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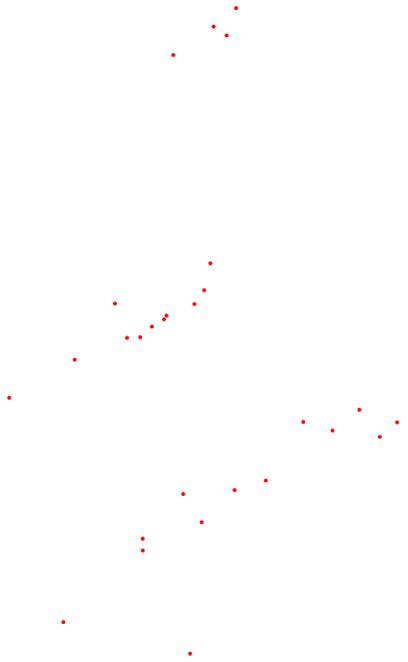
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3
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10 MCQ QUIZ

- “Strength does not come from physical capacity. It comes from an indomitable will.”



U.S. 'allows' India to buy Russian oil for 30 days

Oil from Russia may no longer be available at a discount, with Beijing competing for supplies

India has 25 days of crude oil in reserve, and 25 days of petrol and diesel each, sources say

Global oil supplies are currently constrained due to Iran's blockade of the Strait of Hormuz

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
Saptaparno Ghosh
NEW DELHI

The U.S. Treasury Department on Friday issued an order that would "allow" India to import Russian oil for 30 days, U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said while sharing the order on X.

Analysts say this will help mitigate the spike in the price of oil and delays in oil shipments to import-dependent India.

However, government sources confirmed that Russian oil may no longer come at a discount and that China was also competing for it. The government is currently studying the legal order, they added.

Mr. Bessent said the U.S. was granting India this reprieve to "alleviate pressure caused by Iran's attempt to take global energy hostage".

"This deliberately short-

term measure will not provide significant financial benefit to the Russian government as it only authorises transactions involving oil already stranded at sea," Mr. Bessent said.

The price of Brent crude has increased to nearly \$88 a barrel, a jump of about 20% in a week.

Global oil supplies are currently constrained due to Iran's blockade of the Strait of Hormuz and tankers avoiding the region due to the conflict.

This comes at a time when the Indian government has made assurances that the country has adequate amounts of crude oil, petrol and diesel in reserve. According to sources, India currently has 25 days of crude oil in reserve, and 25 days of petrol and diesel each.

Current status

A previous analysis by *The Hindu* of the latest preliminary data from the Ministry of Commerce and

Congress slams Centre over U.S. remarks

NEW DELHI

Criticising the Centre over U.S. remarks, the Congress on Friday said it is "deeply humiliating for India's sovereignty". Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, in a post on X, alleged that India's strategic autonomy and national sovereignty are under dire threat "because PM [Narendra Modi] is getting blackmailed on Epstein files and Adani case". » PAGE 5

Industry shows that India imported \$1.98 billion worth of crude oil from Russia in January 2026, the month before India and the U.S. issued a joint statement about an interim trade agreement between the two countries. This was the lowest in 44 months.

As a result of this, Russia's share in Indian oil im-



ports fell to 19.3% in January 2026, the lowest since December 2022. In comparison, Russia's share was 27.5% two months earlier, and 33% in May 2025.

"Considering more than 55% of India's oil imports pass through the Strait of Hormuz, elevated price and delays will stretch India's oil bill (\$11.5bn/month) unless India ramps

up imports from Russia (19% currently versus 43% in July 2024)," JM Financial Services said in a note.

It added that, in the "extreme" scenario of Brent crude prices breaching the \$90 per barrel mark, India's current account deficit (CAD) could stretch to 1.4% of GDP, and the rupee could depreciate to ₹95 per U.S. dollar.

Consumers told to use cooking fuel judiciously

CHENNAI

With restrictions placed on LPG supplies for both domestic and commercial consumers, the public has been advised to use the fuel judiciously. Single bottle domestic consumers will be allowed to make fresh bookings only after 21 days from the date of last booking. Commercial consumers using 19 kg cylinders were told they will not be given supplies, sources said. » PAGE 11

Moody's also pointed out that India stands out among the large Asian economies that rely on crude and LNG from West Asia East due to its high share of West Asian crude among total oil imports, and pressure from the U.S. to cut its energy imports from Russia.

"Costly energy imports would weaken the rupee,

raise inflation, worsen the current account balance and complicate monetary policy as well as fiscal management if they lead to expanded subsidies to help offset the economic shock," Moody's said.

The sources in the government, however, said that Indian refiners have sourced more crude stocks from other parts of the world than what is currently stuck in the Strait of Hormuz.

In his post, Mr. Bessent further said that "India is an essential partner of the United States", and that the U.S. anticipates that India will "ramp up" purchases of U.S. oil.

Data show that India has been increasing its imports from the U.S. over the past few months. That is, India imported \$11.6 billion worth of crude oil from the U.S. between April 2025 and January 2026, which is 32% higher than in the same period of the previous financial year.

1. Core Development / मुख्य घटना

- The U.S. Treasury Department has allowed India to import Russian oil for **30 days as a temporary waiver** to stabilize global energy supply. / अमेरिकी ट्रेजरी विभाग ने **30 दिनों के लिए भारत को रूसी तेल आयात की अस्थायी अनुमति दी है** ताकि वैश्विक ऊर्जा आपूर्ति स्थिर रह सके।
 - This waiver applies mainly to oil shipments **already loaded on ships before sanctions restrictions.** / यह छूट मुख्यतः उन तेल खेपों पर लागू होती है जो प्रतिबंधों से पहले जहाज़ों पर लदी हुई थीं।
 - The step aims to **reduce global oil supply shocks and avoid sudden price spikes.** / इस कदम का उद्देश्य वैश्विक तेल आपूर्ति में झटके और अचानक कीमतों में वृद्धि को रोकना है।
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2. India's Oil Security Situation / भारत की तेल सुरक्षा स्थिति

- India has about **25 days of crude oil reserve and 25 days of petrol and diesel stock**, according to the report. / रिपोर्ट के अनुसार भारत के पास लगभग **25 दिन का कच्चे तेल का भंडार और 25 दिन का पेट्रोल-डीजल स्टॉक** उपलब्ध है।
- In total, India currently has **around 50 days of fuel availability in stock.** / कुल मिलाकर भारत के पास लगभग **50 दिनों का ईंधन भंडार** उपलब्ध है।
- Shipments from Russia usually take **25–40 days to reach India.** / रूस से भारत तक तेल की खेप आने में सामान्यतः **25–40 दिन** लगते हैं।

3. Global Oil Supply Crisis / वैश्विक तेल आपूर्ति संकट

- Global oil supply is currently constrained due to **tensions around the Strait of Hormuz**. / वैश्विक तेल आपूर्ति इस समय **हॉर्मुज़ जलडमरूमध्य के आसपास तनाव** के कारण प्रभावित है।
 - Around **20–25% of the world's seaborne oil trade passes through the Strait of Hormuz**. / विश्व के समुद्री तेल व्यापार का लगभग **20–25% हॉर्मुज़ जलडमरूमध्य से होकर गुजरता है**।
 - Any disruption in this region can significantly **increase global oil prices**. / इस क्षेत्र में किसी भी बाधा से वैश्विक तेल कीमतों में तेज वृद्धि हो सकती है।
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4. Russia–India Energy Trade / रूस-भारत ऊर्जा व्यापार

- After the **Russia-Ukraine war in 2022**, India increased its purchase of discounted Russian crude oil. / **2022 के रूस-यूक्रेन युद्ध के बाद** भारत ने रियायती रूसी कच्चे तेल की खरीद बढ़ाई।
- Russia became **one of the largest suppliers of crude oil to India**. / रूस भारत के लिए सबसे बड़े कच्चे तेल आपूर्तिकर्ताओं में से एक बन गया।
- However, discounts on Russian oil may reduce as **China and other Asian buyers compete for supply**. / हालांकि रूसी तेल पर छूट कम हो सकती है क्योंकि चीन और अन्य एशियाई देश आपूर्ति के लिए प्रतिस्पर्धा कर रहे हैं।

5. Economic Impact on India / भारत पर आर्थिक प्रभाव

- Rising crude oil prices can increase India's import bill. / कच्चे तेल की कीमत बढ़ने से भारत का आयात बिल बढ़ सकता है।
 - Higher oil prices may lead to inflation and higher fuel costs. / अधिक तेल कीमतें मुद्रास्फीति और ईंधन लागत में वृद्धि कर सकती हैं।
 - It may also weaken the Indian rupee and widen the current account deficit. / इससे भारतीय रुपये पर दबाव और चालू खाता घाटा बढ़ सकता है।
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6. Strategic Importance of Strait of Hormuz / हॉर्मुज़ जलडमरूमध्य का रणनीतिक महत्व

- The Strait of Hormuz connects the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and Arabian Sea. / हॉर्मुज़ जलडमरूमध्य फारस की खाड़ी को ओमान की खाड़ी और अरब सागर से जोड़ता है।
- It lies between Iran in the north and Oman/UAE in the south. / यह उत्तर में ईरान और दक्षिण में ओमान/यूएई के बीच स्थित है।
- It is considered the most important oil chokepoint in the world. / इसे विश्व का सबसे महत्वपूर्ण तेल परिवहन chokepoint माना जाता है।

7. India's Strategic Petroleum Reserves / भारत के रणनीतिक पेट्रोलियम भंडार

- India maintains strategic petroleum reserves at **Visakhapatnam, Mangaluru and Padur**. / भारत के रणनीतिक पेट्रोलियम भंडार विशाखापत्तनम, मंगलुरु और पादुर में स्थित हैं।
 - These reserves help the country **handle temporary disruptions in global oil supply**. / ये भंडार वैश्विक तेल आपूर्ति में अस्थायी बाधाओं से निपटने में मदद करते हैं।
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8. Political and Diplomatic Significance / राजनीतिक और कूटनीतिक महत्व

- The U.S. waiver reflects **flexibility in sanctions policy to stabilize global markets**. / यह अमेरिकी छूट वैश्विक बाजार स्थिर रखने के लिए प्रतिबंध नीति में लचीलापन दर्शाती है।
- India continues to follow a **strategic autonomy approach in foreign policy**. / भारत अपनी विदेश नीति में रणनीतिक स्वायत्तता की नीति अपनाता रहा है।

Fact

World's major oil chokepoint

Location

Connects

Share of global oil trade

Major Asian importers affected

India strategic reserves locations

Russia-Ukraine war impact

Detail

Strait of Hormuz

Between Iran and Oman

Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman

About 20–25%

India, China, Japan, South Korea

Visakhapatnam, Mangaluru, Padur

Increased Russian oil exports to Asia

Consider the following statements regarding the Strait of Hormuz:

1. It connects the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman.
2. It lies between Iran and Oman.
3. More than one-fifth of global oil trade passes through this route.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Centre directs refiners to maximise LPG production

Govt. invokes Essential Commodities Act, tells oil companies to prioritise domestic supply; order seeks to re-prioritise allocation of propane, butane streams for cooking gas production

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI/CHENNAI

Despite assuring Indians that the country has “comfortable” stocks of crude, diesel, petrol and LPG, the Centre on Wednesday invoked the Essential Commodities Act (ECA), 1955, directing domestic oil refiners to prioritise the production of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) — a tacit admission that there are supply bottlenecks that could affect distribution in the near future.

The order issued on Wednesday read: “All oil refining companies operating in India shall maximise and ensure that propane and butane streams produced, recovered, fractionated or otherwise available with them are utilised for production of LPG and make it available to the three public sector oil marketing companies.”

The order said that all public sector oil marketing



Allaying concerns: IOCL issued a statement seeking to reassure consumers that the country has adequate reserves. FILE PHOTO

companies (OMCs) shall ensure that LPG so produced is supplied or marketed solely to consumers of domestic LPG.

The order further states that oil refining companies “shall not divert, utilise, process, crack, convert or otherwise employ propane or butane streams for manufacture of petrochemical products or other such downstream derivatives.”

The cooking fuel is formed from a combination of propane and bu-

tane and liquefied under pressure. It may contain trace quantities of higher hydrocarbons as well.

“LPG is largely a mixture of propane and butane. These gases are found along with natural gas, but are also produced in the crude oil refining process. The refining process can be tweaked to increase the butane-propane content of the output and rebalance the other output products, thereby boosting the production of

liquefied petroleum gas for use as cooking fuel,” said Prashant Vasisht, Senior Vice-President at ICRA.

Mr. Vasisht added that the government is prioritising the availability of LPG for household cooking gas use rather than supplying it to vehicles or commercial establishments.

Some 60% of India’s LPG is imported, much of it from Persian Gulf countries such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar. With the Strait of Hormuz closed since March 1, LPG imports have been badly hit. OMCs such as Indian Oil Corporation and Bharat Petroleum Corporation produce roughly 40% of India’s LPG requirement domestically.

The fuel is then bottled and distributed across the country.

Separately, IOCL issued a statement seeking to reassure consumers that the country has adequate reserves, dismissing social media chatter about a “fuel shortage” as “rumours”.

1. Core Development / मुख्य घटना

- The Government of India has directed oil refineries to **maximise LPG production** to ensure adequate domestic cooking gas supply. / भारत सरकार ने तेल रिफाइनरियों को **LPG उत्पादन अधिकतम करने का निर्देश दिया है** ताकि घरेलू रसोई गैस की पर्याप्त आपूर्ति सुनिश्चित हो सके।
 - The order was issued by invoking the **Essential Commodities Act (ECA), 1955**. / यह आदेश **आवश्यक वस्तु अधिनियम (Essential Commodities Act), 1955** के तहत जारी किया गया।
 - The government has instructed refineries to **prioritise domestic LPG supply over other petrochemical uses**. / सरकार ने रिफाइनरियों को **अन्य पेट्रोकेमिकल उपयोगों की बजाय घरेलू LPG आपूर्ति को प्राथमिकता देने का निर्देश दिया है**।
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2. Reason for the Decision / निर्णय का कारण

- The step was taken amid concerns of **possible supply bottlenecks due to disruptions in global energy routes**. / यह कदम **वैश्विक ऊर्जा आपूर्ति मार्गों में बाधा के कारण संभावित आपूर्ति संकट की आशंका के बीच** उठाया गया।
- The crisis is linked to tensions around the **Strait of Hormuz**, a major oil and gas shipping route. / यह संकट **हॉर्मुज़ जलडमरूमध्य के आसपास तनाव से जुड़ा है, जो तेल और गैस का प्रमुख समुद्री मार्ग है**।
- A disruption in this route can affect LPG imports and domestic supply chains. / इस मार्ग में बाधा आने से **LPG आयात और घरेलू आपूर्ति श्रृंखला प्रभावित हो सकती है**।

3. Government Directions to Refineries / रिफाइनरियों के लिए सरकारी निर्देश

- All refineries must **maximise recovery of propane and butane streams** used to produce LPG. / सभी रिफाइनरियों को प्रोपेन और ब्यूटेन गैस की अधिकतम रिकवरी सुनिश्चित करनी होगी जो LPG बनाने में उपयोग होती है।
 - These gases should not be diverted to **petrochemical or industrial uses**. / इन गैसों को पेट्रोकेमिकल या औद्योगिक उपयोग में डायवर्ट नहीं किया जाएगा।
 - Oil companies must supply **LPG only for domestic cooking gas distribution**. / तेल कंपनियों को LPG केवल घरेलू रसोई गैस वितरण के लिए उपलब्ध करानी होगी।
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4. What LPG is Made Of / LPG किससे बनती है

- LPG mainly consists of a **mixture of propane and butane gases**. / LPG मुख्यतः प्रोपेन और ब्यूटेन गैसों का मिश्रण होती है।
 - These gases are produced during **natural gas processing and crude oil refining**. / ये गैसें प्राकृतिक गैस प्रसंस्करण और कच्चे तेल के रिफाइनिंग प्रक्रिया में उत्पन्न होती हैं।
 - The composition of refinery outputs can be adjusted to **increase LPG yield**. / रिफाइनिंग प्रक्रिया को समायोजित करके **LPG उत्पादन बढ़ाया जा सकता है**।
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5. LPG Supply Situation in India / भारत में LPG आपूर्ति की स्थिति

- Around **60% of India's LPG demand is met through imports.** / भारत की लगभग **60% LPG आवश्यकता** आयात से पूरी होती है।
 - Major import sources include **Saudi Arabia, Qatar and other Persian Gulf countries.** / प्रमुख आयात स्रोत सऊदी अरब, कतर और फारस की खाड़ी के देश हैं।
 - Domestic refineries produce about **40% of the LPG requirement.** / घरेलू रिफाइनरियाँ लगभग **40% LPG की** आवश्यकता पूरी करती हैं।
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6. Distribution of LPG in India / भारत में LPG वितरण

- LPG cylinders are distributed across India through **public sector oil marketing companies.** / भारत में LPG सिलेंडर सरकारी तेल विपणन कंपनियों के माध्यम से वितरित होते हैं।
- Major companies include **Indian Oil Corporation, Bharat Petroleum and Hindustan Petroleum.** / प्रमुख कंपनियों में इंडियन ऑयल कॉर्पोरेशन, भारत पेट्रोलियम और हिंदुस्तान पेट्रोलियम शामिल हैं।
- LPG is widely used for **household cooking under schemes like PM Ujjwala Yojana.** / LPG का उपयोग व्यापक रूप से प्रधानमंत्री उज्ज्वला योजना जैसी योजनाओं के तहत घरेलू खाना पकाने के लिए किया जाता है।

Fact

LPG Full Form

Main Components

Storage Method

Major LPG Import Region for India

Share of LPG imports in India

Domestic LPG production

Major Indian OMCs

Law invoked in news

Detail

Liquefied Petroleum Gas

Propane and Butane

Stored in liquid form under pressure

Persian Gulf

About 60%

About 40%

IOC, BPCL, HPCL

Essential Commodities Act, 1955

- Consider the following statements regarding LPG in India:
- LPG mainly consists of propane and butane gases.
- The Essential Commodities Act, 1955 allows the government to regulate production and distribution of essential goods.
- India produces more than 80% of its LPG domestically.
- Which of the statements given above are correct?
- (a) 1 only
- (b) 1 and 2 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Use cooking fuel judiciously, consumers told

Sangeetha Kandavel
Deepa H. Ramakrishnan
CHENNAI

With restrictions placed on liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) supplies for both domestic and commercial consumers from Thursday night, the public have been advised to use the fuel judiciously.

An oil industry source said single bottle domestic consumers will be allowed to make fresh bookings only after 21 days from the date of last booking and those with double bottles can book only after 30 days. "Consumers can book only using their registered mobile numbers and delivery will be done only if the OTP is given. These are steps to ensure the fuel is used judiciously," said a distributor.

Sources said commercial consumers using 19 kg cylinders were told they will not be given supplies. But after talks, existing customers were given a portion of their requirements.

"Private gas companies

do not have stock. We heard supplies to industrial consumers were being stopped," a source said.

Hoteliers in Tamil Nadu said this could cripple their business. They fear distributors may cite shortages to divert supplies to the black market or increase prices, raising operating costs for restaurants and hotels.

"They have slowed the supply of LPG for commercial purposes. From next week, we don't know how we will run our business. Distributors say they don't have any stock," said D. Sreenivasan, owner of the Sree Annapoorna Sree Gowrishankar Hotels, Coimbatore and Honorary President of Tamil Nadu Hotel Association.

"LPG is our primary fuel. Many who are working and living in hostels depend on restaurants for their day-to-day food. Even the hospital sector depends on us for food for patients," added Jegan Damodarasamy, CEO of Sree Annapoorna Sree Gowrishankar Hotels.

1. Main Development / मुख्य घटना

- Consumers have been advised to use cooking fuel (LPG) judiciously due to supply restrictions. / उपभोक्ताओं को आपूर्ति प्रतिबंधों के कारण रसोई गैस (LPG) का सावधानीपूर्वक उपयोग करने की सलाह दी गई है।
 - The restrictions apply to both domestic and commercial LPG consumers. / यह प्रतिबंध घरेलू और व्यावसायिक दोनों LPG उपभोक्ताओं पर लागू होते हैं।
 - The advisory aims to prevent shortages and manage limited supply efficiently. / इस सलाह का उद्देश्य संभावित कमी को रोकना और सीमित आपूर्ति का कुशल प्रबंधन करना है।
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2. New Booking Restrictions / नई बुकिंग संबंधी सीमाएँ

- Consumers with single LPG cylinder can book the next cylinder only after 21 days. / एक सिलेंडर वाले उपभोक्ता 21 दिन बाद ही अगली बुकिंग कर सकते हैं।
- Consumers with double cylinder connections can book the next refill only after 30 days. / दो सिलेंडर वाले उपभोक्ता 30 दिन बाद ही नई बुकिंग कर सकते हैं।
- LPG bookings will be accepted only through registered mobile numbers with OTP verification. / LPG बुकिंग केवल पंजीकृत मोबाइल नंबर और OTP सत्यापन के माध्यम से ही स्वीकार की जाएगी।

3. Restrictions on Commercial LPG / व्यावसायिक LPG पर प्रतिबंध

- Commercial consumers using 19 kg LPG cylinders initially faced supply stoppage. / 19 किलोग्राम LPG सिलेंडर का उपयोग करने वाले व्यावसायिक उपभोक्ताओं की आपूर्ति पहले रोक दी गई थी।
 - After discussions, some limited supply was allowed to existing commercial consumers. / बाद में बातचीत के बाद मौजूदा व्यावसायिक उपभोक्ताओं को सीमित आपूर्ति की अनुमति दी गई।
 - Restaurants and hotels fear that LPG shortage may affect business operations and increase costs. / होटल और रेस्तरां संचालकों को आशंका है कि LPG की कमी से व्यवसाय प्रभावित होगा और लागत बढ़ेगी।
-

4. Impact on Hospitality Sector / आतिथ्य क्षेत्र पर प्रभाव

- Hotels and restaurants depend heavily on LPG as their primary cooking fuel. / होटल और रेस्तरां मुख्य ईंधन के रूप में LPG पर निर्भर रहते हैं।
- Any disruption in LPG supply can affect food services, hostels, hospitals and catering businesses. / LPG आपूर्ति में बाधा से खाद्य सेवाएँ, हॉस्टल, अस्पताल और कैटरिंग व्यवसाय प्रभावित हो सकते हैं।
- Hospitality sector associations warned that prolonged shortages could cripple restaurant operations. / आतिथ्य क्षेत्र संगठनों ने चेतावनी दी कि लंबी अवधि की कमी रेस्तरां संचालन को प्रभावित कर सकती है।

5. Concerns of Black Marketing / कालाबाजारी की आशंका

- Some industry representatives fear distributors might **divert LPG supply to the black market.** / कुछ उद्योग प्रतिनिधियों को आशंका है कि वितरक **LPG आपूर्ति को कालाबाजारी की ओर मोड़ सकते हैं।**
 - Reduced supply could also lead to **price increases for commercial consumers.** / आपूर्ति कम होने से व्यावसायिक उपभोक्ताओं के लिए कीमतें बढ़ सकती हैं।
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6. Government's Objective / सरकार का उद्देश्य

- The government wants to **prioritise household cooking gas supply.** / सरकार घरेलू रसोई गैस आपूर्ति को प्राथमिकता देना चाहती है।
 - Measures are intended to **ensure equitable distribution and prevent panic buying.** / इन उपायों का उद्देश्य समान वितरण सुनिश्चित करना और घबराहट में खरीदारी रोकना है।
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Fact

LPG Full Form

Main Components

Domestic LPG Cylinder in India

Commercial LPG Cylinder

Major LPG distributors

Major LPG import region for India

Detail

Liquefied Petroleum Gas

Propane and Butane

14.2 kg

19 kg

IOC, BPCL, HPCL

Persian Gulf

- Consider the following statements regarding LPG distribution in India:
- Domestic LPG cylinders in India generally weigh 14.2 kg.
- Commercial LPG cylinders used in hotels typically weigh 19 kg.
- LPG is mainly composed of methane gas.
- Which of the statements given above are correct?
- (a) 1 only
- (b) 1 and 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

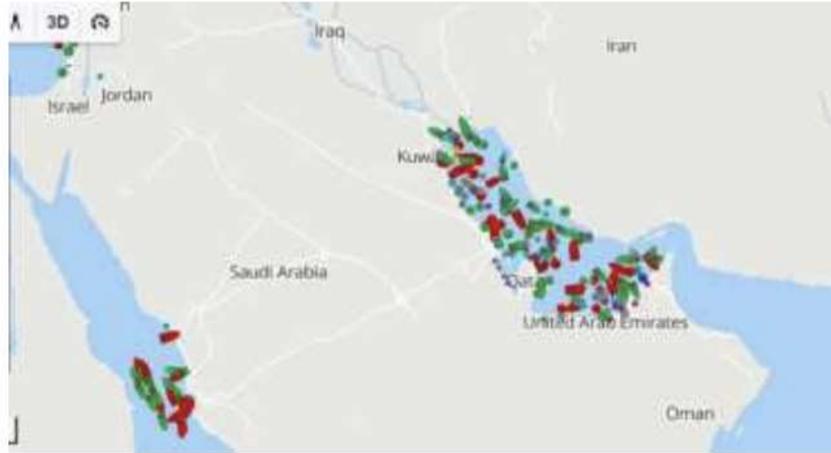
Merchant ships stranded near Strait of Hormuz

M. Kalyanaraman

CHENNAI

With the conflict in West Asia escalating, merchant ships continue to be stranded upstream of Strait of Hormuz, even as the world awaits the roll-out of the U.S. government's promise of deploying its Navy to escort the ships and funding war risk insurance for the vessels.

On Thursday, Sonangal Namibe, a crude oil carrier whose owners and managers are based in Houston, Texas, as per Equasis database, became the ninth ship attacked in the region since the conflict started. Skylight, a ship sanctioned by the U.S. for Iranian links and manned mostly by Indian crew, was also among the ships attacked. Insurance companies are seek-



Fear reigns:: Ships on the Persian Gulf route may have to pay 10 times or 15 times more for insurance coverage.

ing to renegotiate their coverage of ships serving the Persian Gulf.

War risk cover

War risk insurance policies that can cover ship transit through the Strait of Hormuz come with premiums of 1% to 3% of the vessel cost itself, says David Osler, Law and Insurance Editor of Lloyds List Intelligence.

This means vessels transiting the Strait of Hormuz will now need to pay weekly insurance premiums of nearly the same amount they would pay for an entire year, he says.

Insurance premiums have registered increases across the world since the recent conflict started. Ships on the Persian Gulf route may have to pay 10

times or 15 times more for insurance coverage, which is a basic requirement for any merchant ship to embark on a voyage. Experts talk of affiliative risk - vessels may have owners formally based in neutral countries and the ships may fly flags of other nations but if they have links with not just Iran but also the U.S. and Israel, then they may have to pay much higher premiums.

Governments such as the U.K. had historically footed the bill for such war risk insurance. In December of last year, Denmark passed a law providing such a cover for its ships.

One fifth of the world's oil and gas supplies pass through the strait.

More than 600 ships are estimated to be trapped, out of whom some 250 are

oil tankers and gas carriers. At least 10% of the oil and gas ships are estimated to be Indian flagged vessels bound for India. Government-owned Shipping Corporation of India is among the leading ship owners whose vessels have been stranded in the Persian Gulf west of the strait.

Though oil and gas facilities have been hit and some such as Qatar's facilities have been shut down, many Persian Gulf ports continue to be operational.

Lloyds List Intelligence reports that there has been a 95% decrease in the number of ships transiting the Strait of Hormuz.

No India related ship has transited the strait. SCI has ships with some nine lakh tonne cargo capacity in the area while Sanmar has some 3 lakh tonne.

1. Core Development / मुख्य घटना

- Merchant ships carrying oil and gas are **stranded near the Strait of Hormuz due to escalating conflict in West Asia.** / पश्चिम एशिया में बढ़ते संघर्ष के कारण हॉर्मुज़ जलडमरूमध्य के पास तेल और गैस ले जाने वाले व्यापारी जहाज़ फंसे हुए हैं।
 - The situation has created uncertainty in global shipping routes and energy supply chains. / इस स्थिति ने वैश्विक शिपिंग मार्गों और ऊर्जा आपूर्ति श्रृंखलाओं में अनिश्चितता पैदा कर दी है।
 - Many ships are waiting for **naval escorts and war-risk insurance arrangements** before crossing the strait. / कई जहाज़ नौसैनिक सुरक्षा और युद्ध जोखिम बीमा व्यवस्था का इंतजार कर रहे हैं ताकि जलडमरूमध्य पार कर सकें।
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2. Attacks on Ships / जहाज़ों पर हमले

- Several ships have been **attacked or targeted since the conflict escalated in the region.** / क्षेत्र में संघर्ष बढ़ने के बाद कई जहाज़ों पर हमले या लक्ष्य बनाए जाने की घटनाएँ हुई हैं।
- A crude oil tanker named **Sonangal Namibe** became one of the ships attacked in the region. / **Sonangal Namibe** नामक कच्चा तेल टैंकर इस क्षेत्र में हमले का शिकार हुआ।
- Another ship named **Skylight** with an Indian crew was also among the targeted vessels. / **Skylight** नामक जहाज़ जिसमें भारतीय चालक दल था भी हमले का शिकार हुआ।

3. War Risk Insurance / युद्ध जोखिम बीमा

- Ships traveling through the Strait of Hormuz now require **special war-risk insurance coverage.** / हॉर्मुज़ जलडमरूमध्य से गुजरने वाले जहाज़ों को अब विशेष युद्ध जोखिम बीमा कवर की आवश्यकता है।
 - Insurance premiums have increased **10 to 15 times compared to normal rates.** / बीमा प्रीमियम सामान्य दरों की तुलना में **10 से 15 गुना तक बढ़ गए हैं।**
 - War risk insurance can cost **1–3% of the vessel's value for a single transit.** / एक बार जलडमरूमध्य पार करने के लिए युद्ध जोखिम बीमा जहाज़ की कीमत का लगभग **1–3%** तक हो सकता है।
-

4. Decline in Ship Traffic / जहाज़ों की आवाजाही में गिरावट

- The number of ships passing through the Strait of Hormuz has **dropped drastically due to security concerns.** / सुरक्षा चिंताओं के कारण हॉर्मुज़ जलडमरूमध्य से गुजरने वाले जहाज़ों की संख्या तेजी से घट गई है।
 - Reports indicate a **95% decline in ship traffic through the strait** during the crisis. / रिपोर्टों के अनुसार संकट के दौरान जलडमरूमध्य से जहाज़ों की आवाजाही में लगभग **95%** की गिरावट आई है।
 - More than **600 ships** are estimated to be stranded in the Persian Gulf region. / फारस की खाड़ी क्षेत्र में **600 से अधिक जहाज़ फंसे होने का अनुमान है।**
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5. Importance of Strait of Hormuz / हॉर्मुज़ जलडमरूमध्य का महत्व

- The Strait of Hormuz is one of the **most important global oil shipping chokepoints**. / हॉर्मुज़ जलडमरूमध्य विश्व के सबसे महत्वपूर्ण तेल परिवहन chokepoints में से एक है।
 - Nearly **one-fifth of the world's oil and gas supply passes through this route**. / विश्व की लगभग एक-पांचवीं तेल और गैस आपूर्ति इस मार्ग से गुजरती है।
 - It connects the **Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea**. / यह फारस की खाड़ी को ओमान की खाड़ी और अरब सागर से जोड़ता है।
-

6. Impact on Global Energy Market / वैश्विक ऊर्जा बाजार पर प्रभाव

- Disruptions in the strait may cause **global oil prices to rise sharply**. / जलडमरूमध्य में बाधा से वैश्विक तेल कीमतों में तेज वृद्धि हो सकती है।
 - Shipping delays can increase **transportation and insurance costs for oil and gas shipments**. / शिपिंग में देरी से तेल और गैस परिवहन तथा बीमा लागत बढ़ सकती है।
 - Energy-importing countries such as **India, China, Japan and South Korea are highly vulnerable**. / भारत, चीन, जापान और दक्षिण कोरिया जैसे ऊर्जा आयातक देश इससे अत्यधिक प्रभावित हो सकते हैं।
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7. Impact on India / भारत पर प्रभाव

- Around **10% of oil and gas ships in the region are estimated to be Indian-flagged vessels.** / इस क्षेत्र में लगभग **10% तेल और गैस जहाज़ भारतीय ध्वज वाले जहाज़ बताए जाते हैं।**
- India depends heavily on **West Asian oil imports passing through this route.** / भारत काफी हद तक पश्चिम एशिया से आने वाले तेल आयात पर निर्भर है जो इसी मार्ग से आता है।
- Any long-term disruption may affect **India's energy security and import costs.** / दीर्घकालिक बाधा से भारत की ऊर्जा सुरक्षा और आयात लागत प्रभावित हो सकती है।

Additional Exam-Oriented Facts / अतिरिक्त परीक्षा उपयोगी तथ्य

Fact	Detail
Strait of Hormuz location	Between Iran and Oman
Connects	Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman
Global oil trade share	About 20%
Major oil exporters using the route	Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait, UAE
Major importers dependent on the route	India, China, Japan, South Korea
Strategic importance	World's most critical oil chokepoint

- Consider the following statements regarding the Strait of Hormuz:
- It lies between Iran and Oman.
- Nearly one-fifth of the world's oil trade passes through this route.
- It connects the Red Sea with the Mediterranean Sea.
- Which of the statements given above are correct?
- (a) 1 only
- (b) 1 and 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Karnataka, A.P. plan social media ban for children

The Hindu Bureau

BENGALURU

Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh are set to ban social media for children to prevent the adverse effects of increasing mobile phone use.

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah made an announcement in this regard on Friday, during the presentation of the State Budget. He did not spell out a road map for the implementation of the ban.

While Karnataka said it proposes to ban social media for children under 16, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu said the government would impose the restriction on children aged below 13.

Speaking in the Assemb-



Screen lock: The States say the steps are aimed at preventing the adverse impact of social media use on children. FILE PHOTO

ly, Mr. Naidu said the ban is likely to be in place within the next 90 days. He added that the government is also examining possible regulations for children in the 13-16 age group.

It was during a recent meeting with the Vice-Chancellors of State public universities chaired by the

Governor, that Mr. Siddaramaiah had proposed a mobile ban for schoolchildren and sought opinion from all stakeholders.

There has been a public debate on this issue since, and experts are divided on the impact and feasibility of a blanket ban.

Mr. Naidu emphasised

that the government is committed to safeguarding children from the harmful effects of excessive social media usage and ensuring their overall well-being.

A similar ban on social media for children below the age of 16 was made into a law in Australia in December 2025.

The law forces social media platforms to restrict access to children below 16 years of age and violations can attract very high penalties up to \$32 million for serious and repeated violations.

Reacting to Karnataka's proposal, A.P. Minister for IT and Education Nara Lokesh posed on X: "Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery" and said he was pleased to see Karnataka considering restrictions on

social media for young users.

He noted that Andhra Pradesh had earlier proposed similar measures aimed at protecting young minds from the darker side of the digital world, and wished the Karnataka government success in implementing the idea.

Student union elections

During the Budget presentation, Mr. Siddaramaiah also announced the re-introduction of student union elections in colleges and universities, after it was banned nearly four decades ago.

He said it would "foster leadership, responsibility, and democratic values among students". Both have been much-debated contentious issues.

1. Core Development / मुख्य घटना

- The governments of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh are planning to ban or restrict social media usage for children. / कर्नाटक और आंध्र प्रदेश सरकारें बच्चों के लिए सोशल मीडिया उपयोग पर प्रतिबंध या कड़े नियम लागू करने की योजना बना रही हैं।
 - The aim is to protect children from harmful psychological and social effects of excessive mobile and social media use. / इसका उद्देश्य मोबाइल और सोशल मीडिया के अत्यधिक उपयोग से होने वाले मानसिक और सामाजिक दुष्प्रभावों से बच्चों को बचाना है।
 - The announcement was made during the Karnataka State Budget presentation by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah. / यह घोषणा कर्नाटक के मुख्यमंत्री सिद्धारमैया द्वारा राज्य बजट प्रस्तुति के दौरान की गई।
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2. Proposed Age Restrictions / प्रस्तावित आयु प्रतिबंध

- Karnataka plans to ban social media for children below 16 years of age. / कर्नाटक 16 वर्ष से कम उम्र के बच्चों के लिए सोशल मीडिया पर प्रतिबंध लगाने की योजना बना रहा है।
- Andhra Pradesh is considering restrictions on children below 13 years of age. / आंध्र प्रदेश 13 वर्ष से कम उम्र के बच्चों पर प्रतिबंध लगाने पर विचार कर रहा है।
- The policy may be implemented within the next 90 days after consultations with stakeholders. / हितधारकों से परामर्श के बाद 90 दिनों के भीतर नीति लागू की जा सकती है।

3. Reasons for the Ban / प्रतिबंध के कारण

- Increasing **screen addiction among children** has become a major concern. / बच्चों में बढ़ती स्क्रीन लत (**screen addiction**) एक बड़ी चिंता बन गई है।
 - Excessive social media use is linked with **mental health issues, cyberbullying and reduced academic performance**. / सोशल मीडिया का अत्यधिक उपयोग मानसिक स्वास्थ्य समस्याओं, साइबर बुलिंग और पढ़ाई पर नकारात्मक प्रभाव से जुड़ा है।
 - Governments want to ensure **safe digital environments for children**. / सरकारें बच्चों के लिए सुरक्षित डिजिटल वातावरण सुनिश्चित करना चाहती हैं।
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4. Global Context / वैश्विक संदर्भ

- In **December 2025, Australia passed a law banning social media access for children below 16 years**. / दिसंबर 2025 में ऑस्ट्रेलिया ने 16 वर्ष से कम आयु के बच्चों के लिए सोशल मीडिया प्रतिबंध कानून लागू किया।
- Social media companies must **restrict access for minors under the law**. / इस कानून के तहत सोशल मीडिया कंपनियों को नाबालिगों की पहुंच सीमित करनी होगी।
- Violations may lead to **heavy penalties up to about \$32 million**. / उल्लंघन करने पर लगभग 32 मिलियन डॉलर तक का भारी जुर्माना लगाया जा सकता है।

5. Debate on the Policy / नीति पर बहस

- Experts are divided on the **feasibility and effectiveness of a blanket social media ban.** / विशेषज्ञ पूर्ण सोशल मीडिया प्रतिबंध की व्यवहार्यता और प्रभावशीलता पर विभाजित हैं।
 - Some believe it will **protect children from harmful online content.** / कुछ का मानना है कि यह हानिकारक ऑनलाइन सामग्री से बच्चों की सुरक्षा करेगा।
 - Others argue it may **restrict digital literacy and freedom of expression.** / अन्य विशेषज्ञों का तर्क है कि इससे डिजिटल साक्षरता और अभिव्यक्ति की स्वतंत्रता सीमित हो सकती है।
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6. Related Policy Announcement / संबंधित नीति घोषणा

- Karnataka also announced the **reintroduction of student union elections in colleges and universities.** / कर्नाटक ने कॉलेज और विश्वविद्यालयों में छात्र संघ चुनाव दोबारा शुरू करने की घोषणा भी की।
- The move aims to **promote democratic values, leadership and responsibility among students.** / इसका उद्देश्य छात्रों में लोकतांत्रिक मूल्यों, नेतृत्व और जिम्मेदारी की भावना को बढ़ावा देना है।

RSP heads for landslide victory in Nepal; rapper Balen set to become PM

Sanjeev Satgainya
KATHMANDU

The Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP), born just four years ago, has altered the syntax of Nepali politics as it heads towards an electoral landslide, with early trends putting it far ahead of Nepal's established parties that have ruled the country for decades.

According to Election Commission data, the RSP is leading in 110 constituencies out of 165, while established parties like the Nepali Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) trailed at 10 and seven constituencies, respectively.

With the RSP's impending victory, rapper-turned-politician Balendra Shah, popularly known as Balen, is set to become the nation's Himalayan new PM, and its youngest ever, at just 35 years.

He is leading in the vote count against K.P. Sharma Oli of the CPN-UML.

In Mr. Oli's home turf of Jhapa-5, Mr. Shah has secured 15,169 votes against 3,344 for the CPN-UML leader.

The RSP is also ahead in the proportional representation (PR) count, securing 18,830 votes (59%) of the 31,882 votes counted till 8:05 p.m., while the NC secured 5,560 votes (17%). Under the PR system, the Rastriya Prajatantra Party, a pro-Hindu, pro-monarchist force, is third with 2,848 votes (9%), followed by the CPN-UML with 2,101 (6.5%).

Counting is under way in Nepal, which voted on Thursday in its first elec-



RSP candidate Balendra Shah, popularly known as Balen, during an election campaign rally. AFP

tion since last year's Gen Z protests that claimed 77 lives. The protests toppled the Oli government.

Majority mandate

The RSP's victory path busts the long-standing notion that Nepal's mixed electoral system largely prevents any party from securing a majority.

With the centrist liberal party appearing set to hit the threshold of 138 in the 275-member House of Representatives, Nepal could see a majority government for the first time in 27 years, with the mandate to complete a full five-year term. This would mark a rare reset in Nepali politics.

Though the Nepali Congress had won 113 seats in the then 205-member Parliament in 1999, infighting within the party led to the government's collapse in just over a year.

Founded in 2022, the RSP surprised many in that year's election by emerging as the fourth-largest party. In the run-up to Thursday's vote, it enjoyed a groundswell of support, with public opinion tilting towards it, largely because

of Mr. Shah, popularly known as Balen.

Balen, who won the Kathmandu mayoral election in the 2022 local polls as an independent candidate, joined the RSP only in December last year, three months after the Gen Z protests.

Dambar Khatiwada, a writer and commentator, said that Balen's entry had energised the youth, among whom he is hugely popular.

"But multiple factors were in play. That there was disenchantment among the people with the old parties is a fact," he said. "The electorate vented their ire; they took revenge on the parties that failed them for the last three decades."

Frustrated voters

Voter turnout on Thursday stood at 58.7%, the lowest since Nepal's first election in 1991, a year after democracy was restored in the country.

Some see it as voter fatigue, but analysts say the low turnout also indicates that many old-party loyalists stayed home, frustrated by repeated failures.

Photo: Reuters



RSP supporters cheer outside a counting centre in Kathmandu

Trends For

161

Total seats

165

Leads (including wins)

■ RSP	114
■ Nepali Congress	15
■ CPN-UML	11
■ Nepali Communist Party	8
■ Others	13



1. Core Development / मुख्य घटना

- Nepal's **Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP)** is heading toward a major electoral victory in the national elections. / नेपाल की राष्ट्रिय स्वतन्त्र पार्टी (RSP) राष्ट्रिय चुनावों में बड़ी जीत की ओर बढ़ रही है।
 - The party has taken a strong lead over traditional political parties such as the **Nepali Congress and Communist Party of Nepal (UML)**. / इस पार्टी ने पारंपरिक दलों जैसे नेपाली कांग्रेस और कम्युनिस्ट पार्टी ऑफ नेपाल (UML) से बड़ी बढ़त बना ली है।
 - This result indicates a **major shift in Nepal's political landscape**. / यह परिणाम नेपाल की राजनीति में बड़े बदलाव का संकेत देता है।
-

2. Emergence of Balen Shah / बालेन शाह का उभार

- Rapper-turned politician **Balendra Shah (Balen)** is set to become the Prime Minister of Nepal. / रैपर से राजनेता बने बालेन्द्र शाह (बालेन) नेपाल के प्रधानमंत्री बनने की ओर बढ़ रहे हैं।
- If elected, he would become **Nepal's youngest Prime Minister at the age of about 35 years**. / यदि चुने जाते हैं तो वे लगभग 35 वर्ष की आयु में नेपाल के सबसे युवा प्रधानमंत्री बनेंगे।
- Balen gained popularity earlier after **winning the Kathmandu mayoral election in 2022 as an independent candidate**. / बालेन को पहले 2022 में काठमांडू मेयर चुनाव स्वतंत्र उम्मीदवार के रूप में जीतने के बाद लोकप्रियता मिली थी।

3. Electoral Performance of RSP / RSP का चुनावी प्रदर्शन

- According to the Election Commission, the RSP is **leading in about 110 constituencies out of 165** in the First-Past-The-Post system. / चुनाव आयोग के अनुसार RSP 165 में से लगभग 110 निर्वाचन क्षेत्रों में बढ़त बनाए हुए है।
 - Traditional parties such as **Nepali Congress and CPN-UML are trailing behind.** / पारंपरिक दल जैसे नेपाली कांग्रेस और CPN-UML पीछे रह गए हैं।
 - Under the **Proportional Representation (PR) voting system**, RSP also secured a significant share of votes. / अनुपातिक प्रतिनिधित्व (PR) प्रणाली में भी RSP को महत्वपूर्ण वोट मिले हैं।
-

4. Nepal's Electoral System / नेपाल की चुनाव प्रणाली

- Nepal follows a **mixed electoral system combining First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) and Proportional Representation (PR).** / नेपाल FPTP और PR दोनों को मिलाकर मिश्रित चुनाव प्रणाली का उपयोग करता है।
 - **The House of Representatives has 275 members.** / प्रतिनिधि सभा में कुल 275 सदस्य होते हैं।
 - **A party needs 138 seats to form a majority government.** / सरकार बनाने के लिए 138 सीटों की आवश्यकता होती है।
-

5. Political Context / राजनीतिक पृष्ठभूमि

- Nepal has experienced **frequent political instability and coalition governments** since becoming a federal democratic republic. / संघीय लोकतांत्रिक गणराज्य बनने के बाद नेपाल में राजनीतिक अस्थिरता और गठबंधन सरकारें अक्सर रही हैं।
 - A clear majority government would be **the first in nearly 27 years**. / स्पष्ट बहुमत वाली सरकार लगभग 27 वर्षों में पहली बार बन सकती है।
 - Public dissatisfaction with traditional political parties helped RSP gain support. / पारंपरिक दलों से जनता की असंतुष्टि ने RSP को समर्थन दिलाया।
-

6. Role of Youth and Protests / युवाओं और आंदोलनों की भूमिका

- The rise of RSP was partly influenced by **youth-led protests demanding political reforms**. / RSP का उभार राजनीतिक सुधार की मांग करने वाले युवा आंदोलनों से प्रभावित रहा।
- The **Gen Z protest movement** played a role in mobilising public opinion. / Gen Z आंदोलन ने जनमत को प्रभावित करने में भूमिका निभाई।
- Many young voters supported Balen Shah as a **symbol of political change**. / कई युवा मतदाताओं ने बालेन शाह को राजनीतिक बदलाव के प्रतीक के रूप में समर्थन दिया।

Fact

Country

Legislature

Lower House

Total seats

Majority mark

Electoral system

Capital of Nepal

Current Constitution

Detail

Nepal

Federal Parliament

House of Representatives

275

138

Mixed (FPTP + Proportional Representation)

Kathmandu

Constitution of Nepal 2015

- Consider the following statements regarding Nepal's political system:
- Nepal follows a mixed electoral system combining First-Past-The-Post and Proportional Representation.
- The House of Representatives of Nepal has 275 members.
- A party requires 150 seats to form a majority government in Nepal.
- Which of the statements given above are correct?
- (a) 1 only
- (b) 1 and 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

IN BRIEF



Two pilots killed as Su-30MKI fighter plane crashes in Assam

Two Indian Air Force (IAF) pilots were killed after a Su-30MKI fighter jet crashed during a training mission in Assam's Karbi Anglong district on Thursday evening. Squadron Leader Arun and Flight Lieutenant Parvath Dasgupta sustained fatal injuries in the crash, the IAF confirmed. The aircraft had taken off from the IAF base in Jorhat, Assam, and was on a routine training sortie when it lost contact. The incident was reported in the Karbi Anglong area, about 100 km from Jorhat. In a statement, the IAF expressed deep condolences and said that all personnel stand firmly with the bereaved families in this time of grief. A probe into the cause of the crash has been ordered.

Youth Congress workers win time to reply to bail challenge

A Delhi court on Friday granted time to nine Youth Congress workers to file their responses to a plea moved by the Delhi Police challenging their bail in connection with the "starline" protest at the AI summit. Additional Sessions Judge Prashant Sharma of Patna House Court adjourned the matter, which was scheduled for hearing on Friday and then on April 23, after allowing time for the accused to submit their replies. The court also deferred hearing on the police challenge to the bail granted to Indian Youth Congress (IYC) workers. The Delhi High Court, noting that the matter is currently pending before the Delhi High Court, the Delhi Police has challenged the bail orders passed in all the courts.

Focus on high-value crops, Modi tells farmers

The Hindu Bureau NEW DELHI

Addressing a webinar on Friday on the Budget proposals for the rural economy and agriculture, Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged agri-entrepreneurs to go beyond investing in storage and increase innovations and investment in processing, supply chain, agri-tech, and exports. He asked farmers to focus on export-oriented high-value crops. He said that from food grains and pulses to oilseeds, the country has achieved record production. New energy must be infused into agriculture, and the Budget for 2020-27 has taken new steps in that direction, he added. It was essential to discuss how to make the country a farming export-oriented, he said.

U.S. 'allowing' India to buy Russian oil is 'humiliating' for sovereignty: Congress

Kharge says strategic autonomy under threat, while Rahul points to exploitation of a compromised individual; Opposition will seek discussion on the West Asia conflict in Parliament, says Ramesh

The Hindu Bureau NEW DELHI

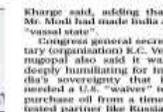
Officialing the Modi government's cover-up of the U.S. Treasury secretary Scott Bennett's comment that President Donald Trump had "allowed" Indian refiners to buy Russian oil for 30 days, the Congress on Friday said it was "deeply humiliating for India's sovereignty". Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, in a post on X, alleged that India's strategic autonomy and national sovereignty was under dire threat "because Prime Minister Narendra Modi is getting blackmailed on Epstein Files and Asian cases targeting the government, the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, said India's foreign policy was the result of the "exploitation of a compromised individual".

Sham U.S. remarks The party also raised a red flag over the recent remark by U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Christopher Landon that the U.S. would put



Kharge said, adding that Mr. Modi had made India a 'sacred state'.

This is the kind of language which is used for sanctioned states, and not India, who has been a responsible and an equal partner in the global order. Mr. Modi had made India a 'sacred state'. Congress general secretary (organisation) K.C. Venugopal also said it was deeply humiliating for India's sovereignty that it needed a U.S. "waiver" to purchase oil from a three-sided partner like Russia. "Instead of standing up to the U.S. dictating terms, compromised PM Modi is handing over energy sovereignty on a platter to other countries," he said on X. Addressing a press conference, Congress spokesperson Pawan Khara said Mr. Gandhi's words on February 11 in the Lok Sabha — that the U.S. would do "nothing" — clearly demonstrate Modi government is consistently ceding diplomatic space. This is the kind of language which is used for sanctioned areas, and not India, who has been a responsible and an equal partner in global order. "From trade to oil, from data to India's long-term relationships with friendly countries, Modi is BURDENING it all," Mr.



America first in the trade deal with India. "India's foreign policy emerges from the collective will of our people. It should be rooted in its history, geo geography, and our national ethos based on atyeh and ahimsa. What we are witnessing today is not policy. It is the result of the exploitation of a compromised individual," he said on X. The Opposition leader also shared his February 11 speech in the Lok Sabha during the discussion on the Budget, where he has been responsible for equal security being compromised. "The U.S. will tell us that they can or cannot buy oil from it. It's Russia or Saudi, the U.S. will decide. But if our Ministry will not decide," Mr. Gandhi had said. Echoing the sentiment, Mr. Kharge hit out at the government for ceding diplomatic space to the U.S. "Congress should be addressing a press conference. Congress spokesperson Pawan Khara said Mr. Gandhi's words on February 11 in the Lok Sabha — that the U.S. would do "nothing" — clearly demonstrate Modi government is consistently ceding diplomatic space. This is the kind of language which is used for sanctioned areas, and not India, who has been a responsible and an equal partner in global order. "From trade to oil, from data to India's long-term relationships with friendly countries, Modi is BURDENING it all," Mr.

Stalin, other leaders hit out at govt. over U.S. announcement

The Hindu Bureau NEW DELHI/DISHANVAI

in the wake of reports that the United States has "allowed" India to import Russian oil for a period of 30 days to help mitigate the spike in oil prices, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Friday asked why India should need another country's approval to meet its own energy needs.

"When the United States decides to allow India to purchase Russian oil for just 30 days, it raises a fundamental question: why should India need another country's approval to secure its energy needs," Mr. Stalin asked in a social media post. Referring to the sinking of the Iranian naval vessel *Shahchaman* by the U.S., Mr. Stalin said this incident was "apparently troubling".

Mr. Stalin alleged that the BJP-led government at the Centre is looking to compromise on India's long-standing tradition of strategic autonomy and an independent foreign policy. "India's dignity in the international arena needed to be protected and the nation's sovereignty and interests needed to be defended, he added. — CHING U.S. Treasury Sec.



M.K. Stalin

Secretary Scott Bennett's remarks on "allowing" India a temporary waiver to purchase Russian oil, several Opposition leaders accused the government of surrendering India's "sovereignty" to the U.S. CPI(M) Rajya Sabha member P. Jayashankar Kumar, in a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, said that Mr. Bennett's comments were "humiliating". He demanded that the government should strongly register its protest on such remarks. (PTI) Rajya Sabha leader John Brittas in a post on X said, "The grand" India a 30-day waiver to buy stranded Russian oil amid Middle East chaos" is this "facilitator" or pure humiliation for a sovereign nation the India". MYS Rajya Sabha member Manoj K. Jha questioned the government's silence in the face of such remarks.

Anuj Agnihotri tops civil services exam; 958 candidates qualify

The Hindu Bureau NEW DELHI

The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) announced the results of the civil services examination on Friday, recommending 958 candidates for appointment to the IAS, IPS, IFS, and Central Services across the country, against 1,097 vacancies. Of the recommended candidates, 299 are men and 299 are women. Anuj Agnihotri, a graduate from AIIMS, Jodhpur, secured the top rank, with medical science as his optional subject. Rajeshwar Jais, a graduate in electrical and electronics engineering from Anna University, Chennai, came second, with sociology as his optional subject. The third rank was secured by Disha University graduate Akshay Dhillon. The civil services (pre-

Anuj Agnihotri

economic categories, who were recommended against 42 vacancies. "I am extremely happy with this achievement. It's an incredible feeling," Mr. Agnihotri said. He attributed his success to family members saying they have been his biggest source of inspiration. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday congratulated the candidates and their dedication. He cleared the civil services examination, 2020, and said their dedication, perseverance and hard work had led to this significant milestone. For those who could not perform as desired, Mr. Modi said, this was only one step in a long journey and many opportunities lay ahead. Both in future examinations and in the career journey through which they can contribute to the nation. (with PTI inputs)

'Scientists, diplomats must discuss evolution of quantum computing'

The Hindu Bureau NEW DELHI

Quantum computing is in a nascent stage of development and therefore this is a critical juncture, said the field and scientists should be engaging with diplomats to be able to form governance frameworks, partnerships, coalitions, international collaboration, and be "completely ready" when the technology matures, Marijane Anderson, Director General, Geneva Science and Diplomacy Anticipation (GSDA), said in an interview. Quantum computing refers to computers that use an entirely different non-binary architecture from conventional computers. However, it is no longer adequate to calculate but at the same time threaten cybersecurity measures, they are promising binary ones and zero architecture. Mr. Anderson, who was a participant at the ongoing Rastriya Dialogue here, met India's Principal Scientific Adviser (PSA), Ajay Sood, on Friday afternoon. He met the PSA and around 60 representatives from various government, diplomacy, business and civil society to "anticipate and prevent emerging scientific and technological breakthroughs" according to a press statement from the Swiss Embassy.

Marijane Anderson

Deepser insight Mr. Anderson, who was formerly a Professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Boston, and the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (EPFL), said scientists weren't always able to forecast the course of technology as they, like other disciplines, thought "linearly" rather than exponentially. However, because scientific funding cycles usually worked in five- or 10-year cycles, they did have a deeper insight into the time of development of certain fields. Around 2020, the scientific community was largely confident of the emergence of something like GPT-3 — the Transformer 3 (by OpenAI) with 175 billion parameters. "What they didn't anticipate was that someone would put it out in the open — the 'chat' aspect of it. Many didn't want to do that because they knew that once it is out in the general population it is a whole new game. So while scientists can't precisely forecast, being experts and participants at conferences at the cutting edge of their science, they have a special voice," she explained.

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Crossword puzzle grid with clues and solutions. Clues include: 14 Rogue lazed, luring essentially hot, life sociable (6,5); 15 Perfect moment with century by ace (6,2,4); 16 Heavy burden of married observer having problems (9); 17 Start to empty a can to have a meal at home (3,2); 18 Star in row consuming ecstasy and Greek wine (7); 19 Corrupt president in extremely respectable party (7); 20 Indian's ladles going around large neighbourhood of New York (5); 21 Attempt to control associate enthralled by drink and greed (6); Down: 1 Ailing in Italian island, taking potassium for illness primarily (6); 2 Aquilino after drinking a little boozie (6); 3 Bequads easily (9,4); 4 Sadhu in tomb got up: He won't believe it (6,6); 5 Flexible being of white is off-white (5); 6 American television host's fancy villa acquired by star (8); 7 Jewish people race to consume heroin (6); 8 Old aged hercule term with rude, derogative remark (6,6); 9 Hotelier turning to peep in secret (9); 10 Disagitated room in abandoned ship - it is exactly similar in form as another (8); 11 Arlt in drunken stupor, beginning to lurch outside club (6); 12 Unreputable model entering in hot (6); 13 Training earnestly to keep working effectively (3,4); 14 Patski husband involved in generosity on scene (8).

Sudoku puzzle grid with numbers and difficulty rating. The grid is a 10x10 grid with some numbers filled in. Difficulty rating is 3 stars.

FAITH section with a story about a debt beyond repayment. The story is about a man named Thirukudandai Dr. Venkatesh who shares a story about his mother's prayer for him in the life of children. After his mother's death, messengers of God carried him to a celestial palanquin to the Pole Star, the Dhruva Manakula, specially created by God in admiration of his unceasing devotion. As Dhruva ascended, he noticed another palanquin proceeding ahead of him and wondered how this could be, since he alone had performed intense penance. The divine messengers revealed that the palanquin ahead carried his mother. They explained that she was the true instrument behind his devotion. In the Yaksha Pradana of the Mahabharata, the Yaksha sage Yudhishtira: "Who or what is greater than Mother God? Yudhishtira replied without hesitation that nothing can be compared to one's own mother. Mother Earth leaves all squares unhilled upon her. Even greater is a human mother, who silently endures not only the physical hardships of nurturing her children but also the harsh words and rebuffs that may come from her own son or daughter. According to Sriprad Bhagavatan, when Lord Krishna, in the tender age of eleven, slew the tyrant Kamsa and released His parents Devaki and Vasudeva from imprisonment, His heart was filled not with pride but with deep remorse. Krishna apologized to His parents, lamenting that He had lost eleven precious years in which He had been unable to serve them as a son. He resolved to dedicate the rest of His earthly existence to their service. The Bhagavatan states that even if one were to serve one's parents for a 100 years, such service would never equal the immeasurable austerities parents make for their children.

Anuj Agnihotri tops civil services exam; 958 candidates qualify

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) announced the results of the civil services examination on Friday, recommending 958 candidates for appointment to the IAS, IFS, IPS, and Central Services across the country, against 1,087 vacancies. Of the recommended candidates, 659 are men and 299 are women.

Anuj Agnihotri, a graduate from AIIMS, Jodhpur, secured the top rank, with medical science as his optional subject. Rajeshwari Suve, a graduate in electrical and electronics engineering from Anna University, Chennai, came second, with sociology as her optional subject. The third rank was secured by Delhi University graduate Akansh Dhull.

The civil services (preli-



Anuj Agnihotri

minary) examination was conducted on May 25 last year. A total of 9.37 lakh candidates applied, of which 5.76 lakh candidates appeared. Candidature of 348 candidates has been kept provisional.

Of the 958 recommended candidates, 317 are from the general category, 158 from the SC category, 73 from the ST category, 306 OBC, and 104 candidates from the EWS category. About 84 candidates were Persons with Benchmark Disabilities across socio-

economic categories, who were recommended against 42 vacancies.

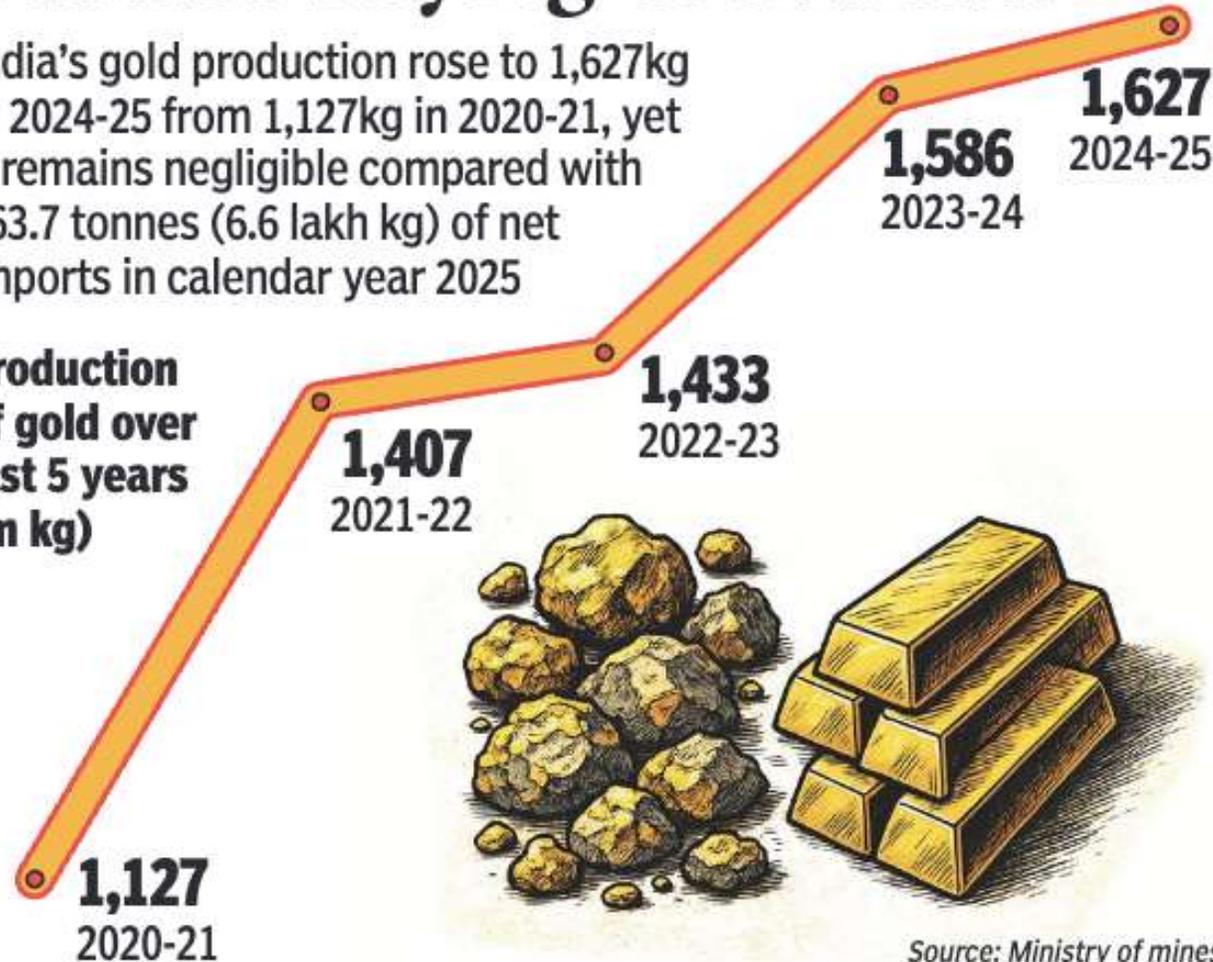
"I am extremely happy at this achievement. It's an incredible feeling," Mr. Agnihotri said. He credited his success to family members saying they have been his biggest source of inspiration.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday congratulated all the candidates who successfully cleared the civil services examination, 2025 and said their dedication, perseverance and hard work had led to this significant milestone. For those who could not perform as desired, Mr. Modi said, this was only one step in a larger journey and many opportunities lay ahead, both in future examinations and in the many avenues through which they can contribute to the nation. (With PTI inputs)

Gold: India is mining more, but also buying 400x more

India's gold production rose to 1,627kg in 2024-25 from 1,127kg in 2020-21, yet it remains negligible compared with 663.7 tonnes (6.6 lakh kg) of net imports in calendar year 2025

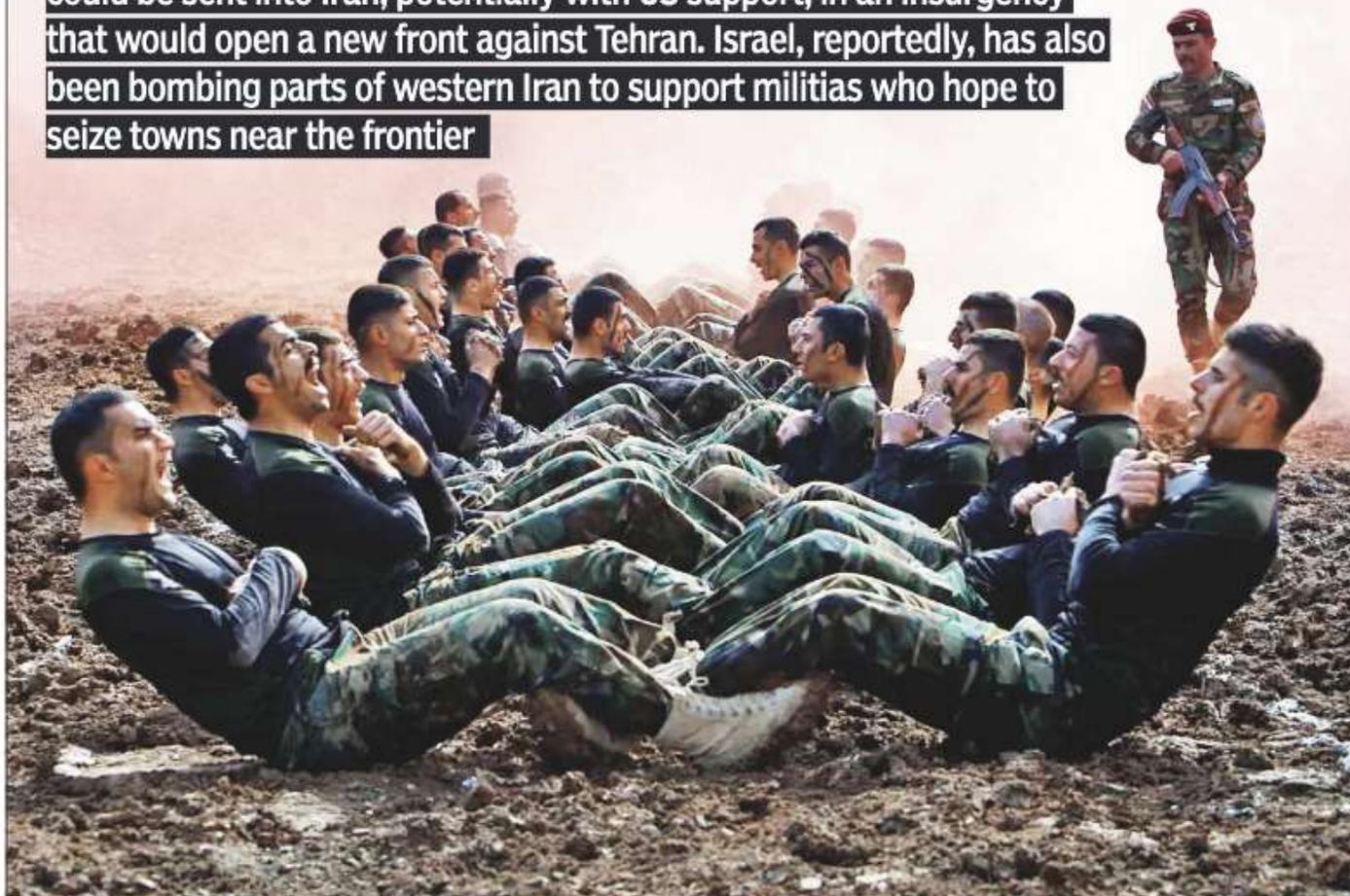
Production of gold over last 5 years (In kg)



KURDS ON IRAN'S BORDER

A Potential New Front

Iranian Kurdish forces, based in Iraq, are preparing armed units that could be sent into Iran, potentially with US support, in an insurgency that would open a new front against Tehran. Israel, reportedly, has also been bombing parts of western Iran to support militias who hope to seize towns near the frontier



WHO ARE THE KURDS? The Kurds are an ethnic group of about 45 million people spread across the mountainous regions of Iraq, Iran, Syria and Türkiye. They have long sought either an independent state or greater autonomy, making them one of the largest stateless populations in the world. Kurds speak their own language with several dialects, and most are Sunni Muslims

HOW BIG IS IRAN'S KURDISH MINORITY? Kurds make up around 10% of Iran's population and live mainly in the country's north-west border regions. They have often been at the forefront of dissent against Tehran. In 2022, the death of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old Kurdish Iranian woman arrested by morality police, sparked nationwide protests

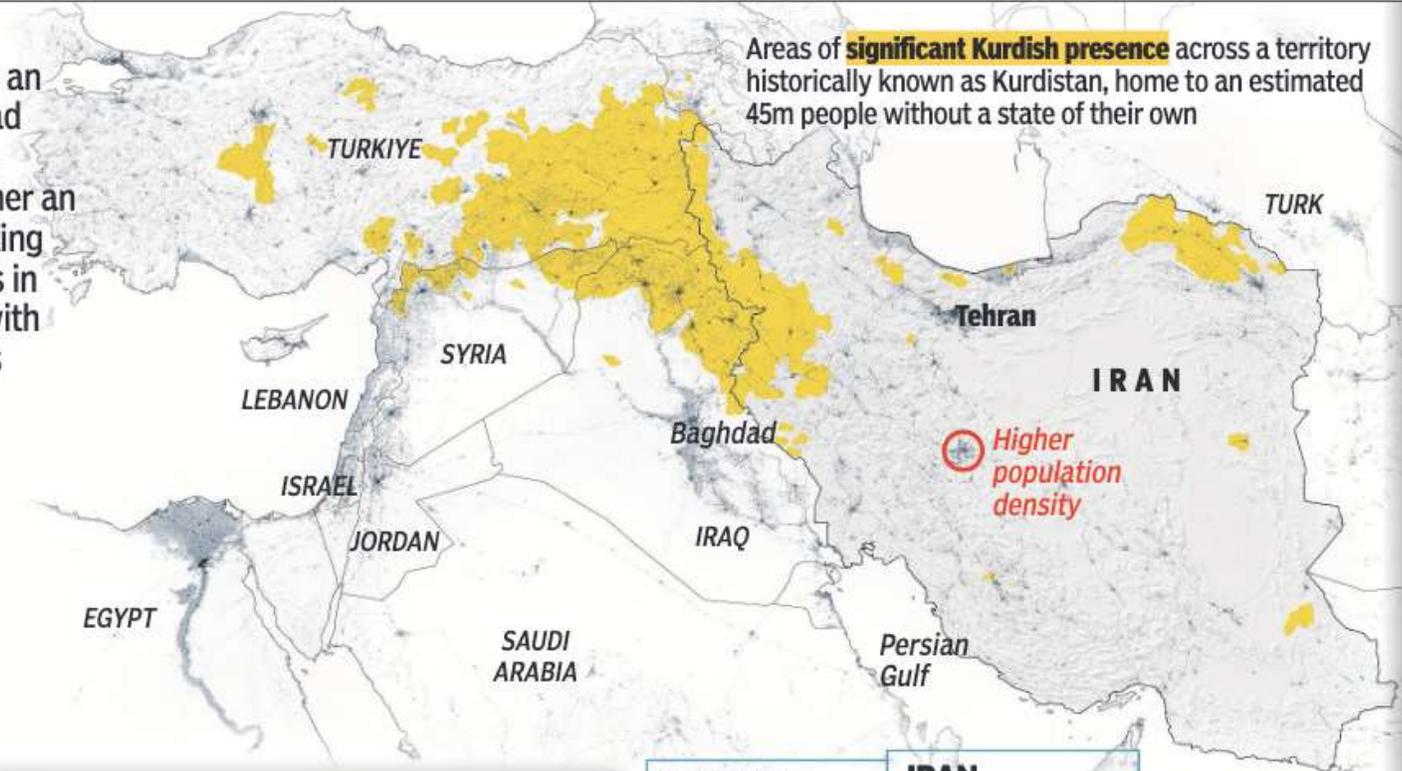
HOW THEY COULD CHALLENGE TEHRAN With US air support and military advisers, Kurdish militias could attempt to seize and hold territory in Kurdish-majority areas of Iran. Even limited gains could force Iran to divert troops and resources to border regions, stretching its military during a wider conflict



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Areas of **significant Kurdish presence** across a territory historically known as Kurdistan, home to an estimated 45m people without a state of their own



A History Of Distrust With Washington



1975 | President **Gerald Ford** failed to protect Kurds from a routing by Iraqi forces



1988 | President **Ronald Reagan** did not stop Iraqi forces from using chemical weapons against the Kurds



1990 | President **George Bush Sr** encouraged the Kurds to rise up against Saddam Hussein after he invaded Kuwait but then stood aside as Iraqi forces brutally crushed the rebellion



Jan 2026 | President **Trump** allowed Syrian forces to seize Kurdish territory won during the Syrian civil war and in bloody battles against the Islamic State terror group



TURKIYE 85.5m inhabitants		IRAN 91.5m	
Kurds	25%	17.5%	
	27%	15%	
IRAQ 46m		SYRIA 21.6m	

Kurdish Population by Country

REGIONAL OPPOSITION
Any Western support for Kurdish fighters could face strong resistance from Turkiye, a Nato member. Ankara considers the Kurdish militant group PJAK a terrorist organisation linked to separatists fighting the Turkish state

Source: NYT, AP, Reuters

Conditions apply: Digital fraud relief to be capped

RBI's ₹25K Compensation To Be Applicable Only For One Time Gross Loss Up To ₹50K

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: Reserve Bank of India has proposed a ceiling of Rs 50,000 for digital frauds to be eligible for compensation of up to Rs 25,000. According to the draft, customers who lose more than Rs 50,000 in a cyber fraud incident will not qualify for this compensation mechanism.

Banks must credit the compensation to the victim within five calendar days after receiving a completed claim application. They will subsequently seek reimbursement from RBI on a quarterly basis. The draft directions also bar banks from charging customers for mandatory regulatory SMS alerts or for promotional and marketing messages sent to them.

The proposal, which will be applicable for transactions after July 1, 2026 sets out how the financial burden will be shared between RBI, the customer's bank, and the bank that received the fraudulent funds. According to the framework, compensation will follow a three-way split that varies with the size of the loss.

For losses below Rs 29,412, the victim will receive 85% of the lost amount (Rs 25,000). RBI will bear 65% of the total loss, while the customer's bank and the beneficiary bank will each bear 10%. For losses between Rs 29,412 and Rs 50,000, compensation will reach the maximum cap of Rs 25,000. In such cases, RBI will contribute Rs 19,118, while the customer's bank and the beneficiary bank will each pay Rs 2,941.

While RBI did not explain

the additional ceiling on the gross loss despite the absolute cap of Rs 25,000, bankers said the limit could be intended to restrict compensation to small depositors or to ensure that customers with higher balances exercise greater caution. RBI announced the compensation framework in its Feb 2026 monetary policy. The provision extends coverage

imposed strict eligibility conditions to ensure the scheme functions as a limited safety net rather than a recurring insurance cover. Individuals will be allowed to claim the compensation only once in their lifetime. In joint accounts, only one account holder may file a claim. Once a claim is made, that individual's lifetime eligibility will be ex-

RBI TO BEAR 65% OF LOSS

> For losses below ₹29,412, the victim will receive 85% of the lost amount (₹25,000)

> RBI will bear 65% of the total loss, while the customer's bank and the beneficiary bank will each bear 10%

> Provision extends coverage even to customers who have shared credentials such as one-time passwords



> Customers who lose more than ₹50,000 in a cyber fraud incident will not qualify for this compensation mechanism

> The central bank has also imposed strict eligibility conditions to ensure the scheme functions as a limited safety net rather than a recurring insurance cover for customers

rage even to customers who have shared credentials such as OTPs. Existing rules generally do not protect customers if they lose money after sharing credentials and before informing the bank.

The new norms include losses where the customer is tricked into sending money through an authorised electronic banking transaction carried out through deception, coercion, or misuse of credentials. Such transactions may use valid authentication methods such as OTP, PIN, CVV, or passwords but are still treated as fraud because the approval was obtained through manipulation rather than genuine intent.

The central bank has also

hausted, including for any personal accounts held later.

Victims must report the fraud to the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal or the 1930 helpline and inform their bank within five calendar days of the incident to qualify. The standard application form for compensation will also require applicants to submit their Aadhaar number.

If law enforcement agencies or banks later recover the stolen funds, the settlement will be recalculated based on net loss. Recovered amounts will first be used to make up any remaining gap between the compensation paid and the customer's actual loss. Any surplus will be returned to the RBI and the banks.

1. Core Development / मुख्य घटना

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has proposed a framework to compensate victims of digital fraud. / भारतीय रिज़र्व बैंक (RBI) ने डिजिटल धोखाधड़ी के पीड़ितों को मुआवजा देने के लिए एक नया ढांचा प्रस्तावित किया है।
 - Compensation will be capped at ₹25,000 for eligible fraud cases. / पात्र धोखाधड़ी मामलों में मुआवजा अधिकतम ₹25,000 तक सीमित होगा।
 - The rule will apply only if the total fraud loss does not exceed ₹50,000. / यह नियम तभी लागू होगा जब कुल धोखाधड़ी का नुकसान ₹50,000 से अधिक न हो।
-

2. Eligibility Conditions / पात्रता शर्तें

- Customers who lose more than ₹50,000 in a cyber fraud incident will not qualify for this compensation scheme. / जिन ग्राहकों का साइबर धोखाधड़ी में ₹50,000 से अधिक नुकसान होता है, वे इस योजना के पात्र नहीं होंगे।
- The compensation will be available only once in a customer's lifetime. / यह मुआवजा ग्राहक के जीवनकाल में केवल एक बार ही उपलब्ध होगा।
- In joint bank accounts, only one account holder can claim the compensation. / संयुक्त बैंक खातों में केवल एक खाताधारक ही मुआवजा दावा कर सकता है।

3. Compensation Structure / मुआवजा संरचना

- For losses **below ₹29,412**, customers will receive **85% of the lost amount (maximum ₹25,000)**. / ₹29,412 से कम नुकसान पर ग्राहकों को खोई राशि का 85% (अधिकतम ₹25,000) मिलेगा।
 - For losses **between ₹29,412 and ₹50,000**, compensation will be capped at **₹25,000**. / ₹29,412 से ₹50,000 के बीच नुकसान होने पर अधिकतम ₹25,000 मुआवजा मिलेगा।
 - The RBI will bear **65% of the loss**, while the customer's bank and beneficiary bank will each bear **10% of the loss**. / नुकसान का 65% RBI वहन करेगा, जबकि ग्राहक का बैंक और लाभार्थी बैंक प्रत्येक 10% नुकसान वहन करेंगे।
-

4. Reporting Requirements / रिपोर्टिंग आवश्यकताएँ

- Victims must report the fraud to the **National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal or the 1930 helpline**. / पीड़ितों को धोखाधड़ी की सूचना राष्ट्रीय साइबर अपराध रिपोर्टिंग पोर्टल या 1930 हेल्पलाइन पर देनी होगी।
- The fraud must be reported **within five days of the incident** to qualify for compensation. / मुआवजा पाने के लिए घटना के पांच दिनों के भीतर रिपोर्ट करना आवश्यक है।
- Banks must credit the compensation to victims **within five calendar days after receiving the completed claim**. / बैंक को पूर्ण दावा मिलने के पांच दिनों के भीतर मुआवजा राशि जमा करनी होगी।

5. Coverage of Fraud Cases / धोखाधड़ी मामलों का दायरा

- The scheme covers fraud cases where money is transferred through **authorized digital transactions but obtained through deception or coercion.** / यह योजना उन मामलों को कवर करती है जहां पैसा प्रमाणित डिजिटल लेनदेन के माध्यम से धोखे या दबाव से प्राप्त किया गया हो।
 - It includes cases where customers share **OTP, PIN, CVV or passwords due to manipulation.** / इसमें वे मामले भी शामिल हैं जहां ग्राहक **OTP, PIN, CVV** या पासवर्ड धोखे से साझा कर देते हैं।
 - Such transactions will still be treated as **fraud despite authentication being completed.** / प्रमाणीकरण पूरा होने के बावजूद ऐसे लेनदेन धोखाधड़ी माने जाएंगे।
-

6. Purpose of the Policy / नीति का उद्देश्य

- The RBI intends to create a **limited safety net for small depositors affected by digital fraud.** / RBI का उद्देश्य डिजिटल धोखाधड़ी से प्रभावित छोटे जमाकर्ताओं के लिए सीमित सुरक्षा तंत्र बनाना है।
- The framework is **not meant to function as an insurance system for repeated fraud claims.** / यह ढांचा बार-बार होने वाले धोखाधड़ी दावों के लिए बीमा प्रणाली की तरह कार्य नहीं करेगा।
- The policy also encourages customers to **exercise caution while sharing banking credentials.** / यह नीति ग्राहकों को बैंकिंग जानकारी साझा करते समय सावधानी बरतने के लिए प्रोत्साहित करती है।

Fact

Regulator

Cyber fraud helpline

Reporting platform

Maximum compensation

Maximum eligible fraud loss

RBI share in compensation

Detail

Reserve Bank of India

1930

National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal

₹25,000

₹50,000

65%

- Consider the following statements regarding RBI's proposed digital fraud compensation framework:
 - The maximum compensation amount is ₹25,000.
 - The scheme applies only if the fraud loss does not exceed ₹50,000.
 - Customers can claim compensation multiple times for different fraud incidents.
- Which of the statements given above are correct?
 - (a) 1 only
 - (b) 1 and 2 only
 - (c) 2 and 3 only
 - (d) 1, 2 and 3

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Thank you 😊