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ANALYSIS

# Topics

1. Moving from war to deal in a deeply divided region – Pg 8
2. The U.S – Iran peace deal confronts spoiler Israel – Pg 8
3. The long term implications of US Iran deal – Pg 9
4. Primed to treat – Pg 8 → GS III
5. What does the tenth schedule provide on party mergers? – Pg 10
6. 5 solutions Indian cities need to stop fighting for water – Pg 11 → GST
7. Not binary – Science II → GS II / GS III

GS II

GS II

GST

## Prelims :

1. IORA examining Canada's request to be observer – Pg 14
2. Air Force to participate in Exercise 'Pitch Black' – Pg 14
3. GRAPES 3 – Science II

## PIB

1. Kishau multipurpose project
2. India Japan joint credit mechanism

*Basics of*  
**GEOGRAPHY**  
**THROUGH MAPS**



# Moving from war to deal in a deeply divided region

→ G&I

Even as the ceasefire between the United States and Iran was being repeatedly breached, the Iran war showed something that the world appears to have forgotten: military force, by itself, cannot be a solution unless it is followed by a political settlement – whether in Ukraine, Gaza, Lebanon, Sudan or Iran. The last four years of relentless bombardment, bloodshed, and the killing of innocent civilians and children with impunity have exposed the reality that none of the major powers seriously pursued the option of negotiations. In fact, many have been either directly involved in acts of aggression or have actively supported them through the supply of arms and financial assistance. However, the growing stalemate in almost all major conflicts underscores a fundamental truth: a political resolution is the only way forward if the major powers are to preserve what remains of their dignity.

## An uneasy path to fragile peace

Restarting a full-scale war with Iran had become untenable for the U.S. after setbacks on both the strategic and political fronts, and equally untenable for Iran after reverses on the military, economic and leadership fronts. Both sides were ultimately compelled to negotiate. However, for Israel, which had initially encouraged the U.S. to start this war, any deal with Iran that fell short of regime change was unacceptable – and remains so – because of Iran's continued support for a much-weakened Hezbollah in Lebanon, which Israel still regards as a direct threat. With Israeli elections due in October 2026, a ceasefire on the Lebanon front is politically unpalatable for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his coalition. Iran, meanwhile, has become more assertive, by directly targeting Israeli interests and U.S. assets in the Gulf even when Hezbollah was attacked. Until recently, the pattern had been the reverse, with Iran's proxies retaliating whenever Iran was targeted.

The much-awaited digitally signed U.S.-Iran deal reflects the reality that Iran has had a strategic win. Reports indicate that it opens up Hormuz Strait unconditionally, halts the war on all fronts including Lebanon, lifts Iranian oil sanctions, unfreezes Iranian assets and commits Iran not to produce nuclear weapons.

Negotiations to commit Iran to suspend nuclear enrichment and give up enriched nuclear material without being dubbed a repackaged Obama-era 2016 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), will take place over 60 days. In some ways the deal is not yet a political settlement, but the beginning of one.

Lest anyone romanticise Iran's strategic gains, they do not alter the fundamental reality that Iran will continue to be viewed as a major disruptor in



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A fragile Iran deal masks deeper regional rivalries and uncertainties

West Asia. There is little indication that its reliance on non-state actors such as Hezbollah, the Houthis and Iraqi militias will diminish. The Iranian government is now more hardline, its missile arsenal will be replenished, and it retains the capability to threaten the Strait of Hormuz and strike Gulf countries at will. The region is unlikely to be any safer after a deal than it was before.

This is precisely why U.S. President Donald Trump's 'Make America Great Again' (MAGA) base was pushing him to get a better deal. Mr. Trump's push to get the Saudis, Qataris and others to join the Abraham Accords to normalise relations with Israel made no headway since Israeli attacks were unrelenting in Gaza, the West Bank and Lebanon.

Even now, after the deal, Israel has sworn to keep the territories it has captured in Lebanon and expand Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank. Iran is apprehensive, for good reason, that the U.S. or Israel will derail the deal at the first sign of stalled negotiations or a Hezbollah attack. Israel, meanwhile, has accused the U.S. of selling it out because none of its key objectives have been achieved, conveniently overlooking its own role in urging the U.S. into the conflict.

## Gulf fault lines exposed

The Gulf countries have also come out the worse off. They bet on a U.S. security umbrella, signed bilateral Abraham Accords with Israel sidelining historical regional conflicts, shed the conservative tag (like Saudi Arabia), invested in a hi-tech future and joined important global groupings such as BRICS, signalling their increasing ambitions as middle powers. Those ambitions have been rudely shaken and their fragilities exposed.

The Gulf states need to return to the drawing board. They overestimated their collective economic and security strength while underestimating their internal divisions and long-standing rivalries.

The post-war landscape has exposed these fault lines: Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have worked at cross-purposes in Yemen, Sudan and Somalia, the Emiratis have left the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries – a clear signal that Saudi writ on energy policy is over. Their supply chains have to be reworked to overcome a future Hormuz blockade. They will face a growth slowdown after the war impacting their ambitions. While the UAE has moved closer to Israel and the U.S., others have adopted a more cautious approach. Ironically, the Iran war has divided the Gulf rather than united it against a common adversary, making a recalibration of relations

with Washington inevitable. After the collapse of deterrence against Iran, no Gulf country is secure unless it forges a regional security architecture bringing Iran into the fold. The lessons of the Ukraine war should not be forgotten. Europe expanded the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's boundaries towards Russia without bringing Moscow into a broader regional security architecture, and is now paying the price. Yet, neither Europe nor West Asia appears to have learned that lesson.

## The other power shifts

Russia and China are happy to watch the U.S. get bogged down. For China, a weakened Trump is easier to manage, while the Iran war has given China a preview of what to expect if it closes the Taiwan Strait or if a well-armed smaller power is attacked by a bigger one. Although China seeks a larger role in West Asia, the Gulf remains too deeply tied to the U.S. economically and strategically for any dramatic shift. China is therefore likely to work through its "iron brother" Pakistan, which found itself in a geographical sweet spot. For Russia, meanwhile, the war only reinforces the strategic logic it has long applied to Ukraine.

India initially appeared to align with Israel and the U.S., and ignored the assassination of the Iranian Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, but quickly realised the need for a more balanced approach when Iran closed the Strait of Hormuz and threatened critical interests such as energy

security and maritime trade. Close ties with Israel or the UAE are important, but taking sides in regional conflicts is not.

With growing divergences among regional powers, Pakistan's rising role, and the possibility of greater Chinese influence in West Asia, bilateral relationships alone are insufficient. India needs a balanced regional strategy rooted in strategic autonomy and multi-alignment. Any slowdown in the Gulf will affect trade, investments, employment opportunities for Indian workers and diaspora remittances. The Chinese getting a permanent maritime foothold in that region will make it worse. More broadly, the inability of the U.S. to accommodate India within its larger strategic vision in West Asia, East Asia and the wider neighbourhood is hurting India.

The question now is whether Israel will seek to undermine the Iran deal. Will the protagonists draw lessons from this conflict, or will they embark on yet another cycle of wars in Lebanon, Cuba, Gaza and the West Bank? And, on a related note, will Pakistan's growing proximity to the U.S. increase pressure on India to resume unconditional talks with Islamabad?



# A strategic compromise

JCPOA

Iran keeps the Strait of Hormuz open.

Hostilities across multiple fronts, including Lebanon, are halted.

Iranian assets are unfrozen and sanctions eased.

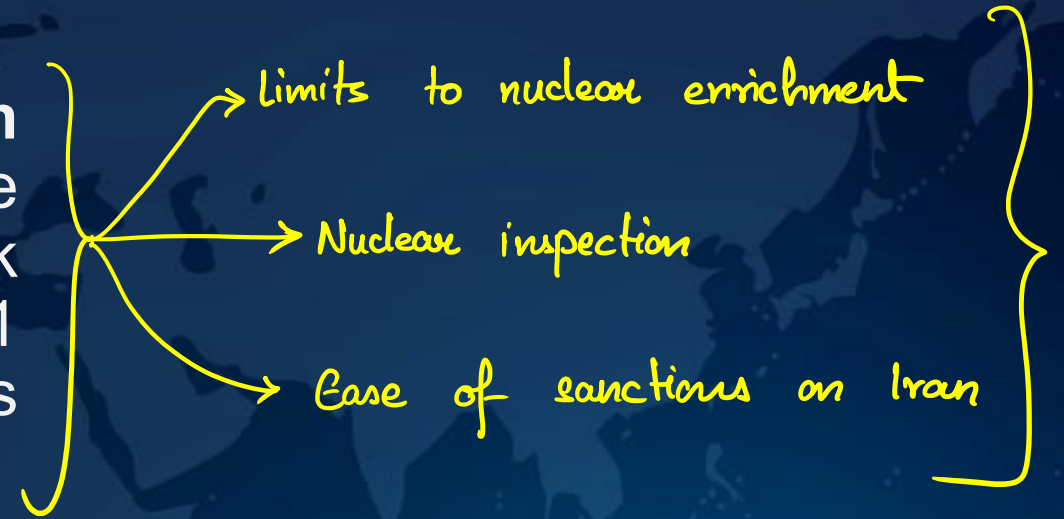
Iran commits to limits on nuclear activities.

\$100bn



# What was the JCPOA

- The **2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)**, widely known as the Iran Nuclear Deal, was a landmark agreement between Iran and the P5+1 (the US, UK, France, Russia, China, plus Germany) and the EU.



2018

# What has the war indicated

Failure of military solutions – Ukraine, Gaza, Lebanon etc

Political agreements and diplomacy are the only viable route for durable peace

Increased cost of war

# Key outcomes

OPEC

UAE



**Fragile deal**

**Stronger Iran**

**The divided Gulf**

**Emboldened China and  
Russia**

**Prominent Pakistan**

U.S.

'Paper Tiger' defence approach of the Gulf

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# Implications for India

## ↳ Multi Alignment

- [Need for energy security]
- Need for Economic Reforms

# The U.S.-Iran 'peace deal' confronts spoiler Israel

The signing of a United States-Iran peace memorandum offers a rare opportunity to reduce tensions in one of the world's most volatile regions. After decades marked by sanctions, proxy wars, covert operations, and periodic military confrontations, even a tentative framework for reconciliation between Washington and Tehran represents a significant diplomatic achievement. Yet, the prospects for transforming this memorandum into a permanent agreement depend not only on the willingness of the U.S. and Iran to compromise. They depend equally on whether Israel is prepared to accept a regional order in which Iran is no longer treated as a permanent enemy.

## Israel's long opposition

No country has done more over the past three decades to oppose U.S.-Iran rapprochement than Israel. Successive Israeli governments have portrayed Iran as an existential threat and have consistently sought to prevent any normalisation of relations between Tehran and Washington. While Israeli leaders justify this position in terms of national security, the persistence of their opposition suggests broader political and strategic motivations.

The historical record is revealing. The 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) placed stringent restrictions on Iran's nuclear programme and subjected it to one of the most intrusive inspection regimes ever implemented. International nuclear experts broadly agreed that the agreement significantly reduced the risk of Iran acquiring a nuclear weapon. Yet, Israel remained vehemently opposed to it.

What made Israel's position particularly striking was that it opposed an agreement designed precisely to address the threat it claimed to fear most. The episode demonstrated that Israeli objections extended beyond the nuclear issue itself. What Israel appeared unwilling to accept was the broader implication of the agreement: the gradual reintegration of



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Lasting U.S.-Iran peace may depend on Tel Aviv's willingness to adapt

Iran into a regional order that Israel sought to dominate but would find it impossible to do if Iran was a part of it.

For decades, Israel has benefited strategically from the perception of Iran as the principal source of instability in West Asia. The Iranian threat has long served as a justification for deeper military cooperation with the U.S., expanding security ties with Arab states, and the diversion of international attention from the Palestinian issue. As long as Iran remained centre stage, scrutiny of Israeli policies in the occupied Palestinian territories remained secondary.

## From Iran to Palestine

A successful U.S.-Iran rapprochement would fundamentally alter this equation. If Iran ceased to be seen as the region's primary threat, international attention would inevitably shift back to the Palestinian issue – including the occupation, settlement expansion in the West Bank and the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. This concern has become more acute since the Gaza war, which has severely damaged Israel's international standing and intensified global scrutiny of its policies towards Palestinians.

At the same time, the regional mood has shifted. Arab governments that once viewed confrontation with Iran as a strategic necessity have increasingly embraced de-escalation. Saudi Arabia's restoration of diplomatic relations with Iran in 2023 signalled a growing recognition that endless rivalry has imposed enormous political and economic costs on the region. Many Arab states, especially in the Gulf, now see stability and economic development as more urgent priorities than perpetual confrontation with Tehran – a point driven home strongly by the recent conflict.

Israel finds itself increasingly at odds with this emerging regional consensus. While it continues to advocate a strategy centred on containing and

isolating Iran, much of West Asia appears to be moving toward cautious engagement. A permanent U.S.-Iran agreement would reinforce this trend and further weaken the logic of confrontation.

## Israel's choice ahead

Nevertheless, Israel retains significant influence over U.S. policy through the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) and other channels, strong congressional support and deeply institutionalised security ties. This influence has often shaped American approaches towards Iran. The danger is that Israeli leaders may again seek to derail diplomacy through political pressure, demands for unattainable concessions or military actions that raise regional tensions and undermine negotiations. Israel's continued strikes in Lebanon despite repeated rebukes from U.S. President Donald Trump are a clear indication of the preferences of Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government.

The fundamental issue, therefore, is whether Israel can adapt to a West Asia in which its security is no longer based on the isolation of Iran but on a broader framework of regional coexistence. The Netanyahu government's record offers little reason for optimism, having consistently favoured military action over diplomatic compromise.

The future of the U.S.-Iran peace memorandum may therefore depend a great deal on Israel's willingness to accept a changing regional landscape. If Israeli leaders continue to view any U.S.-Iran understanding as inherently unacceptable, they may succeed in obstructing a permanent agreement. But in doing so, they would be confronting a broader regional movement towards de-escalation at a moment when West Asia desperately needs it, potentially leading to Israel's further isolation both regionally and internationally.





A permanent agreement could contribute to:

- Regional stability,
- Reduced military tensions,
- Lower risks of escalation in West Asia.

# Why is Israel uncomfortable?

- [Fear of Iran's Reintegration]

- The "Iran Threat" Benefited Israel

- • Shift from Iran to Palestine

1980s - 87



# The long-term implications of the U.S.-Iran deal

The world is holding its breath with respect to the June 14 adoption of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Iran and the United States for a cessation of hostilities and a 60-day period of negotiation to iron out their thorny differences. The scepticism stems from at least two scores of premature claims by U.S. President Donald Trump. Moreover, this is only the beginning of a meandering journey pebbled with numerous obstacles. Vicious bloodletting in two wars during the past year has exacerbated instinctual mutual distrust. Hence, even this vaguely worded framework is no mean feat.

Can the world now hope for a durable resolution to this multifaceted crisis, or does the MoU merely kick the can down the road? Some contextual developments create a space for cautious optimism. The respective announcements by both Tehran and Washington are factual and measured, eschewing trenchant triumphalism and demonisation. They have emphasised the complexity of negotiations; both realise that their asymmetric wars were militarily unwinnable, and a sustainable solution would require political negotiations with the recalcitrant enemy. The twin Hormuz blockades morphed into economic attrition, and Iran's threat of expanding the next war beyond the region, with the Houthis choking the Bab el-Mandeb strait again, was foreboding. Both sides were also facing growing domestic discontent, with their respective erratic conduct alienating supporters and neighbours. In front of the international community, both nations have lost their moral high ground, each appearing as irresponsible and vindictive.

## A long road

The scope and complexity of the current issues are daunting. These include the question of U.S. sanctions, a release of over \$100 billion of frozen Iranian assets, regional issues such as the crisis in Lebanon and the problem of U.S. military bases, and the demand for reparations. However, Iran's nuclear enrichment and its assertion of sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz are deal breakers. Since President Trump tore down the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)



**Mahesh Sachdev**  
A former Indian Ambassador with an interest in West Asia and oil matters

Irrespective of largely unaltered borders and an endgame that has barely commenced, the past three years of hostilities have triggered seismic geopolitical changes in West Asia and beyond

in 2018, he now insists on a "better" deal, requiring Iran to export enriched uranium. However, Iranian hardliners are steadfastly opposed to this diktat. Moreover, Iran's closure of the Hormuz chokepoint has caused the "biggest energy disruption in human history", creating havoc for the global economy. A resolution of these two contentious issues would require protracted negotiations and creativity, allowing both sides to claim victories. A \$300 billion fund to reconstruct Iran with U.S. companies, a typically bizarre Trumpian transactional diplomacy, is also reportedly on the table. Here, one must also mention the various other influences in the negotiation chamber – Israel and the states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) significantly influence the thinking at the White House, while China and Russia each have an inside track in Tehran. Pakistan, the official mediator, also has its own multiple axes to grind.

## Discernible undercurrents

Irrespective of largely unaltered borders and an endgame that has barely commenced, the past three years of hostilities have triggered seismic geopolitical changes in West Asia and beyond, irrevocably unhooking its longstanding strategic paradigms. While the situation is still evolving, some basic medium-to-long-term undercurrents are discernible.



**Debris and destruction:** People and rescue forces search through the rubble following a strike on a school in Minab, Iran, on February 28. REUTERS

First, the two Iran wars have dramatically overturned numerous basic global assumptions. It has shown the limits of American hyperpower with its penchant for military solutions, high-tech battlefield dominance, air superiority doctrine, social media-provoked mass uprising etc. Iran was able to counter this with incipient strategies; careful planning for asymmetric warfare; smart and cost-effective tactics; a resilient and coherent command structure; leveraging of geostrategic assets; resolute supply chains and defence production among others. American MAGA (Make America Great Again) hotheads and Chinese wolf-warriors may need to pull in their claws, hopefully, making the world a safer place.

Moreover, the failure of ad-hoc coercive diplomacy may bring back multilateralism. Nations are now going to fret more about choke points, preventive diplomacy, robust supply lines, and adequate strategic reserves for essential inputs. Physical security and the succession of command of the political leadership would be prioritised and ruggedised.

Second, the hobbled return to regional peace may be catastrophic for global hydrocarbon supplies as depleting strategic reserves compete with demand destruction. In the long-term, high prices and volatility

would destroy demand and hasten us towards the 'peak oil' scenario (a hypothetical point where global crude oil demand reaches its maximum rate and begins to decline). The disruptions have underscored the indispensability of higher strategic oil reserves and clean energy.

Third, there are two regional shifts which are currently underway. While U.S.-Israel relations remain strategic, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's mesmerisation of Mr. Trump has waned. The GCC states were traumatised by the U.S.-Israel coalition's "wars of choice". Apart from the collateral damage from Iranian attacks on their vital infrastructure, their exports via Hormuz also suffered. To add insult to injury, Washington neither consulted the GCC nor adequately protected them from Iranian retaliation. Moreover, the Pentagon's failure to anticipate the Iranian regime's staying power, Hormuz closure, or a plausible exit strategy has raised doubts about its war planning. This unsavoury experience has seriously undermined America's credibility as a security provider for the GCC. They are likely to reassess their geostrategic alignments as they contend with a weakened but defiant Iran. Their sub-optimal past experiences with external defence tie-ups may leave them with a Hobson's choice to shore up their defences, either individually or collectively. Given the GCC disunity, especially the Saudi-Emirati rivalry, burying their hatchets may not be easy, forcing them to accommodate and appease Iran individually. Alternatively, the Iranian grip on the Arab world's Shia militias, particularly in Iraq, may loosen, allowing a reassertion of their Arab and tribal identities.

## A more defiant Iran

Fourth, while the Iranian state has defied existential threats, it has now convulsed and radicalised. Regionally friendless, the theocratic regime is in suspended apprehension amidst escalating foreign pressure and a brewing domestic blowback. Left to themselves, the Iranian leadership would insist on a strategic deterrence based on both nuclear latency and control of the Strait of Hormuz. But they

also realise that this maximalism may scupper the forthcoming negotiations. A small but significant minority of Iran's leadership now believes that the Iranian capacity to block the Strait of Hormuz is the new and more potent deterrence than nuclear ambiguity. Instead of ensuring the Islamic Republic's survival, Iran's nuclear fixation has attained the opposite: entrenching Israel-U.S. enmity against it. Its direct cumulative costs are estimated at \$100 billion, and if Western sanctions are factored in, costs will rise manifold. They argue that the nuclear strategy can be replaced by Iran's real or presumptive control over Hormuz, already proven to be an effective 'weapon of mass disruption'.

Tellingly, while Iran's Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei's statements have frequently asserted national sovereignty over Hormuz, he has not specifically referred to the indispensability of the nuclear programme. If this incipient shift in deterrence gets traction in Tehran, it could upend Iranian and regional geopolitics.

Tehran's control over Hormuz would be legally questionable and problematic for the global economy, especially for other littoral states. However, an innovative architecture can improve the optics, say, by creating a littoral inter-governmental Hormuz management framework, with Iran as *primus inter pares*.

And finally, in West Asia, those defeated on the battlefield often resort to terrorism to redeem their "lost honour". Israel's single-minded drive for a military solution against the 'axis of resistance' and the simultaneous weakening of Iran create such 'opportunities'. The pro-Iranian militias, particularly in Iraq and Lebanon, may go deeper underground to wage their mini-wars against perceived enemies. The decline of Iran and its proxies may give a second wind to the region's Sunni non-state actors such as the Islamic State, al-Qaeda, the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas, Kurds, IS-Khorasan, and Jaish al-Adl.

Even if only a few of these forebodings are realised, one could ask if the botched surgery to decapitate Iran has not plunged the entire world into intensive care.



# Major challenges

- U.S. sanctions on Iran.
- Release of frozen Iranian assets (estimated at over \$100 billion).
- • Future of Iran's nuclear enrichment programme.
- • Security arrangements in Lebanon and the wider region.
- Iran's assertion of sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz.

A dark blue world map is visible in the background, showing the outlines of continents. The map is centered on the Atlantic Ocean.

# Limitations of U.S

- Military limitations

*Alliances*



# Global energy markets

Countries may expand:

- Strategic petroleum reserves, ✓
- Energy diversification strategies, ✓
- Alternative transport routes.

India - UAE deal

→ Indo - Oman pipeline

# Primed to treat

The Kerala story in containing Nipah has lessons for pandemic preparedness

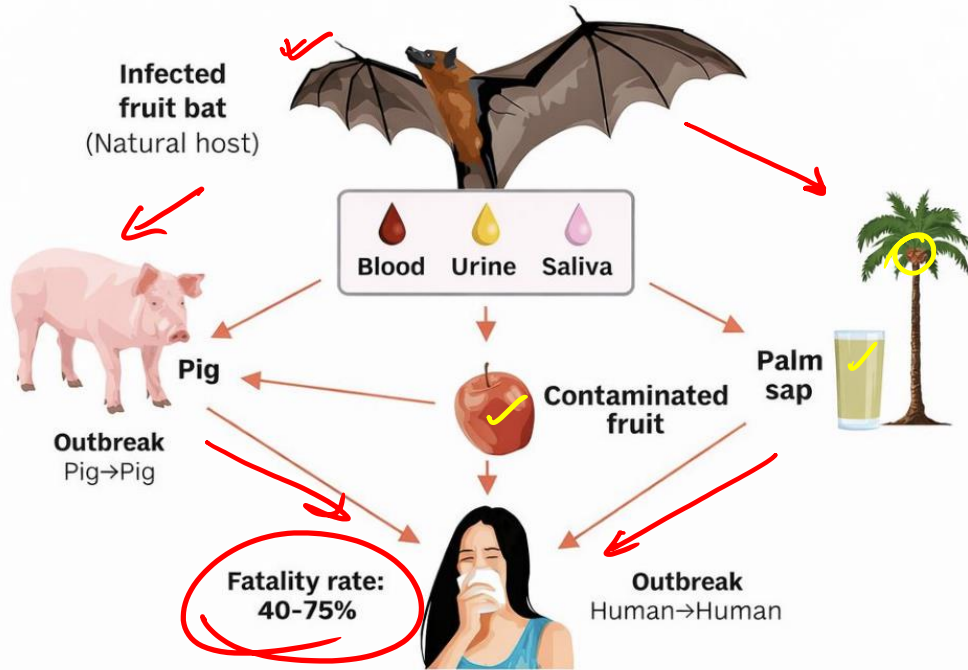
→ GS III

The emergence of a case of the Nipah virus in Kerala and the subsequent control in the State is indicative of two things: first, Kerala's own mix of ecological factors and anthropogenic activity that makes it vulnerable every monsoon season to the possibility of Nipah spreading, the hosts being fruit bats. Second, the fact that there has been just a single case so far is testament to the robustness of the health systems in place in Kerala. The World Health Organization (WHO) has classified Nipah a priority pathogen, accounting for its lethality, potential to cause outbreaks, even a pandemic. It is just one of several pathogens that WHO has flagged for Kerala – including avian influenza and Kyasanur Forest Disease. Kerala has, at the moment, one active case of 43-year-old man from Ramanattukara in Kozhikode. He remains on ventilator support at the Kozhikode Government Hospital. No fresh cases have come up since then, after intensive contact tracing and screening. The 2018 Nipah outbreak, immortalised in film and art, which caused 17 deaths, and affected 23 people (18 lab confirmed), spread primarily on person-to-person contact, with the index patient reportedly transmitting the virus to 15 others, including health-care workers. Since then it has had cases/outbreaks in 2019, 2021, 2023, 2024, and 2025. Historically in India, a devastating outbreak was noted in 2001 in West Bengal, and later, a few cases were detected again, in 2007. Earlier this year, on January 26, 2026, two laboratory-confirmed cases of Nipah virus infection were reported from West Bengal, both health-care workers. This was also contained and no further cases were reported.

It is clear that human activity on the fringes of forest zones, encroaching into traditional habitats of the fruit bats, has a central role to play in the transmission of the virus; in time, this originally zoonotic infection jumped to humans. Repeatedly, the source of infection has been traced to consuming contaminated fruits, or contact with water sources contaminated by bats. This also indicates that the overall approach should be from a One Health perspective, considering environmental and animal interplays with humans, and not a mere health-care angle. The State's history of Nipah outbreaks and its learnings have enabled it to prime its health system to meet such health emergencies, at the primary and secondary hospitals itself. This is the other lesson from Kerala for pandemic preparedness. Its system has become adept at maintaining a high index of suspicion for cases of acute encephalitis; watching out for clusters, and with clinical efficiency, deploying protocols to control further spread and reach all those who need medical assistance.

# Nipah virus: What it is and how it spreads

There are currently no drugs or vaccines for the infection, and treatment is mainly supportive care like rest and hydration.



Forests

## Symptoms



Fever



Drowsiness



Confusion



Dizziness



Seizures

Encephalitis (brain swelling)

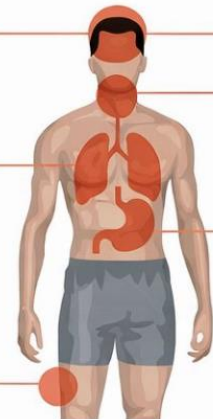
Respiratory problems

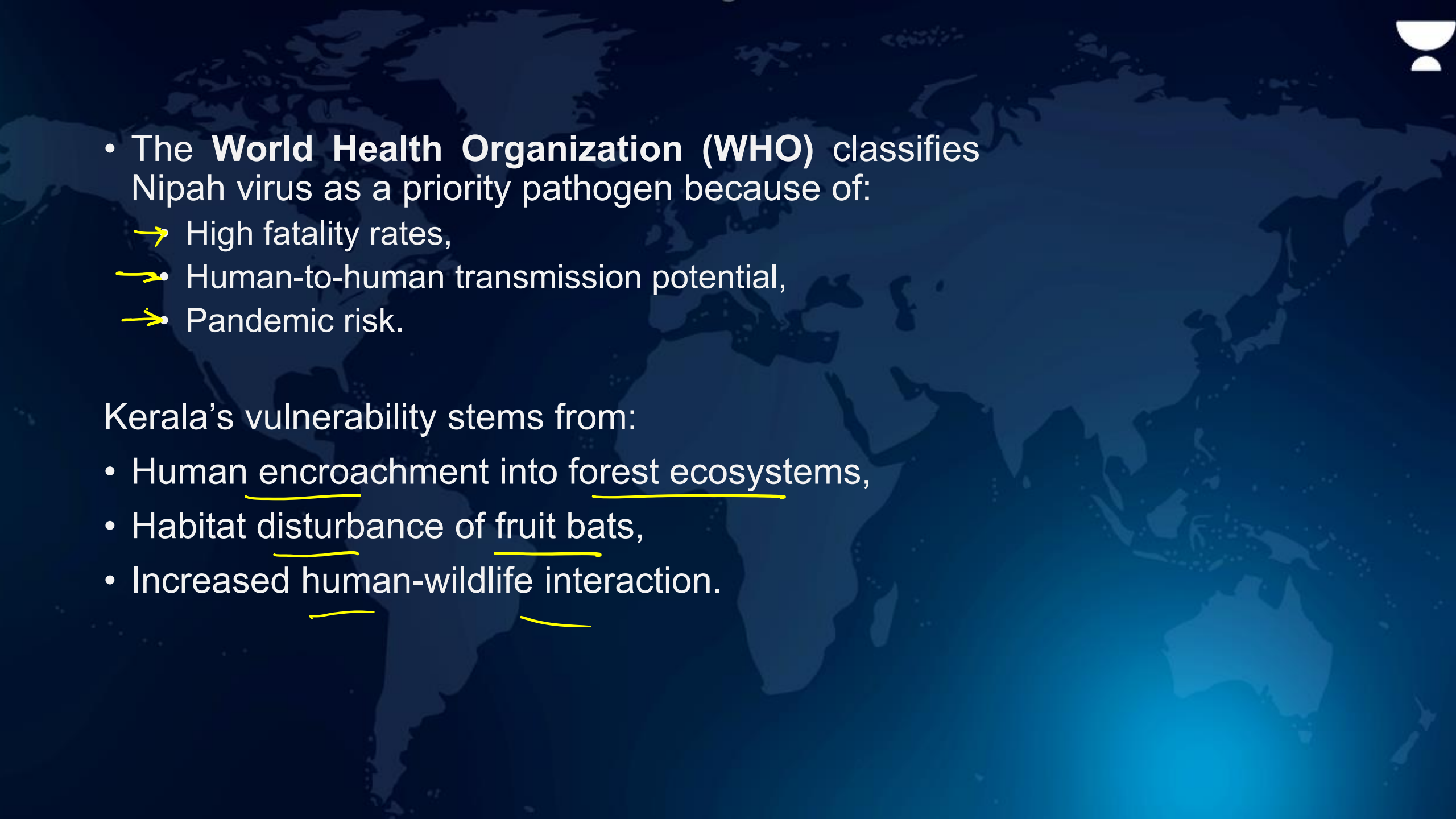
Muscle ache

Headache

Sore throat

Vomiting



- 
- A dark blue world map is visible in the background of the slide. In the top right corner, there is a small white logo consisting of a semi-circle above a horizontal line, resembling a stylized 'U' or a similar symbol.
- The **World Health Organization (WHO)** classifies Nipah virus as a priority pathogen because of:
    - High fatality rates,
    - Human-to-human transmission potential,
    - Pandemic risk.

Kerala's vulnerability stems from:

- Human encroachment into forest ecosystems,
- Habitat disturbance of fruit bats,
- Increased human-wildlife interaction.

# What does Tenth Schedule provide on party mergers?

Why has the misuse of the merger provision increased after the deletion of paragraph 3?

## LETTER AND SPIRIT

Rangarajan R.

### The story so far:

As many as 20 rebel Trinamool Congress MPs met the Lok Sabha Speaker and announced their decision to merge with Nationalist Citizens Party of India (NCPI). This has raised issues about the interpretation of Tenth Schedule with respect to merger of political parties.

### What is the origin of Tenth Schedule?

The defections of legislators during 1960s and 70s from their parent parties created political instability in many States bringing down elected governments. This prompted the 52nd constitutional amendment to introduce the 'anti-defection' law through the Tenth Schedule in 1985. This Schedule provides

that a member of a House of Parliament or State legislature who voluntarily gives up the membership of their 'political party' or votes against the instructions of their party in a House are liable for disqualification from such House. The 'political party' is the entire organisation of a party, while the 'legislature party' is all the members of a political party in a House of Parliament or State legislature.

The Tenth Schedule originally had two exceptions that would not render the members liable for disqualification viz., one-third of members of the 'legislature party' splitting to form a separate group (paragraph 3), or a merger of their 'political party' with another party that is approved by two-thirds of the members of its 'legislature party' (paragraph 4). However, considering the need to strengthen the 'anti-defection' law, paragraph 3 was omitted in 2003.

With the deletion of paragraph 3, there have been instances of two-third

members of a legislature party 'practically' defecting but claiming to be the original political party in order to escape disqualification. This happened in the case of Shiv Sena and Nationalist Congress Party in June 2022 and July 2023 respectively.

There have also been instances where more than two-third members of a 'legislature party' in a house have merged themselves with another political party to escape disqualification. This happened in September 2019 (in Rajasthan) when all 6 Bahujan Samajwadi Party MLAs merged themselves with the Congress and in September 2022 (in Goa) when 8 out of the 11 Congress MLAs merged themselves with the BJP. The Bombay High Court upheld the merger of Goa's Congress Legislature Party with the BJP, though an appeal is pending in the apex court. A similar move occurred in April 2026 when 7 of 10 AAP Rajya Sabha MPs merged with the BJP.

### What is the present case in Bengal?

After the recent West Bengal polls, around 60 of the 80 MLAs elected from Trinamool Congress formed a separate faction led by Ritabrata Banerjee, who was recognised as the Leader of Opposition in the State Assembly even after the party expelled him. Meanwhile, 20 of the 28 Lok Sabha MPs have submitted their decision to the Lok Sabha Speaker to merge themselves with the NCPI. Their claim is that they constitute two-thirds of the legislature party and are hence authorised to take this step under the provisions of the Tenth Schedule without attracting disqualification.

### What may be way forward?

A plain reading of the Tenth Schedule allows only for merger of a political party with another party that is approved by two-thirds of its legislature party. It does not authorise two-thirds of the legislature party in a house to merge itself with another political party to claim immunity from defection. However, in the recent instance with respect to proposed merger of Trinamool Lok Sabha MPs with NCPI as well as the merger of Rajya Sabha MPs of AAP with the BJP, this is what has happened. It is also subject to interpretation whether a merger of an 'original political party' can happen only with another political party that already has members in the legislative house. Moreover, the authority to decide on the

disqualification of members is vested in the Speaker or Chairman. While they are expected to perform this constitutional role impartially, the presiding officers have often favoured the ruling dispensation. The Supreme Court in K. M. Singh case in 2020, recommended that the Parliament amend the Constitution to vest these powers in an independent tribunal headed by judges.

An authoritative Supreme Court judgement in the matters of merger and setting up of an independent tribunal to decide on disqualification may reduce the ambiguities surrounding the Tenth Schedule. However, it may not prevent the ingenious methods adopted by political parties to circumvent the Tenth Schedule. Any such manoeuvres may be viewed as a betrayal of the electorate by the elected representatives. A stricter measure, as recommended by the Law commission in 1999, could be to amend the Tenth Schedule and delete paragraph 4 that provides exemption from disqualification for merger of political parties. Any action by elected members of a legislature party against their political party should lead to disqualification that results in seeking fresh mandate from the people.

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# Context

- **Shiv Sena split (2022)** in Maharashtra.
- **Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) split (2023)**.
- **Congress MLAs joining BJP in Goa (2022)**.
- **AAP Rajya Sabha MPs joining BJP (2026)**.
- **Current controversy involving Trinamool Congress MPs seeking merger with NCPI.**

# Major Features of the 52nd Amendment Act, 1985 Anti – Defection Law

↳ Prelims

- The amendment inserted the Tenth Schedule into the Constitution.
- **Grounds for Disqualification**
  - A legislator could be disqualified if:
    - **1. Voluntarily Giving Up Membership**
      - Not limited to formal resignation.
      - Conduct indicating disloyalty could amount to defection.
    - **2. Voting Against Party Whip**
      - If a member:
        - Votes contrary to party directions, or
        - Abstains without prior permission.
    - **3. Independent Members**
      - Disqualified if they joined a political party after election.
    - **4. Nominated Members**
      - Allowed six months to join a party.
      - Joining after six months attracted disqualification.

# Original Exceptions under the Tenth Schedule

Initially, two major exceptions existed:

## (a) Paragraph 3 — Split Exception ↵

Protected legislators if one-third members formed a separate faction.

Recognised internal divisions within legislative parties.

### Problem:

Extensively misused for engineered defections.

Encouraged factional politics and instability.

## ↵ (b) Paragraph 4 — Merger Exception

Provides protection when two-thirds legislators agree to merge with another party.

Still continues after constitutional reforms.



# 91st Amendment 2003

Paragraph 3 (“split” exception) was deleted.

- **Reasons:**

- Recommendations of:
  - Dinesh Goswami Committee,
  - 170th Law Commission Report.

- **Constitutional implication:**

- Parliament intentionally moved away from legitimising internal fractures within legislative parties.
- It restored primacy to the “political party” rather than the “legislature party.”

# Key Question

- Can two-thirds of legislators merge themselves into another party without the original political party formally merging?

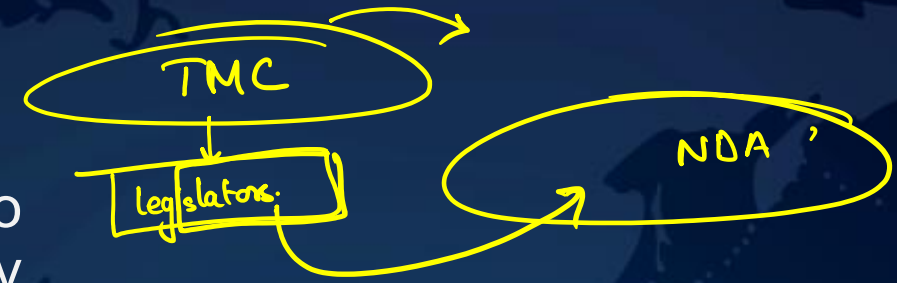
## Competing Interpretations

- **Strict Interpretation:**

- Only a merger of the original political party qualifies under Paragraph 4.
- Legislature members alone cannot engineer a merger.

- **Practical Interpretation:**

- Two-thirds of legislators can claim merger protection even without a formal party merger.
- This ambiguity has generated frequent litigation.





## Solution.

- Panel of Retired SC judges
- Law Commission recommendation



**Scarcity woes:** This summer, residents in parts of New Delhi faced days without piped water supply and large families have had to make do with just one 20-litre water can for a day. *AP*

## Five solutions Indian cities need, to stop fighting for water week after week

Water-secure cities require a combination of clear and transparent emergency planning, systematic reduction of water losses through leak repairs, collective efforts to curb demand, strong safeguards to ensure water quality during shortages, and better management and reuse of wastewater

**Manish Dubey**  
**K.V. Santhosh Ragavan**

**U**rban India's water emergency is no longer a future risk. It has become the normal of our summers. From high-rises anxiously tracking tanker schedules to informal settlements queuing at a single standpost, every year brings the same mix of dry taps, frayed tempers, and quiet resignation.

This summer, residents in parts of New Delhi have already faced days without piped water supply and large families have had to make do with just one 20-litre water can for a day. The Delhi Jal Board has reportedly planned to deploy more than 1,000 tankers to manage the crisis. Similar scenes have played out in other major cities, including Chennai, Bengaluru, and Hyderabad, over the last few summers.

Unfortunately, India still treats this as a seasonal inconvenience to endure until the clouds arrive.

Most cities source their water from reservoirs, groundwater or a combination of both. The annual summer water shortage however is the result of choices made over years. Cities have grown faster than their systems. Lakes and tanks have been built over. People are consuming groundwater faster than it can be replenished.

Cities often focus on finding new water sources instead of fixing and maintaining existing networks. Choices around

development planning and control, enforcement of groundwater regulations, water use and wastewater management, made by all – from every individual to service providers to policymakers – shape the experience each summer.

Many cities have moved from nearby rivers and lakes to distant sources and rapidly depleting groundwater, sinking more borewells and laying longer pipelines. What looks like a sudden shortage is often the result of this slow erosion of local buffers. At the same time, lakes, tanks, ponds and stormwater channels that once softened both floods and droughts have been encroached upon or converted, so a few hours of intense rain can flood streets and, a few weeks later, the same city is again queuing for tankers.

### Beyond short-term coping

For many residents, especially in poorer settlements and smaller towns, the crisis is also about quality. Intermittent supply, leaky pipes, and unsafe storage mean that even when water arrives, it may not be safe to drink. The familiar scenes of tankers, angry protests, and frantic borewell drilling are therefore not one-offs. They are symptoms of a chronic condition that shows up in illness, lost workdays and mounting bills.

If we accept this, we will also realise that coping from week to week is no longer enough.

First, every city needs an honest and public emergency water plan. Residents

should not have to rely on rumours to know what is happening. A basic plan would identify the most vulnerable wards and critical facilities, set simple rules for how water will be prioritised when supplies are tight such as duration and frequency of supply to enable better tail end distribution, and commit to regular public updates on storage levels and expected supply. Where such information is shared clearly, it manages expectations and reduces grievances; this is less about technology than about treating information as part of the service.

Second, a concerted effort must be made to recover water that is already in the system but never reaches the taps. Instead of announcing distant, expensive new sources, cities can launch a time-bound 'leak hunt' in the worst-affected zones: walk key stretches of the network, fix visible leaks quickly, use simple tools to detect hidden ones, and set a short-term target for cutting losses. In systems where a large share – nearly 30% – of water is lost before it reaches users, even modest reductions in a few high-loss areas is equivalent to creating a new local source without building a new pipeline.

Third, government buildings, big campuses and commercial complexes are among the steadiest consumers of water. And a quick internal audit, basic leak repairs, and simple efficiency measures over the next month can free up meaningful volumes and set an example. Neighbourhoods and resident groups can

agree on clear norms for peak months, limiting non-essential uses, tracking weekly consumption and asking tanker suppliers where they draw their water from – while local leaders in low-income areas help authorities see how supply actually reaches their lanes.

Fourth, any emergency response must include water quality: rapid testing in high-risk neighbourhoods and tanker water supply, temporary support for basic treatment where problems are found, and simple communication about safe storage.

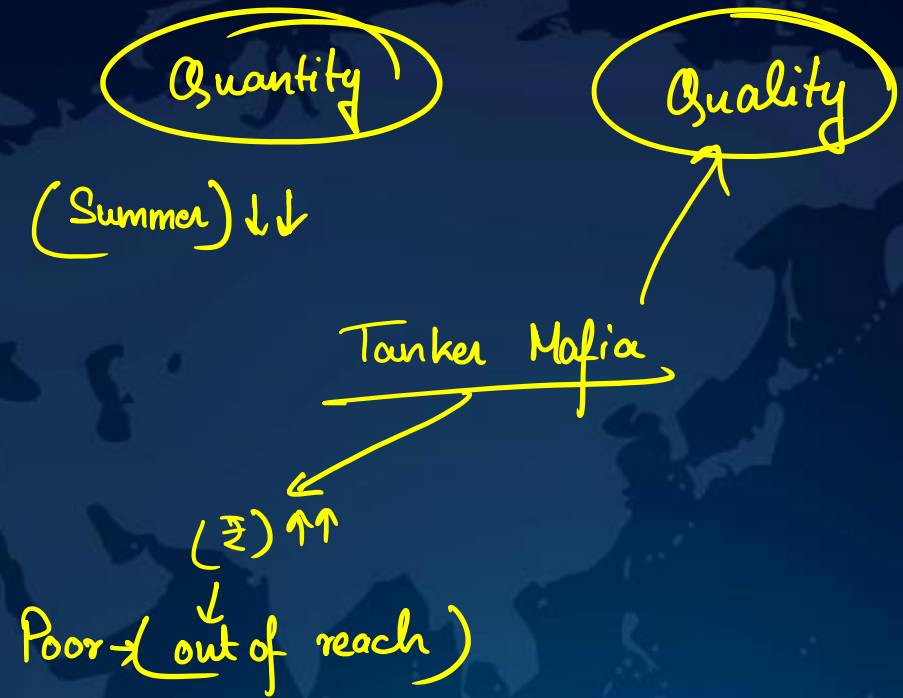
Finally, water security cannot be achieved without improving how we manage used-water. Measures to reduce leaks in water pipelines should also be used on sewer networks to identify and stop major sewage exfiltration and prevent contamination.

### Not a single solution

Quick, low-cost upgrades to used-water treatment plants such as, optimising aeration, de-weeding, and desludging, can further reduce pollution and help augment available surface- and ground-water resources.

No single measure will pull Indian cities out of their water emergency. Together, however, they can directly address the summer's pain points: unpredictability, waste, inequity, and illness.

*Manish Dubey is Dean & Rahul Bajaj Chair, School of Governance, Indian Institute for Human Settlements (IIHS). K.V. Santhosh Ragavan is Adjunct Faculty, IIHS.*





# Urban water crisis

- Rapid urbanization has outpaced water infrastructure.
- Cities have expanded beyond the capacity of existing water systems.

Traditional water bodies such as:

- Lakes,
- Tanks,
- Ponds,
- Stormwater channels, have been encroached upon or degraded.
- Excessive groundwater extraction has weakened urban water security.

A dark blue world map is visible in the background, showing the outlines of continents. The map is centered on the Atlantic Ocean.

# Quantity and Quality



# Solutions



# Practice Question (10 marks)

- 'Water shortage in urban areas is a human problem and not an environmental problem.' Elucidate with probable solutions.

Describe the issue  
of water scarcity



Conclusion →

# Not binary: India can save its forests by winning the war on poverty

Forests with more poor households and communities that depended more on fuelwood were also found to have less diverse tree species, a new study has found. On the other hand, forests where communities had access to alternative livelihoods, such as farming, had more diverse trees species

Ipsita Herlekar

**T**raditionally, many conservationists and policymakers have seen biodiversity conservation as a choice between protecting nature and meeting human needs. Forests were often seen as places that had to be protected from people, while alleviating poverty and economic development were treated as separate concerns.

A new international study has concluded that this is a harmful view.

In a paper in the journal *Nature Sustainability*, researchers from the University of Notre Dame, the University of Michigan, Yale University, the University of Colorado Boulder (U.S.), the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, the University of Manchester (U.K.), the University of Victoria (Canada), and the Indian School of Business analysed data from community-managed forests in the tropics.

The data came from the International Forestry Resources and Institutions network, and spanned 322 community-managed tropical forests in 15 countries from 1993 to 2017.

The dataset's size allowed the researchers to understand both current patterns in forest biodiversity and how they had changed over time. Principally, they found a significant link between people's livelihoods and forest biodiversity.

## Forests, people, livelihoods

Forests with more poor households and communities that depended more on fuelwood were also found to have less diverse tree species. The team also found similar patterns in forests in densely populated areas with higher levels of poverty.

On the other hand, forests where communities had access to alternative livelihoods, such as farming, had more diverse trees.

Tree species diversity refers to the number of tree species in a forest; it is an important measure of biodiversity. Forests with more species tend to support more wildlife, are ecologically more stable, and are often more resilient to environmental change.

Overall, the analysis found that a greater dependence on forest resources was associated with lower tree species diversity.

However, the researchers emphasised that poverty is not responsible for biodiversity loss. They pointed out that when people have fewer livelihood options and depend heavily on forests to survive, the pressure on forest resources automatically increases. The way out is to improve economic opportunities.

## The fortress model

The study also focused on human-dominated landscapes, which are common in India. Most forests in the country are owned and managed by State



Garo tribal women carrying firewood in the West Garo Hills district of Meghalaya in 2024. Representative image. RITU RAJ KONWAR

Forest Departments. And for decades, this apparatus has followed the fortress model – where protected areas are managed by minimising human activities and restricting access to resources. While this model has allowed the Departments to recover several iconic species and strengthen protection, it has some severe limitations.

Today, many protected areas are increasingly becoming isolated islands surrounded by human-dominated landscapes.

"The forests in these landscapes are smaller in size and bear a heavy burden of extraction," Ashwini Chhatre, associate professor of Public Policy at the Indian School of Business and one of the study's authors, said.

Around 275 million people depend on these forests to varying degrees for their livelihoods and daily needs.

"But these forests are ecologically important and provide significant ecosystem services," Dr. Chhatre said.

According to him, the new findings can be used to support conservation by prioritising wildlife corridors – patches of forests that form a loose link between protected areas.

"These corridors are used by large mammals to move between protected areas. The improvement of species richness in these corridors will increase forest resilience and support conservation directly," he said.

## Helping conservation

To reduce pressure on forests, State Forest Departments across India have introduced initiatives like distributing subsidised LPG connections and efficient cooking stoves and heaters around many tiger reserves and national parks. The measures reduce people's need for fuelwood and to enter forests.

**Today, many protected areas are increasingly becoming isolated islands surrounded by human-dominated landscapes. They bear a heavy burden of extraction from communities who depend on them for their livelihood**

Extending similar support to private landholdings and community forests along wildlife corridors could help conservation.

However, Imran Siddiqui, senior field conservationist at the Centre for Wildlife Studies, who has worked extensively in protected areas and with forest communities in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, said that while such initiatives are well-intentioned and that communities often welcome them, they face implementation challenges.

"Funding can be inconsistent, participation from local communities may vary, and long-term support is not always guaranteed," he said.

## Conservation partners

Today, there is growing recognition among wildlife conservationists and forest managers that conservation can't succeed without the support of local communities.

In addition to fuel alternatives and subsidies, many State Forest Departments also give local community members jobs in tourism, forest protection, and seasonal conservation work.

The late ecologist Madhav Gadgil was a strong advocate of an inclusive approach, believing conservation efforts would be more effective if local communities had rights, incentives, and a meaningful role in managing natural resources. He also emphasised the value of traditional

ecological knowledge, and argued people who had lived alongside forests for generations possessed insights that could complement scientific approaches to conservation.

In Ladakh, the Snow Leopard Conservancy has mitigated economic losses of human-wildlife conflict with community-run homestays and livestock insurance programmes. In Maharashtra's Sindhudurg district, village-based

Mangrove Co-Management Committees help protect mangrove ecosystems while supporting fisheries, ecotourism, and sustainable aquaculture.

In Arunachal Pradesh, hornbill nest adoption programmes run by the Nature Conservation Foundation have encouraged local communities to protect nesting sites, with former Nyishi tribe hunters now serving as nest protectors and forest patrollers.

There is also tremendous scope to expand these initiatives and to further support community welfare. As Mr. Siddiqui said, wildlife tourism is a growing multi-million-dollar industry, yet only a small fraction of its revenue reaches the communities living alongside forests and protected areas. He added that a greater share of these benefits should be directed to local communities, creating stronger incentives for conservation.

The findings of the new study highlight the close links between alleviating poverty and conserving biodiversity, and show how socio-economic conditions and conservation goals need not be in conflict with each other. By recognising these connections, both conservationists and policymakers can design more inclusive frameworks to benefit both people and nature.

(Ipsita Herlekar is an independent science writer. [ipsitaherlekar@gmail.com](mailto:ipsitaherlekar@gmail.com))

## THE GIST

▼ Researchers pointed out that when people have fewer livelihood options and depend heavily on forests to survive, the pressure on forest resources automatically increases

▼ The new findings can be used to support conservation by prioritising wildlife corridors – patches of forests that form a loose link between protected areas

▼ The findings show how socio-economic conditions and conservation goals need not be in conflict with each other

# Major Findings

- Forests with a higher proportion of poor households and greater dependence on fuelwood had lower tree-species diversity.
- Forests where communities had access to alternative livelihoods such as farming and other income sources exhibited higher biodiversity and tree-species diversity.



# Poverty matters

Poor households often depend heavily on forests for:

- Fuelwood, ✓
- Fodder, ✓
- Timber, ✓
- Daily subsistence needs. ✓
- Greater dependence increases pressure on forest ecosystems.

# Co-existence vs 'Fortress Model'

- Approximately **275 million people in India depend on forests** to varying degrees for livelihoods and daily needs.

1970s → MAB

## Successful Examples

- ➔ **Ladakh:** Snow Leopard Conservancy's livestock insurance and homestay initiatives reduced human-wildlife conflict.
- **Maharashtra (Sindhudurg):** Mangrove co-management supports fisheries, ecotourism, and conservation.
- **Arunachal Pradesh:** Hornbill nest adoption programmes transformed former hunters into forest protectors.



# Prelims

# IORA examining Canada's request to be observer

**Saptaparno Ghosh**

NEW DELHI

Canada's application to become an observer in the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) "is being examined" at the 28<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials being held in New Delhi, Sanjiv Ranjan, IORA's Secretary-General, told *The Hindu* on Monday.

"Canada has made an application to become a dialogue partner of the organisation, and it is being examined at this meeting," he said.

Mr. Ranjan added member states could benefit from Canada's potential inclusion into the fold considering its expertise in varied maritime domains.

"They [Canada] are a big maritime power because of the huge coastal zones they have, they also have various initiatives and expertise in maritime safety, security and connectivity, among other areas, which would be of help to other member states of the organisation," he said.



Sanjiv Ranjan

Mr. Ranjan welcomed the potential peace deal between Iran and the U.S. that could end more than 100 days of hostilities in the Strait of Hormuz.

"It is a welcome thing that we may have an agreement by the end of this week as has been reported," he said.

Listing out priorities in the Indian Ocean, Mr. Ranjan said disaster response and mitigation remain a priority for IORA. He said the adverse impact of climate change would be "disproportionate" in the Indian Ocean. "Therefore, we must be ready in dealing with that," he said.





- The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) is the premier intergovernmental forum of 23 Member States and 12 Dialogue Partners bordering the Indian Ocean.
- Headquartered in Ebene, Mauritius, IORA fosters regional economic integration, maritime security, and sustainable development through a unique tripartite approach of government, business, and academia.



# Key Priority Areas

- **Trade and Investment:** Promoting freer flow of goods, services, and investment within the rim.
- **Maritime Safety & Security:** Combating piracy, illegal fishing, and protecting vital sea lanes.
- **Blue Economy:** Sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth and improved livelihoods.
- **Fisheries Management:** Ensuring responsible, sustainable harvesting of marine life.
- **Disaster Risk Management:** Coordinating humanitarian assistance and rapid disaster response.
- **Tourism & Cultural Exchange:** Promoting the region's shared heritage and vibrant tourist economies.
- **Cross-Cutting Issues:** Academic/Science & Technology cooperation and Women's Economic Empowerment.

# Air Force to take part in 'Exercise Pitch Black'

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

The Indian Air Force (IAF) will participate in Exercise Pitch Black 2026, the Royal Australian Air Force's (RAAF) premier multinational air combat exercise, scheduled to be held in Australia's Northern Territory from July 20 to August.

Australian High Commissioner to India Philip Green OAM announced India's participation on X on Tuesday, tagging the IAF's official handle and citing the exercise as an opportunity to strengthen regional interoperability across the Indo-Pacific.

According to the Australian Defence Ministry, the exercise will bring together more than 100 aircraft and personnel from 19 allied and partner nations, providing a platform for participating air forces to enhance operational interoperability, strengthen military cooperation, and refine air combat tactics. Exercise Pitch Black is the RAAF's largest international exercise.



## WHAT IS IT?

# GRAPES-3: A cosmic-ray tracker

Vasudevan Mukunth

Researchers from Mumbai, Kochi, and Japan used the GRAPES-3 telescope to track how the earth's upper atmosphere temperature and the sun's magnetic field affect muons — subatomic particles from space. By analysing 22 years of data, they developed a way to use these measurements to monitor changes in the upper atmosphere in real-time with high accuracy. The findings are to be published in the August issue of *Astroparticle Physics*.

The GRAPES-3 telescope in Ooty, Tamil Nadu does not look at light like a traditional telescope. Instead, it is a muon detector. Muons are created when high-energy cosmic rays from deep space collide with the earth's upper atmosphere. The facility consists of 16 independent modules spread over a large area. Each module contains 232 proportional counters, which are long steel tubes filled with a special mixture of argon and methane, with a thin tungsten wire running through the centre. When a muon passes through a tube, it knocks electrons out of the gas molecules. These electrons are pulled towards the wire, creating an electrical pulse that the telescope records as a hit.



The detector array of GRAPES-3 in Ooty. HIDEKI TANAKA (CC BY-SA)


The tubes are arranged in four layers, with each layer positioned at a right angle to the one below. This grid layout allows scientists to track the exact path and angle of the incoming muons. Thick layers of reinforced concrete are placed between the tubes to ensure the telescope only counts high-energy muons that are strong enough to penetrate the concrete. This is how GRAPES-3 is able to produce a high-resolution map of the invisible cosmic forces affecting the earth.




### **For feedback and suggestions**

for 'Science', please write to [science@thehindu.co.in](mailto:science@thehindu.co.in) with the subject 'Daily page'



- **GRAPES-3** (Gamma Ray Astronomy PeV Energies phase-3) is a major astroparticle physics observatory located in Ooty, India, and operated by the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR). 

It is designed to study high-energy cosmic rays and atmospheric phenomena using an extensive array of particle detectors. 



PIB

At an important meeting held in New Delhi under chairmanship of Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Shri Amit Shah, consensus reached among concerned states on long-pending **Kishau Multipurpose Dam Project**

Under leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, Central Government is working to build consensus on significant, long-pending issues concerning nation and public interest by putting into practice principle of 'finding solutions through dialogue'

At meeting chaired by Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Shri Amit Shah, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, and Rajasthan agreed to sign a MoU for implementation of Kishau Multipurpose Project

Following signing of MoU, Kishau Multipurpose Project will be placed before Union Cabinet for approval

For Kishau Multipurpose Dam Project, 90% of cost of water component will be borne by Central Government as Central Assistance, while remaining 10% financial burden will be shared by six participating states

A consensus was reached to allocate Himachal Pradesh's share of water to Delhi and Rajasthan in return for sharing cost of Himachal Pradesh's portion of power component of project

H.P & U.K.

River Tons

R. Yamuna

## India and Japan Adopt Rules of Implementation for Joint Crediting Mechanism Under Article 6.2 of Paris Agreement

Posted On: 16 JUN 2026 3:02PM by PIB Delhi

The Government of the Republic of India and the Government of Japan have adopted the **Rule of Implementation** of the Joint Crediting Mechanism on 08.06.2026, under Article 6.2 of the Paris Agreement of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Last year, India and Japan signed the Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) for the Joint Crediting Mechanism (JCM). The MoC established a framework for collaboration on mitigation activities that deliver greenhouse gas emission reductions or removals while supporting sustainable development outcomes in India and contributing to the achievement of the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) of both countries.

The Rule of Implementation defines robust governance arrangements, including a Joint Committee with representatives from both Governments, transparent project approval procedures, third-party validation and verification, sustainable development safeguards and national registries to track the issuance and transfer of credits.

The Joint Crediting Mechanism demonstrates India's firm commitment to climate action. It will catalyse investment, technology transfer and capacity-building for projects involving low-carbon technologies in India to support climate change mitigation and sustainable development.

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