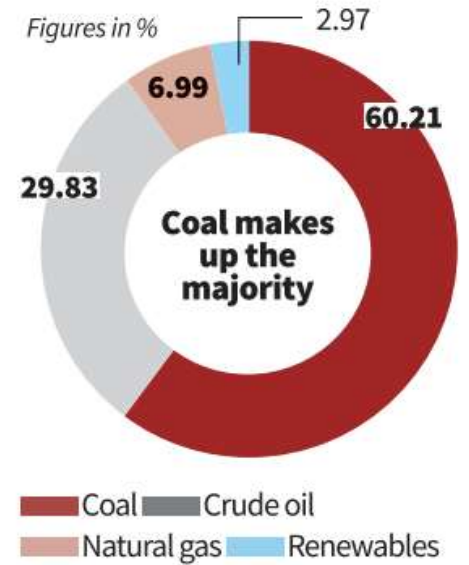


Chart 2: The fall in India's crude oil imports in March



Data for the charts were sourced from Ember (2026), Energy Institute- Statistical Review of World Energy (2025) - with major processing by Our World in Data; Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell; Energy Statistics India 2025 report by the Ministry of Statistics and Planning Implementation

Chart 3: The makeup of India's energy sources



Areena Arora

In 2025, global electricity generation increased by roughly 850 terawatt-hours (TWh), according to data from the Ember Energy Institute. This increase was supplied almost entirely by solar and wind energy, contributing 636 TWh and 204 TWh respectively. Other renewables added another 23 TWh. Coal generation and oil meanwhile fell by 67 TWh and 12 TWh respectively. This is the first year in which expanded electricity demand did not require an increase in fossil fuels.

Over the past decade, the cost of solar and wind energy has dropped steeply, and battery storage and grid integration capacities have improved drastically, supporting an uptick in reliance on renewable energy sources. In 2025, coal's share of global electricity production fell by just over 1% and solar energy increased by nearly 2%. The dependence on oil also went down.

Major superpowers are embracing the change. China, for instance, saw its fossil fuel generation fall for the first time since 2015. The country saw a strong 5% growth in electricity demand and a 15% growth in clean energy generation, met largely by solar and wind energy. Solar energy in China grew by 40% compared to 2024 and wind energy increased by 14%. Solar energy alone met two-thirds of the increase in the country's electricity demand in 2025, according to a report by Ember Energy.

Fossil fuel demand fell in India as well. Together, the fall in demand in India and China has pushed global fossil fuel generation to stagnation, according to the report. Fossil fuel generation fell in both India (down 3.3%) and China (down 0.9%), driven by clean power usage and demand growth.

How is this different from the

earlier years? For two decades, even as renewable electricity capacity grew at double-digit rates, fossil fuel generation remained relevant and kept climbing because absolute electricity demand was rising faster than what renewables could cover. The rising consumption relied on coal and gas-fuelled energy. Even as renewable energy gained market share, it could not displace fossil fuels in absolute terms. However, that pattern reversed in 2025.

Globally, coal's share in electricity production declined from 36% in 2015 to 33% in 2024 (**Chart 1**). Coal generation fell in absolute terms for the first time last year, as renewables outpaced demand growth. Natural gas also saw a modest 45 TWh increase, entirely offset by renewable gains.

The effect of war

India's crude oil imports fell by 17% year-over-year in March 2026 to 18.9 million tonnes, compared with 22.8 million tonnes in March 2025 (**Chart 2**). The decline comes amid the closure of the Strait of Hormuz starting March 1 due to the U.S.-Israel conflict with Iran. This narrow waterway handles a significant share of global oil and gas shipments. India imports 89% of its crude oil from mostly Qatar, the UAE and Saudi Arabia. The Indian basket crude (simplify) price averaged \$113.49 per barrel in March 2026, compared with \$72.47 in March 2025, a 56% increase year-over-year.

India's primary energy supply consists of coal, followed by oil, natural gas and then renewables (**Chart 3**).

India's natural gas consumption rose in March 2026 despite supply disruptions. Natural gas available for consumption went up by 7% from March 2025. This increase came despite a 4.9% decline in domestic production. The gap was filled by LNG imports, which jumped by 20.5% by March this year. India's LNG imports reached 27 million metric tonnes (mmt) in

2024-25, the highest on record and double the 13.5 mmt imported in 2011-12. India's LPG imports also surged with expanded household access. The Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana increased LPG connections from 62% of households in 2016 to nearly 100% by 2025, driving imports to 18 mmt in 2025-26 from 16.48 mmt in 2020-21.

Crude oil, LNG, and LPG are all imported heavily from West Asian suppliers. The closure of the Strait of Hormuz disrupted all three simultaneously. India's response included accelerating renewable approvals, maximising refinery output, and paying ₹30,000 crore to oil marketing companies in FY 2025-26 to cushion LPG losses. LPG prices rose by ₹60 per cylinder after the conflict began.

On the flip side, India's renewable capacity grew by over 210% in the past decade. In FY 2024-25, renewable energy accounted for 89% of India's new capacity additions. Yet absolute energy dependence on imports has also deepened. India imports 89% of crude oil, 47% of natural gas, and 26% of coal despite being the world's third-largest coal producer. The renewable buildout has not yet reduced India's reliance on imported fossil fuels.

Renewable capacity takes years to translate into reliable, usable power and geopolitical shocks affect energy supply in the instant short-term. When the Strait of Hormuz closed in early March, India could not wait for wind farms to reach completion or battery capacity to scale. It responded by maximising output from existing coal and gas infrastructure, instructing domestic suppliers to prioritise domestic users and accelerating imports of LNG and LPG from alternative suppliers.

The global energy transition advanced significantly in 2025. India's renewable capacity is growing at the fastest rate globally. However, import dependence on a conflict zone exists alongside clean energy progress in India.

— Key Data Points / मुख्य डेटा बिंदु

▶ Global Highlights 2025 / वैश्विक मुख्य बिंदु 2025

- Global electricity generation increased by ~850 TWh in 2025 (Ember Energy Institute)
2025 में वैश्विक बिजली उत्पादन ~850 TWh बढ़ा (एम्बर एनर्जी इंस्टीट्यूट)
- Solar = 636 TWh | Wind = 204 TWh | Other renewables = 23 TWh
सौर = 636 TWh | पवन = 204 TWh | अन्य नवीकरणीय = 23 TWh
- Coal generation fell by 67 TWh | Oil by 12 TWh — FIRST TIME electricity growth without fossil fuel increase
कोयला उत्पादन 67 TWh गिरा | तेल 12 TWh — पहली बार बिजली वृद्धि बिना जीवाश्म ईंधन वृद्धि के
- Coal's share in global electricity declined from 36% (2015) to 33% (2024)
वैश्विक बिजली में कोयले की हिस्सेदारी 36% (2015) से घटकर 33% (2024) हुई

▶ China / चीन

- China: 5% electricity demand growth; 15% clean energy growth; Solar +40%; Wind +14%
चीन: 5% बिजली मांग वृद्धि; 15% स्वच्छ ऊर्जा वृद्धि; सौर +40%; पवन +14%
- China's fossil fuel generation fell for first time since 2015
चीन का जीवाश्म ईंधन उत्पादन 2015 के बाद पहली बार गिरा

▶ India Energy Data / भारत ऊर्जा डेटा

- India: Fossil fuel generation fell 3.3%; battery storage + grid improved drastically
भारत: जीवाश्म ईंधन उत्पादन 3.3% गिरा; बैटरी भंडारण + ग्रिड में भारी सुधार
- India's LNG imports: 27 MMT in 2024-25 (highest on record); jumped 20.5% by March 2026
भारत का LNG आयात: 2024-25 में 27 MMT (अब तक सबसे अधिक); मार्च 2026 तक 20.5% उछाल
- LPG imports: 16.48 MMT (2020-21) → 18 MMT (2025-26); Ujjwala Yojana LPG connections 62% → ~100%
LPG आयात: 16.48 MMT (2020-21) → 18 MMT (2025-26); उज्वला योजना LPG कनेक्शन 62% → ~100%
- Crude oil imports fell 17% YoY (March 2026) amid Strait of Hormuz closure
होर्मुज जलसंधि बंद होने से मार्च 2026 में कच्चे तेल का आयात 17% YoY गिरा

▶ Why Strait of Hormuz Matters / होर्मुज जलसंधि क्यों महत्वपूर्ण

- ~25% of world's crude oil transported through this narrow waterway (between Iran & Oman)
विश्व का ~25% कच्चा तेल इस संकरे जलमार्ग से गुजरता है (ईरान और ओमान के बीच)
- Closed from March 1, 2026 due to US-Israel-Iran conflict; LPG prices rose ₹60/cylinder
अमेरिका-इजरायल-ईरान संघर्ष के कारण 1 मार्च 2026 से बंद; LPG कीमतें ₹60/सिलेंडर बढ़ीं
- India imports 89% crude oil (Qatar, UAE, Saudi Arabia); 47% natural gas; 26% coal
भारत 89% कच्चा तेल (कतर, UAE, सऊदी अरब); 47% प्राकृतिक गैस; 26% कोयला आयात करता है

▶ Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana / पीएम उज्वला योजना

- Launched 2016 — provide LPG connections to BPL households
2016 में शुरू — BPL परिवारों को LPG कनेक्शन प्रदान करना
- Coverage increased from 62% to ~100% of households by 2025
2025 तक कवरेज 62% से ~100% परिवारों तक बढ़ा

▶ Environment + GS3 Exam Angles / पर्यावरण + GS3 परीक्षा कोण

- India's renewable capacity grew 210%+ in past decade; FY2024-25: 89% of new capacity additions from RE
पिछले एक दशक में भारत की नवीकरणीय क्षमता 210%+ बढ़ी; FY2024-25 में 89% नई क्षमता नवीकरणीय से
- India: World's 3rd largest coal producer yet imports 26% coal — energy paradox
भारत: विश्व का तीसरा सबसे बड़ा कोयला उत्पादक फिर भी 26% कोयला आयात — ऊर्जा विरोधाभास
- Critical minerals dependency: Lithium, cobalt, nickel, copper, rare earths for batteries/EVs — mostly from China
महत्वपूर्ण खनिज निर्भरता: बैटरी/ईवी के लिए लिथियम, कोबाल्ट, निकेल, कॉपर, दुर्लभ मृदा — अधिकतर चीन से
- National Energy Policy target: 500 GW RE capacity by 2030
राष्ट्रीय ऊर्जा नीति लक्ष्य: 2030 तक 500 GW नवीकरणीय क्षमता

With reference to global energy trends in 2025 as per the Ember Energy Institute:

1. Solar and wind energy together accounted for more than 800 TWh of the global electricity increase.
2. 2025 was the first year when expanded electricity demand did not require an increase in fossil fuels.
3. Coal's share in global electricity production rose from 33% in 2015 to 36% in 2024.
4. China's fossil fuel generation fell for the first time since 2015.

Options: / विकल्प:

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1, 2 and 4 only**
- (c) 2, 3 and 4 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Explanation: Stmt 1 — CORRECT: Solar 636 + Wind 204 = 840 TWh. Stmt 2 — CORRECT. Stmt 3 — WRONG: Coal's share DECLINED from 36% (2015) to 33% (2024). Stmt 4 — CORRECT.

1. Global electricity rose 850 TWh in 2025; Solar 636 + Wind 204 TWh

2025 में वैश्विक बिजली 850 TWh बढ़ी; सौर 636 + पवन 204 TWh

2. First year: electricity growth without fossil fuel increase

पहली बार: जीवाश्म ईंधन वृद्धि के बिना बिजली वृद्धि

3. Coal's global share: 36% (2015) → 33% (2024)

कोयले की वैश्विक हिस्सेदारी: 36% (2015) → 33% (2024)

4. China: Solar +40%, Wind +14%; fossil fuels fell for 1st time since 2015

चीन: सौर +40%, पवन +14%; 2015 के बाद पहली बार जीवाश्म ईंधन गिरा

5. India LNG imports: 27 MMT in 2024-25 (record high)

भारत LNG आयात: 2024-25 में 27 MMT (रिकॉर्ड)

1. India imports: 89% crude oil, 47% natural gas, 26% coal

भारत आयात: 89% कच्चा तेल, 47% प्राकृतिक गैस, 26% कोयला

2. Ujjwala Yojana (2016): LPG coverage 62% → ~100% by 2025

उज्वला योजना (2016): LPG कवरेज 62% → 2025 तक ~100%

3. India RE capacity grew 210%+ in last decade

भारत नवीकरणीय क्षमता पिछले दशक में 210%+ बढ़ी

4. India: 3rd largest coal producer yet imports 26% coal

भारत: तीसरा सबसे बड़ा कोयला उत्पादक फिर भी 26% आयात

5. RE Target India: 500 GW by 2030

भारत का नवीकरणीय लक्ष्य: 2030 तक 500 GW

Text & Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Growth recorded by Hong Kong in the first three months of 2026

5.9 In per cent, Hong Kong's economy grew by 5.9% in the first three months of 2026, the government said on Tuesday while also warning of "downside risks" from the West Asia crisis. The figure was the strongest since the 7.6% growth recorded in the second quarter of 2021. Hong Kong has set an annual growth target of 2.5 to 3.5 percent for 2026. [\(1\)](#)

Percentage increase in India's coffee exports in January-April 2026

26.6 In per cent, India's coffee exports rose 26.6 per cent to 2.74 lakh tonnes in the January-April period of 2026, mainly driven by higher shipments of robusta and instant coffee, government data showed. The country had exported 1.37 lakh tonnes of coffee in the year ago period. India ships arabica and robusta varieties, as well as instant coffee. [\(2\)](#)

Sub-sectors identified for faster clearance of FDI proposals by India

40 Rare earth magnets and printed circuit boards are among 40 sub-sectors identified by the government for clearance within 60 days of FDI proposals from China and other countries sharing level borders with India. The government has also laid out guidelines for FDI proposals from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar and Afghanistan. [\(3\)](#)

Amount approved by the M.P. cabinet for various departments

38,555 In T crore. The M.P. cabinet on Tuesday approved funds of ₹ 38,555 crore for various departments. The cabinet earmarked ₹ 32,405 crore for road infrastructure and maintenance and government housing for 2026-2027, ₹ 4,622.04 crore for the "Self-Reliance in Pudukkottai Mission". [\(4\)](#)

Villages dependent on tankers for water supply in Marathwada

92 With rising summer heat, 92 villages across those districts of Maharashtra's Marathwada region are now dependent on tankers for the supply of water, a report has said. As of Tuesday, 156 tankers are supplying water to 92 villages and 30 settlements in the districts of Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj, Jalgaon and Hingoli. [\(5\)](#)

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India's energy security amid conflicts

The conflict in West Asia has shown how geopolitical shocks can transmit to India's domestic economy, given that the country imports over 88% of its crude needs. In a fragmented energy market, India's edge lies not in self-sufficiency but in optionality.

EXPLAINER

Dhyanishu Mohan
Aditi Laxanas

The conflict in West Asia has demonstrated the speed with which geopolitical shocks have been transmitted to India's domestic economy. The head of the International Energy Agency has described the current geo-economic crisis as more severe than the combined shocks of 1972, 1979 and 2022.

The price of Brent crude oil rose to \$109.23 per barrel after hitting highs of around \$120 during the conflict. At a domestic level, India is projected to see its economy slow from 7.4% growth in FY26 to 6.5% in FY27 with a projected increase in inflation from 2.3% to 4.4% due to the impact of disruptions observed in the energy supply chains.

Energy security can no longer be defined solely as purchasing fuel at the lowest possible price. It now rests on resilience, diversification, and protection of macroeconomic stability.

Breakdown of the old energy market order
The Russia-Ukraine War was the first major warning to the pre-existing energy market order. It exposed the perils of energy dependence on a single source.

Europe once relied on Russia for 40% of its gas imports. By 2023, that had fallen to 12%. Europe did not respond by chasing efficiency, it did so by buying insurance. Gas consumption by European Union (EU) countries fell by 20% between 2021 and 2024, while the combined imports of gas and liquefied natural gas (LNG) declined by 18%.

Even when average LNG terminal utilisation was only 52% in the first half of 2024, Europe accepted spare capacity at the price of security.

While the war in Ukraine revealed the reliance on pipeline-based supplies, the conflict in West Asia demonstrated the reliance on sea transportation.

The Strait of Hormuz, through which approximately 25% of the world's crude oil is transported, has once again become an extremely important chokepoint, transmitting price shocks rapidly across global markets.

China powers have adapted differently. China has locked in nearly 28 million metric tons of LNG per year through contracts. South Korea has secured 273 million barrels of crude oil that will transit from outside the Strait of Hormuz, while Japan has stockpiled 470 million barrels, which is equivalent to 254 days of consumption.

Gulf shore exporters have regained much of their bargaining power due to spare capacity. The International Energy Agency (IEA) forecasts a contraction of 80 kbbl in the global demand for oil on average in 2026, with a decrease of 208 kbbl for OPEC (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) and 254 kbbl for Middle East, while non-OPEC demand will rise 152 kbbl. In this weaker market, India's demand growth becomes strategically valuable.

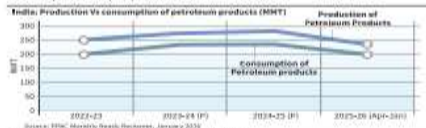
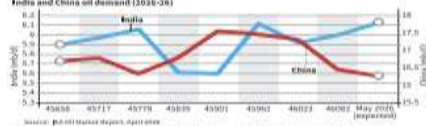
Now India gained more room to manoeuvre
The potential threat of disruption of the Indian oil imports is real and immediate, since the country imports over 88% of its crude needs, with roughly 45% of its imports transiting through the Strait of Hormuz.



Navigating the crisis: An Indian-flagged tanker carrying crude oil that transited through the Strait of Hormuz, as seen docked in Mumbai. [\(6\)](#)

Energy requirements

India is now the world's third-largest oil consumer, with high dependence on crude imports. As a result, fluctuations in crude oil prices, freight rates, and currency exchange rates remain a concern, especially during geo-economic conflicts.



For years, India has depended heavily on imports. But the country has huddled repeated shocks better than many comparable importers. It is now the world's third-largest oil consumer. According to OPEC's forecast, India's consumption is expected to reach 8.74 million barrels per day (mbbl) in 2028 and 8.90 mbbl in 2029, while the IEA projects that Indian crude demand will rise approximately 130 kbbl, compared with 80 kbbl for China. As Chinese demand becomes flatter

and more cyclical, India has become one of the few large engines of incremental oil demand. Before 2022, Russia supplied barely 2% of India's crude imports, however, by FY2024-25, that figure was around 26%, making Russia India's largest supplier. Flows from Russia picked up again as Gulf disruptions intensified. Now, India's import basket also includes countries such as Iraq, Saudi Arabia, UAE, and the United States, while remaining geographically diversified. In a

THE GIST

India has long relied on crude oil imports but has handled repeated geo-economic shocks better than many comparable importers.

Its import basket — spanning Iraq, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Russia, and the United States, remains geographically diversified.

While expansion into solar, batteries, and EVs may reduce oil use over time, reliance on lithium, cobalt, nickel, copper, and rare earths may increase in the future.

fragmented energy market, India's edge lies not in self-sufficiency, but in optionality.

Factual gains and structural risks
India has managed successive shocks well. First, India's crude oil dependence is extremely high, reaching 88.4% in FY2024-25. During that period, India produced only 28.7 million metric tons of crude oil domestically. As a result, fluctuations in crude oil prices, freight rates, and currency exchange rates continue to be a concern.

Second, geography will constrain strategy. Significant reductions in flows along Gulf sea lanes occurred due to tensions in 2020, and Indian LPE carriers, carrying a combined cargo of 97,000 metric tonnes required naval escort under Operation Sankalp. Diversification cannot bypass chokepoints.

Third, the energy transition creates fresh vulnerabilities. India's expansion into solar, batteries, electric vehicles (EV), and storage may reduce oil use over time. However, the reliance on lithium, cobalt, nickel, copper, and rare earths may increase in the future.

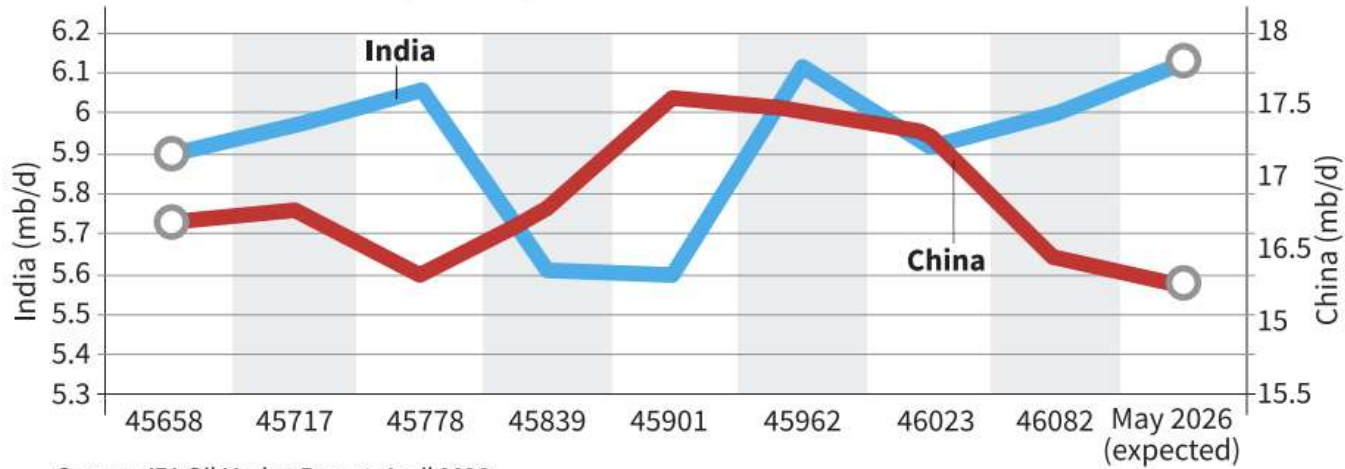
The way forward
India's dependence on critical minerals is tied to processing networks dominated elsewhere, especially by China, which controls over 80% of global rare-earth production, while India currently processes less than 5% of its projected 2035 battery-grade mineral requirements domestically. While India has adapted to the new oil order with considerable agility, having such tactical flexibility does not provide security in the long term.

The next phase must focus on increasing larger strategic reserves, reducing the oil intensity in transport, strengthening maritime resilience, and ensuring security for supply chains of critical minerals. The real question is no longer whether India can switch suppliers during crises, but whether future crises will carry lower economic costs when they occur. (Dhyanishu Mohan is professor and dean, O.P.J.S. Global University. He is a visiting professor at IIS and a visiting academic fellow at University of Oxford. Arjunima Subramaniam contributed to this column. Arjunima and Aditi Laxanas are both research analysts with Centre for New Economic Studies, O.P.J.S. Global University.)

Energy requirements

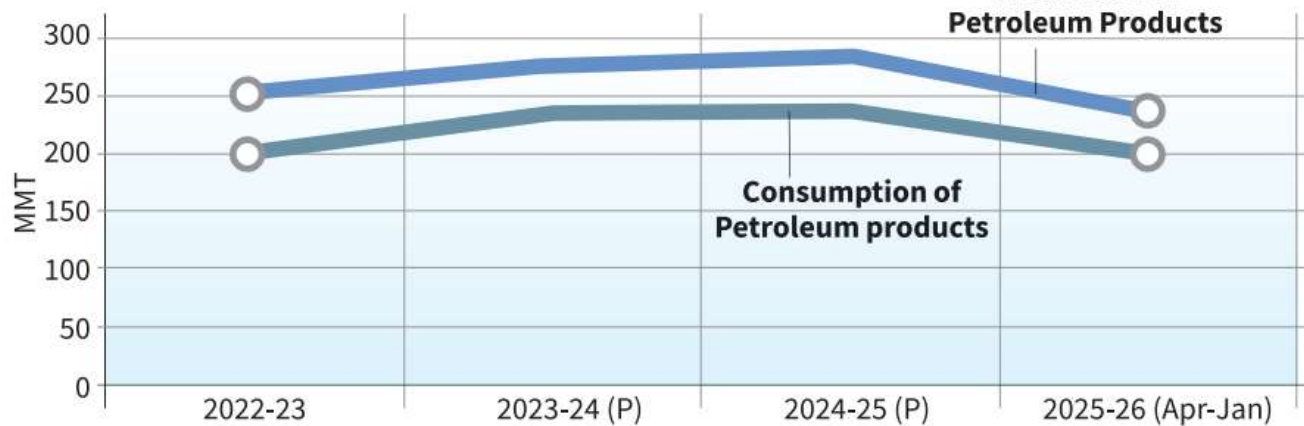
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India and China oil demand (2025-26)



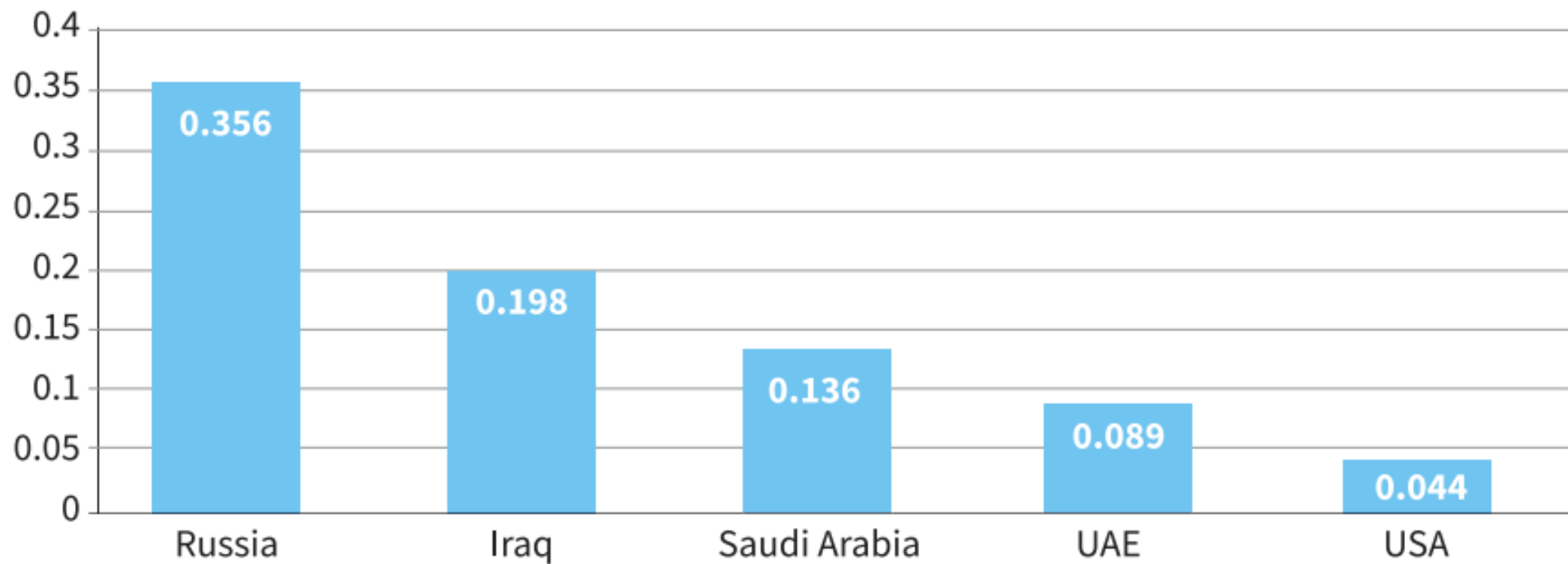
Source: IEA Oil Market Report, April 2026

India: Production Vs consumption of petroleum products (MMT)



Source: PPAC Monthly Ready Reckoner, January 2026

India's FY2024-25 Crude import shares: Top 5 sources



Source: DGCI & S data

EXPLAINER

**Deepanku Mohan
Aditi Lazarus**

The conflict in West Asia has demonstrated the speed with which geopolitical shocks have been transmitted to India's domestic economy. The head of the International Energy Agency has described the current geopolitical crisis as more severe than the combined shocks of 1973, 1979 and 2002.

The price of Brent crude oil rose to \$109.03 per barrel after hitting highs of around \$120 during the conflict. At a domestic level, India is projected to see its economy slow from 7.4% growth in FY26 to 6.3% in FY27 with a projected increase in inflation from 2.3% to 4.4% due to the impact of disruptions observed in the energy supply chains.

Energy security can no longer be defined solely as purchasing fuel at the lowest possible price. It now rests on resilience, diversification, and protection of macroeconomic stability.

Breakdown of the old energy market order

The Russia-Ukraine War was the first major warning to the pre-existing energy market order. It exposed the perils of energy dependence overnight.

Europe once relied on Russia for 45% of its gas imports. By 2025, that had fallen to 12%. Europe did not respond by chasing efficiency, it did so by buying insurance. Gas consumption by European Union (EU) countries fell by 20% between 2021 and 2024, while the combined imports of gas and liquefied natural gas (LNG) declined by 38%.

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Other powers have adapted differently. China has locked in nearly 25 million metric tons of LNG per year through contracts. South Korea has secured 273 million barrels of crude oil that will transit from outside the Strait of Hormuz, while Japan has stockpiled 470 million barrels, which is equivalent to 254 days of consumption.

Gulf shore exporters have regained much of their bargaining power due to spare capacity. The International Energy Agency (IEA) forecasts a contraction of 80 kb/d in the global demand for oil on average in 2026, with a decrease of 236 kb/d for OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) and 254 kb/d for Middle East, while non-OECD demand still rises 152 kb/d. In this weaker market, India's demand growth becomes strategically valuable.

How India gained more room to manoeuvre

The potential threat of disruption of the Indian oil imports is real and immediate, since the country imports over 85% of its crude needs, with roughly 45% of its imports transiting through the Strait of Hormuz.

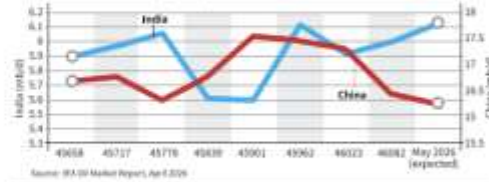


Navigating the crisis: An Indian-flagged tanker carrying crude oil that transited through the Strait of Hormuz, is seen docked in Mumbai. AP

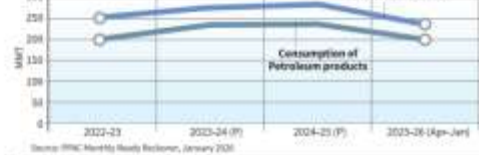
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India: Production Vs consumption of petroleum products (MMT)



India's FY2024-25 Crude import shares: Top 5 sources



For years, India has depended heavily on imports. But the country has handled repeated shocks better than many comparable importers. It is now the world's third-largest oil consumer.

According to OPIC's forecast, India's consumption is expected to reach 5.74 million barrels per day (mmb/d) in 2025 and 5.99 mmb/d in 2026, while the IEA projects that Indian crude demand will rise approximately 130 kb/d, compared with 80 kb/d for China.

As Chinese demand becomes flatter

and more cyclical, India has become one of the few large engines of incremental oil demand.

Before 2022, Russia supplied barely 2% of India's crude imports, however, by FY2024-25, that figure was around 36%, making Russia India's largest supplier. Flows from Russia picked up again as Gulf disruptions intensified.

Now, India's import basket also includes countries such as Iraq, Saudi Arabia, UAE, and the United States, while remaining geographically diversified. In a

fragmented energy market, India's edge lies not in self-sufficiency, but in optionality.

Tactical gains and structural risks

India has managed successive shocks well. First, India's crude oil dependence is extremely high, reaching 85.4% in FY2024-25. During that period, India produced only 28.7 million metric tons of crude oil domestically. As a result, fluctuations in crude oil prices, freight rates, and currency exchange rates continue to be a concern.

Second, geography still constrains strategy. Significant reductions in flows along Gulf sea lanes occurred due to tensions in 2024, and Indian LPG carriers, carrying a combined cargo of 93,000 metric tonnes required naval escort under Operation Sankalp. Diversification cannot bypass chokepoints.

Third, the energy transition creates fresh vulnerabilities. India's expansion into solar, batteries, electric vehicles (EV), and storage may reduce oil use over time. However, the reliance on lithium, cobalt, nickel, copper, and rare earths may increase in the future.

The way forward

India's dependence on critical minerals is tied to processing networks dominated elsewhere, especially by China, which controls over 98% of global rare-earth production, while India currently processes less than 3% of its projected 2035 battery-grade mineral requirements domestically. While India has adapted to the new oil order with considerable agility, having such tactical flexibility does not provide security in the long-term.

The next phase must focus on increasing larger strategic reserves, reducing the oil intensity in transport, strengthening maritime resilience, and ensuring security for supply chains of critical minerals. The real question is no longer whether India can switch suppliers during crises, but whether future crises will carry lower economic costs when they occur.

(Deepanku Mohan is professor and dean, O.P. Jindal Global University. He is a visiting professor at LSE and a visiting academic fellow at University of Oxford. Sriyaniya Subramanian contributed to this column. Sriyaniya and Aditi Lazarus are both research analysts with Centre for New Economic Studies, O.P. Jindal Global University)

THE GIST

India has long relied on crude oil imports but has handled repeated geopolitical shocks better than many comparable importers.

Its import basket—spanning Iraq, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Russia, and the United States, remains geographically diversified.

While expansion into solar, batteries, and EVs may reduce oil use over time, reliance on lithium, cobalt, nickel, copper, and rare earths may increase in the future.

Who gets to be called 'Hon'ble' and 'Mr'? Allahabad High Court clarifies

Bhupendra Pandey
Lucknow, May 5

A MONTH after taking exception to the Uttar Pradesh Police not inserting honorifics like 'Hon'ble' or 'Mr' before the name of BJP MP Anurag Thakur in an FIR, the division bench of Allahabad High Court, in an order, has laid down who gets to be addressed this way.

"Ministers of the Central and State Governments; Judges of the Supreme Court and the High Courts; the Speaker; the Chairman of the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha, respectively; and likewise of the State Legislative Assemblies; the Members of Parliament and the State Legislative Assemblies are entitled to the use of this honorific," the division bench of Justices JJ Munir and Tarun Saxena observed while hearing the matter on April 30. The order was uploaded on May 4.

It observed that there could be other functionaries who, as per protocol, are entitled to the usage. "Whosoever is entitled to the use of this honorific has to be addressed likewise."

The bench further observed, "It is to be noted that the honorific 'Hon'ble' is to be appended to the names of constitutional functionaries who exercise sovereign functions of any of the three organs of the Government..." But it said no functionary, however high, who is a civil servant and "not the holder of a sovereign constitutional office, is entitled to use" it.

"Personal disgruntlement or familiarity with a family, who is entitled to an honorific, cannot permit the author of any communication to refer to a sovereign functionary of the Government... without it. This part of the matter stands closed," observed the court.



BJP MP Anurag Thakur

During the earlier hearing, the court had directed the Additional Chief Secretary, Home Department, to file an affidavit explaining the reason behind police not abiding by the protocol in using honorifics.

The court took note of the affidavit on April 30, which stated that the complaint — typed in Hindi and on the basis of which the FIR was registered — was produced by the complainant, Khajan Singh, and was reproduced in the FIR verbatim.

The affidavit further stated that after the court's March 31 order, directions were issued to the Mathura Senior Superintendent of Police on April 2 to initiate a preliminary inquiry regarding name and honorifics for the former Union Minister.

Thakur was a minister of sports, youth affairs, and Information and Broadcasting in the second Modi government.

The affidavit also stated that the complainant said he was unaware of the protocol regarding use of honorifics for MPs or former Union Ministers. Anurag Thakur is an Hon'ble Member of Parliament and is entitled to the honorific, it stated. The court has listed the matter for hearing next on May 11.

Case Context	FIR filed without using honorifics for BJP MP Anurag Thakur
Court	Allahabad High Court
Bench	Justice JJ Munir & Justice Tarun Saxena
Date of Observation	April 30 (Order uploaded May 4)
Key Issue	Who is entitled to use honorifics like 'Hon'ble'
Trigger	Uttar Pradesh Police not using 'Hon'ble' or 'Mr.' in FIR

Who Can Use 'Hon'ble' (As per Court)

Category	Entitled?	Explanation
Ministers (Centre/State)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	Exercise executive power
Judges (SC/HC)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	Exercise judicial power
Speaker / Chairman (Lok Sabha/Rajya Sabha)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	Constitutional authority
MPs & MLAs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	Sovereign legislative function
Other constitutional authorities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	If exercising sovereign function
Civil servants (IAS/IPS etc.)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	Not holders of sovereign constitutional office

Principle	Explanation
Sovereign Function Doctrine	Only those exercising power of State (Executive, Legislature, Judiciary) get such recognition
Constitutional Status vs Administrative Role	Constitutional posts > Bureaucratic posts
Protocol Norms	Based on Government of India Warrant of Precedence
Respect in Official Communication	Mandatory for constitutional functionaries



Court Observations (Important Lines)

- "Whosoever is entitled to the use of this honorific has to be addressed likewise."
- Honorific '**Hon'ble**' applies only to constitutional functionaries.
- **Civil servants are NOT entitled**, even if holding high office.
- Personal ignorance **cannot justify violation of protocol**.

'Ecocide': Where international law stands in tackling war toll on environment

Bhaskar Sarma

New Delhi, May 5

A RECENT report by Lebanon accused Israel's military of committing "ecocide" during its 2023-24 invasion of southern Lebanon and reshaping both its "physical and ecological landscape".

Earlier, Iran's foreign minister said Israel's bombings of fuel depots in Tehran, which led to "black rain", violated international law and constituted "ecocide".

Researchers and environmental organisations have invoked the same term to describe the effects of Israel's war on Gaza.

Environmental groups have called for the inclusion of 'ecocide' as an international crime under the Rome Statute that governs the International Criminal Court (ICC).

What is ecocide?

Ecocide refers to the worst harms caused to the environment by human actions, usually on a major scale or affecting a huge area. The term was coined in 1970 by

Prof Arthur W Galston, a Yale plant biologist whose early research contributed to the development of the herbicide Agent Orange, which the US Army used to devastating effect in the Vietnam War. Galston used 'ecocide' to describe the massive, long-term environmental devastation particularly caused by the herbicide's use.

Two years later, at the UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm, Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme used the term in context of the Vietnam War.

Indeed, Vietnam became the world's first country to codify ecocide in its domestic law in 1990. Since then, the use of the term has become more widespread, with many countries — such as Russia, Ukraine, Chile, France and Belgium — incorporating ecocide (or its equivalent) into their laws.

How does 'ecocide' differ from provisions in international law?

Many international conventions and statutes deal with widespread environmental damage, even if they don't ex-

plicitly mention 'ecocide'.

For instance, under the Rome Statute, it is a war crime to intentionally launch a disproportionate attack knowing that it will cause "widespread, long-term and severe" damage to the natural environment that directly impacts humans, such as causing displacement, inflicting great suffering or injury on victims, or causing death.

The Geneva Conventions, which establish standards for treatment of non-combatants, require that warring parties not use methods of warfare that cause "widespread, long-term and severe damage to the natural environment".

The widely adopted Environmental Modification Convention (ENMOD), in force since 1978, prohibits the deliberate manipulation of natural processes when it causes "widespread, long-lasting or severe effects".

So how does 'ecocide' differ from the present international law framework? Delhi-based senior advocate Avi Singh, who has extensive experience in international criminal law, told *The Indian Express*

that the difference is in the focus. "The laws we have are anthropocentric. They put human beings at the centre of harm, while ecocide puts the environment as a separate entity that is being damaged."

Where do current laws stand?

The Rome Statute recognises four serious crimes — the crime of genocide; crimes against humanity; war crimes; and the crime of aggression. It classifies serious damage to the environment under 'war crimes' — meaning it would be considered only during war.

Another hurdle is jurisdiction. Iran and Lebanon, for instance, are not State Parties to the ICC, which could complicate the prosecution pathway, pointed out Mrinalini Shinde, Visiting Lecturer of International Environmental Law at the University of Cologne, Germany. ICC jurisdiction, however, could still arise through a UN Security Council referral or ad hoc acceptance.

One more issue is criminalisation. Most existing international instruments do not

establish enforceable international criminal liability for environmental destruction.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), a global body on environmental policy, limited itself to "recognising the crime of ecocide" in October 2025. "It will hopefully encourage more States Parties to push for inclusion of the crime domestically and within international law," said Shinde.

This is what is behind the advocacy to include 'ecocide' as an international crime in the Rome Statute.

Inclusion, however, is easier said than done. "For inclusion into the Rome Statute, a State Party to the Rome Statute would introduce the amendment of the Statute at the Assembly of States Parties, and would require 2/3rds majority of States Parties to be successful. There will be further conditions for such an amendment to come into effect," said Shinde.

What's the enforcement challenge?

The Council of Europe adopted the

Convention on the Protection of the Environment through Criminal Law in 2025. This is the first legally binding international treaty to criminalise severe and large-scale environmental destruction — "conduct that many term ecocide", it says.

Under this convention, even acts committed abroad can be prosecuted in European domestic courts.

"There is universal criminal jurisdiction for crimes against humanity. With this, there is a potential to bring actions in domestic criminal law irrespective of where the event happens," said Singh. "For instance, if whoever is committing an environmental crime travels to Europe, then somebody can bring a criminal action against them, saying that they have committed ecocide, and they should now be criminally charged and tried."

According to both Singh and Shinde, however, no direct prosecution has ever been launched over environmental destruction caused by war.

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Aspect	Details
Meaning of Ecocide	Severe, widespread, long-term environmental destruction caused by human actions
Origin of Term	Coined by Arthur W. Galston (Vietnam War context – Agent Orange)
Nature	Proposed 5th international crime
Focus Shift	From human-centric harm → environment-centric harm

Current Status in International Law

Framework	Provision	Status
Rome Statute (ICC)	Genocide, Crimes against Humanity, War Crimes, Aggression	✗ Ecocide NOT included
War Crimes (Rome Statute)	Environmental damage during war	Limited scope
Geneva Conventions	Prohibit warfare causing severe environmental damage	Indirect protection
ENMOD Convention (1976)	Bans environmental modification causing harm	Narrow scope

Definition Under Debate

Feature	Explanation
Scale	Widespread
Duration	Long-term
Severity	Severe environmental damage
Intent	Often includes reckless or intentional acts

Countries Recognising Ecocide (Added Value)

Country	Status
Vietnam	First to codify (1990)
France	Recognised in domestic law
Belgium	Incorporated
Chile	Incorporated
Ukraine, Russia	Recognised in legal framework

Challenge	Explanation
No Global Recognition	Not yet part of ICC crimes
Jurisdiction Issues	ICC applies only to member states
Proof Complexity	Difficult to prove "intent + scale"
Political Resistance	Powerful states reluctant
War vs Peace Scope	Mostly limited to wartime laws

Where Current Laws Fall Short

Issue	Gap
Environmental harm in peace time	✗ Not covered adequately
Independent environmental crime	✗ Not recognised
Accountability of states & corporations	Weak
Enforcement mechanism	Limited

Key Institutional Developments

Institution	Role
International Criminal Court (ICC)	Can include ecocide via amendment
IUCN (2025)	Recognised ecocide concept
UN Bodies	Advocacy for inclusion
Council of Europe (2025)	Treaty on environmental crimes

New Legal Developments (VERY IMPORTANT)

Development	Details
Council of Europe Convention (2025)	First binding treaty criminalising severe environmental damage
Universal Jurisdiction Concept	Crimes can be tried even outside country
Domestic Courts Role	Can prosecute environmental crimes internationally

● POLICY

Why UP stepped back from mandatory prepaid smart meters

Maulshree Seth
Lucknow, May 5

FACING protests, the Uttar Pradesh government on Monday stepped back from its push for mandatory prepaid smart electricity meters. The decision is seen as the result of several factors: protests, regulatory push-back, shifting policy signals from the Centre, and political calculations ahead of next year's Assembly elections.

Why the policy was brought

The policy was initially aimed at improving billing efficiency and reducing losses. Sources said that the state's aggressive rollout of prepaid smart meters over the past year-and-a-half was rooted in its interpretation of the Central Electricity Authority's (CEA) 2022 regulation notification.

According to Avadhesh Verma, Chairman of Uttar Pradesh Electricity Consumers Forum and a member of the Central Electricity Advisory Committee, the move can be traced to clause 3(b) of the notification. It said consumers in areas with communication networks "shall" be supplied electricity through smart meters op-

erating in prepayment mode.

Verma said the government interpreted this as a mandate, and began rolling out prepaid smart meters as the default for new connections and converting existing consumers. About 85 lakh smart meters have been installed so far, but implementation quickly ran into friction.

Why it ran into trouble

The rollout triggered protests across districts. Consumer complaints ranged from higher or inconsistent billing to automatic disconnections and a lack of transparency in prepaid deductions. The state initially dismissed the concerns as being fuelled by misinformation and political motives.

As protests continued, the government held review meetings and issued directions to resolve issues. The Uttar Pradesh Electricity Regulatory Commission (UPERC) also took suo motu cognizance. In some instances, consumers removed or damaged the installed meters.

"At the heart of the controversy was the issue of consumer choice. Under the Electricity Act framework, consumers are generally entitled to opt between prepaid and

Shock to consumers

● The policy was initially aimed at improving billing efficiency and reducing losses.

● But the rollout led to complaints ranging from higher billing to automatic disconnections.

● Prepaid smart meters also led to protests in Gujarat and Rajasthan in 2024 and 2025, respectively. The issues were similar: implementation, consent and fears of power cuts once the balance ran out.

postpaid systems. The state's attempt to enforce prepaid meters — especially for new connections — without explicit consent became a central point of contention, strengthening both protests and regulatory objections," said Verma.

The government first announced a temporary halt to the conversion of existing postpaid meters into prepaid smart meters, but protests continued. Meanwhile, Union Power Minister Manohar Lal Khattar clarified in Parliament last month that prepaid smart meters are not mandatory, undercutting the interpretation that had driven Uttar Pradesh's policy.

Subsequently, the CEA issued a fresh amendment in its 2026 gazette notification, revising the earlier provision. The amended clause removed the explicit requirement of "prepayment mode", while allowing flexibility in implementation.

Adding to the pressure, the UPERC also intervened by flagging concerns and seeking explanations from the state power utility. In a separate notice, UPERC pointed out non-compliance with standards related to the timely reconnection of supply in prepaid systems, even raising the possibility of penalties.

In its April 23 order, it noted that reconnections within the mandated two-hour window were achieved in only 77% of cases, far below the 95% benchmark, and questioned why a Rs 1 lakh per day penalty should not be imposed on the Uttar Pradesh Power Corporation Ltd.

According to government sources, these developments prompted a course correction before any adverse direction from regulatory authorities or courts could come. The government began recalibrating its approach in two phases, on April 19 and 24. It first introduced immediate relief measures, including a limited pause in disconnections. SMS alerts were made mandatory, giving consumers time to respond.

Politics in an election year

The timing of the rollback is also significant. With state elections due next year, the issue had begun to gain political traction.

Ultimately, the decision does not end the smart metering programme, but removes the mandatory prepaid billing aspect. The broader challenge for the government now lies in ensuring accurate billing, reliable systems and responsive grievance redressal.

Core Issue

Aspect	Details
State	Uttar Pradesh
Policy	Mandatory prepaid smart electricity meters
Decision	Rollback of <i>mandatory prepaid condition</i>
Reason	Protests + regulatory pushback + political factors

Objective of Policy

Objective	Explanation
Improve billing efficiency	Reduce manual errors
Reduce AT&C losses	Control theft & leakage
Ensure timely payments	Prepaid ensures advance payment
Digitisation of power sector	Smart grid integration

⚠️ Why Policy Failed (Critical for Exam)

Issue	Explanation
Consumer protests	Widespread dissatisfaction
Higher billing complaints	Perceived increase in electricity bills
Lack of transparency	Confusion in deductions
Automatic disconnection	When balance exhausted
Consent issue	Consumers forced into prepaid system
Implementation gaps	Poor grievance redressal

🔍 Regulatory & Legal Factors

Authority	Role
Central Electricity Authority (CEA)	Issued 2022 guidelines (misinterpreted as mandatory)
UPERC	Raised compliance issues, reconnection delays
Union Power Ministry	Clarified prepaid meters are NOT mandatory
Gazette Amendment (2026)	Removed compulsory "prepayment mode"



Key Policy Correction Steps

Step	Details
Temporary halt	Stopped conversion of postpaid to prepaid
Phased recalibration	Policy adjustments in April
Consumer relief	SMS alerts, pause on disconnections
Flexibility introduced	No forced prepaid system

Impact on Consumers

Positive	Negative
Better awareness	Billing confusion
Digital tracking	Fear of disconnection
Energy monitoring	Higher upfront payments
Efficient usage	Lack of trust

Implementation Data (Important)

Indicator	Data
Smart meters installed	~85 lakh
Reconnection compliance	Only 77% (below 95% benchmark)
Penalty issue	₹1 lakh/day penalty questioned

Comparative State Experience

State	Issue
Gujarat	Similar protests
Rajasthan	Billing & implementation issues
Common problem	Consent + transparency + fear of outages

Word of the day

Astute:

marked by practical hardheaded intelligence

Synonyms: sharp, shrewd

Usage: *The minister's astute handling of the crisis helped avert further unrest.*

Pronunciation: newsth.live/ydo2E8/astute

International Phonetic

Alphabet: /ə'stju:t/



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