

# DAILY NEWSP APER ANALYSIS

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**CHANAKYA IAS ACADEMY  
SECTOR 25 CHANDIGARH**

# Iran steps up attacks on Israel, Gulf energy sites

Iran insists it will deny enemies their security and will continue to build on its stockpile of missiles

Iran fires launches two waves of drone strikes on Kuwaiti refinery, one of the largest in West Asia

Bahrain warehouse set ablaze; Saudi Arabia intercepts drones targeting its oil-rich province

Associated Press  
DUBAI

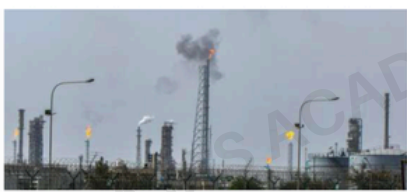
Iran defiantly insisted on Friday that it would deny its enemies their security and that it was still building missiles nearly three weeks into U.S.-Israeli strikes that have killed a slew of Tehran's top leaders and hammered its weapons and energy industries.

Iran fired on Israel and energy sites in neighbouring Gulf Arab states as many in the region marked one of the holiest days on the Muslim calendar. Two waves of Iranian drones attacked a Kuwaiti oil refinery early Friday, sparking a fire. The Mina Al-Ahmadi refinery, which can process some 7,300,000 barrels

of oil a day, is one of the largest in West Asia. Bahrain's Interior Minister said a fire broke out after shrapnel from an intercepted projectile landed on a warehouse, and Saudi Arabia reported shooting down drones targeting its oil-rich Eastern Province.

With little information coming out of Iran, it was not clear how much damage its arms, nuclear or energy facilities have sustained since the war began or even who was in charge of the country. But Iran has shown it is still capable of attacks that are choking off oil supplies and scrambling the global economy.

"We are producing missiles even during war conditions, which is amazing, and there is no particular problem in stockpiling,"



War-hit: The Mina Al-Ahmadi refinery in Kuwait, which can process more than seven lakh barrels of oil a day, is one of the largest in West Asia. AP

IRGC spokesman Gen. Ali Mohammad Naeini was quoted as saying in the state-run IRAN newspaper.

Gen. Naeini added that Iran had no intention of seeking a quick end to the war. Underscoring the tremendous pressure Iran's

leadership is under, a short time after the statement was released, Iranian state television said Gen. Naeini was killed in an air strike.

The country's new Supreme Leader Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei also released a rare statement,

saying Iran's enemies need to have their "security" taken away.

In Iran, meanwhile, many were marking Nowruz, the Persian New Year — even as Israel said it had launched new strikes, and explosions were heard on

## Indian killed in missile strike by Iran in Riyadh

NEW DELHI

An Indian citizen died in an Iranian missile strike that hit the Saudi Arabian capital of Riyadh on Wednesday, the Indian Embassy said on Friday. Diplomatic sources said that the Indian national is believed to have died after being hit by missile debris. >> PAGE 3

militants. On Friday, it broadened its attacks to Syria, saying it hit infrastructure there in response to what it described as attacks on the minority Druze population in the southern Sweida province.

More than 1,300 people have been killed in Iran during the war. Israeli strikes in Lebanon have displaced more than 1 million people, according to the Lebanese government, which says more than 1,000 people have been killed. Israel says it has killed more than 500 Hezbollah militants. In Israel, 15 people have been killed by Iranian missile fire. Four people were also killed in the occupied West Bank by a missile strike. At least 13 U.S. military members have been killed.

## Economic Impact:

- Oil supply disruptions → rise in crude prices → global inflationary pressure.
- Threat to critical chokepoints like Strait of Hormuz (handles ~20% of global oil trade).

## Static Linkages

- Strait of Hormuz as a strategic maritime chokepoint connecting the Persian Gulf to the Arabian Sea.
- Concept of energy security: availability, accessibility, affordability, and sustainability.
- Role of OPEC and OPEC+ in regulating global oil supply.
- West Asia as a major geopolitical hotspot due to resource concentration.
- Proxy warfare and non-state actors (e.g., Hezbollah) in international relations.
- Impact of conflicts on global supply chains and inflation (Economic Survey insights).

## Critical Analysis

### Implications

- Energy Crisis Risk: Oil price volatility → inflationary pressures globally.
- India's Vulnerability: ~85% crude import dependence.
- Regional Instability: Multi-front conflict increases war risk.
- Trade Disruptions: Threat to Strait of Hormuz shipping routes.

### Challenges

- Supply chain disruptions
- Rising insurance and shipping costs
- Diplomatic balancing for India (ties with Iran, Israel, Gulf, U.S.)
- Humanitarian crises and refugee flows

## Way Forward

- Diversify energy imports (Russia, U.S., renewables).
- Expand Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPR).
- Strengthen maritime security in IOR.
- Promote diplomatic neutrality and multilateral engagement.
- Accelerate renewable energy transition (solar, green hydrogen).

## KEY HIGHLIGHTS

### Context of the News

- Ongoing military conflict involving Iran vs U.S. – Israel alliance has intensified over the past three weeks.
- Iran continues missile and drone production despite heavy strikes on its military and energy infrastructure.
- Iranian retaliatory strikes targeted:
  - Israel
  - Energy installations in Kuwait (Mina Al-Ahmadi refinery), Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain
- Attacks coincided with Nowruz (Persian New Year), highlighting symbolic timing.
- Significant casualties:
  - ~1300 deaths in Iran
  - Large-scale displacement in Lebanon (~1 million people)
- Conflict has disrupted global oil supply chains, raising concerns of an energy crisis.

### Key Points

- Energy Infrastructure Targeting:
  - Mina Al-Ahmadi refinery (capacity ~7,30,000 barrels/day) attacked.
  - Gulf region accounts for ~30% of global oil supply (IEA estimates).
- Strategic Significance of Iran:
  - Holds ~9% of global oil reserves and ~17% of natural gas reserves (BP Statistical Review).
- Escalation Pattern:
  - Multi-front conflict: Iran-Israel, Lebanon (Hezbollah), Syria.
  - Expansion to Gulf states increases regional instability.
- Military Developments:
  - Continued missile production by Iran's IRGC.
  - Leadership losses weaken command but not operational capability.

# Centre raises prices of premium petrol and industrial diesel

Saptaparno Ghosh  
NEW DELHI

In what could be the first sign of cracks due to the fiscal stress brought on by skyrocketing global oil prices, Indian Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) on Friday increased the price of the premium variant of petrol and industrial diesel by approximately ₹2.3 and ₹22 per litre, respectively.

The government, however, assured that this is limited only to the premium variants and that the prices of the normal grades of petrol and diesel remain unchanged.

In a social media post on Friday evening, State-owned IndianOil confirmed the price of its premium petrol XP-95 which increased by ₹2 for every litre from ₹99.87 to ₹101.89. Hindustan Petroleum also announced a similar increase.

Prices will vary across States due to differences in tax structures.

"IndianOil has ensured no increase in regular automotive fuel prices in India, even amid rising international costs," the post said. "A limited revision applies only to premium petrol XP-95, with minimal impact on overall consumption."

The refiner said that the premium variant of petrol accounts for about 5% of the overall petrol sales. Other than the car fuel, the price of industrial diesel was revised upwards from ₹87.67 to ₹109.59 per litre. The hike in the price of premium petrol and industrial diesel contrasts with the OMCs' actions when oil prices were low.

#### Prices surge

A previous analysis by *The Hindu* found that the OMCs did not lower the price of any form of petrol or diesel over the past two



**Long wait:** Motorists queue to refuel at a petrol station in Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu, on March 12.

and-a-half years, even when oil prices fell to an average of \$64 a barrel.

As of Friday evening, Brent crude futures were trading at \$108.1 for every barrel, continuing an upward trajectory as tensions continue to mount in West Asia.

Further, according to data from the Petroleum and Planning Analysis Cell, India's crude oil basket – the average price at which India imports oil – was averaging \$117.09 for every barrel in the current month.

Earlier in the day, addressing queries about the increase in petrol prices, Sujata Sharma, Joint Secretary at the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, said the hike would not impact the common man.

"That is [the premium variant] hardly represents 2-4% of the petrol which is sold every day in the country," she said. "It is not that price of petrol has been increased [affecting] the common man."

The increase in the price of premium fuel also brought barbs from the Opposition. "While people are already troubled by the gas shortage, now they will also be made to pay on petrol," the Indian National Congress said.

(With inputs from Sandeep Phukan)

## Static Concepts

- Administered Pricing Mechanism (APM) – Pre-2010 system.
- Petroleum Planning & Analysis Cell (PPAC) – Data and policy support.
- Excise duty (Centre) + VAT (States) → key revenue sources.
- Impact of crude prices on:
  - Current Account Deficit (CAD)
  - Inflation (CPI/WPI)
- Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPR) for energy security.

## Mains Value Addition

- Rising crude prices → fiscal stress + inflation risk.
- Selective price hikes reflect political economy of fuel pricing.
- OMC under-recoveries vs consumer protection dilemma.
- Industrial diesel hike → logistics cost → supply-side inflation.

## Critical Points

Issues:

- Incomplete deregulation → government influence persists
- Asymmetric pricing (prices rise faster than they fall)
- Burden shifted indirectly via inflation

Positives:

- Protects common consumers
- Controls inflation temporarily

## Way Forward

- Transparent fuel pricing mechanism
- Bring fuels under GST (long-term reform)
- Expand Strategic Petroleum Reserves
- Diversify crude import sources
- Promote ethanol blending & EV transition

## KEY HIGHLIGHTS

### Context

- Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) such as Indian Oil Corporation and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited increased:
  - Premium petrol (XP-95) by ~₹2/litre
  - Industrial diesel by ~₹22/litre
- No change in regular petrol and diesel prices.
- Occurs amid rising crude oil prices (Brent ~\$108/barrel; India basket ~\$117/barrel).
- Premium petrol accounts for only ~2–5% of total consumption.

### Key Points

- India imports ~85% of crude oil → high import dependence.
- Petrol (2010) and diesel (2014) officially deregulated.
- Industrial diesel is fully market-linked.
- Fuel prices vary across states due to VAT differences.
- OMCs use price smoothing to control inflation.
- Premium fuels are a small share of total fuel consumption.

# India's Iran stance does fuel a foreign policy debate

A debate, for the most part civilised, is going on in India about foreign policy. The provocation for the debate is the ongoing Israeli-American war on Iran, now in its third week and India's response to it. I belong to the tribe of 'professional' diplomats. We consider ourselves experts with special skills to propound on foreign policy issues. It is true that we are trained to read between the lines and to research whatever issue occupies the attention of the international community at a given time. However, it is not as if we are born with a particular gift for foreign policy; the gift or expertise is cultivated over a period of time. Almost anybody can handle foreign policy with experience and exposure to the issues. Everyone has an opinion on foreign policy, and it would not be correct to dismiss those opinions as ill-informed or irrelevant.



**Chinmaya R. Gharekhan**  
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with America was in India's interest whereas the Bharatiya Janata Party at the time opposed the deal. Once in power, it went beyond what even the previous government had not agreed; it absolved the suppliers of nuclear reactors from any liability, for accident or defect in the reactors. Foreign policy often is, but should not be, influenced by the ideological orientation of the ruling party. If it is to adhere strictly to the objective of promoting national interest, it cannot afford to be too concerned about principles or rights and wrongs. At times, a particular position might offend our sense of justice or morality, but the government of the day will have to make an objective decision, even if it is not popular. Equally important, the government must explain to the people the rationale for its decision. In a democracy, this is extremely important. People, certainly the Indian people, are fully capable of understanding and approving or disapproving of the government's actions.

## Labels and policy

Much time and intellectual energy is spent on giving a label to foreign policy. The one currently in fashion is 'strategic autonomy'. By adding the word 'strategic', it sounds profound and gives the impression of a concept beyond the understanding of ordinary citizens. But then, why 'autonomy'? Why not 'independent'? Is not independence more precious than autonomy? P.V. Narasimha Rao used to say that Kashmiris can have as much autonomy as they want, but not independence. In any case, why give any label at all? How many countries have given adjectives to their foreign policy? If a name has to be given, just call it 'independent'.

The best definition of foreign policy was given by Jawaharlal Nehru in a letter to Einstein written a few weeks before India's independence. Foreign policy, Nehru wrote, essentially is selfish. The only principle it follows is the principle of national interest.

The Narendra Modi government is essentially following Nehru's foreign policy, that is 'selfish' foreign policy. Its approach to the Iran war seems to be based on a cold calculation that India has too much at stake with America and the Gulf states. America is India's largest trading partner, and India needs its support for state-of-the-art

technology, especially for developing India's defence capabilities. As for the Gulf countries, nearly 10 million Indians are working there. Their welfare is of overriding concern. They send hundreds of billions of dollars' worth of remittances back home. Collectively, the Gulf countries are a most valuable source for India's energy needs.

## Application of 'strategic autonomy'

These are valid considerations. Nevertheless, within the parameters of these factors, the government could and should have shown some 'strategic autonomy'. No harm would have been done if the assassination of Ayatollah Khamenei had been condoned or if the External Affairs Minister rather than the Foreign Secretary had signed the condolence book in the Iranian Embassy in Delhi. Since the Prime Minister did speak to the Iranian President to press for the safety of the 9,000-strong Indian community in Iran, would it not have been proper for him to also express condolences for the assassination?

His telephone conversations with the leaders of the Gulf states would surely have ensured their support to take care of India's citizens living there. The fact that Iran has allowed oil tankers destined for India safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz speaks not so much to the success of India's diplomacy as to the graciousness of the Iranians. Despite India's unfriendly attitude, Iran took a friendly approach towards India. In the final analysis, India needs to be on the winning side. The government has obviously concluded that the Israeli-American coalition will come out the winner and that Iran will be defeated or surrender.

There is also the question of the Prime Minister's visit to Israel (February 25-26, 2026), its timing more than the visit per se. It was evident from watching his address to the Israeli Knesset that he was deeply moved by the warm reception that was accorded to him by its members. His visit was a demonstration of the ideological affinity that he feels with Israel and, more so with its Prime Minister. That Israel and the U.S. were going to attack Iran any day was known to all those following such matters. The timing of the visit was unfortunate.

Let the debate continue.

## The two sides

The debate is argued between those who generally support the government's stand on the war, which began on February 28, and those who criticise it as weak-kneed or surrendering to the Americans, or as hostile to Iran, a close and civilisational friend. The deliberate decision not to condole the assassination of Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has come in for particular criticism.

Foreign policy is an instrument in the hands of the government to protect and promote the country's national interests. It follows that it is within the province of the government of the day to define what the national interests are and how to protect them. Some interests are *sui generis*, such as defending the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country. For a country such as India, the improvement in the standard of living of its citizens is an extremely important objective.

In a highly globalised and interdependent world, this task imposes on the government the duty to chart its policy with deliberation and calculation. A government led by one party may take one position whereas a government led by another party may take another. The same party may take one position when in opposition but might pursue that very policy when in power. The Congress-led government under Manmohan Singh decided that obtaining the nuclear deal

New Delhi's Iran policy may be influenced by US-Israel dynamics in the war

## KEY HIGHLIGHTS

### Context of the News

- Israel-US military strikes on Iran have escalated geopolitical tensions in West Asia.
- India's measured response has triggered debate over its foreign policy approach.
- Criticism over:
  - Lack of strong condemnation of actions against Iran
  - Perceived tilt towards US-Israel axis

### Key Points

- Foreign policy driven by national interest (realist approach)
- Key strategic considerations:
  - USA: Largest trading partner; technology and defence cooperation
  - Gulf Region:
    - Around 10 million Indian diaspora
    - Major source of remittances
    - Critical for energy imports
- India focused on:
  - Safety of Indian citizens abroad
  - Maintaining energy supply chains
- Debate on "strategic autonomy" vs "independent policy"
- Iran ensured safe oil transit via Strait of Hormuz despite tensions

### Static Linkages

- National interest as core of foreign policy
- Evolution: Non-alignment to strategic autonomy to multi-alignment
- Strait of Hormuz as a key global oil chokepoint
- Diaspora as an instrument of soft power

- Article 51: promotion of international peace and security
- Balance between realism and idealism in international relations

### Critical Analysis

#### Positives

- Protects core national interests
- Ensures energy security and trade continuity
- Prioritises diaspora safety
- Reflects strategic pragmatism

#### Negatives

- Perception of reduced strategic autonomy
- Possible strain on India-Iran relations
- Weakens image as an independent global actor
- Ethical concerns over silence on sensitive issues

### Way Forward

- Maintain balanced multi-alignment
- Strengthen engagement with Iran (energy and connectivity)
- Diversify energy sources
- Enhance diplomatic transparency
- Promote issue-based alignment rather than bloc politics

# Andaman and Nicobar Islands in Great Nicobar over land

On January 18 this year a Great Nicobar Island based online news portal, [www.nicobarlines.com](http://www.nicobarlines.com), published an important news item related to the mega-infrastructure project on the island that has been headline news across the country for many months now. This particular issue has, however, barely been noticed, leave alone creating anything close to even a ripple.

The report, "DEF-GNI Objects to Low Minimum Circle Rates Fixed for Villages of Campbell Bay Tehsil, Seeks Revision Ahead of Airport Land Acquisition", highlighted the grievances of the Great Nicobar's settler (non-tribal) community in the matter of the compensation being awarded for their land that is being acquired for the mega-project under the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement (RFCTLARR) Act, 2013. About 300 families of ex-servicemen were settled in Great Nicobar between 1969 and 1975 for which about 40 square kilometres were de-notified from the Tribal Reserve. The descendants of these settlers now form the majority of the population here. "The Dependents and Ex-Servicemen Forum for Equitable Negotiation, Compensation & Entitlements - Great Nicobar Island (DEF-GNI)", the report noted, "has raised strong objections to the minimum circle rates fixed for villages under Campbell Bay Tehsil, terming them unreasonably low and unjust."

**Inadequate compensation**  
At the heart of the matter is the low rates of compensation, ranging from ₹13 to ₹80 per square metre, they are being offered against the ₹1,370 - ₹20,500 per square metre offered in the Andaman Islands when land is acquired for tourism projects. The forum requested that the rates be fixed in a manner that ensures a minimum compensation of not less than ₹1 crore per acre of agricultural land to affected landowners.

The matter has also been raised regularly by the lone Member of Parliament (MP) from the



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Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Bishnu Pada Ray of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). In December, he had written to the Prime Minister and the Home Minister making a number of related points: that the land was being acquired from ex-servicemen settler families who were originally brought here by the government to serve strategic and national security purposes; these families had already faced two major displacements, one during the initial settlement and then again after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami; there were major procedural violations in the land acquisition process; there were serious deficiencies in the social impact assessment carried out for this land, and that compensation being offered should be ₹32 lakh per hectare as against ₹9 lakh being offered currently.

There are two things that stand out: first the claim makers – the MP included – are explicit that they, the settler families, are not opposing the project. Their only request is adherence to due process and ensuring that no family is left without land or livelihood.

The second is the deep contradiction at the heart of (un)democratic representation and politics here: the settler community and their representatives, while seen seeking fairness and justice over their own land, are also collaborating with the same authorities in alienating land, livelihood and the resources of Great Nicobar's tribal communities the Shompen and the Great Nicobarese) to make it available for the same project.

**Alienating tribal lands**  
In a process marked by serious substantive and procedural impropriety, nearly 84 sq. km of legally notified tribal reserve is sought to be denotified and handed over to project authorities. Everyone from local agencies such as the Andaman and Nicobar Tribal Welfare Department, to the local settler communities, to national level bodies such as the Union Ministries of Environment and of Tribal Affairs have been complicit.

Evidence of this can be seen in the near-complete absence of the Shompen in discussions, the pressure being exerted on the Nicobarese to "voluntarily" surrender their lands for the project, the public and vociferous support expressed by settlers and authorities, and the explicit violation of provisions of the Forest Rights Act, in which representatives of the settler community have signed documents freeing up tribal reserve land for the project.

## Pertinent issues being ignored

No one can deny the right of the settlers to adequate compensation. But what about the original islanders such as the nomadic hunter gatherer Shompen that is notified as a particularly vulnerable tribal group, a PVTG? They may not want compensation because they have no use for the money we offer. What about the Nicobarese who wish to return to their traditional pre-tsunami lands and settlements but are not being provided the means to do so? And what of the impact on lives, livelihoods and cultures of these communities that are completely dependent on the sea and the forests? What also of the pristine forests and unique biodiversity that will be lost forever?

This situation underlines multiple things at the same time. On the ground it highlights the stark nature of (un)democratic local politics as adjacent communities are forced into competition and conflict over land and resources. At the macro level, it highlights how local communities and rights to resources are only minor pawns in the larger geo-political and development agendas of the state, of its larger political economy, and indeed the rhetoric of national sovereignty and strategic autonomy.

The contradictions might not be visible to the local settler communities or perhaps they do not have the agency or the choice. The same surely cannot be said for the state, the nation and for society at large. There is much for us to think about and ponder over.

*The views expressed are personal*

## Static Linkages

- Right to property as a constitutional legal right under Article 300A.
- Directive Principles promote equitable distribution of resources (Article 39(b)).
- Role of Gram Sabha in safeguarding community rights.
- Concept of Social Impact Assessment in development planning.
- Sustainable development and intergenerational equity principles.
- Environmental protection under constitutional provisions (Article 48A, Article 51A(g)).

## Critical Analysis

### Positives

- Enhances strategic infrastructure and maritime security.
- Promotes regional economic development and connectivity.
- Potential employment generation.

### Negatives

- Inadequate compensation undermines trust in governance.
- Marginalisation of tribal communities, especially PVTGs.
- Possible violation of Forest Rights Act and due process.
- Ecological degradation in a fragile biodiversity hotspot.
- Social conflict between settler and tribal communities.

## Way Forward

- Ensure strict implementation of RFCTLARR Act, 2013 provisions.
- Conduct transparent and comprehensive Social Impact Assessments.
- Guarantee informed consent of tribal communities.
- Revise compensation based on fair and market-linked valuation.
- Strengthen implementation of Forest Rights Act, 2006.
- Balance development with ecological sustainability.
- Establish independent monitoring mechanisms for large projects.

## KEY HIGHLIGHTS

### Context of the News

- Concerns have emerged regarding land acquisition for the Great Nicobar mega infrastructure project.
- Settler families (ex-servicemen rehabilitated in 1969–75) have raised objections over low compensation rates.
- Compensation offered (₹113–₹180 per sq. metre) is significantly lower than rates in other island regions.
- Allegations of procedural lapses, including inadequate Social Impact Assessment (SIA).
- Nearly 84 sq. km of tribal reserve land proposed for denotification for the project.
- Concerns over exclusion of indigenous communities such as Shompen (PVTG) and Nicobarese.

### Key Points

- Land acquisition governed by the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013.
- Settlers demand revision of compensation to reflect fair market value.
- Issues of multiple displacement faced by settler communities (initial settlement and post-2004 tsunami).
- Tribal concerns include loss of traditional land, livelihood, and cultural identity.
- Potential violation of Forest Rights Act, 2006 due to lack of proper consent.
- Environmental risks include destruction of biodiversity-rich forests and coastal ecosystems.
- Strategic importance of the project linked to India's maritime security in the Indo-Pacific region.

Inequities arise between settler families and original islanders over land compensation for the Great Nicobar mega-infrastructure project

## Restoring rights

Adoptive mothers have the same rights as biological mothers

Courts with a tinge of judicial activism have expansively interpreted the Constitution to secure fresh rights for citizens, over the years. In the latest instance, a view that encompasses evolving social systems, and a keen feminist perspective, taken by the highest court in the land, has recognised maternity leave for working women as a basic human right. The Court ruled that adoptive mothers are entitled to 12 weeks of paid maternity leave, regardless of the child's age at the time of adoption, thus striking down a previous restriction allowing maternity leave only for women who had applied for adopting children less than three months of age. The judgment, delivered by Justices J.B. Pardiwala and R. Mahadevan, came in response to petitioner Hamsanandini Nanduri challenging this provision in the Maternity Benefit Act, recently replaced by the Code on Social Security. She also pointed out that the legal process of adoption itself took over three months to be completed. The judges observed that an adoptive mother had the same rights and obligations towards the child as a biological mother. Reading adoption as an 'expression of reproductive autonomy', the Court said that the emotional bond with the child has to be consciously nurtured through time, presence and sustained caregiving. "Adoption is an equally valid pathway for the creation of a family. It is not biology that constitutes a family of a mother, father, and children, rather, it is the shared meaning, responsibility, and emotional bonds that sustain such a relationship," it explained. Maternity benefit is extended to working women during the early phase of motherhood to support them financially and provide economic security without them having to depend on family members. This equally applies to biological and adoptive mothers. Further, the judges urged the government to legally recognise paternity leave as a social security benefit, noting that parenthood is not a solitary function performed by one parent alone.

The judges have, with one judgment, conferred equal rights to adoptive parents, and restored child rearing to a gender-neutral parenting paradigm. The patriarchal enabling system has feminised raising children, leading to it being undervalued or inadequately compensated, if it ever is. Nobel winner Claudia Goldin's work has identified that the gender pay gap often emerges with the birth of a first child. The top court has given India an opportunity to set right the inadequate laws governing maternity leave in adoption, and to a large extent, the gender imbalance in society. It is the duty now of the state to make sure that this progressive judgment finds effective implementation in every corner of the country.

## KEY HIGHLIGHTS

### Context of the News

- The Supreme Court of India held that adoptive mothers are entitled to 12 weeks of paid maternity leave, irrespective of the child's age at adoption.
- The judgment struck down the earlier restriction under the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 (now subsumed under the Code on Social Security, 2020) which limited benefits to adoption of children below 3 months.
- Delivered by Justices J.B. Pardiwala and R. Mahadevan.
- The Court recognised maternity leave as a basic human right linked to dignity, equality, and reproductive autonomy.

### Key Points

- Parity Principle: Adoptive mothers placed at par with biological mothers.
- Reproductive Autonomy: Adoption recognised as a valid form of parenthood.
- Child Welfare: Emphasis on emotional bonding and caregiving.
- Removal of Age Restriction: Earlier cap of 3 months declared arbitrary.

- Gender-Neutral Parenting: Court recommended introduction of paternity leave.
- Social Security Dimension: Maternity leave seen as part of welfare state obligations.

### Static Linkages

- Article 14: Equality before law.
- Article 15(3): Special provisions for women and children.
- Article 21: Right to life includes dignity and autonomy.
- Article 42: Provision for maternity relief.
- Concept of welfare state and social justice.
- Judicial review and constitutional interpretation.

### Critical Analysis

#### Positives

- Advances gender justice and equality.
- Recognises changing family structures.
- Strengthens child-centric welfare approach.
- Expands scope of Article 21 jurisprudence.

#### Challenges

- Limited applicability in informal sector.
- Potential financial burden on employers.
- Absence of statutory paternity leave framework.
- Implementation and compliance issues.

### Way Forward

- Introduce comprehensive parental leave policy.
- Extend benefits to informal sector via social security schemes.
- Provide state support/incentives to employers.
- Strengthen awareness and enforcement mechanisms.
- Promote gender-neutral caregiving norms.

# WhatsApp

deliberations, the platform agreed to several commitments that are aimed at improving user security and aiding law enforcement investigations," a senior Government official said.

Sources said the key measures discussed include:

- Assessing the feasibility of identifying and blocking device IDs involved in digital arrest scams to prevent repeat offenders from creating new accounts.
- Exploring protective features similar to those deployed by Skype.

- Ensuring retention of user data from deleted accounts for at least 180 days, as mandated by the IT Rules, 2021, to support law enforcement investigations.

- Strengthening technological mechanisms to detect and block harmful APKs and similar content.

- Expanding AI and machine learning systems to detect impersonation, abuse of official logos and synthetic or AI-generated content.

To prevent the use of logos and official insignia of law enforcement agencies, such as Delhi Police, Mumbai Police, CBI and ATS, WhatsApp is also learnt to have conveyed during the meeting that it has deployed logo detection and media matching systems that will compare profile photos and remove accounts engaged in impersonation.

The Union Home Ministry and Meta did not respond to requests for comment from *The Indian Express*.

According to the official, the representatives of WhatsApp conveyed that the platform is introducing several safety features similar to those on Skype, which is Microsoft's video-calling platform: more information on callers, warning signals for suspicious accounts and better detection of scam networks. WhatsApp has been asked to present a proposal on these measures within 30 days, the official said.

The platform has also been asked to submit a separate proposal within 45 days on the introduction of mechanisms to block device IDs involved in digital arrests, the official said.

"In a bid to curb the spread of malicious files, WhatsApp has been asked to strengthen its technological mechanisms to detect and block harmful APKs and similar content. They have been asked to develop safeguards to identify and mitigate prolonged scam calls commonly seen in digital arrest cases, with proposed technical measures expected within a month," the official said.

"The company assured the IDC that it continues to expand its AI and machine learning systems to detect impersonation, abuse of official logos, and synthetic or AI-generated content, with periodic progress updates to be shared going forward," the official said.

In typical digital arrest scams, fraudsters impersonate law enforcement officers on video calls with victims, claim that they are being investigated for serious crimes and coerce them to transfer large sums to various bank accounts to avoid arrest.

In June 2025, an investigation by *The Indian Express* uncovered how these scamsters move crores of rupees in minutes across banks and state borders using and reusing multiple accounts, or third-party accounts, which are difficult to trace. This newspaper also reported that 1.23 lakh cases of digital arrest, involving Rs 15,935 crore, were logged in 2024 -- almost thrice the number recorded in 2022.

With nearly Rs 3,000 crore estimated to have been lost to digital arrest scams overall, the Supreme Court took suo motu cognizance of the menace last October while expressing "grave concern" over the rising cases.

On November 28 last year, the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) issued a directive requiring application-based communication services, including WhatsApp, Telegram, Signal and Snapchat, to implement active SIM linkage for user access.

During the three-hour-long IDC meeting this month, the representatives of WhatsApp conveyed that they would implement the DoT directive within four-six months and submit an Action Taken Report (ATR), likely by March-end.

"This measure, known as SIM binding, mandates that these platforms can only be used with a specific, active SIM card, effectively eliminating anonymous or multi-device usage. The directive aims to strengthen user traceability and enhance compliance with national security and data protection norms," the official said.

"WhatsApp will also enhance its cooperation with investigative agencies, ensuring timely response to flagged signals relating to fraud networks, impersonation of law enforcement officers, and misuse of government symbols. The platform also committed to complying with updated IT Rules provisions related to identification and labelling of synthetically generated information, which is a growing concern in cases involving AI-generated or deep fake video calls used in digital extortion attempts," the official said.

- SIM Binding (DoT Directive):
  - Platforms linked to active SIM cards.
  - Ensures traceability and reduces anonymity.
- Safety Features:
  - Caller identification and warning signals (similar to Skype).
- Scale of Fraud:
  - 1.23 lakh cases in 2024.
  - Losses ~₹1,935 crore (2024).
  - Total estimated loss ~₹3,000 crore.

## Static Linkages

- Article 21 – Right to life and personal liberty (includes privacy).
- IT Act, 2000 – Cyber offences and intermediary liability.
- IT Rules, 2021 – Due diligence by intermediaries.
- CERT-In – Nodal agency for cybersecurity.
- RBI guidelines – Financial fraud prevention, KYC norms.
- Indian Evidence Act – Admissibility of electronic evidence.

## Critical Analysis

### Positives

- Enhances cyber fraud detection and prevention.
- Improves traceability of offenders.
- Supports law enforcement through data retention.
- AI-based monitoring tackles emerging threats like deepfakes.

### Concerns

- Privacy concerns due to SIM binding and tracking.
- Risk of surveillance and misuse of data.
- Encryption limits monitoring effectiveness.
- Implementation challenges in cross-border cybercrime.

## Way Forward

- Balance privacy and security through strong data protection laws.
- Increase cyber awareness among citizens.
- Strengthen institutional coordination (CERT-In, RBI, police).
- Develop international cooperation on cybercrime.
- Promote responsible AI usage in surveillance.

## KEY HIGHLIGHTS

### Context of the News

- The Union Home Ministry constituted an Inter-Departmental Committee (IDC) (Dec 2025) to address rising digital arrest scams.
- WhatsApp has been directed to implement technological and regulatory safeguards.
- The issue gained prominence due to increasing fraud cases involving impersonation of law enforcement agencies.
- The Supreme Court took suo motu cognizance (2025) due to large-scale financial losses.

### Key Points

- Device ID Blocking: Prevents repeat offenders from creating new accounts.
- AI-based Detection:
  - Identification of impersonation (police, CBI, ATS logos).
  - Detection of deepfake and synthetic content.
- Data Retention:
  - Mandatory 180 days retention under IT Rules, 2021.
- APK Monitoring:
  - Detection and blocking of malicious Android files used in scams.

# Political class must come together on the war, ruling party should reach out

THE INDIAN people can legitimately expect that the political class that governs on their behalf will rise above politicking whenever there is an extraordinary national difficulty. That there is now such a difficulty because of the Iran war is obvious. Its depth and gravity are growing as the war enters its fourth week. Now oil and gas production and refining facilities have been targeted, and that is a dangerous omen. The Arabian Peninsula states have not entered the war as yet, but they are indicating that their patience is running out.

There is no indication when the war will end. Its conclusion depends on many imponderable factors. But that the Iran war will have a substantial negative economic and perhaps social impact is clear even now. The political class cannot, therefore, adopt an ostrich-like approach.

Yet the political class, as a whole, has shown no desire, let alone urgency, to evolve a consensus to chart a way forward to address the national difficulty. The development of a consensus is the responsibility of all sections of the political class. However, the ruling dispensation has to take the lead and engage the Opposition. On its part, the Opposition must respond constructively. This is notwithstanding the coming state elections, which will be contested bitterly.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has spoken to his Gulf counterparts and,

once, to the Iranian president. External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar has been active in maintaining regular contact with his counterparts in Iran, Israel, and the Gulf countries. He has also visited Brussels, where he met with the leadership of the European Union (EU) and the foreign ministers of some EU member states. That would have given him an indication of what these countries were thinking about the duration and consequences of the war. What has not been publicly revealed is the government's interactions with the Donald Trump administration on the Iran war. Doubtless, the National Security Adviser, Ajit Doval, would also have activated his channels to discuss the war and its implications for the region and the world.

Have these conversations and information from other sources given an indication to the government about how long the conflict will continue and how destructive it is likely to become? The government should share these assessments, even if they are tentative and partial, with leaders across the political spectrum.

It is doubtful, though, that anyone can predict how much damage the war will do because Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu seems determined to expand its scope. That is compelling a very fraught situation.

As for its durability, only President Trump can decide the end



VIVEK KATJU

of hostilities. Israel will definitely fall in line with whatever decision he makes. The problem is that Trump is caught in the quicksand of West Asia, and there is no sign that he is aware of how close he is to getting bogged down. He may even now declare victory, though there is no indication, as yet, that he will do so. Perhaps he still wants the Iranians to cry "uncle" and do a Venezuela, but they are very unlikely to oblige.

How will Iran respond if Trump wants the hostilities to end? It has laid down conditions, which include reparations and guarantees that there will be no further attacks. These will naturally not be agreed to. The hardliners in Tehran may be inclined to carry on the struggle, but one former Indian official with almost two decades of working experience in Tehran mentioned to this writer that the pragmatists may resort to Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's example of agreeing to end the Iran-Iraq War in 1988. He then told his people that they would have to drink from the poisoned chalice.

But now the pragmatists have been weakened with the elimination of Ali Larijani, secretary of the National Security Council.

There are three distinct strands to the Iranian character: The impulse for "shahadat" (martyrdom), the elements derived from its civilisational ethos, which makes it what can be best captured by the Hindi word

"*pasik*" (refined and cultured), and pragmatism. These instincts continuously jostle in Iran. The decapitation strike in which Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and members of his family were killed, including his infant granddaughter, strongly revived memories in the entire Shia world of the martyrdom of the Prophet Muhammad's grandson, Imam Hussain, at Karbala.

This has naturally been felt most in Iran and has led to cries for revenge. In addition, the devastating American and Israeli airstrikes against Iran are also leading Iran to close ranks. This includes some of those who are implacably opposed to the Iranian system of *velayat-e-faqih*.

While these tendencies will propel some to continue to fight, there will be others who wish to pursue the example of Khomeini. What eventually matters is what the current Supreme Leader, Mojtaba Khamenei, decides. There are reports that he is incapacitated. That will make a decision to call for a halt to Iranian attacks even more difficult.

In sum, it is impossible to envisage the endgame — either in substance or in precise timing — of the Iran war. It is, therefore, prudent to plan for it to continue for many weeks, possibly months. That would mean that India's multidimensional national difficulties would not end early. Hence, the political class needs to come together to give confidence to the people.

The writer is a former diplomat

- Economic Impact:
  - Rising oil prices leading to inflation and fiscal stress.
  - Pressure on Current Account Deficit (CAD).
- Diaspora Concerns:
  - Around 8–9 million Indians in the Gulf region (MEA data).
  - Risk to remittances and safety.

## Static Linkages

- India's dependence on imported hydrocarbons
- Strait of Hormuz as a strategic chokepoint
- Concept of strategic autonomy in foreign policy
- Evolution from non-alignment to multi-alignment

- Impact of oil prices on inflation and fiscal deficit
- Role of remittances in India's economy
- Shia-Sunni divide in West Asian geopolitics
- Balance of power and collective security

## Critical Analysis

### Positives

- India's balanced diplomacy enhances global credibility.
- Strengthening ties with multiple blocs such as the U.S., EU, Gulf, and Iran.
- Opportunity to diversify energy sources and accelerate renewable transition.

### Negatives

- High vulnerability due to oil import dependence.
- Limited influence in conflict resolution.
- Inflationary pressures affecting growth and welfare.

### Stakeholder Perspectives

- Government: Focus on stability, energy access, diplomacy.
- Consumers: Concerned about fuel price rise.
- Industry: Facing input cost pressures.
- Diaspora: Safety and employment concerns.

### Challenges

- Difficulty in predicting conflict trajectory.
- Balancing relations between Iran, Israel, and the U.S.
- Managing domestic economic impacts.

### Strategic Concerns

- Possible militarisation of key sea lanes.
- Weakening of global multilateral mechanisms.

## Way Forward

- Diversify crude import sources (Africa, Latin America).
- Expand Strategic Petroleum Reserves capacity.
- Accelerate renewable energy transition (solar, green hydrogen).
- Strengthen maritime security in the Indian Ocean Region.
- Build bipartisan consensus on foreign policy issues.
- Enhance diplomatic engagement with West Asia and global powers.
- Ensure safety of diaspora through contingency planning.

## KEY HIGHLIGHTS

### Context of the News

- Ongoing conflict involving Iran, Israel, and indirect U.S. involvement has escalated into a prolonged regional crisis.
- Critical oil and gas infrastructure in West Asia has been targeted, raising global energy security concerns.
- Diplomatic engagements by India (Prime Minister, External Affairs Minister, National Security Adviser) with Gulf countries, EU, Iran, and Israel indicate rising strategic concerns.
- Uncertainty regarding duration and intensity of the war, with potential expansion involving Gulf states.
- The conflict is expected to have economic, geopolitical, and social repercussions for India.

### Key Points

- Energy Security Risk:
  - India imports about 85% of its crude oil (Economic Survey).
  - West Asia accounts for a major share of India's oil imports.
- Supply Chain Disruptions:
  - Strait of Hormuz handles around 20% of global oil trade (IEA data).
  - Any blockade or instability affects global prices.
- Geopolitical Uncertainty:
  - Increased U.S.-Iran-Israel tensions reshape regional alliances.
  - Role of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries becoming critical.
- Diplomatic Engagements:
  - India maintaining strategic autonomy through multi-alignment.
  - Continuous diplomatic outreach to all stakeholders.

# An iftar party on a boat doesn't go against Kashi's spirit



MRINAL PANDE

THESE ARE few subjects on which all of India's communities, Hindus or non-Hindus, speak in one voice. One of these is Ganga mata, mother Ganga.

There was a furore recently when a member of the Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha in Uttar Pradesh filed an FIR against 14 young Muslim men alleging that they were holding an iftar party on a boat on the Ganges in Kashi, and polluting it by eating chicken biryani.

They were also allegedly seen by the (usually unreliable) bystanders throwing bones into the river. The police moved quickly and hauled in the men, all in their 20s.

One of the most beautiful verses on the Ganga, still sung during the Ganga Aarti at Har Ki Pauri each day, was written by the great poet Pandit Jagannath Shastri Telang, a poet in the court of Emperor Shah Jahan and a tutor of his favourite son, Dara Shikoh.

The poet was thrown out after he dared ask for the hand of the Badshah's 14th daughter, Lavangi, in marriage. Yet, as the emperor had already told the poet he could ask for anything, he found he couldn't break his promise.

The newly married couple ran away, finally reaching Kashi, where the pundits too spurned the poet for having married a "yavan kanya". They could not throw him out for fear of enraging the mighty emperor, but whenever the poet came up to them on the ghats of the Ganga, they would cover their faces and walk away.

According to legend, Telang asked Lavangi to come with him to his native Telang Desh, but she refused. Ganga is my mother, too, she said, and Kashi is my nagari. I will stay here.

So the couple sat on the topmost steps of Dashashwamedh Ghat and the poet called out to Ma Ganga to come up and take them both away. The people of Kashi, who loved theatrics, stood and waited.

Telang, composer of the moving paean to the river 'Ganga Lahari', began to recite the 52 couplets. They say that he sang — *dāntm-audāsyam yadi bhajasi bhāgirathi tadā nirādāro hā rodimi ka-*

*thaya kesām-īha purah* (Mother, if you too turn away from me, whose lap will I cry into?) — the river began to rise.

As he reached the end, Mother Ganga reached the lovers at the top steps and swept them away into her all-purifying lap.

That Kashi is now being swept aside by the roar of *sanatan sanskriti*, with non-Hindu men being accused of polluting the river, Kashi is the permanent seat of Lord Shiva, not a *sanatani* stronghold. Ganga, who is said to flow out of his matted locks, is all-forgiving.

Both she and Shiva repeatedly demonstrate a mastery of austerities and hearty playful laughter. Shiva dances in joy and also in sorrow. Ganga gives life and also accepts the bones and ashes of the dead and purifies them.

Tulsidas, who composed the poem that all *sanatanis* hold in awe, describes Shiva in Ramcharitmanas as an austere yogi, who is also a merry Bhoothnath (the God of all creatures, seen and unseen).

While Ganga purifies all without discrimination, Shiva wanders on the ghats with his team of naked and semi-naked *aghoris*, ghosts, *ojhas*, *joginis* and *jogis*. They drink blood and gorge on a bloody mix of *sattu* and meat from bowls made of human skulls.

Shiva joins his hands in merry greeting and laughs: *Tulsi betal bhoot saath liye Bhoothnath/ heri heri hasat hai haath jori jori ke* (Tulsi, the Lord of Ghosts arrives, with spirits and ghouls in his train/ Glancing around, they roar with laughter, clapping again and again).

That is the spirit of the Ganga, the heart of Kashi. How can a disputed video overwhelm this generosity of soul and 14 young men be dragged to jail, just for holding an iftar party on a boat?

As for the real issue of pollution, we, as citizens, and our representatives need to push aside this chauvinism and do something concrete about preventing the further degradation of the river, as holy and unholy trash and chemical waste make its waters hazardous for all.

The writer is former chairperson, Prasar Bharati

While Ganga purifies all without discrimination, Shiva wanders on the ghats with his team of naked and semi-naked aghoris, ghosts, ojhas, joginis and jogis

## KEY HIGHLIGHTS

### Context of the News

- FIR filed in Varanasi against a group of Muslim youths for allegedly holding an iftar gathering on the Ganga and causing pollution.
- The incident triggered debate on religious freedoms, communal harmony, and environmental protection.
- It highlights the contrast between symbolic concerns over pollution and the actual major sources of Ganga degradation (sewage, industrial waste).
- Raises questions on governance, rule of law, and selective enforcement.

### Key Points

- Ganga is a national river (declared in 2008) and holds cultural, ecological, and economic significance.
- Major pollution sources (as per CPCB):
  - ~70–80% from untreated sewage
  - Industrial effluents (tanneries, textiles, chemicals)
  - Solid waste and ritual offerings
- Legal framework:
  - Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974
  - Environment Protection Act, 1986
- Institutional framework:
  - National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG)
  - Namami Gange Programme

- Issue reflects:
  - Intersection of environment and communal sensitivity
  - Need for objective, evidence-based enforcement

### Static Linkages

- Article 14 – Equality before law
- Article 21 – Right to life (includes clean environment; SC judgments like Subhash Kumar case)
- Article 25 – Freedom of religion (subject to public order, morality, health)
- Article 48A – Protection of environment
- Article 51A(g) – Fundamental duty to protect environment
- Concepts:
  - Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD)
  - Point vs Non-point pollution sources
- Ganga Basin:
  - Covers ~26% of India's land area
  - Supports ~43% of population (Economic Survey data)

### Critical Analysis

- Environmental concern must be based on scientific evidence, not perceptions.
- Selective targeting can undermine constitutional principles of equality and secularism.
- Real issue of Ganga pollution lies in structural failures:
  - Inadequate sewage treatment capacity
  - Weak enforcement against industries
- Cultural-religious practices often become focal points while systemic issues remain neglected.
- Risk of communalization of environmental governance.

### Way Forward

- Prioritize sewage treatment infrastructure in urban centers along Ganga
- Strict compliance monitoring using CPCB norms and real-time data
- Ensure uniform and non-discriminatory enforcement of laws
- Promote behavioural change through awareness (eco-friendly practices)
- Strengthen cooperative federalism (Centre-State coordination)
- Integrate cultural sensitivity with environmental sustainability

# When AI enters law class, the teacher must change



G S BAJPAI

**L**AW SCHOOLS in India are on the brink of disruptive change. These shifts emanate from two powerful developments. First, the number of students in classrooms has dipped to almost half due to the removal of the attendance requirement stipulated in a recent Delhi HC judgment. Second, AI's use has impacted teaching-learning environments in schools across the country. It is bound to shake conventional methods of learning and practising law. It has already begun to make things easier for students in many ways. Teachers in law schools will soon find themselves on edge, as AI will perform certain tasks in a more structured manner. Students can now generate content on topics that a teacher is likely to cover in class. They find this output meaningful as it saves time.

AI began by taking over some preliminary stages of teaching (explanations, examples, summarisation, and practice questions). In the second stage, AI has begun to impact the value chain (learning, design, verification, feedback, professional identity, ethics). The third phase could involve replacing roles that teachers ordinarily play. Critics argue that AI may reduce the teacher's role in mediating knowledge. Students' reliance on the sharp, subject-specific outputs produced by AI tools has reduced their engagement in class and in collecting classroom material, which they now obtain through AI. This has affected traditional classroom interactions. A complete withdrawal of teachers is not yet visible, as all stakeholders are in a state of transition and confusion while exploring new roles and avenues.

The nuanced case analysis of combining dozens of cases to map single or multiple doctrines and jurisprudence in one exercise is now possible with advanced AI tools. In a recent workshop, we demonstrated that a deeper constitutional analysis of multiple Supreme Court decisions on a single issue can not only be done, but can also be presented through a remarkable display of data in tabular form, with both qualitative and quantitative mapping. The oft-cited concern about AI "hallucinating" case citations will diminish as these systems train on structured Indian case law and verified legal databases. Tasks such as contract drafting, pleadings, and standard notices are now generated quickly by AI tools. In many corporate legal departments and law firms, AI systems are no longer experimental. Law schools need to respond with urgency by integrating AI into academics.

Law libraries are losing prominence. Digitally adept students now rely on online platforms and engage with notes produced through targeted searches. While this improves efficiency, it raises concerns about depth of engagement, sustained reading, and the development of critical analysis skills. This is not entirely gloomy for the teaching profession. While the teacher's "lecturer" function may shrink, their roles as editor, verifier, coach, and ethics supervisor will grow. Teachers need to learn AI methodologies within their subject domains and deploy them as new teaching methods. They may now pitch from level two — presuming the content is already in students' hands — to encourage deeper and more comprehensive engagement with the subject matter.

*The author is vice-chancellor, NLU Delhi. Views are personal*

While the teacher's 'lecturer' function may shrink, their roles as editor, verifier, coach, assessment architect, and ethics supervisor will grow

## KEY HIGHLIGHTS

### Context of the News

- Law schools in India are witnessing declining classroom attendance following a recent High Court ruling removing mandatory attendance requirements.
- Rapid adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools is transforming teaching-learning processes in legal education.
- AI is increasingly being used for legal research, drafting, case analysis, and academic content generation.
- Concerns are emerging regarding reduced classroom engagement, changing role of teachers, and the future of legal pedagogy.

### Key Points

- Decline in Physical Attendance Removal of attendance mandates has reduced student presence in classrooms.
- Increased reliance on AI-generated notes and materials.
- AI in Legal Education AI assists in:
  - Case law summarisation and comparative analysis
  - Drafting contracts, pleadings, and notices
  - Generating practice questions and explanations
- Enables integration of multiple judgments and doctrines in structured formats.

- Impact on Teaching-Learning Shift from teacher-centric to AI-assisted learning models.
- Reduced classroom interaction and discussion-based learning.
- Increased efficiency but concerns over superficial understanding.
- Changing Role of Teachers Transition from lecturer to:
  - Facilitator
  - Verifier of AI outputs
  - Ethical guide
  - Mentor for critical thinking
- Institutional Impact Declining relevance of traditional law libraries.
- Rise of digital legal databases and AI-driven tools.

### Static Linkages

- Right to Education and evolving pedagogy under constitutional framework.
- Role of technology in education (Digital India, National Education Policy 2020).
- Principles of natural justice and legal reasoning in Indian Polity.
- Ethical dimensions in professional conduct (legal ethics, Bar Council norms).
- Knowledge economy and human capital development (Economic Survey insights).

### Critical Analysis

- Advantages:
  - Improves efficiency and access to legal knowledge
  - Enhances research and analytical capabilities
  - Supports personalized learning
- Concerns:
  - Decline in critical thinking and deep reading
  - Overdependence on AI outputs
  - Accuracy and reliability issues
  - Weakening of classroom interaction
- Challenges:
  - Lack of clear regulation for AI in education
  - Need for curriculum redesign
  - Digital divide

### Way Forward

- Integrate AI tools within formal curriculum
- Focus on critical thinking and case-based learning
- Establish ethical guidelines for AI usage
- Train teachers in AI-based pedagogy
- Promote blended learning models

# On GLP-1 drugs, match access with vigilance

**T**HE EXPIRY of semaglutide's patent in India marks a turning point in the country's public-health trajectory. Once accessible only to a narrow, affluent patient base, GLP-1 receptor agonists — best known through brands such as Ozempic and Wegovy — are set to become dramatically cheaper as domestic manufacturers introduce generic drugs at scale. As many as 50 brands are likely to become available, reducing the cost by at least a third to a fifth of the price point. In a country grappling with diabetes and an obesity epidemic, the prospect of wider access, particularly for middle- and lower-income patients, is an unequivocal gain. In conjunction with lifestyle changes, these drugs regulate Type-2 diabetes, aid sustained weight loss and lower cardiovascular risk, offering a multi-pronged intervention for metabolic diseases. At a time when India's healthcare system is overstretched, prevention through affordable medication could ease a mounting disease burden.

Yet, the very reasons that make these drugs transformative also make them susceptible to misuse. With companies working on their own versions, India risks an explosion of brands that outpaces regulation and clinical scrutiny. The drugs' reputation for rapid weight loss has already evoked interest among those who may not be medically eligible. GLP-1 drugs carry side effects and are not designed for casual or cosmetic use. There is also a deeper scientific concern: Global prescribing thresholds, such as BMI cut-offs, are based largely on Western populations and may sit uneasily in the Indian context, where metabolic risks develop at lower body weights. Monitoring of outcomes, adverse effects and long-term use in a population that differs significantly from those in which these drugs were first studied is crucial. An unregulated rollout could widen inequities.

The challenge, therefore, is to create necessary firewalls that ensure the advantages of easy access are not squandered. The Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) classifies GLP-1 medicines as Schedule H drugs. A valid prescription is mandatory for their procurement. In practice, however, India's over-the-counter culture often subverts procedure. Tighter prescription protocols, robust pharmacovigilance systems and clearer eligibility criteria are essential guardrails. Advertising, too, must ensure that a serious therapy is not repackaged as a lifestyle shortcut. CDSCO has already issued an advisory to manufacturers to that effect. If India can match affordability with regulatory foresight, it can set a global standard in equitable care.

## KEY HIGHLIGHTS

### Context of the News

- Patent expiry of semaglutide in India enabling entry of multiple generic manufacturers.
- Expected reduction in cost (approx. 20–30%), improving accessibility.
- GLP-1 receptor agonists widely used for Type-2 diabetes and obesity management.
- Rising burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) like diabetes and obesity in India.
- Concerns regarding misuse, regulatory gaps, and lack of India-specific clinical standards.

### Key Points

- GLP-1 receptor agonists:
  - Incretin-based therapy → glucose-dependent insulin secretion.
  - Reduce appetite and delay gastric emptying → weight loss.
- Public health relevance:
  - India among top countries with highest diabetes burden (IDF estimates).
  - NCDs account for ~60% of total deaths in India (MoHFW).
- Regulatory framework:
  - Classified as Schedule H drugs → prescription mandatory.
  - Regulated by CDSCO under Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940.

- Concerns:
  - Potential off-label use for cosmetic weight loss.
  - Side effects: gastrointestinal issues, long-term safety concerns.
  - Global BMI thresholds not fully suitable for Indian population.

### Static Linkages

- Article 21 – Right to life includes right to health (judicial interpretation).
- Article 47 – State duty to improve nutrition and public health.
- National Health Policy 2017 – focus on preventive and promotive care.
- Epidemiological transition – rise of lifestyle diseases (NCERT).
- Generic drugs – role in reducing healthcare costs (Economic Survey).

### Critical Analysis

#### Positives

- Improved affordability and access to advanced therapies.
- Supports preventive healthcare → reduces long-term disease burden.
- Strengthens India's generic pharmaceutical sector.

#### Concerns

- Risk of irrational and unsupervised use.
- Weak enforcement of prescription norms.
- Lack of India-specific treatment guidelines.
- Possible inequitable access across regions.

### Way Forward

- Develop India-specific clinical protocols (ICMR guidelines).
- Strengthen pharmacovigilance and post-market surveillance.
- Enforce stricter prescription compliance mechanisms.
- Regulate advertisements and prevent misuse.
- Integrate with national NCD control programmes.