



DAILY NEWS PAPER ANALYSIS

DATE - 16/06/2026

**SOURCE : THE HINDU & INDIAN
EXPRESS**

**CIVILS WITH AKASH
SECTOR 25 CHANDIGARH**

U.S., Iran reach deal to end war, re-open Strait

Preliminary deal signed digitally on Sunday, says U.S. V-P; in person signing in Geneva on June 19

Release of assets, reparations part of deal; will collect navigation fee in the Strait, says Tehran

Military operations including in Lebanon halted; American naval blockade on Iran also terminated

Stanley John

The U.S. and Iran have reached a preliminary agreement to end the war, lift blockades in the Strait of Hormuz and the Gulf of Oman, and launch substantive negotiations on Tehran's nuclear programme and the Western sanctions, the two countries announced on Monday. The agreement was signed digitally on Sunday, U.S. Vice President J.D. Vance said, while Iran and Pakistan said an in-person signing ceremony would be held in Geneva, Switzerland, on June 19.

U.S. President Donald Trump said during a media interaction in France, where he arrived on Monday for the G7 meeting, that Mr. Vance will lead the country's delegation for the signing ceremony. "The deal with the Islamic Republic of Iran is now complete... I hereby



A commuter flashes a victory sign in front of a banner that reads "Thank you Iran" near Beirut, Lebanon, on Monday. (AP/Reuters)

fully authorise the toll-free opening of the Strait of Hormuz, and... authorise the immediate removal of the United States Naval blockade," Mr. Trump earlier wrote in a social media post. "Ships of the world, start your engines. Let the oil flow!" he added.

Iran's Supreme National Security Council confirmed that Tehran and Washington had finalised the text of the "historic

deal of understanding" on ending the war, while its Foreign Ministry said releasing frozen assets and paying war reparations were "essential" parts of the deal. "The American side has committed to taking measures in both areas," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Raminollah Raqi said at a press briefing on Monday, Tehran would not collect tolls from ships but fees for navigation ser-

Vessels cautious despite Trump's announcement

GENEVA While U.S. President Donald Trump on Monday said he had authorised the re-opening of the Strait of Hormuz and the removal of the U.S. blockade while announcing the deal with Iran, data suggested that traffic through the Strait remained limited. **in PAGE 4**

VICES and environmental upkeep would be charged, the Ministry added. "We have always maintained that we do not seek to collect transit tolls, but fees for navigation services, environmental protection, ship insurance and other necessary services will be charged," Mr. Raqi said on Monday. "Under the agreements reached, the war and military operations on all

Modi welcomes deal, expresses hope for stability

LONDON Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday welcomed the agreement between Iran and the U.S. to end the conflict in West Asia and expressed hope that the deal would restore peace and stability in the region while ensuring freedom of navigation. **in PAGE 4**

fronts, including Lebanon, are ended immediately and permanently. Furthermore, the naval blockade against Iran is terminated immediately and completely," read a statement issued by the Council Secretariat, which doesn't say anything about the Strait of Hormuz. Talks for a final agreement, which would involve Iran's nuclear programme and sanctions, "will be

postponed until after the other side has implemented its commitments under the memorandum", the secretariat added.

U.S. officials say the deal would extend the ceasefire by 60 days during which time talks on the core issues would be held. Iran took control of the Strait, a critical waterway connecting the Persian Gulf with the Arabian Sea, after the U.S. and Israel launched the war on February 28. Mr. Trump announced a blockade in the Gulf of Oman of Iranian ports on April 12, after negotiations between the two sides in Islamabad failed to reach any breakthrough.

"This Great Deal will bring Peace and Security to the whole Region. With the opening of the Strait upon the signing of the Deal on Friday, for purposes of nine removal, oil will flow on both ends again for the Region, and the World!" Mr. Trump wrote

in another post.

He said on Monday evening that "ships are starting to move, many loaded up with oil, out of the Strait of Hormuz."

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also confirmed the agreement, adding that "both sides have declared the immediate and permanent termination of military operations on all fronts, including in Lebanon."

Iran's Mehr news agency reported that the deal would see release of \$24 billion in frozen Iranian assets during the 60-day negotiation period. But U.S. officials, including Mr. Trump and Mr. Vance, have insisted that no cash would be paid to Iran upon signing the agreement.

The report also claimed final negotiations would not begin until half of the frozen assets are released and the blockade is lifted. The final text of the agreement is yet to be released.

- Inflation
- Shipping costs

- Stability in the region supports uninterrupted trade and energy supplies.

Static Linkages

- International straits used for navigation are governed by the principle of transit passage under UNCLOS.
- Maritime chokepoints significantly influence global trade and energy security.
- Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPR) help countries manage disruptions in crude oil supply.
- Energy security involves availability, accessibility, affordability, and sustainability of energy resources.
- West Asia remains crucial for India's:
 - Energy imports
 - Diaspora interests
 - Maritime security
 - Trade connectivity

Critical Analysis

Positives

- Reduces geopolitical tensions in West Asia.
- Improves global energy market stability.
- Lowers shipping and insurance costs.
- Enhances security of maritime trade routes.
- Supports diplomatic engagement on nuclear issues.

Concerns

- Final agreement details remain unclear.
- Trust deficit between parties persists.
- Uncertainty regarding sanctions relief.
- Risk of future disruptions by state and non-state actors.
- Challenges in implementation and verification of commitments.

Stakeholders

- Iran: Sanctions relief and economic recovery.
- United States: Regional stability and nuclear oversight.
- India: Energy security and safe maritime trade.
- Gulf Countries: Stability in energy exports.
- Global Shipping Industry: Reduction in operational risks.

Way Forward

- Ensure transparent implementation of the agreement.
- Strengthen international maritime security cooperation.
- Promote diplomatic resolution of nuclear disputes.
- Enhance monitoring through international verification mechanisms.
- Diversify India's energy import basket.
- Expand Strategic Petroleum Reserves.
- Accelerate renewable energy and green hydrogen initiatives.
- Uphold freedom of navigation in accordance with international law.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS:

Context of the News

- The United States and Iran have reached a preliminary agreement to end the ongoing conflict in West Asia.
- The agreement provides for:
 - Immediate cessation of military operations.
 - Removal of the U.S. naval blockade.
 - Reopening of the Strait of Hormuz and Gulf of Oman for commercial shipping.
 - Future negotiations on Iran's nuclear programme and sanctions.
- India welcomed the agreement, emphasizing regional stability, peace, and freedom of navigation.
- The development is significant due to the strategic importance of the Strait of Hormuz in global energy trade.

Key Points

Agreement Provisions

- Immediate ceasefire between the U.S. and Iran.
- Reopening of maritime routes through the Strait of Hormuz.
- Removal of restrictions on commercial shipping.
- Proposed negotiations on:
 - Iran's nuclear programme.
 - Sanctions relief.
 - Frozen Iranian assets.

Strait of Hormuz

- Located between Iran and Oman.
- Connects:
 - Persian Gulf
 - Gulf of Oman
 - Arabian Sea
- Carries nearly 20% of global oil trade.
- One of the world's most important maritime chokepoints.

Importance for India

- Major route for India's crude oil and LNG imports.
- Direct impact on:
 - Energy security
 - Current Account Deficit (CAD)

India's goods exports hit record high of \$45.2 billion in May; trade deficit widens

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

India's merchandise exports have jumped to a record high of \$45.2 billion in May 2026, 18% higher than \$38.3 billion in May last year, according to official data. Services exports rose 13.2% during the same period, to \$36.8 billion in May 2026.

However, despite this, India's overall trade deficit widened to \$10.5 billion from \$6.8 billion in May last year due to a sharper growth in imports of both goods and services.

Broad-based increase

The data released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry show that India's merchandise exports rose in May, due to higher ship-

Outbound expansion

Merchandise exports rose to an all-time high in May 2026 (in \$ billion)



Source: Ministry of Commerce and Industry

ments to Singapore, China, the U.K., Tanzania, Bangladesh, Germany, and South Africa, among others. This increase was also relatively broad-based in terms of sectors, with both petroleum and several non-petroleum sectors seeing strong growth in exports.

Within merchandise exports, the electronic goods sector saw exports growing 11.6% to \$5.1 billion in May 2026.

The organic and inorganic chemicals sector similarly saw exports grow by 12.7% to \$2.7 billion during the same period.

Notably, the engineering goods category saw exports jumping 24.5% in May 2026 to \$12.3 billion. The gems and jewellery sector, too, saw a growth in exports of 6.7% to \$2.5 billion in May 2026.

Overall, the data show India's non-petroleum exports grew 10.5% to \$70.7 billion in the first two months of this financial year.

Imports grow faster

India's merchandise imports jumped 22.1% to \$73.4 billion in May 2026. As a result, the merchandise trade deficit stood at \$28.2 billion in May this year, 25% higher than in May 2025.

Services imports, too, grew 14.1% in May 2026 to \$19.1 billion.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS:

Context of the News

- India's merchandise exports reached a record \$45.2 billion in May 2026, registering an 18% increase compared to May 2025.
- Services exports rose by 13.2% to \$36.8 billion.
- Despite strong export growth, India's overall trade deficit widened to \$10.5 billion due to a faster rise in imports.
- Data released by the Ministry of Commerce & Industry indicate broad-based growth across sectors and export destinations.

Key Points

Export Performance

- Merchandise exports: \$45.2 billion (18% growth)
- Services exports: \$36.8 billion (13.2% growth)
- Non-petroleum exports: \$70.7 billion during April-May FY 2026-27 (10.5% growth)

Major Export Destinations

- Singapore
- China
- United Kingdom
- Bangladesh
- Germany
- South Africa
- Tanzania

Sector-wise Export Growth

- Engineering Goods: 24.5% growth to \$12.3 billion
- Electronic Goods: 11.6% growth to \$5.1 billion
- Organic & Inorganic Chemicals: 12.7% growth to \$2.7 billion
- Gems & Jewellery: 6.7% growth to \$2.5 billion

Import Performance

- Merchandise imports: \$73.4 billion (22.1% growth)
- Merchandise trade deficit: \$28.2 billion
- Services imports: \$19.1 billion (14.1% growth)

Static Linkages

- Balance of Trade (BoT) = Merchandise Exports – Merchandise Imports.

- Current Account includes goods, services, income, and transfer payments.
- India traditionally runs a merchandise trade deficit but a services trade surplus.
- Export diversification improves resilience against global economic shocks.
- Manufacturing competitiveness depends on productivity, infrastructure, logistics, and technology.
- Higher value-added exports contribute more significantly to economic growth and employment generation.
- Foreign trade is a key determinant of Balance of Payments stability.

Critical Analysis

Positives

- Record export performance reflects improving global competitiveness.
- Strong growth in engineering and electronics exports indicates manufacturing expansion.
- Broad-based sectoral growth reduces dependence on a few export commodities.
- Services exports continue to strengthen India's foreign exchange earnings.
- Growing exports support employment generation and industrial growth.

Concerns

- Imports are growing faster than exports, widening the trade deficit.
- Continued dependence on imported crude oil and intermediate goods.
- Rising trade deficit may increase pressure on the Current Account Deficit.
- Global economic slowdown and protectionist trends may affect future export demand.
- Logistics and compliance costs remain relatively high for exporters.

Way Forward

- Strengthen export-oriented manufacturing.
- Promote higher value-added exports, especially electronics and engineering goods.
- Enhance integration with Global Value Chains (GVCs).
- Improve logistics efficiency through PM Gati Shakti and National Logistics Policy.
- Expand market access through Free Trade Agreements (FTAs).
- Reduce import dependence in strategic sectors.
- Support MSMEs through export credit and market access initiatives.
- Improve product quality, standards, and branding for global competitiveness.

India and Slovakia expand ties with a series of MoUs from defence to education

Sriram Lakshman
LONDON

India and Slovakia on Monday expanded their bilateral relationship with memoranda of understanding (MoUs) across defence, labour mobility, education, digital tech, and other sectors, officially branding their relationship a 'Comprehensive Partnership'.

"Held an excellent meeting with Prime Minister [Robert] Fico. This is indeed a very special moment for the India-Slovakia friendship," Prime Minister Narendra Modi said following bilateral talks in the Slovakian capital of Bratislava.

The Prime Minister is here for a little over 24 hours – the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister since the founding of Slovakia in 1993.

"Our talks covered cooperation in sectors like automobiles, railways, advanced manufacturing, and green technology. The India-EU Free Trade Agreement will also add momentum to our partnership," the Prime Minister said.

The countries committed to significantly boost two-way trade and investment across areas such as the automotive, electronic, and advance manufacturing industries.

The labour migration MoU signed seeks to facilitate mobility and the exchange of information between the authorities in both countries, as per the joint statement. The two sides also agreed to conclude a social security agreement in this regard.

An MoU between the Higher Education Ministries of the two countries



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with his Slovak counterpart Robert Fico at the Bratislava Castle in Slovakia on Monday. REUTERS

to facilitate academic and institutional linkages was also signed.

Mr. Modi and Mr. Fico agreed to promote the mobility of students and researchers – especially in STEM fields and humanities.

Action against terrorists

The formation of a Joint Working Group on Terrorism was agreed by Mr. Modi and Mr. Fico, with the two leaders "strongly" condemning the April 2025 terror attacks in Pahalgam.

They agreed to work towards the adoption of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism within the United Nations framework.

The two leaders called for action against terrorists, including those in the UN Security Council 1267 Sanctions Committee list and the sponsors of terrorism.

The two sides reaffirmed their support for multilateralism and called for UN reform, including the UNSC, with an expansion of the permanent and non-permanent seats on the Council.

Slovakia has continued to support India's quest for a permanent seat on the UNSC and "reaffirmed its constructive approach" to India's membership to the Nuclear Suppliers Group, as per the joint statement.

Defence and security cooperation would be "one of the key pillars" of the India-Slovakia relationship, as per the joint statement.

The two sides signed a Letter of Intent to promote defence cooperation – a move welcomed by Mr. Modi and Mr. Fico in their press statements. Through this framework, the governments would seek to collaborate more in defence technologies, defence industrial cooperation, capacity building, and research and development.

The two governments signed an MoU on digital technologies to provide structure to their digital cooperation, as they committed to deepening collaboration in AI, semiconductors and start-ups.

They also agreed to explore cooperation in emerging fields, including the Internet of Things and 6G standardisation.

Labour Mobility

- MoU signed on labour migration.
- Facilitation of skilled workforce mobility.
- Information-sharing on labour markets.
- Agreement to work towards a Social Security Agreement (SSA).

Education and Research

- MoU on higher education cooperation.
- Promotion of:
 - Academic exchanges
 - Research collaboration
 - Student mobility
- Focus on STEM and humanities.

Defence Cooperation

- Letter of Intent signed on defence cooperation.
- Areas of cooperation:
 - Defence technology
 - Defence manufacturing
 - Capacity building
 - Research & Development

Digital and Emerging Technologies

- MoU signed on digital technologies.
- Cooperation in:
 - Artificial Intelligence (AI)
 - Semiconductors
 - Start-ups
 - Internet of Things (IoT)
 - 6G standardisation

Counter-Terrorism

- Joint Working Group on Terrorism to be established.
- Condemnation of the Pahalgam terror attack (2025).
- Support for adoption of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT).

Multilateral Cooperation

- Support for UN reforms.
- Demand for expansion of UNSC permanent and non-permanent membership.
- Slovakia reaffirmed support for:
 - India's UNSC permanent membership.
 - India's NSG membership.

Static Linkages

- Article 51 promotes international peace and security.
- India supports reformed multilateralism.
- NSG is a voluntary nuclear export-control grouping established in 1975.
- CCIT was proposed by India in 1996 at the United Nations.
- Social Security Agreements prevent double social security contributions and ensure portability of benefits.
- Defence indigenisation is promoted under Atmanirbhar Bharat.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS:

Context of the News

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Slovakia, the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister since Slovakia's independence in 1993.
- India and Slovakia elevated bilateral ties to a Comprehensive Partnership.
- Several agreements were signed in defence, labour mobility, education, digital technologies, and counter-terrorism.
- Slovakia reiterated support for India's permanent membership in the UN Security Council and membership in the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG).

Key Points

Bilateral Cooperation

- Comprehensive Partnership established.
- Focus on strengthening political, economic and strategic ties.
- Enhanced engagement with Central and Eastern Europe.

Trade and Economy

- Commitment to increase bilateral trade and investment.
- Cooperation in:
 - Automobile sector
 - Electronics manufacturing
 - Advanced manufacturing
 - Railways
 - Green technology

- AI, semiconductors, IoT and 6G are critical technologies of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Critical Analysis

Opportunities

- Expands India's strategic footprint in Central Europe.
- Strengthens defence industrial cooperation.
- Enhances access to advanced technologies.
- Supports skilled labour mobility.
- Promotes educational and research partnerships.
- Builds support for India's global governance reform agenda.

Challenges

- Bilateral trade remains relatively low.
- Regulatory barriers may affect implementation.
- Defence technology transfer constraints.
- Delays in India-EU FTA negotiations.
- Need for sustained institutional coordination.

Way Forward

- Fast-track India-EU Free Trade Agreement negotiations.
- Operationalise defence cooperation mechanisms.
- Conclude Social Security Agreement.
- Expand semiconductor and AI collaboration.
- Strengthen counter-terrorism intelligence sharing.
- Increase academic and research exchanges.
- Promote joint ventures in manufacturing and defence.
- Deepen engagement with Central and Eastern European countries.

Technology drives India-France strategic convergence

It is a measure of the importance that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and French President Emmanuel Macron attach to the India-France relationship that they are meeting again in France, on the sidelines of the G7 Summit in Evian (June 15-17), barely months after Mr. Macron's visit to India for the India AI Impact Summit 2026 in New Delhi in February. During that visit, the two leaders jointly inaugurated the India France Year of Innovation 2026. In normal diplomacy, such announcements often take time to translate into action. It is therefore notable that Mr. Modi and Mr. Macron are already moving swiftly to advance bilateral technology cooperation. They jointly inaugurated the "Bharat Innovates" event in Nice (June 14-16), bringing together leading Indian start-ups and venture capital funds. Mr. Modi will then attend the VivaTech Summit in Paris on June 18, Europe's largest technology and start-up event, underscoring the growing India-France technology partnership.

The new pillars of partnership
The India-France relationship is constantly evolving and is consequently being updated by the two leaders who are committed to the cause. While the recently elevated Special Global Strategic Partnership has already included traditional areas such as defence, nuclear and space, it is the focus on tech and innovation that is now exciting for the relationship. This focus will include cyberspace, Artificial Intelligence (AI), health care, sustainable development, creative economy, education and research. These are new facets of the evolving and dynamic relationship and will no doubt take



Mohan Kumar
Former Indian Ambassador to France and now Dean/Professor at O.P.J.S. Indira Gandhi Global University

ties to greater heights. Tech and innovation has tremendous mutual advantages for both sides. France has some of the best state-of-the-art technology in aerospace, AI, robotics, biotech, health care, green tech and sustainable development, besides being a European hub for the digital economy. It is not hard to see how India can not only benefit from access to technology in these areas but also bring its own added value in terms of frugal innovation, start-ups, digital public infrastructure and biotech, just to name a few. The possibilities are endless. It must be hoped that the two tech summits – "Bharat Innovates" and the "VivaTech" – will enable the private sector on both sides to come up with substantive collaborative arrangements.

Defence, space and Africa
The two leaders are also expected to take stock of the special strategic partnership. There are a number of dossiers which can benefit from their political and strategic guidance. The first is certainly the idea of the co-designing and co-production of defence platforms which must be expedited. Progress is also desirable in emerging areas such as small modular reactors, joint satellite development and human flight programmes.

The potential for Franco-Indian cooperation in Africa has not been fully exploited and this must get the attention of both sides. This becomes even more important in light of the postponement of the India-Africa Forum Summit (May 2026) due to the Ebola crisis in Africa. The two leaders will doubtless exchange views on the ongoing conflicts in Ukraine and in Iran, which have

adversely and disproportionately affected countries of the Global South. Mr. Modi's Europe visit (June 13-18, 2026) also includes a state visit to Slovakia, the first-ever visit by an Indian Prime Minister to Slovakia since its independence in 1993.

Watching the 'D10 debate'
France, as the current chair of the G7, will host the G7 summit in Evian from June 15 to 17, 2026. It is difficult to imagine a G7 summit without India being invited, and Mr. Modi's participation is particularly important given the geopolitical turbulence of the present moment. United States President Donald Trump is also expected to attend it. While attention will naturally focus on the possibility of a Modi-Trump meeting, any interaction may not be a substantive one, given the G7 atmospherics.

More important is the evolving role of the G7 itself in global geopolitics. With the G20 having lost some of its momentum in recent years, discussions have resurfaced about expanding the G7 into a D10 – a grouping of 10 major democracies. Whether, and how soon, such a transformation materialises remains uncertain, but it is a development India will need to watch closely.

At the end of the day, two middle powers – India and France – which set great store by strategic autonomy, have a fundamental role to play in contributing to geopolitical stability and ensuring a smooth transition to a multipolar world. In that sense, Mr. Modi and Mr. Macron shoulder a significant responsibility.

The views expressed are personal

KEY HIGHLIGHTS:

Context of the News

- PM Narendra Modi met French President Emmanuel Macron on the sidelines of the G7 Summit 2026 in Evian, France.
- The meeting followed Macron's visit to India for the India AI Impact Summit 2026.
- Both leaders launched the India-France Year of Innovation 2026.
- They jointly inaugurated Bharat Innovates in Nice and emphasized technology-driven cooperation.
- PM Modi also attended VivaTech 2026, Europe's largest technology and start-up summit.
- The developments reflect the growing focus on technology, innovation, defence manufacturing and strategic cooperation in India-France relations.

Key Points

India-France Strategic Partnership

- Established in 1998.
- Elevated as a Special Global Strategic Partnership.
- France is among India's closest strategic partners in Europe.

Traditional Areas of Cooperation

- Defence cooperation.
- Civil nuclear energy.
- Space cooperation.
- Counter-terrorism.
- Maritime security.

Emerging Areas of Cooperation

- Artificial Intelligence (AI).
- Cybersecurity.
- Biotechnology.
- Healthcare innovation.
- Green technology.
- Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI).
- Education and research.
- Start-up ecosystem collaboration.

Defence Cooperation

- Rafale fighter aircraft.
- Scorpene-class submarines.
- Focus on co-development and co-production.
- Support for Atmanirbhar Bharat in defence manufacturing.

Space Cooperation

- ISRO-CNES collaboration.
- Joint satellite missions.
- Maritime surveillance.
- Climate and ocean monitoring.

Nuclear Cooperation

- Jaitapur Nuclear Power Project.
- Cooperation in Small Modular Reactors (SMRs).
- Clean energy transition support.

Indo-Pacific Cooperation

- Free, Open and Inclusive Indo-Pacific.
- Maritime domain awareness.
- Rules-based international order.
- Freedom of navigation.

Africa Cooperation

- Capacity building.
- Renewable energy projects.
- Healthcare initiatives.
- Development partnerships.

G7 and D10 Debate

- India participated in the G7 Summit as an invited country.
- Discussions continue on possible expansion of G7 into a D10 grouping of major democracies.
- Highlights India's growing role in global governance.

Static Linkages

- Strategic autonomy is a core principle of Indian foreign policy.
- Article 51 of the Constitution promotes international peace and security.
- Defence indigenisation strengthens national security.
- Technology transfer supports self-reliance.
- Nuclear energy contributes to energy security and low-carbon development.
- The Indian Ocean Region is vital for India's maritime interests.
- Multipolarity involves distribution of power among multiple centres.

Critical Analysis

Opportunities

- Access to advanced technology.
- Strengthening indigenous defence production.
- Expansion of innovation and start-up partnerships.
- Enhanced AI and digital cooperation.

- Greater Indo-Pacific cooperation.
- Support for India's strategic autonomy.

Challenges

- Slow implementation of projects.
- Limited technology transfer in sensitive sectors.
- High cost of defence acquisitions.
- Geopolitical uncertainties.
- Regulatory and intellectual property issues.

Strategic Significance

- Strengthens India's position in Europe.
- Supports diversification of strategic partnerships.
- Enhances India's role in a multipolar world.
- Promotes resilient supply chains and technology cooperation.

Way Forward

- Accelerate defence co-development projects.
- Expand AI and semiconductor cooperation.
- Strengthen cyber security partnerships.
- Promote joint research and innovation funds.
- Fast-track nuclear and space projects.
- Deepen Indo-Pacific and Africa cooperation.
- Institutionalize start-up and academic exchanges.

Politics over people

Pragmatism should guide India's demographic governance

In constituting a panel to study demographic changes in India, the Centre was guided by a paranoid mindset that saw devious conspiracies everywhere. The move gave shape and substance to a thought expressed by Home Minister Amit Shah: "unnatural demographic change" is a "very significant challenge to the present and future of any nation". In his Independence Day address in 2025, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the proposal, characterising illegal infiltration as a "premeditated conspiracy" to alter India's demography. The committee, chaired by retired Supreme Court judge Justice P.P. Naolekar, is to assess demographic changes, examine patterns of abnormal population shifts among religious and social communities, and recommend a time-bound solution. Mr. Shah linked demographic changes not only to sovereignty but also to national security, law and order, "profound changes in social structure and the preservation of tribal society". According to the government, demographic shifts have affected public service delivery, local governance, resource distribution and social cohesion, and Justice Naolekar has said that the panel will also formulate a system for the custody and deportation of infiltrators.

It is indeed true that the management of population dynamics is a key instrument of governance. On June 14, Switzerland held a referendum and rejected a proposal to cap the country's population at 10 million. Across the world, immigration has become contentious, with unregulated cross-border movement seen as a challenge to sovereignty. Population management, however, is not entirely about illegal infiltration, and securitising demographic trends at the cost of all adjacent factors could do more harm than good. As the recent experience with the SIR of electoral rolls shows, facts about people would be seen as valid only to the extent that these are established through documentation. If this exercise creates a large stateless population with no country willing to accept them, it could result in a demographic deadlock rather than a solution. The fear of communal profiling of Muslims is real, and the Centre should also seriously consider whether the human costs are worth it. India faces major demographic challenges. Rising life expectancy and falling birth rates are changing the composition of India's population. There are concerns of India losing its demographic dividend, as the quality of education and health, and the evolving dynamics of work, remain very challenging. Migration continues to shape India's trajectory. Partition created three sovereign countries out of a geographical and cultural continuum, and its legacy included voluntary and involuntary movement of people. Sensitivity and a long-term view should guide India's demographic governance.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS:

Context of the News

- The Union Government has constituted a High-Level Committee on Demographic Changes under Justice P.P. Naolekar (Retd.).
- The committee will:
 - Assess demographic changes across India.
 - Examine abnormal population shifts among communities.
 - Study impacts on governance, resource allocation, social cohesion, and national security.
 - Recommend measures regarding illegal infiltration and deportation mechanisms.
- The move follows concerns over demographic changes due to illegal migration, particularly in border regions.

Key Points

Committee's Mandate

- Assess demographic changes and population shifts.
- Examine implications for:
 - National Security
 - Public Service Delivery
 - Resource Distribution
 - Local Governance
 - Tribal Communities
 - Social Cohesion

- Suggest a time-bound policy framework.

Important Demographic Trends

- India is undergoing Demographic Transition:
 - Declining fertility rates.
 - Rising life expectancy.
 - Increasing urbanization.
 - Changing age structure.
 - NFHS-5 (2019–21): Total Fertility Rate (TFR): 2.0
 - Replacement Fertility Rate: 2.1
- Concerns:
 - Population ageing.
 - Future decline in demographic dividend.
 - Migration-induced regional imbalances.

Government Concerns

- Illegal cross-border migration.
- Pressure on public resources.
- Changes in local demographic composition.
- Border security challenges.
- Protection of tribal and indigenous communities.

Static Linkages

Constitutional Provisions

- Articles 5–11 – Citizenship.
- Article 14 – Equality before Law.
- Article 21 – Right to Life and Personal Liberty.
- Article 355 – Duty of Union to protect States against external aggression and internal disturbance.

Important Laws

- Citizenship Act, 1955.
- Foreigners Act, 1946.
- Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920.
- Census Act, 1948.
- Registration of Births and Deaths Act, 1969.

Important Concepts

- Demographic Dividend.
- Demographic Transition Theory.
- Migration.
- Population Ageing.
- Statelessness.
- Human Security.

Critical Analysis

Positives

- Facilitates evidence-based demographic planning.
- Improves welfare targeting and resource allocation.
- Helps identify illegal migration patterns.
- Strengthens national security and border management.
- Protects vulnerable tribal communities.

Concerns

- Risk of communal profiling.
- Documentation-related exclusion of vulnerable groups.
- Possibility of creating stateless persons.
- Human rights and due process concerns.
- Large administrative burden for verification exercises.

Way Forward

- Conduct regular Census and demographic surveys.
- Strengthen Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS).
- Ensure due process and constitutional safeguards.
- Improve border management through technology.
- Focus on education, healthcare, and skill development.
- Balance security concerns with humanitarian obligations.

Peace with peace

Preventive detentions are misused by the state in the name of order

In *Chander Pal Singh*, a matter involving preventive proceedings, the Allahabad High Court has simultaneously addressed a part of the criminal justice system that often receives less attention than ordinary criminal proceedings and the more overbearing reality of mechanisms designed to avert disturbances having gradually become instruments to deprive people of liberty. The state has the power to intervene before a crime occurs if it is reasonably apprehensive that a person is a threat to public order. However, it has acquired a habit of exercising that power routinely, resulting in detentions without any substantive criminal charge. The High Court's order was based, the Bench said, on a "highly irresponsible" deprivation of personal liberties in Uttar Pradesh, where police officers and executive magistrates were using preventive powers to incarcerate individuals on the basis of arguably minor apprehensions. In *Chander Pal Singh* as well, the petitioner, a physically challenged Dalit advocate, had been arrested over a petty dispute with a neighbour. The Bench said that between May 2025 and April 2026, around 2,500 people were reportedly subjected to preventive detention proceedings in Ghaziabad, despite a 2021 State policy to guide the exercise of such powers.

The guidelines in response are commendable; if implemented appropriately, they could reduce the use of preventive incarceration in neighbourhood and property disputes; require executive magistrates to justify their decisions; encourage constitutional challenges to unlawful preventive detention; and generate appellate scrutiny of the compensation framework. They may also snap at the heels of magistrates who cite unspecified "communal tensions" to jail protesters and who impose prohibitively unaffordable bonds for release. Further, even if the ruling does not directly impinge on the detention of activist Sonam Wangchuk under the NSA, it critiques the idea of using the excuse of maintaining peace to silence dissent and reminds the state that it still has a responsibility to maintain peace with peace. The ruling may also apply to workers and activists recently detained in New Delhi if held under Sections 126 or 170 of the BNSS without valid grounds. That said, implementing the ruling will be difficult. The Bench said that compensation for unlawful detention can be recovered from the salary of the magistrate concerned and/or police officer following a disciplinary hearing. However, the executive has been historically reluctant to penalise its personnel. Second, executive magistrates are part of the State administration and their careers may depend on maintaining 'peace' as the State defines it. Addressing these barriers could reform preventive proceedings in India.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS:

Context of the News

- Allahabad High Court in *Chander Pal Singh v. State of Uttar Pradesh* (2026) criticized the misuse of preventive proceedings by police and Executive Magistrates.
- The petitioner, a physically challenged Dalit advocate, was subjected to preventive action following a minor neighbourhood dispute.
- The Court observed that preventive powers are increasingly being used routinely rather than exceptionally.
- Around 2,500 individuals were reportedly subjected to preventive proceedings in Ghaziabad between May 2025 and April 2026.
- The judgment issued guidelines to prevent arbitrary deprivation of liberty under preventive provisions of the BNSS, 2023.

Key Points

- Preventive proceedings are meant to prevent anticipated breaches of peace, not to punish individuals.
- Personal liberty cannot be curtailed on vague or trivial apprehensions.
- Executive Magistrates must pass reasoned and speaking orders.
- Preventive detention should remain an exceptional measure.

- Excessive security bonds violate principles of fairness and proportionality.
- Compensation may be awarded for unlawful detention.
- Compensation can be recovered from responsible officials after due process.
- Judicial scrutiny of preventive proceedings has been strengthened.
- The judgment discourages using "public order" as a justification for suppressing lawful dissent.

Static Linkages

- Article 14 – Equality before Law.
- Article 19 – Freedom of Speech, Assembly and Movement.
- Article 21 – Protection of Life and Personal Liberty.
- Article 22 – Safeguards against Arrest and Detention.
- Preventive detention is constitutionally permissible in India.
- Rule of Law is a basic feature of the Constitution.
- Judicial Review acts as a check on executive arbitrariness.
- Principle of Proportionality in restrictions on fundamental rights.
- Natural Justice requires reasoned administrative decisions.
- Compensation for violation of Fundamental Rights recognized through judicial precedents.

Critical Analysis

Positives

- Strengthens protection of personal liberty.
- Reinforces constitutional safeguards under Article 21.
- Promotes accountability of police and Executive Magistrates.
- Encourages reasoned decision-making.
- Strengthens judicial oversight.
- Protects democratic dissent and peaceful protests.
- Reduces misuse of preventive proceedings in local disputes.

Concerns

- Weak enforcement of accountability mechanisms.
- Difficulty in recovering compensation from officials.
- Administrative reluctance to initiate disciplinary proceedings.
- Broad interpretation of public order concerns.
- Dependence of Executive Magistrates on the executive hierarchy.
- Limited monitoring of preventive proceedings.

Way Forward

- Ensure strict compliance with constitutional safeguards.
- Mandate detailed recording of reasons before preventive action.
- Conduct periodic judicial review of preventive proceedings.
- Strengthen training of police and Executive Magistrates.
- Establish independent oversight mechanisms.
- Implement time-bound compensation frameworks.
- Improve access to legal aid for affected individuals.
- Apply necessity and proportionality tests before restricting liberty.
- Publish regular data on preventive proceedings for transparency.

In West Asia pause, questions for India, especially about its place at the table

WRITE this from Srinagar on the eve of Muharram. Black flags wave in the summer wind through neighbourhoods in parts of the city. On the boulevard that overlooks the Dal Lake there towers a billboard-sized portrait of Iranian leaders staring down upon us. It is an unsettling backdrop against which to meditate upon the American-Iranian blueprint for peace being stitched. A deal that troubles rather than reassures.

US President Donald Trump can claim victory, as he has already done. And he deserves to: Purely on the basis of this day alone. The guns may fall silent. Markets will stabilise. Oil shipments through the Gulf will no longer navigate minefields. That is laudable. But the foundational facilities that set up this crisis — Iran's ambitions and proxies in the region, Israel's vulnerabilities and security obsessions, the Gulf's volatility and Trump's hubris — remain exactly as they were yesterday. What has been bought by this breathing space is time, masquerading as victory.

While this deal breaks a war, it doesn't settle the numerous questions that led to it. Lebanon remains on a wire. Hezbollah's future is still up for grabs. Israel has said it needs the freedom to operate. And the nuclear issue isn't solved, it's been kicked under the table — a 60-day delay where there should have been a resolution. A ceasefire suspends all these concerns. It doesn't answer any of them. And it can't prevent other nations from

drawing their own conclusions about deterrence and nuclear weapons and their utility.

We, in India, should feel deeply concerned. For more than two decades, New Delhi has invested in Washington — emotionally, politically and strategically — on the belief that when push came to shove America would remember just how significant that equity was and what it said about India's stake at the highest table. Today it did not. Indian soldiers lay vulnerable. Indian lives were risked and lost as the fight expanded. Indian commerce was rattled at a time when our economy depends more than most upon its engines running the livelihoods of millions of Indians we cherish in the Gulf reentered on a knife's edge. None of that registered in the fevered pitch of Trump's social-media world-view when it set down to negotiate a pause. Instead, America dialled blame. The very same deep state that has managed four decades of terror at India's border was delivered centrality in American decision-making without the slightest pause for how that upgrade would be perceived in New Delhi. Adversaries are blind. America is India's friend. But a friend who doesn't notice you are in the room anymore will hurt far worse than an adversary eventually. Because weakness invites aggression. Indifference allows it to flourish, free from question.

We have insulated ourselves comfortably to Pakistan being a



AMITABH MATTOO

falling state — failing, bankrupt, falling behind us as we steam past. The Iran crisis explodes that delusion of Pakistani irrelevance. For a nation that has bet its survival on fostering chaos is becoming today the interlocutor every foreign ministry is desperate to cultivate. This is not a momentary embarrassment for India. It is a serious long-term threat that demands our attention.

Which is why the hard questions will be the ones India will have to ask about itself. India has often prided itself on the ability to have multiple friendships across every spectrum: To talk to Tehran and Tel Aviv, to Riyadh and Washington, all at the same time, without apology or conditionality. "Strategic autonomy" was never a slogan. It was the art of keeping your options open when the world rarely favours India's preferences. Somewhere along the line, we started to mistake friendship with one group of countries as increasing our leverage with others. If anything, the Iran crisis should teach us the exact opposite: Proximity is not leverage, access is not influence, and the visibility that you or others have

access is not influence and the visibility that you or others have does not translate into strength if the country that needs to heed that visibility is not also willing to use it.

Proximity is not leverage, access is not influence and the visibility that you or others have does not translate into strength if the country that needs to heed that visibility is not also willing to use it.

And should we misjudge this moment, the price we will pay for it only increases. West Asia was where we bought our oil from not too long ago. It hosts one of the largest Indian diaspora popula-

tions on Earth. It represents a large source of external remittances. Our strategic gateway to energy. The route through which the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor will realise its potential. When turbulence hits West Asia, it doesn't rock the ship we sail upon. It impacts our balance of payments, our diaspora in the Gulf, our fuel prices and our influence in an Asian century that is being transformed as we speak.

And that is what makes Muharram far more poignant than the mourning on display. Humain lost at Karbala. He was surrounded. He was denied water. He died a brutal death on that field. Yazid won. But history remembers the lesson Karbala taught us: Hussein dared to fight and live a defeat so righteous that its memory outlasted every Caliph who came after him. Iran, over 14 centuries now, has internalised that lesson and passed it down to generations since: He who holds advantage today may not win the battle of tomorrow.

Celebrated victories have a tendency to turn bitter over time. The bigger history of this crisis has thus still to be written. Let us hope the more valuable gift the Iran-US deal leaves India is the questions it forces us to ask ourselves about our illusions, about our place at the table and about a world that will give us nothing that we haven't already secured for ourselves.

The writer is dean JSU, IIS and former member AGAD

- Maritime chokepoints significantly influence energy security.
- Energy security is linked to economic and national security.
- Diaspora serves as an important instrument of soft power.
- Multipolarity creates opportunities and challenges for middle powers.
- Balance of power remains a key principle in international relations.

Critical Analysis

Positives

- Reduced risk of immediate regional conflict.
- Stabilization of global oil markets.
- Protection of international shipping routes.
- Better environment for regional connectivity initiatives.

Concerns

- Nuclear issue remains unresolved.
- Regional proxy conflicts continue.
- Possibility of renewed escalation persists.
- Strategic uncertainty remains in West Asia.
- India's influence in crisis-management remains limited.

Challenges for India

- Ensuring uninterrupted energy supplies.
- Protecting Indian diaspora in the Gulf region.
- Managing relations with competing regional actors.
- Safeguarding maritime trade routes.
- Maintaining strategic autonomy amid great-power competition.

Way Forward

- Strengthen strategic autonomy and multi-alignment.
- Diversify energy import sources.
- Expand Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPR).
- Accelerate renewable energy transition.
- Enhance maritime security capabilities.
- Deepen engagement with all major West Asian stakeholders.
- Strengthen diaspora protection mechanisms.
- Fast-track IMEC and other connectivity initiatives.
- Build greater diplomatic leverage through economic and technological strength.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS:

Context of the News

- Recent military escalation involving Iran, Israel and the United States led to a temporary ceasefire/de-escalation arrangement.
- The agreement reduced immediate risks to global oil supplies, maritime trade and regional stability.
- Core issues such as Iran's nuclear programme, regional proxy conflicts and Israel's security concerns remain unresolved.
- The development has important implications for India due to its energy dependence, diaspora presence and strategic interests in West Asia.

Key Points

- Temporary reduction in regional military tensions.
- Stability of oil supplies through the Strait of Hormuz remains crucial.
- West Asia continues to be a major source of India's energy imports.
- The Gulf region hosts a large Indian diaspora population.
- Strategic projects such as the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) depend on regional stability.
- The crisis highlights the importance of strategic autonomy in India's foreign policy.
- Demonstrates limitations of relying excessively on any single strategic partner.
- Reaffirms the importance of India's balanced engagement with Iran, Israel, Gulf countries and the United States.

Static Linkages

- Article 51 promotes international peace and security.
- Strategic autonomy emphasizes independent decision-making in foreign policy.
- Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) are vital for global trade.

A 12-year story of peace and progress in Bastar



VISHNU DEO SAI

THE PERIOD under Prime Minister Narendra Modi has brought major changes in India. The country has made significant progress in security, roads, electricity, housing, digital services, and welfare schemes, in a golden period for India's security and development. Strong leadership has helped the country move forward with confidence.

For Chhattisgarh, this was a significant change. Bastar and other tribal areas earlier faced Naxalite violence, poor roads, and lack of basic facilities. Today, the situation is improving, with better security, roads, and welfare schemes bringing hope.

A decade ago, India faced terrorism and Left-Wing Extremism. The government took strong steps to overcome these challenges. The removal of Article 370 strengthened national unity. Efforts against Naxalism reduced violence, including in Bastar, and development started reaching neglected regions.

In Bastar, under Niyad Nellana Yojana, the benefits of 43 schemes from 17 departments reach 525 villages near security camps. These camps are being converted into Veer Shaheed Gundadhar Seva Deras for better service delivery.

Central government schemes have played a major role in the past 12 years. Under PM Awas Yojana, 2.43 lakh urban houses have been approved and 2.16 lakh completed in Chhattisgarh. PM Janman Yojana supports Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups with housing, roads, healthcare, and education. The Dharti Aaba campaign improves Anganwadi centres, schools, and local services in tribal villages.

Under the Swasthya Bastar campaign, 36 lakh people have been screened, 4.96 lakh examined, and 5,600 referred. Through Mahatari Vandan Yojana, 69 lakh women receive Rs 1,000 monthly, with over Rs 17,500 crore transferred.

PM-KISAN supports farmers. Krishak Unnati Yojana saw the procurement of 14.1 million metric tons of paddy in kharif marketing year 2025-26 with a Rs 33,431 crore support price and Rs 10,324 crore input assistance.

Under PM Surya Ghar, 61,000 homes have rooftop solar systems, reducing costs

and promoting clean energy. A single-window system improves ease of doing business and the investment climate.

The Bastar Olympics and Bastar Pandum promote tribal culture. Chitrakote is being developed as a major tourist site, creating jobs. Direct benefit transfers have ensured that money reaches beneficiaries without delay or leakage. Mobile connectivity and internet access in remote villages have helped people access government services more easily.

Bastar is also witnessing social and economic change through self-help groups, forest-based livelihood, and co-operative models. Minor forest produce collection and value addition are increasing income for tribal families.

Digital agriculture initiatives like Agri-Stack and Farmer Registry are improving transparency and reducing delays in subsidy delivery. Farmers are now able to access crop insurance, MSP benefits and soil health information more efficiently.

Skill development programmes are preparing youth for national and global opportunities. Training in new-age sectors such as IT and AI is helping young people become job-ready.

Better roads, electrification and drinking water supply are ensuring that basic needs are met in previously remote villages. Government schemes are reducing inequality between urban and rural areas.

The combined impact of central and state initiatives is visible in every sector of Bastar, which is emerging as a model of transformation. There is trust in governance, active participation by citizens and growing opportunities for the future. As India progresses towards Viksit Bharat 2047, Chhattisgarh remains committed to ensuring that the benefits of development reach every citizen.

The transformation of Bastar shows how focussed governance and welfare delivery can change lives in even the most difficult regions, creating a safer and more hopeful future for all. This progress is a result of sustained efforts, strong leadership, people-centric policies, and coordinated implementation across levels of governance.

The writer is Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh.

The combined impact of central and state initiatives is visible in every sector of Bastar, which is emerging as a model of transformation. There is trust in governance, active participation by citizens and growing opportunities for the future

KEY HIGHLIGHTS:

Context of the News

- Bastar region of Chhattisgarh, historically affected by Left-Wing Extremism (LWE), is witnessing improvements in security, infrastructure, welfare delivery and tribal development.
- The government has highlighted the convergence of security measures and development initiatives as a model for inclusive governance in conflict-affected areas.
- Schemes such as Niyad Nellana Yojana, PM JANMAN, PM Awas Yojana, PM-KISAN and PM Surya Ghar are being implemented to improve socio-economic indicators in tribal regions.
- The developments are aligned with the broader objective of achieving inclusive growth and Viksit Bharat 2047.

Key Points

Security and Governance

- Adoption of a Security-Development approach in LWE-affected regions.
- Expansion of administrative outreach and public service delivery.
- Improved connectivity and state presence in remote tribal areas.

Niyad Nellana Yojana

- Chhattisgarh Government initiative.
- Targets villages located near security camps.
- Facilitates convergence of welfare schemes through doorstep delivery.

Tribal Development

- PM JANMAN focuses on Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs).
- Emphasis on:
 - Housing
 - Healthcare
 - Education
 - Drinking water
 - Roads
 - Mobile connectivity

Women Empowerment

- Mahatari Vandan Yojana provides direct financial assistance to women.
- Promotes financial inclusion and social empowerment.

Agriculture

- PM-KISAN provides income support.
- MSP-based paddy procurement supports farmers' incomes.
- AgriStack and Farmer Registry improve transparency and service delivery.

Renewable Energy

- PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana promotes rooftop solar installations.
- Supports clean energy transition and energy security.

Livelihood Promotion

- Strengthening of:
 - Self-Help Groups (SHGs)
 - Minor Forest Produce (MFP) value chains
 - Cooperative models
 - Forest-based livelihoods

Digital Governance

- Expansion of internet and mobile connectivity.
- Increased use of Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT).
- Reduction in leakages and improved targeting of beneficiaries.

Static Linkages

- Article 244 and Fifth Schedule.
- Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA).
- Forest Rights Act, 2006.
- Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs).
- Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) mechanism.
- Aspirational District Programme.
- Inclusive Growth strategy.
- Security-Development Nexus in internal security management.

Critical Analysis

Positives

- Integrates security and development objectives.
- Strengthens last-mile governance.

- Enhances access to welfare benefits.
- Improves infrastructure and connectivity.
- Supports tribal livelihoods and income generation.
- Promotes transparency through DBT and digital governance.
- Encourages renewable energy adoption.

Challenges

- Incomplete implementation of PESA and FRA provisions.
- Risk of land alienation and displacement.
- Administrative capacity constraints in remote areas.
- Persistent digital divide.
- Dependence on welfare without adequate livelihood diversification.
- Need to balance security operations with civil liberties.
- Environmental concerns linked to infrastructure expansion.

Way Forward

- Strengthen implementation of PESA and Forest Rights Act.
- Enhance Gram Sabha participation in development planning.
- Promote community-led governance in Scheduled Areas.
- Expand forest-based value addition and tribal entrepreneurship.
- Improve healthcare and education infrastructure.
- Bridge the digital literacy gap.
- Strengthen monitoring through social audits.
- Ensure environmentally sustainable development.
- Focus on long-term livelihood generation alongside welfare support.

Iran-US framework pact is a relief. Work lies ahead

THE FRAMEWORK agreement between Iran and the US to negotiate a deal comes as a relief. Thousands of lives have been lost across West Asia in the last three-and-a-half months. Iran's closure of the Strait of Hormuz and the counter-blockade by the US triggered an economic shock, reminiscent of the Covid days. Oil prices have fallen, and stock markets worldwide have rallied after the announcement of the framework agreement. However, amid the optimism, it is important to remember that what has been agreed to is not a final deal but a framework to address longstanding issues. The prospect of a return to unrestricted shipping is heartening. But that, too, could take time to materialise and will depend on how safe shipping companies and insurers feel. Still, an open strait — through which roughly a fifth of the world's oil and gas passes — is good news. Its reopening, according to Trump, will depend on the signing of the final agreement, scheduled for Friday.

If the past two weeks are any indication, it takes very little for all sides to resume hostilities. Israel has already declared that it will not withdraw from Lebanon, while Tehran has demonstrated its willingness to call Tel Aviv's bluff and retaliate — militarily and by closing the Strait of Hormuz — if Lebanon is excluded from the terms of the ceasefire. Negotiating the details of Iran's nuclear programme, the release of frozen assets, sanctions relief, and securing the strait from future conflicts are even more difficult long-term challenges. For the US, a legitimate question, given that shipping through the Strait of Hormuz is only a return to the status quo ante, is: What exactly has Trump achieved? Republican hardliners have been opposing any deal short of a Carthaginian one, arguing that a compromise would weaken America's standing in the region. Israel, too, is deeply divided. Benjamin Netanyahu's far-right cabinet members have denounced the framework pact as a strategic failure. In Iran, hardliners within the IRGC oppose any agreement they perceive as surrendering leverage without securing meaningful guarantees, even as the country is in need of sanctions relief and reconstruction funding — both of which are unlikely to materialise without US acquiescence.

With millions of Indians working across the Gulf, thousands serving at sea, and households grappling with high fuel and LPG prices, the crisis is not a distant one for New Delhi. It should lend its support to the peace process. Without sustained engagement, the current pause risks becoming little more than an interlude in a cycle of instability.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS:

Context of the News

- The United States and Iran announced a framework agreement to address issues related to Iran's nuclear programme, sanctions relief, and regional security.
- The agreement follows months of conflict in West Asia that led to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz by Iran and disruptions in global energy supplies.
- The framework is not a final agreement; detailed negotiations are yet to be completed.
- Reopening of the Strait of Hormuz is expected to restore global energy trade and reduce economic uncertainty.
- The development is significant for India due to its dependence on Gulf energy imports and the large Indian diaspora in the region.

Key Points

- Strait of Hormuz:
 - Located between Iran and Oman.
 - Connects the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and Arabian Sea.
 - One of the world's most important maritime chokepoints.
 - Around one-fifth of global oil trade passes through it.
- Framework Agreement Covers:
 - Iran's nuclear programme.
 - Sanctions relief.
 - Release of frozen Iranian assets.
 - Maritime security and freedom of navigation.

- Concerns:
 - Agreement is not legally binding yet.
 - Opposition from hardliners in Iran, Israel, and the US.
 - Possibility of renewed regional conflict remains.
- Significance for India:
 - Stable crude oil prices.
 - Reduced inflationary pressures.
 - Enhanced energy security.
 - Protection of Indian diaspora interests.

Static Linkages

- Strategic maritime chokepoints influence global trade and energy security.
- Freedom of navigation is a fundamental principle of international maritime law.
- Energy imports directly affect Current Account Deficit (CAD) and inflation.
- Economic sanctions are instruments of foreign policy.
- Nuclear non-proliferation is a key component of international security architecture.
- Strategic Petroleum Reserves help countries manage supply disruptions.
- Diversification of energy sources reduces vulnerability to geopolitical shocks.

Critical Analysis

Positives

- Reduces risk of regional war.
- Stabilizes global energy markets.
- Restores confidence in maritime trade.
- Encourages diplomatic conflict resolution.
- Benefits major energy-importing countries including India.

Challenges

- Framework agreement is not a final settlement.
- Trust deficit between Iran and the US persists.
- Regional rivalries remain unresolved.
- Maritime security concerns may continue.
- Possibility of future disruptions cannot be ruled out.

Stakeholder Perspective

- Iran: Seeks sanctions relief and economic recovery.
- United States: Seeks regional stability and secure energy flows.
- Israel: Concerned about Iran's regional influence and nuclear ambitions.
- India: Focused on energy security, trade stability, and diaspora welfare.

Way Forward

- Finalize a comprehensive and enforceable agreement.
- Strengthen maritime security mechanisms in the region.
- Enhance international monitoring of nuclear commitments.
- Promote sustained diplomatic engagement among regional actors.
- Accelerate India's energy diversification efforts.
- Expand Strategic Petroleum Reserves.
- Strengthen diaspora protection and evacuation preparedness.