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IAS ENGLISH

The Oman CEPA, a new gateway for India's exports

Signed - 2025

1 Jun, 2026 - Force

India and Oman share one of the oldest trading relationships, with commercial and maritime links dating back thousands of years. From the movement of spices, textiles and frankincense to enduring people-to-people ties, trade has long been a cornerstone of this partnership. The India-Oman Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), which came into force on June 1, 2026, reaffirms and strengthens this historic relationship by providing a modern framework to deepen trade, investment and economic cooperation for the future.

India is amongst the top suppliers for Oman and bilateral trade has grown from \$8.94 billion in FY2023-24 to \$11.18 billion in FY2025-26, reflecting the growing complementarities between the two economies.

An expansion of India's trade ties

The CEPA comes at a time when India is actively diversifying its trade partnerships and integrating more deeply with global value chains. Following agreements with the United Arab Emirates, Australia, the European Free Trade Association, the United Kingdom, New Zealand and the European Union, the Oman CEPA further strengthens India's presence in a region that is central to its energy security, trade and strategic interests.

The CEPA offers significant opportunities for Indian exporters. Oman has offered duty-free access on 98.08% of its tariff lines, covering 99.38% of India's exports by value. Before the agreement, only 15.33% of India's exports entered Oman at zero duty under the Most Favoured Nation regime. The CEPA, therefore, provides an immediate competitiveness boost across a broad range of sectors. In textiles and apparel, India already commands a 43% share of Oman's woven apparel imports and 31% of knitted apparel imports. The removal of the existing 5% tariff will strengthen the competitiveness of Indian manufacturers against China, which is the other dominant supplier in this market. In the case of chemicals, India already supplies nearly 39% of Oman's inorganic chemical imports, making it



Anant Goenka

President,
The Federation of
Indian Chambers
of Commerce and
Industry (FICCI)

The agreement
boosts exports,
services,
investment and
professional
mobility

one of the leading players in the market. Tariff free access will only amplify this further.

Likewise, engineering goods will also benefit. Oman imports over \$3.7 billion worth of mechanical machinery and \$3.3 billion worth of automobiles annually, where India's market share is only 5% and 2%, respectively. Preferential market access under the CEPA can help Indian exports of engineering goods expand significantly and deepen their presence in Oman's infrastructure, construction and industrial sectors.

In pharmaceuticals, where India holds around 10% market share, the agreement's value lies not in tariff reductions but in regulatory facilitation. Products approved by leading international regulators will benefit from fast-tracked approvals, reducing compliance costs and accelerating market entry. As Oman's pharmaceutical market continues to expand, Indian companies will be well-positioned to capture a larger share. Duty-free access for products such as meat, eggs, honey, butter and processed foods will further strengthen India's already strong position. At the same time, sensitive sectors such as dairy, cereals, edible oils and several agricultural commodities have been kept outside tariff concessions, ensuring that domestic producers remain protected.

Streamlining procedures

Significant trade facilitation measures have been introduced. Oman will accept certificates issued by India's Export Inspection Council (EIC), eliminating duplicative testing and inspections, while also recognising India's organic (NPOP) and halal certification systems. There are dedicated sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) and technical barriers to trade (TBT) provisions, which will enhance regulatory transparency and cooperation, and streamlined customs clearance, including fast-track processing for perishables, which will reduce costs and improve export efficiency.

Another forward-looking aspect of the CEPA is its strong focus on services and professional mobility. Bilateral services trade stood at \$863

million in 2024, with India enjoying a surplus of nearly \$447 million. Yet, India's share in Oman's global services imports remains just over 5%, indicating substantial untapped potential.

Oman has undertaken binding commitments covering professionals in sectors such as accounting, engineering, information technology, health care, education and consulting. Oman also raises the quotas for intra-corporate transferees, facilitating greater mobility of Indian professionals and specialists. Provisions relating to AYUSH and traditional medicine further create opportunities for Indian health care and wellness services in the Gulf.

Strategic location advantage

Beyond trade statistics, the CEPA has a larger strategic significance. Oman occupies a unique position at the crossroads of the Gulf, the Indian Ocean and East Africa. Its ports at Sohar, Duqm and Salalah are emerging as major logistics and industrial hubs. For Indian businesses, Oman can serve not only as a destination market but also as a gateway to the wider Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region and East African economies.

The India-Oman CEPA once again demonstrates the evolution of India's trade policy from tariff negotiations to comprehensive economic partnerships encompassing goods, services, investment, mobility and regulatory cooperation. Its benefits will extend from textile clusters in Tamil Nadu and the gems and jewellery industry in Gujarat to engineering hubs in Maharashtra and Punjab, and from pharmaceutical manufacturers in Telangana to seafood exporters in Andhra Pradesh and Kerala.

The real test will now lie in implementation and utilisation. If businesses actively leverage the opportunities created by the agreement, the CEPA can significantly expand India's export footprint, strengthen economic integration with the Gulf, and support the country's broader ambition of becoming a globally competitive manufacturing and services powerhouse. For India, the agreement opens not only the Omani market but also a broader gateway to the Gulf and beyond.

The Oman CEPA, a new gateway for India's exports



The agreement boosts exports, services, investment and professional mobility

Updated - June 09, 2026 12:47 am IST

ANANT GOENKA

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 GIFT



'India and Oman share one of the oldest trading relationships' | Photo Credit: Getty Images/iStockphoto



India and Oman share one of the oldest recorded international partnerships, with maritime trade and cultural ties dating back over 5,000 years to the Indus Valley Civilization. This deep historical bond—rooted in ancient commerce, strategic defense alliances, and modern diplomacy—continues to shape their strong bilateral relationship. [Ministry of External Affairs +3](#)



Ancient and Medieval Maritime Trade

- **The Indus-Magan Connection:** Trade dates to the Harappan period. Ships sailed from ancient Indian ports in present-day Gujarat and Maharashtra to the region of Magan (modern-day Oman), trading cotton, beads, and ivory for copper, frankincense, and dates. [ThePrint +1](#)
- **The Roman Trade Route:** Omani seafarers mastered monsoon winds, serving as vital intermediaries who shipped Indian spices and textiles to the Roman and Arabian worlds. [ThePrint +1](#)
- **Cultural Crossings:** Cities like Sohar and Muscat became cosmopolitan hubs where Indian merchants lived, while Omani sailors established a massive footprint on India's Malabar Coast. [ThePrint +1](#)
- **Joint Anti-Colonial Efforts:** In the medieval and early modern eras, Omani rulers (like Imam Ahmad Bin Said) and Indian powers (such as the Marathas and Tipu Sultan) formed military pacts to counter the maritime stranglehold of the Portuguese. [ThePrint +2](#)

Muscat (Present-day Oman)

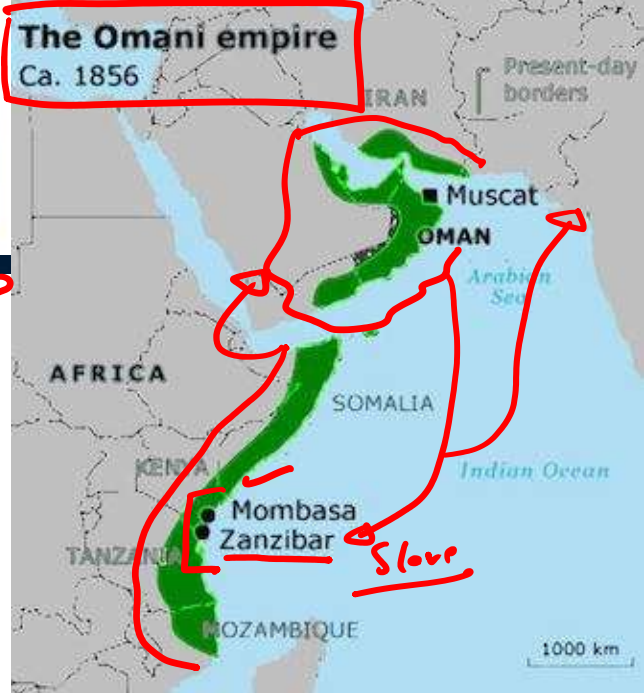
Located along key sea routes, Muscat has long been part of the India-Gulf maritime exchange, with evidence of sustained contact and later merchant communities along its coast.

Oman produces the world's most prized frankincense (*Boswellia sacra*), historically harvested in the southern Dhofar region and traded globally. In India, this aromatic resin—known as luban or kunduru—is highly sought after for Ayurveda, aromatherapy, and daily religious rituals. [Amazon.in +4](#)



Ind-Oman

The Omani empire
Ca. 1856



Gujarati merchants and financiers, particularly from the Kutch region, played a foundational role in the economic and administrative history of the Omani Sultanate. Operating through maritime trade routes, these business dynasties served as the primary bankers and customs collectors for Omani Sultans, helping fund their royal operations and overseas expansion. [The Times of India +2](#)

The Muscat-to-Zanzibar Shift

Gujarati financiers wielded such immense influence over the royal treasury that they persuaded Omani Sultan Syed Said (1791–1856) to shift his capital from Muscat to Zanzibar in the 1800s to capitalize on the booming spice and ivory trade. The Sultans heavily relied on these unofficial bankers for liquidity, managing caravan trade into the African interior, and administering ports. [Wikipedia +1](#)

The Indian diaspora in Oman is the country's largest expatriate community, comprising nearly 700,000 individuals and making up about 15-20% of the Sultanate's total population. Deeply woven into Oman's economic, medical, and educational sectors, they are highly regarded as a vital "living bridge" between India and Oman. International Journal of Humanities So... +2

↑ Energy → {Oil} / {Gas} -

↑
Bypass
Hormuz
Strait
↑

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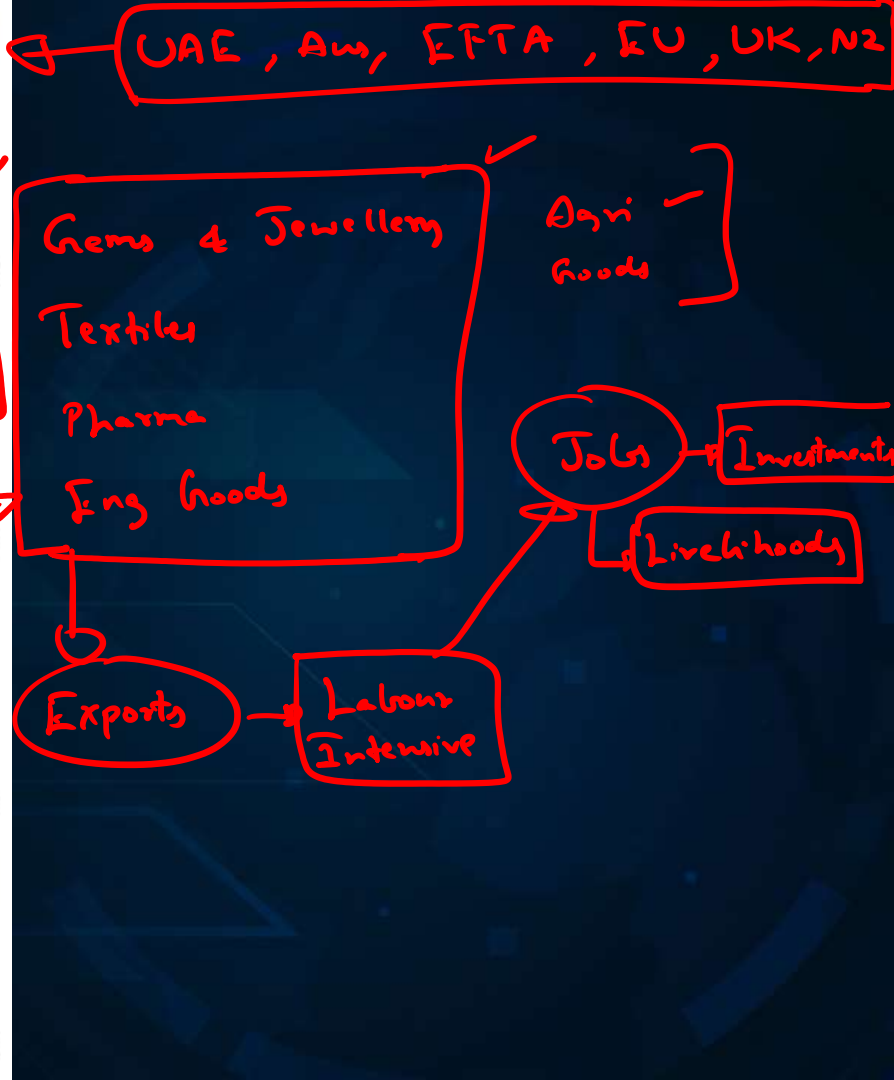
\$8 Bn → 11.1 Bn

\$25 Bn

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Non-Tariff Barriers

Protection ← Sensitive → Perishable

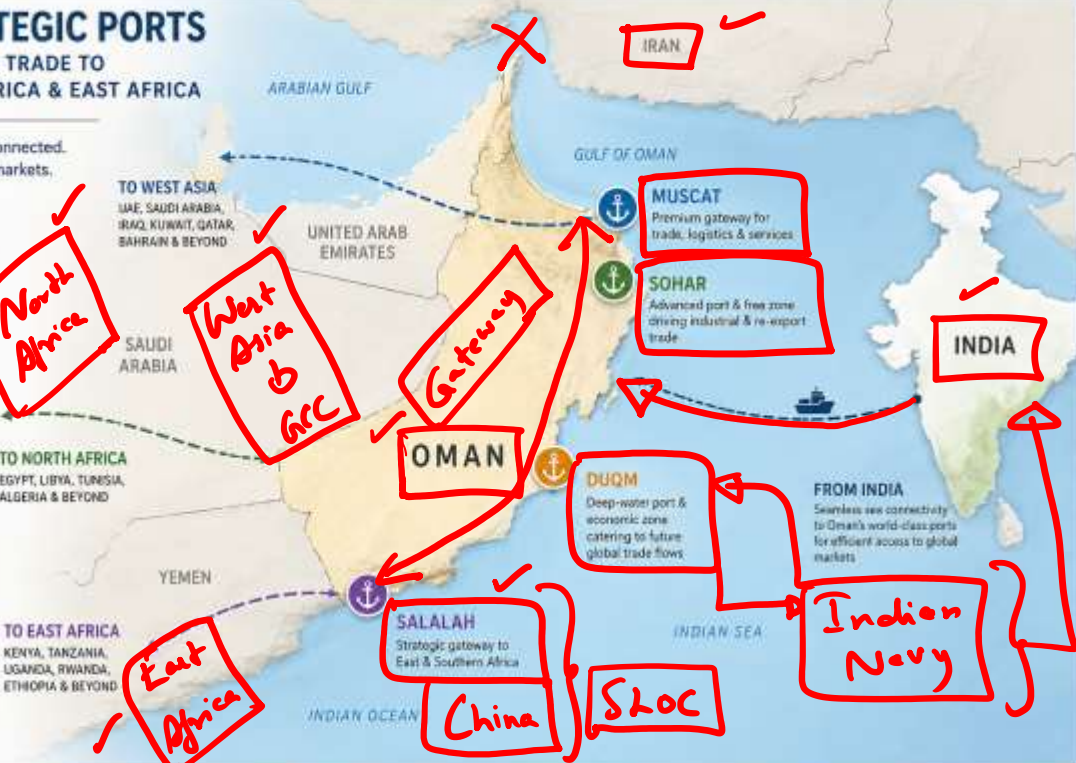
OMAN'S STRATEGIC PORTS

GATEWAYS FOR INDIA'S TRADE TO WEST ASIA, NORTH AFRICA & EAST AFRICA

Strategically located. Globally connected.
Powering India's trade to wider markets.

OMAN'S KEY PORTS

- MUSCAT**
The capital gateway
Connecting to
West Asia & beyond
- SOHAR**
Industrial hub of Oman
Linking India to
West Asia & Europe
- DUQM**
Future-ready hub
Connecting to
global markets
- SALALAH**
Gateway to Africa
Connecting India to
East & Southern Africa



STRATEGIC LOCATION
At the crossroads of
major global trade routes

WORLD-CLASS PORTS
Modern infrastructure,
deep draft & efficiency

MULTI-MARKET ACCESS
West Asia, North Africa &
East Africa within easy reach

TRADE ENABLEMENT
Supporting India's exports,
imports & re-exports

PARTNER IN PROGRESS
Strengthening trade ties,
Creating shared prosperity.

INDIA FAST-TRACKS \$4.8 BILLION DEEP SEA GAS PIPELINE

FROM OMAN TO GUJARAT TO STRENGTHEN ENERGY SECURITY AMID MIDDLE EAST TENSIONS

India is reviving the ₹40,000-crore Middle East-India Deepwater Pipeline (MEIDP) to transport natural gas directly from Oman to the Gujarat coast. The 2,000-km subsea pipeline aims to bypass the vulnerable Strait of Hormuz to ensure stable energy supplies, with state-run firms like GAIL and Indian Oil conducting feasibility studies. [YouTube · DD India · +1](#)



COST
\$4.8 BILLION
(₹40,000 CRORE)



TYPE
DEEP SEA
GAS PIPELINE



TIMELINE
5-7 YEARS



GOAL
ENERGY SECURITY &
REDUCE HORMUZ RISK

1990s



STRENGTHENING INDIA'S ENERGY FUTURE



RELIABLE. SECURE. STRATEGIC.

Mains Practice Question



Q. India and Oman share centuries-old maritime and commercial ties that have evolved into a comprehensive strategic partnership in the 21st century. In this context, examine the significance of the India–Oman Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) for India's economic and geopolitical interests. Also discuss the key challenges that may hinder the realization of its full potential.

(250 words; 15 marks)

Ind - Bangladesh

The trust deficit in India-Bangladesh ties

More than hundred days have passed since the Tarique Rahman government took charge in Bangladesh. However, contrary to early expectations from his leadership, India-Bangladesh relations have remained more or less the same as in the difficult months of the interim government.



Kallid Bhattacharjee

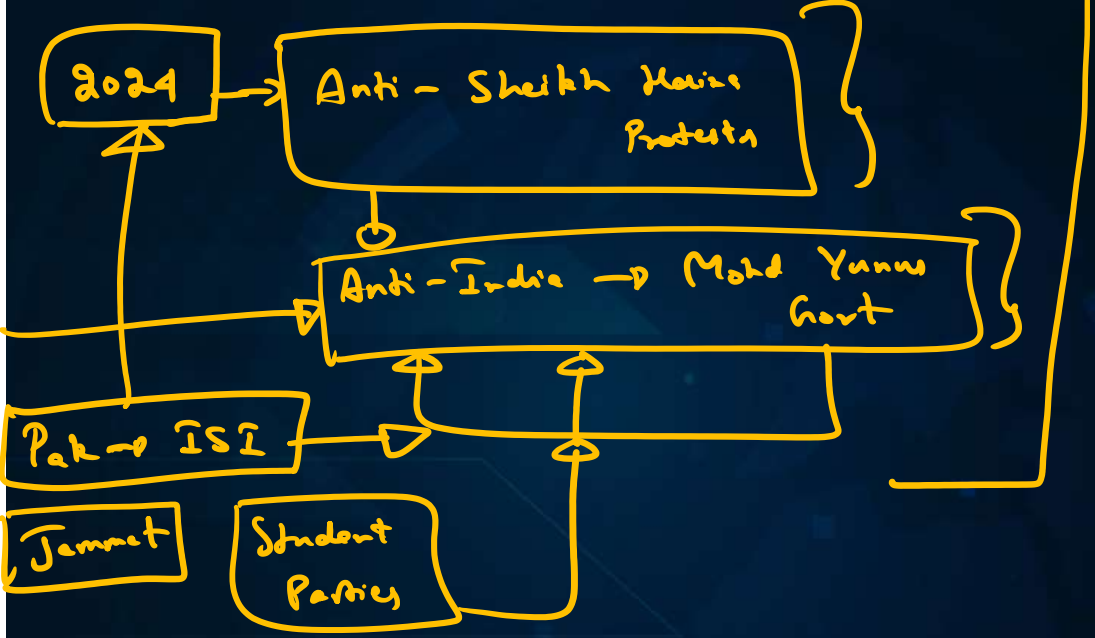
Actions, not rhetoric
India reached out twice before Mr. Rahman became the Bangladesh Prime Minister. The first outreach was by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar who visited Dhaka on December 31, 2025 to condole the passing of Mr. Rahman's mother, former Prime Minister Khusheka Za. The second time was through Foreign Secretary Vikram Nair, who carried Prime Minister Narendra Modi's invitation letter, and Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla who on February 17 participated in the swearing-in ceremony of Mr. Rahman. But sources in the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) say such gestures in themselves are insufficient. An influential segment within the BNP felt that as a goodwill gesture towards the new government, India should have reversed some of the retaliatory steps that it had taken during the interim government's rule under Muhammad Yunus. These steps included the restarting of shipments for goods from Bangladesh, full restoration of visa services including business and medical visas, and stopping the restrictive market access for Bangladeshi goods. None of these measures have been implemented so far, as per Dhaka. They argue that, by not reversing these decisions, India has not delivered any advance incentives to Mr. Rahman who will have to engage with the Jamaat-e-Islami and several anti-India student outfits before normalising ties with India. On its part, the BNP's veteran leaders have tried to smoothen the relationship by creating greater public acceptability of the position

Bangladeshi diplomats have pointed out that Dhaka expected less rhetoric on illegal immigration, and more focus on issues such as the renewal of the 1996 Ganga Water Treaty

that the presence of the deposed Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in India will not hold ties back, a departure from the headline stance that the interim government had taken. However, Dhaka feels that such attempts have not found appreciation from the Indian side. As proof they refer to the aggressive use of 'illegal immigration' in official communication from Delhi following the victory of the Bharatiya Janata Party in West Bengal and Assam. Bangladeshi diplomats have pointed out that Dhaka expected less rhetoric on sensitive issues such as illegal immigration, and more focus on issues such as visa restoration and the renewal of the 1996 Ganga Water Treaty. Dhaka had sent Foreign Minister Khulshar Rahman to Delhi on April 7-8 for a brief visit, to test the waters, where he met National Security Adviser Ajit Dorai and Mr. Jaishankar. However, the election campaign in Assam and West Bengal around Bangladesh-related issues and a flurry of interviews by exiled PM Sheikh Hasina have displayed that Mr. Rahman's BNP, despite winning a landslide majority in Bangladesh, has not managed to impress India. While a senior diplomat in Dhaka said that Bangladesh was assured that the language around State elections would not reflect New Delhi's foreign policy, the Ministry of External Affairs' strident position on illegal immigration have generated 'a sense of betrayal' in Dhaka's secretariat. According to reports, Mr. Rahman, sensing that the window for restoration of ties with India is not opening as per expectations, is in the final stages of considering visits to Malaysia and China that are likely to take place in the last week of June.

Bangladesh's dilemma
This turn to China however cannot hide the fact that it is incumbent on Bangladesh, as much as it is on India, to repair bilateral ties.

Bangladesh's ties with India remain broken because of the 2024 uprising and the subsequent interim rule whereas its ties with China, the U.S. and other players have prospered since August 2024. Further, a pragmatic assessment shows that without steady assurance from India on the main river Padma (Ganga), Bangladesh's other plans are not expected to proceed smoothly beyond 2026. River allies expert Aiman Nishat has stated that a delay in the renewal of the 30-year-old Ganga treaty will put the Ganges-Kobadak irrigation project in a challenging situation affecting vast portions of western and central Bangladesh. The lack of predictable water supply will affect the upcoming sowing seasons, hurting Bangladesh's economy that is already dealing with the crippling effects of the energy crisis because of the U.S.-Israel war on Iran. The compounded effect of these disruptive forces will increase pressure on the Tarique Rahman government that is already under criticism for its inept handling of the worst monsoon outbreak in the country that has claimed the lives of at least 600 infants. Critics have targeted the government for its senior handling of the health crisis as well as the growing incidents of sexual violence, which is a symptom of the breakdown of law and order in the country that is yet to make a recovery since the protests of August 2024. Rivals, including Sheikh Hasina's Awami League that are mobilising on the ground despite a ban, will be strengthened if Mr. Rahman fails to renew the Ganga river agreement with Delhi before the deadline of December 31, 2026. Such material factors on the ground call for pragmatism in both the capitals as the challenges will soon overwhelm Bangladesh, swerving it to instability, which again is not in India's immediate or long-term interests.



M

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F



INDIA'S PM MODI CONGRATULATES TARIQUE RAHMAN AFTER BNP'S DECISIVE BANGLADESH POLL WIN

Actions, not rhetoric

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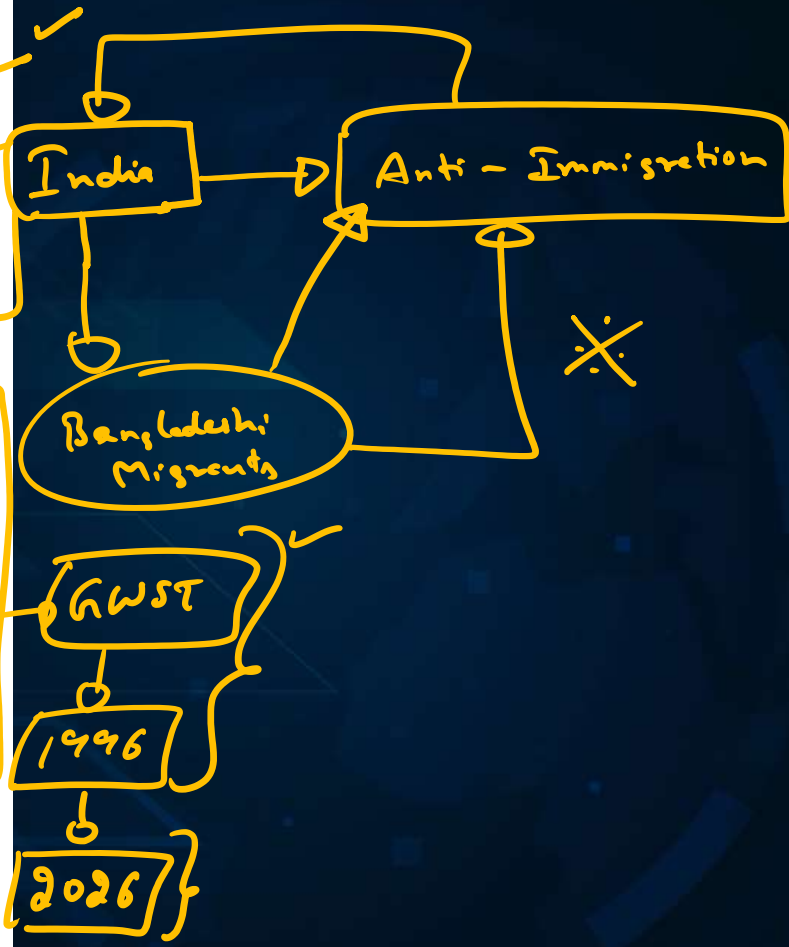


On its part, the BNP's veteran leaders have tried to smoothen the relationship by creating greater public acceptability of the position that the presence of the deposed Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in India will not hold ties back a departure from the hardline stance that the interim government had taken. Here also, Dhaka feels that such attempts have not found appreciation from the Indian side.

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Mains Practice Question

Q. India's relationship with Bangladesh has not seen any uptick despite the change in government in Dhaka. Evaluate the factors hindering the relationship and suggest a way forward. (250 words; 15 marks)

MoD



Economic
Civilian

Defence
Strategic

FRA

Nicobar project will enhance maritime security

Saurabh Trivedi
NEW DELHI

...tivity and enhancing India's presence in the Indo-Pacific region.

Four components
Elaborating about the project, the official said the project comprises four major components – an International Container Transshipment Port (ICTP), a joint-user greenfield airport and Naval Air Station, a modern township, and a power plant. Together, these projects are expected to transform Great Nicobar into a key maritime and economic hub while enhancing India's defence capabilities in the strategically significant Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

Located just 40 km from the Six Degree Channel,



The project comprises a port, airport, and power plant. AFP

one of the world's busiest sea trade routes connecting the Gulf of Aden and the Malacca Strait, Great Nicobar occupies a critical position along global shipping lanes. Government officials said the project

would reduce India's dependence on foreign transshipment ports and strengthen its ability to monitor and secure vital Sea Lanes of Communication.

The proposed greenfield airport, approved by the Union Cabinet and to be operated by the Indian Navy, is expected to significantly improve maritime domain awareness, logistics support, and rapid deployment capabilities. The airport is also expected to promote tourism, officials said. It is understood that five sites, including INS Baaz at Campbell Bay, were assessed before Galathea Bay was selected for the airport. Technical constraints, limited expansion possibilities, and environ-

mental concerns reportedly made the expansion of INS Baaz unviable.

Extensive studies
Addressing concerns over environmental impact and tribal rights, officials said the project has undergone extensive environmental assessments involving institutions such as the Zoological Survey of India, Wildlife Institute of India and the Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History. Of the island's total area, only 166.1 square kilometres have been earmarked for development, while more than 81% will continue to remain under forests, biosphere reserves, national parks and tribal conservation zones.

Under the Great Nicobar Island Development Project, India plans to invest around ₹13,000 crore to build a dual-use airport and runway for both civilian and Navy operations, said a senior official with the Ministry of Defence on Monday.

According to sources in the Ministry, the project, expected to be completed within five years, will be jointly funded by the Ministry along with the Ministry of Civil Aviation. The government views the initiative as a strategic investment aimed at strengthening maritime security, boosting regional connec-



GREAT NICOBAR ISLAND DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

India's Strategic Gateway to the Indo-Pacific

Strengthening Maritime Security • Boosting Regional Connectivity • Enhancing India's Presence in the Indo-Pacific



FOUR COMPONENTS OF GREAT NICOBAR PROJECT

- INTERNATIONAL CONTAINER TRANSHIPMENT PORT (ICTP)**
 - Deep draft port to handle mega container vessels
 - Reduce dependence on Colombo, Singapore and Port Klang
 - Transshipment & maritime logistics hub
- GREENFIELD AIRPORT + NAVAL AIR STATION**
 - Dual-use airport for civilian and Indian Navy operations
 - Enhances Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA)
 - Supports logistics and rapid deployment
- MODERN TOWNSHIP**
 - Residential, commercial & social infrastructure
 - Support for project workforce
 - Promote tourism and economic activity
- POWER PLANT**
 - Reliable power supply for the entire project
 - Support industrial, port and urban infrastructure

STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE

- Critical Position**
Near Malacca Strait and key chokepoints (Hormuz, Bab al Mandeb)
- Enhances India's ability**
to monitor and secure vital Sea Lanes of Communication
- Strengthens India's maritime presence**
in the Indo-Pacific and IOR
- Supports SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) Vision**
- Boosts trade, connectivity, tourism and economic development** of the Andaman & Nicobar Islands
- Improves logistics support, rapid deployment and India's defence capabilities** in the region

At the Confluence of Global Trade Routes, Great Nicobar is set to become a key maritime and economic hub, strengthening India's security, connectivity and leadership in the Indo-Pacific.

DEVELOPMENT WITH CONSERVATION

- Extensive environmental assessments by Zoological Survey of India, Wildlife Institute of India & Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology & Natural History
- Total Area of Great Nicobar Island - 921 sq km
- Area earmarked for Development: 166.1 sq km (= 18%)
- More than 81% will remain under:
 - Forests
 - Biosphere Reserve
 - National Parks
 - Tribal Conservation Zones

ECI

Foreign Nationals

Tamil Nadu

Foreigners who left India after voting in T.N. Assembly election come under scanner

Election Commission says it has constitutional duty to bar foreigners from voter rolls

Posted 07 Jan 2026 2 min read

SIR

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Central State law enforcement agencies have been working with EC to obtain data on foreign nationals who might have voted; investigators have also sought the Bureau of Immigration's help.

S. Vijay Kumar CHENNAI



RPA

In another case, a United Kingdom national of Indian origin was detained at the Chennai airport after admitting that he had voted in the Velachery constituency. He was handed over to the local police for further investigation.

'False declaration' "During the SIR, family members appear to have filled the enumeration form and signed it on behalf of the foreign national. This would amount to a false declaration. Proceedings will be initiated through appropriate channels against the individuals who voted and then left the country," the State government official said.

The first case of alleged illegal voting came to light in the second week of May when a couple were questioned by immigration officials at the Madurai airport while preparing to board a flight to Colombo. Questioned about the indelible ink marks on their fingers, they admitted to having voted in the election using their Electors Photo Identity Cards (EPICs). They were subsequently handed over to the Avaniapuram police.

After detecting around 40 cases of foreign nationals of Indian origin allegedly voting in the recent Tamil Nadu Assembly election, investigators have shifted their focus to those who returned abroad shortly after the April 23 polling.

According to official sources, Central and State law enforcement agencies are working with the Election Commission of India (ECI) to obtain data on suspected foreign nationals who might have voted in the election. Investigators have sought the assistance of the Bureau of Immigration, Government of India, in identifying foreign nationals who arrived in the State ahead of the election and departed within two to three days of polling.

The authorities are also verifying social media posts and videos in which individuals claimed to have travelled to Chennai, Bengaluru, and other cities, specifically to exercise

Final call: Any decision on the validity of the votes cast by foreign nationals in the Assembly election will have to be taken by the EC, a senior State government official said. FILE PHOTO

franchise. "It is possible to verify whether these individuals voted in the Assembly election. If they did, it would amount to cheating and violation of provisions of the Representation of the People Act, 1951. We are also examining how their names were not removed from the electoral rolls during the special intensive revision (SIR). If a voter is falsely shown to be residing in India, action will be taken against those responsible for making the false declaration," a senior State go-

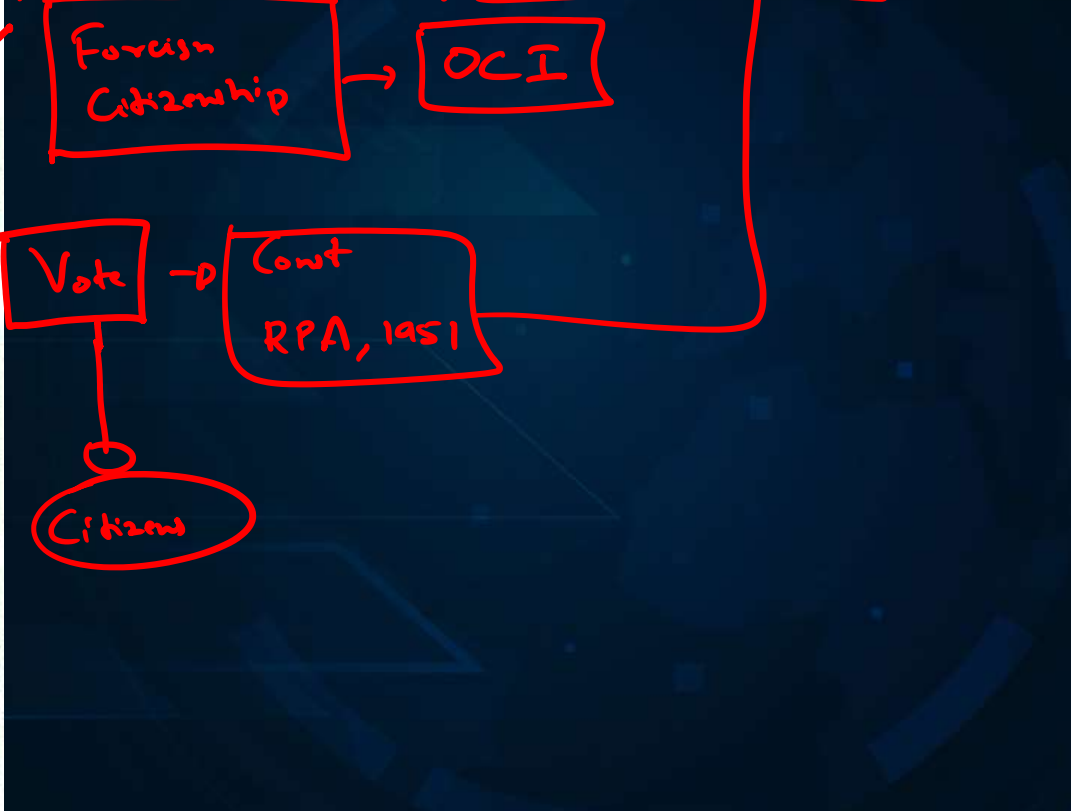
Foreign Citizenship

OCI

Vote

Cont RPA, 1951

Citizen



24 Indian sailors rescued from ship attacked by U.S.

Marivex, sanctioned by the U.S. last December, had earlier carried Iranian oil to India. U.S. Central Command says the tanker violated the ongoing blockade by attempting to sail to an Iranian port.

M. Kalyanaraman
Debayan Tewari
CHENNAI

Twenty-four Indian seafarers were rescued from tanker *Marivex*, a ship sanctioned by the U.S. for Iran links, off the south-eastern coast of Oman on Monday, after a U.S. missile strike.

The sailors sent distress messages to a Forward Seaman's Union of India (FSUI) office-bearer that the U.S. Navy had attacked the ship's engine room.

Audio messages from the seafarers to Manoj Yadav, general secretary of FSUI, received at 2 p.m. (India time) say: "This is Motor Tanker *Marivex*. Fire on board. Vessel is sinking. U.S. Navy attacked with missile our engine room. We have a hole at the bottom."

U.S. Central Command (Centcom) said in a statement that "U.S. forces disabled (attacked) an unladen oil tanker in the Gulf of Oman, June 8, after the vessel violated the ongoing blockade against Iran by attempting to sail to an Iranian port. An **F/A-18 Super**



Smoke rises from *Marivex*, off the coast of Oman, on Monday, after a suspected U.S. missile attack. **rsu1**

state of shock and most of them have lost their phones. They are expected to reach India in two days," he said.

'Tanker was empty'

A statement from the Centre said a "fire incident was reported today aboard the vessel *MT MARIVEX* at approximately 13:30 hours off the coast of Oman."

Earlier, at a news briefing, Opesh Kumar Sharma, director at the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, declined to comment on the cause of the fire. "The vessel has 24 Indian seafarers, all are reported to be safe," he said. He added the tanker was empty and located away from the Strait of Hormuz.

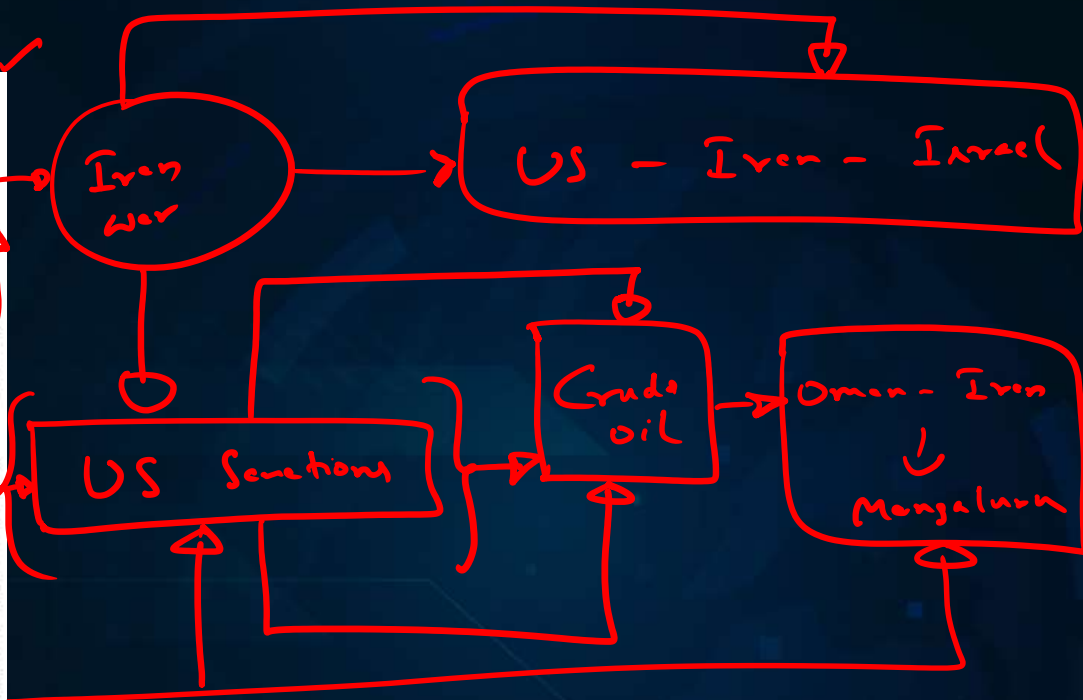
Marivex is a ship sanctioned by the U.S. government last December, as per shipping database Equasis.

Marivex was one of the few ships that exited the Strait of Hormuz on April 9 just when the ceasefire was declared. **It had then carried crude oil from Bandar Abbas in Iran to Mangalore.** *Marivex* has been operating in the "conflict zone", said Mr. Yadav.

ship pointing to a warship nearby. The audio messages say the lifeboats on one side of the ship were also hit in the attack and the other side lifeboats were not accessible due to a fire that had broken out.

Eventually, a **rescue operation** evacuated the **24 Indian seafarers**, who had moved to the front-end of the ship since the back-end of the vessel was on fire, through helicopter.

The seafarers are now on the Masirah Island in Oman, and safe, said Mr. Yadav. "All of them are in a



Hornet from USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) fired a precision munition into the ship's engineering and steering spaces after the crew failed to comply with directions from U.S. forces. *Marivex* is no longer sailing to Iran."

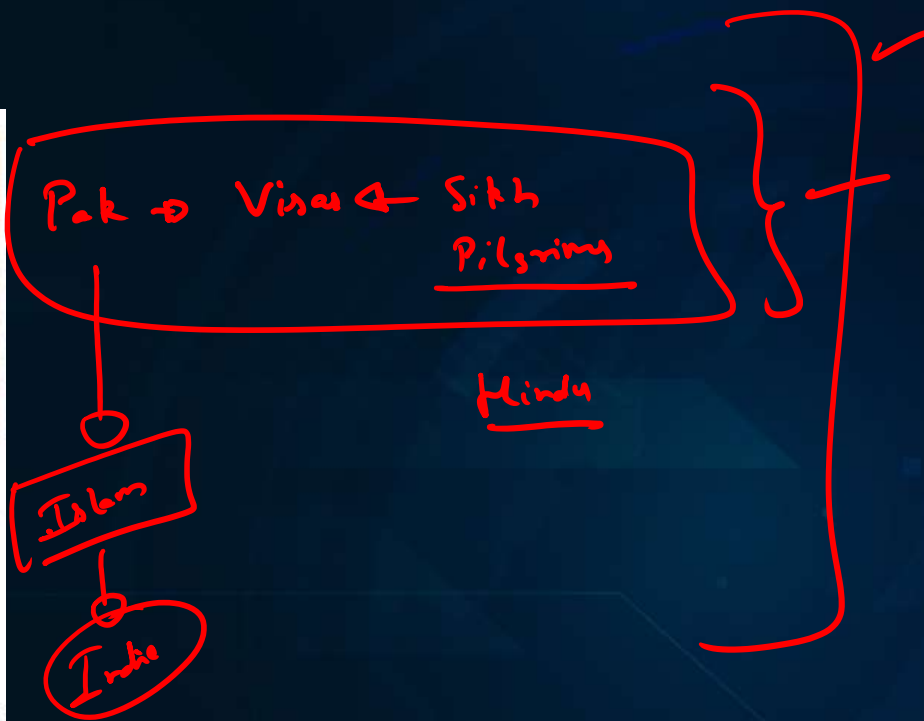
The *Marivex* crew's distress message says that there was a U.S. warship nearby that was not helping, neither was there an immediate response from the Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre. Video clips sent to Mr. Yadav show a seafarer from the

6. Pg 14 – GS II (IR)



541 Sikh pilgrims receive visas to visit shrines in Pakistan

The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) has received visas for 541 Sikh pilgrims who will travel to Pakistan to pay obeisance at historic Sikh shrines on the occasion of the martyrdom anniversary of the fifth Sikh Guru, Arjan Dev. In total, the Pakistan High Commission in New Delhi has issued 737 visas to the Indian pilgrims to participate in an annual festival to be held in Pakistan from June 10-19, according to an official statement. The issuance of visas is in line with the Government of Pakistan's commitment to fully implement the Bilateral Protocol on Visits to Religious Shrines of 1974, the statement said. 771



The Bilateral Protocol on Visits to Religious Shrines of 1974 is a formal agreement between India and Pakistan that allows nationals of both countries to visit mutually agreed-upon religious shrines across the border. It ensures pilgrimages are facilitated without discrimination based on religion or sect. Ministry of External Affairs +1

Key Provisions

Pak → Sikh
Hindu

- **Quota Limits:** The protocol sets a baseline allowing up to 20 pilgrimage parties (often called *jathas*) to travel between the two countries each year, though this number is subject to revision and mutual agreement. Ministry of External Affairs +1
- **Visa Categories:** Travelers are issued specific "Visitor Category" visas for the duration of their pilgrimage. Ministry of External Affairs
- **Maintenance and Sanctity:** Under the protocol, the host country is obligated to make every effort to properly maintain the shrines on the agreed list and preserve their sanctity.

India → Visas

Covered Shrines

The agreed-upon list can be enlarged or amended through mutual correspondence. Traditionally, the list covers multiple historic sites across both nations: Ministry of External Affairs +3

Kartarpur

In Pakistan: Primarily Sikh and Hindu shrines including Gurudwara Shri Nankana Sahib, Gurudwara Shri Panja Sahib, Samadhi of Maharaj Ranjit Singh, and Shri Kataraj Dham. Ministry of External Affairs +1

In India: Primarily Muslim shrines including the Dargah of Hazrat Moinuddin Chishti (Ajmer), Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya (Delhi), and Hazrat Mujaddid Alf Sani (Sirhind Sharif).

Israel, Iran trade strikes, warn each other against escalation

Associated Press

DUBAI

Israel and Iran traded fire on Monday in their first attacks since the U.S. struck a ceasefire with the Islamic Republic in April.

The Iranian military said hours later that it was halting offensive operations as the renewed hostilities threatened to drag West Asia back into a full-scale war, and warned that further “aggression and hostile acts” by Israel and its supporters, including in southern Lebanon, would be met with “much more severe and crushing measures than before”.

Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz said on Monday night that the military will

Will respond to further hostile acts, says Iran: Israel talks of using great force against retaliation

continue to operate against Hezbollah in Lebanon, warning that any Iranian strikes in retaliation for Israeli attacks on Hezbollah, the Tehran-backed militant group in Lebanon, would be “met with great force”.

Iranian state media reported at least 15 people were wounded after explosions sounded in Tehran and other cities.

Fresh advisory

Following the renewed exchange of fire, India on

Monday urged its citizens to avoid all unnecessary travel to Israel and Iran, and asked its nationals in these countries to exercise utmost caution and stay vigilant.

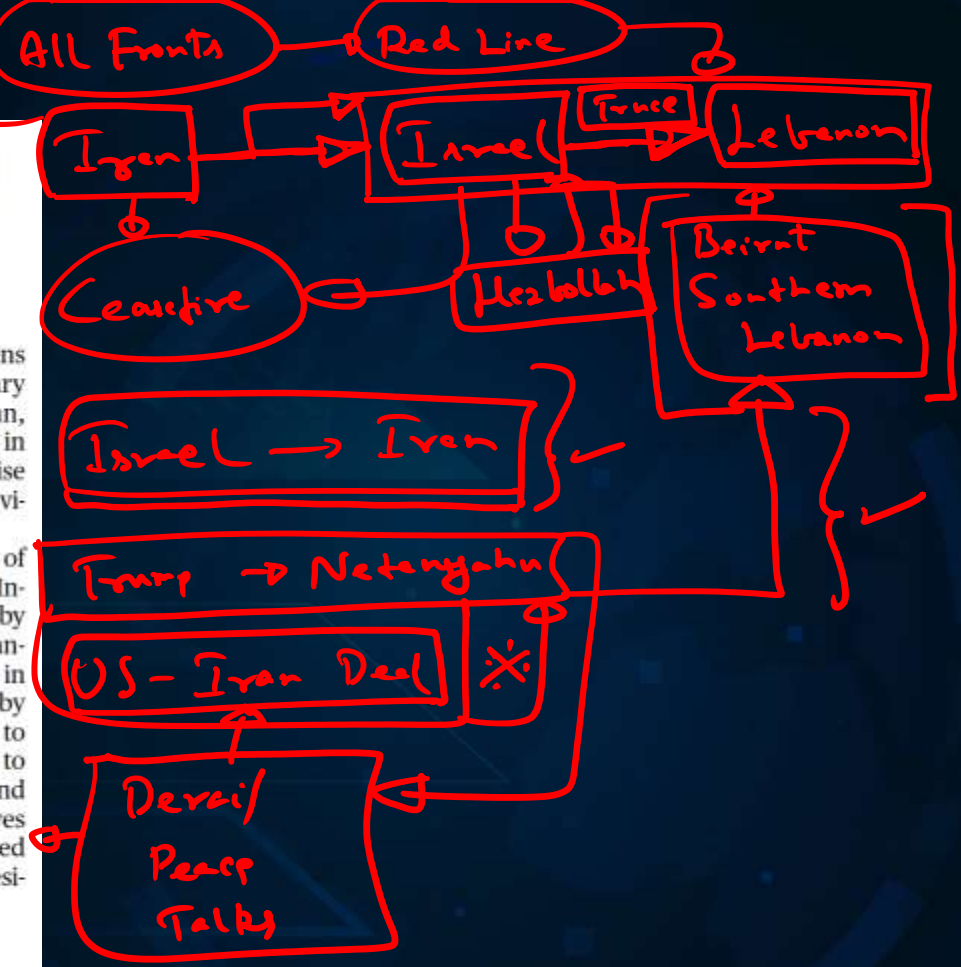
While the Embassy of India in Iran advised Indians to exit the country by available means of transport, Indian nationals in Israel have been asked by the Embassy in Tel Aviv to “remain in proximity to designated shelters” and “to familiarise themselves with the nearest protected spaces in their area of residence or work.”

CONTINUED ON

» PAGE 12

HOUTHIS BAN ISRAELI SHIPS

» PAGE 16



Houthis claim missile attack, declare 'total ban' on Israeli ships in Red Sea

Yemen-based Iran-aligned group launches air attack on Israel, says Israel-affiliated ships would again become a target in the Red Sea; the escalation comes as the Strait of Hormuz remains blockaded by Iran due to the war in West Asia with the U.S.

Agence France-Presse
SANA

Iran-aligned Houthi rebels in Yemen announced a missile attack on Israel on Monday and declared a ban on Israeli shipping in the Red Sea, raising the spectre of a return to major disruption on the key route.

The Houthis' attack came as Israel and Iran traded fire on Monday, putting the ceasefire under renewed strain and threatening hopes for a peace deal.

The Houthis made a similar threat and targeted cargo ships in the vital sea-way during the Israel-Hamas war, forcing many companies into a lengthy detour around the tip of



War fallout: Two men examine a rocket half-buried in the ground near the West Bank city of Jericho on Monday. AFP

southern Africa. The assaults upended shipping in the Red Sea, through which about \$1 trillion of goods passed each year before the war.

Their threat comes as the Strait of Hormuz, the gateway to the Gulf sea and

its energy exporters, remains blockaded by Iran as a result of the war in West Asia with the U.S. and Israel.

'Legitimate targets'
"We declare a complete and total ban on Israeli

maritime navigation in the Red Sea," said a statement from the Houthis' armed forces. "We consider all enemy movements to be legitimate military targets for our armed forces from the moment this statement is issued."

The statement from Brigadier General Yahya Saree was broadcast on the Houthis' al-Masirah satellite news channel.

The Houthis, who joined the war in support of Iran in March, had not announced a missile attack on Israel since a fragile ceasefire began on April 8.

The Houthis have fired missiles at Israel during the Israel-Hamas war and later, but haven't been fully involved in the Iran war.

They said they "launched a missile barrage targeting sensitive Israeli enemy targets", claiming the strikes "achieved their objectives with precision".

The Israeli military earlier wrote on Telegram that it "has identified the launch of a missile from Yemen toward Israeli territory, aerial defence systems are operating to intercept the threat".

An Israeli military official said two missiles were fired by the Houthis since Sunday evening.

The Houthis and Lebanon-based Hezbollah form part of the "Axis of Resistance" grouping of pro-Iran forces opposed to Israel and the United States.

2023-24 → Gaza War

Prelims Bytes

Deadly tremor

Philippines EQ

2.8 Mag

Tsunami

Mindanao

M 7.8



Risky terrain: Rescue workers near a collapsed building in General Santos City, the Philippines on Monday after a 7.8-magnitude earthquake struck the country, killing at least 35 people, destroying buildings, and sparking tsunami warnings across the region. AFP (REPORT: PAGE 16)

Major quake off Philippines kills at least 35, many missing

Agence France-Presse
MANILA

A 7.8-magnitude earthquake in the southern Philippines on Monday killed at least 35 people, according to provincial authorities, after toppling buildings and sparking tsunami warnings across the region.

National disaster authorities said at least a dozen people were still missing, while 134 had sustained injuries.

Authorities urged people in affected coastal regions to move to higher ground after the offshore quake hit south of General Santos, a city of about 720,000, where the death toll stood at 12, according to a local command centre.

A series of powerful aftershocks rocked the area from about two hours after the first quake, according



Rubbled remains: A damaged building seen in General Santos, Philippines, following a magnitude 7.8 quake on Monday. AP

to the U.S. Geological Survey, with the largest measuring magnitude 6.5.

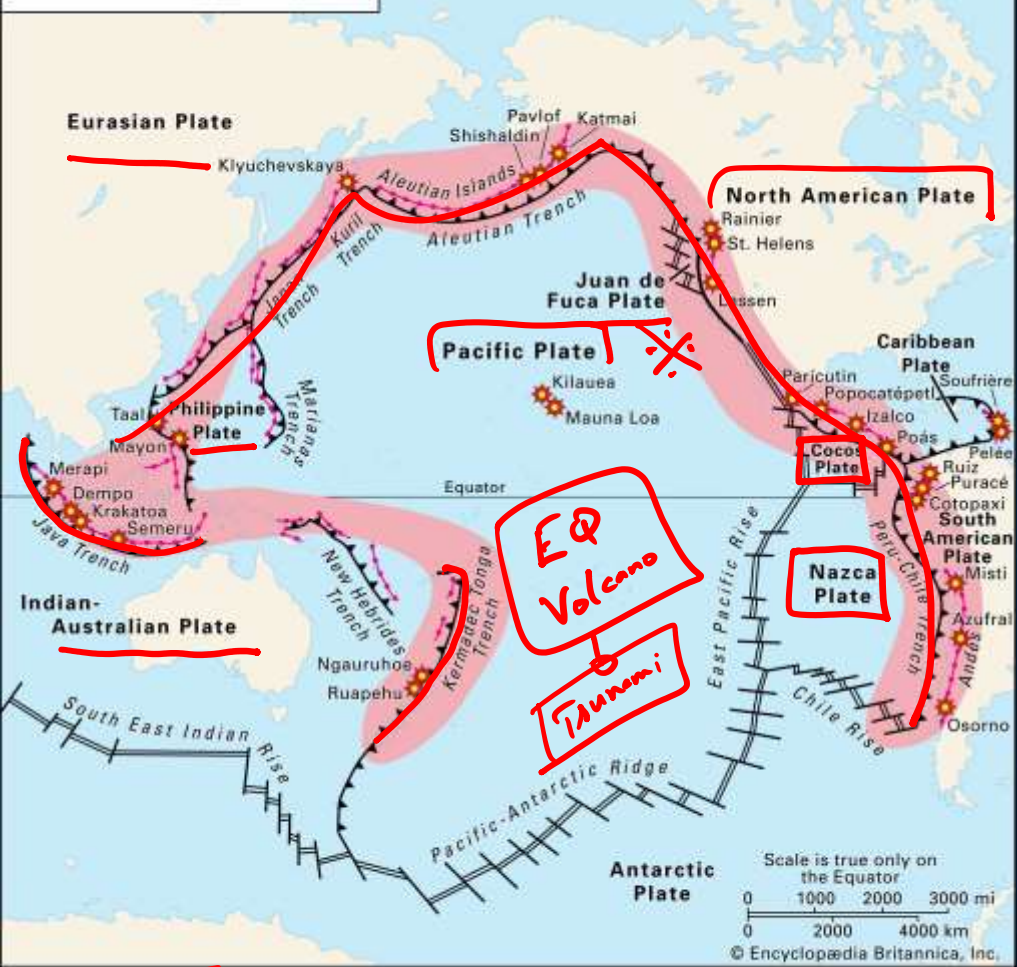
Rene Punzalan, disaster chief for hard-hit Sarangani province, said 14 people had died in Glan municipality alone when a landslide buried their homes.

Mr. Punzalan said that more than 2,000 people evacuated due to a morning tsunami warning were now awaiting a green light to return to their homes.

The Pacific Tsunami Warning Center issued a tsunami alert for the Philippines, Indonesia, Palau, Taiwan and Papua New Guinea. But by mid-afternoon, the notices were cancelled.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. ordered an immediate disaster response. "The national government is moving and we will not leave anyone behind," Mr. Marcos said in a statement.

PACIFIC RING OF FIRE



Scale is true only on the Equator.
 0 1000 2000 3000 mi
 0 2000 4000 km
 © Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.

Spreading plate boundaries	Converging plate boundaries	Volcanic arcs	Major active volcanoes	Pacific Ring of Fire
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Zojila Tunnel between Kashmir and Kargil to see final breakthrough

Peerzada Ashiq
SONAMARG (GANDERBAL)

India's ambitious, strategic, all-weather Zojila Tunnel in volatile seismic zone IV will witness the final breakthrough on June 9 as Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari will oversee the final blasting from the Kargil side. The 13.14-km-long tunnel cuts through the mighty Himalayas at an altitude of 11,578 feet and connects the Kashmir valley with Ladakh's Kargil.

Mr. Gadkari will preside over the process of final blasting of the last block, which will see the tunnel through. The tunnel is likely to allow security officials to ferry goods, machines and stocks to the high-altitude bases of Ladakh during peak winter for the first time ever in coming winters, officials said. Earlier,



The Zojila Tunnel is likely to allow security officials to ferry goods to the high-altitude bases of Ladakh during peak winter. ANI

stocks would be maintained during early autumn months to feed soldiers on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in winters.

The Zojila Tunnel bypasses the weather-dependent Zojila Pass, which is prone to landslides and shooting stones and remains closed due to snow accumulation in winters.

A spokesman of Megha

Engineering and Infrastructures Ltd. (MEIL), which started work on the tunnel in 2020, termed the final breakthrough "a defining moment". "It demonstrates the successful execution of one of India's most complex transport infrastructure works in a hostile Himalayan environment," said senior MEIL officials.

The excavation work has been completed on the world's longest single-tube bi-directional road tunnel at an altitude of over 11,500 feet. "The project will deliver the long-envisioned objective of seamless, all-weather connectivity between Kashmir and Ladakh, bringing long-term benefits in mobility, economic integration, and strategic resilience," said MEIL officials.



Reduced travel time
The tunnel cost more than ₹6,800 crore. A 7.57-metre-high horseshoe-shaped single-tube two-lane tunnel will pass under the arduous Zojila Pass between Ganderbal district in Kashmir and Drass district of Ladakh. Officials say the travel time will come down from three hours to 20 minutes between Ganderbal and Kargil.

New mustard hybrids need diverse farming plans

Vasudevan Mukunth

Mustard oil

In the 2026-27 rabi sowing season, from October to April, Indian farmers are set to begin the wide-scale cultivation of imidazolinone-resistant (IMI-resistant) mustard hybrids. These hybrids are designed to overcome a parasitic weed called Orobanche, a major hurdle in oilseed production.

India has long grappled with an edible oils deficit. In 2024-25, the country imported around 16 million tonnes at about ₹1.6 lakh crore. Mustard is the most vital oilseed crop to meet this demand, especially in the arid environments of North India. However, its yields have been suppressed throughout the year by Orobanche, a destructive root parasite that attaches to the mustard plant and drains it of water and nutrients. (It has more recently been called Phelipanche)

The new IMI-resistant hybrids are a technological solution to this problem. Unlike genetically modified (GM) crops, these hybrids were developed in a process called mutation breeding where scientists breed crops to preserve certain natural mutations. The process is based on an enzyme called acetolactate synthase (ALS), which is essential for plant growth. Normal mustard plants are killed by IMI herbicides because the herbicides inhibit ALS.

In the new IMI-resistant hybrids, a single change in the plant's DNA rendered the ALS enzyme resistant to the herbicide, freeing farmers to spray IMI herbicides directly over the field, killing only the weeds. This strategy is particularly effective against Orobanche because, as the herbicide moves through the soil and the plant, it strikes the parasite where manual weeding can't reach.

BRICS Delegates Visit Indore Ahead of the 16th BRICS Agriculture Ministers' Meeting

16th BRICS Agriculture Ministers' Meeting to Be Held in Indore on June 12-13

Posted On: 08 JUN 2026 9:33PM by PIB Delhi

PIB

Ahead of the 16th BRICS Agriculture Ministers' Meeting under India's BRICS Chairship 2026, delegates from BRICS Member and Partner Countries visited Indore, Madhya Pradesh, on June 8, 2026. The visit was hosted by the Indore Smart City Project and the Indore Municipal Corporation.

Representatives from Brazil, South Africa, Ethiopia and other participating countries experienced the renowned hospitality, rich cultural heritage and vibrant urban environment of Indore, widely recognized as India's cleanest city. The delegates also visited the iconic 56 Dukan food hub, where they sampled a variety of local delicacies and gained first-hand experience of India's rich culinary traditions and culture of hospitality.

It may be noted that the 16th BRICS Agriculture Ministers' Meeting will be held in Indore on June 12-13, 2026, bringing together Member and Partner Countries to strengthen cooperation in agriculture, food security and sustainable development. Prior to the ministerial meeting, Deputy Representatives will convene from June 9-11 to deliberate on key challenges and opportunities facing global agriculture.

Under India's BRICS Chairship, four sessions of the Agriculture Working Group (AWG) have already been successfully completed, advancing discussions on food security, sustainable agriculture, innovation, climate resilience and the development of resilient food systems. These deliberations have laid a strong foundation for meaningful outcomes at the upcoming ministerial meeting.

The discussions in Indore will focus on a wide range of issues, including agricultural cooperation, value chains, market opportunities, innovation, knowledge exchange, climate-resilient agriculture, regenerative farming, soil health and sustainable resource management. Special emphasis will also be placed on strengthening the role of smallholder farmers, women and youth in advancing food security and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

India's BRICS Chairship has also facilitated technical dialogues on reducing food loss and waste, fisheries and aquaculture, and advanced livestock technologies, enabling participating countries to exchange experiences, best practices and innovative solutions for strengthening agricultural productivity and rural livelihoods.

India holds the BRICS Chairship from January 1 to December 31, 2026. Building on its previous Chairships in 2012, 2016 and 2021, India remains committed to fostering practical cooperation, dialogue and shared progress among BRICS Member and Partner Countries.

The forthcoming Agriculture Ministers' Meeting is expected to further strengthen collaboration among BRICS countries and contribute to building more resilient, sustainable and inclusive agricultural and food systems for the future.

Union Minister of Commerce & Industry, Shri Piyush Goyal, Launches BHAVYA Portal

BHAVYA Scheme to Promote Competitive Development of Industrial Parks Across States: Shri Piyush Goyal

Government's Focus on Infrastructure, Reforms and Digital Connectivity Has Created Strong Foundation for Growth: Shri Goyal

BHAVYA Parks to Include Dedicated Spaces for Startups, Deep-Tech, R&D and Innovation-Led Enterprises: Shri Piyush Goyal

Modern Testing Facilities to Be Developed in BHAVYA Parks in Partnership with BIS, EIA and FSSAI: Shri Goyal

NICDC to Lead Implementation and Monitoring of BHAVYA Through Dedicated Digital Platform

Posted On: 08 JUN 2026 6:07PM by PIB Delhi

State

In a significant step towards the operationalisation of the **Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojana (BHAVYA)**, Union Minister of Commerce & Industry, Shri Piyush Goyal, launched the BHAVYA Portal today in New Delhi.

Addressing the gathering, Shri Piyush Goyal said that the BHAVYA Scheme will adopt a competitive model under which States will be encouraged to submit detailed project proposals highlighting their industrial strengths, availability of land, investor interest and sectoral potential. He said the Government will work closely with industry to identify the most suitable sectors and infrastructure requirements for each location, whether for chemicals, manufacturing, data centres or other industries. He added that investors would be able to access detailed information on industrial parks through digital platforms, including land availability, connectivity and surrounding infrastructure, enabling them to make informed investment decisions. The scheme will seek to ensure that industrial parks are designed according to the specific needs of different sectors and investors, making them more attractive destinations for domestic and global investments.

Announcing the BHAVYA Scheme, the Minister said that it aims to develop 100 industrial parks across the country to promote large-scale job creation through greater investments. He said the parks will be developed in different sizes, ranging from 25 acres in hilly regions, smaller Union Territories and Northeastern States, to between 100 and 500 acres in mid-sized States and regions, and up to 1,000 acres in locations closer to cities and towns, depending on need assessment and the commitment of States.

He informed that land for the parks will be provided by the State Governments, while the Government of India will support infrastructure creation through the National Industrial Corridor Development Corporation (NICDC), which will partner with States under a 51:49 model. He said the objective is to create plug-and-play industrial parks focused on industries best suited to specific locations.

✖

Foreign & Domestic Inv



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ANALYSIS