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What is Netanyahu's endgame in Iran?

Israel has aerial superiority, and it continues to bomb Iran with the objective of destroying its nuclear programme. But there are problems. One, Israel doesn't have strategic bombers that can carry bombs to destroy heavily fortified nuclear facilities in Iran. Therefore, Israel's offensive is not going to conclude any time soon

WORLD INSIGHT

Stanly Johny

When Israel launched an all-out air war against Iran on June 13, it said the attack was aimed at destroying Iran's nuclear programme. On day one, Israel bombed Iran's Natanz nuclear facility and several ballistic missile sites, besides assassinating the country's top Generals, including the chief of the armed forces. In the subsequent days, Israel bombed the nuclear facility in Isfahan, Iran's command centres, missile launchers, civilian locations and even the headquarters of the state TV. Israel has established air superiority over Iran. In retaliation, Iran launched close to 400 missiles, hitting several targets in Israel, including an oil refinery in Haifa and a top research institute near Tel Aviv.

While the air war is escalating, there are questions about Israel's endgame. What does Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu want?

If it is the destruction of Iran's nuclear programme, Israel is far from achieving it. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the UN's nuclear watchdog, said on June 16 that Israel's attack "severely damaged if not entirely destroyed" the centrifuges at the Natanz facility. The Israeli strike had "completely destroyed" the above-ground facility at Natanz, according to IAEA chief Rafael Grossi. The underground hall housing the centrifuges that enrich uranium was not directly hit. "However, the loss of power to the cascade hall may have damaged the centrifuges there," he said. Mr. Grossi also said four buildings were destroyed at the Isfahan Nuclear Technology Centre – a chemical lab, a uranium conversion plant, a fuel manufacturing plant, and a facility to convert uranium hexafluoride to uranium metal. But there was no major damage to the Fordow enrichment plant, which is Iran's most fortified facility that has been built deep under a mountain.

As Israel has aerial superiority, it can continue to bomb Iran. But there are two problems. One, Israel doesn't have the kind of bunker buster bombs or strategic bombers that can carry such bombs to destroy heavily fortified facilities such as Fordow. Therefore, Israel's offensive is not going to be concluded any time soon. And two, despite Israel taking out most of Iran's chain of command in the initial strike, Tehran is hitting back with drones and ballistic missiles. Israel's air strikes in Iran have not reduced the intensity of Iranian missile barrages. At least 24 people have been killed so far in Israel. The Ben Gurion airport in Tel Aviv, the country's main airport, remained shuttered. If Israel's air strikes do not blunt Iran's fire power, Mr. Netanyahu could come under greater pressure at home to wrap up the war quickly. And if Israel accepts a ceasefire without destroying Iran's nuclear facilities, it could be seen as defeat.

This leaves Mr. Netanyahu with three options.

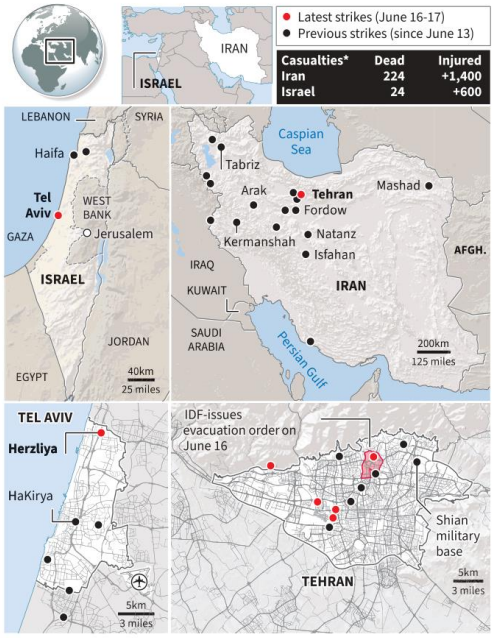
State collapse

One is to continue the relentless bombing of Iran, destroying state institutions and infrastructure, decapitating the regime and pushing for a state collapse or regime change in Tehran. On June 15, while speaking to *Fox News*, Mr. Netanyahu said Israel's attack could lead to regime change in Iran. The next day, he refused to rule out assassinating Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's Supreme Leader, saying killing him would end the conflict. But there is a grey area. Before starting the war, Mr. Netanyahu had urged the Iranians to rise against their government. But when Israel started widespread bombing across the country, killing hundreds of Iranians, it was an 'I-told-you' moment for the Iranian government, who always warned the public of the threats from "the Zionist entity". So it is to be seen whether the Israeli bombings would weaken or strengthen the political and social roots of the regime.

Escalating conflict: Smoke and fire rise from an impacted facility following a missile attack from Iran on Israel, at Haifa, Israel on June 15. REUTERS

Expanding the war

Israeli officials are pressing the U.S. to join the war because Israel needs U.S. military involvement to meet their objectives — total destruction of Iran's nuclear facilities



*Figures since Jun 13 from Iran's health ministry and Israel's government
Sources: ISW, Reuters, BBC

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Path of diplomacy

The second option is diplomacy.

Even after the Israeli strike began, U.S. President Donald Trump said he was open for a deal with Iran. On June 16, there were reports that Iran had sent feelers to America through Gulf Arab countries that it was ready to return to talks if Israel stopped bombing. Mr. Trump's initial posts suggested that he wanted to use the Israeli strikes as an added layer of pressure on the Iranians to get the deal he wanted. While Iran is ready to scale back the programme, it is not ready to give up its capabilities. Mr. Trump wants Iran to completely abandon its nuclear programme. Even if Iran is ready to seriously consider Mr. Trump's offer, will they return to talks when the country is under attack? So far Iran has said no. So the next question is whether Mr. Netanyahu will stop his attacks to facilitate talks between the U.S. and Iran? If that would be the case, why did Mr. Netanyahu start the war in the first place, three days ahead of a sixth round of talks between the U.S. and Iran? This indicates that a nuclear deal between the U.S. and Iran has never been Israel's priority.

American involvement

The third option is to drag the U.S. into the war. Mr. Trump has so far maintained that America is not involved in the war. But he admitted that he was aware of Israel's attack plans even when he publicly voiced opposition to them. Israeli officials say they went ahead after getting "a clear green light" from the U.S. Mr. Trump has warned Iran not to target American bases or soldiers. And Iran has been careful not to escalate the war beyond Israel. But Israeli officials, according to *Axios*, are pressing the U.S. to join the war because Israel needs American military involvement to meet their objectives – total destruction of Iran's nuclear facilities either through direct strikes or through regime change.

If Tehran falls, that would be an added boost for Israel's efforts to reshape West Asia. The Assad regime in Syria is already gone. Iran's network of militants has been weakened. Gaza lies in ruins. In the West Bank, Israel is free to do whatever it wants to do. Arab nations voice protests meekly. If Iran is weakened, Russia's remaining strategic influence in West Asia will shrink further. China will be more dependent on America's Gulf Arab allies for oil. Mr. Trump's position, as of now, is to let Israel continue the bombing. He will not call for a ceasefire. But as the war drags on, with both Israel and Iran hitting each other, Mr. Trump will come under greater pressure to join the war.

THE GIST

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- On June 16, there were reports that Iran had sent feelers to America through Gulf Arab countries that it was ready to return to talks if Israel stopped bombing.
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The third nuclear age

Priyanjali Malik

Author of India's Nuclear Debate: Exceptionalism and the Bomb

The world has entered a third nuclear age. Israel's bombing of Iran, supposedly to address the nuclear threat posed by the regime, contravenes diplomatic norms, tests international law to breaking point, and goes against the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty which seeks to control proliferation through negotiations and treaty obligations. Yet no major power has criticised Israel's actions.

After the first nuclear age of the Cold War and its terrifying bipolar logic of mutually assured destruction between the U.S. and the USSR, followed by the relative optimism of the post-Cold War second nuclear age that assumed nukes could be pushed into the background until somebody figured out how to achieve total nuclear disarmament, we appear to have entered a third age where nuclear weapons and deterrence are back in focus.

Attitudes towards proliferation and deterrence began to harden with China's nuclear build up in the mid-2010s, which coincided with deteriorating relations between Russia and the West. Since then, Russia has threatened nuclear use over Ukraine, Europe is reconsidering how to deter Russia in the wake of waning American support for NATO, and some, including U.S. President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, perceive a nuclear element to the recent hostilities between India and Pakistan. However, it would be a mistake to think that the third age reprises the first: this one is messier and more unpredictable.

The first nuclear age

The first nuclear age was consumed by superpower rivalry, epitomised by massive American and Soviet nuclear arsenals on hair-trigger alert. The other three nuclear powers played supporting parts as the superpowers first furiously increased their arsenals and then sought to create a nuclear regime that could accommodate their rivalry and achieve stability at lower levels of nuclear possession. After negotiating the NPT, the USSR and the U.S. engaged in bilateral arms control treaties that required reductions in their stockpiles from a peak of almost 70,000 warheads between them. The last of these, the New START, which limits deployed warheads to 1,550 each, expires in February 2026 and there are no negotiations for a successor treaty or extension.

If thinking on deterrence shifts in this age of global realignment and potential instability, we are entering a period of self-inflicted nuclear insecurity

The second nuclear age

At the same time, Russia and the U.S. are modernising their arsenals. America's 30-year, $1.5-2 trillion upgrade started under President Barack Obama soon after he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2009 in part for his efforts "to create a world free from nuclear weapons". China (at 600 warheads) is believed to have the fastest growing arsenal. Even if the U.S. and Russia were willing to discuss arms control, China's nuclear ambitions are likely to overshadow the conversation.

These nuclear modernisation programmes began during the second nuclear age. A negotiated test ban and talk of a fissile ban treaty were attempts to freeze the status quo and prevent new nuclear entrants. Even India and Pakistan's nuclear tests did little to change the idea that nuclear use was beyond the pale. It was the age of lofty proclamations of Global Zero (though Mr. Obama was quick to caveat his 2009 speech and say it might not happen in his lifetime) – a concept being valiantly promoted by the signatories of the Nuclear Ban Treaty that was negotiated in 2017 without a single nuclear weapons state supporting it.

In hindsight, it was an age of cynicism. Despite hailing Global Zero, the overriding achievement was the extension in perpetuity of the NPT and with it, the status of the five nuclear weapons states. It made a mockery of the NPT's Article 6, which called on nuclear possessors to "pursue negotiations in good faith" to achieving nuclear disarmament. Instead, extension of their status combined with counter-proliferation appeared to be making the world safe for their continued possession of nukes. This age *normalised* nuclear possession. We are now reaping the dividends of that, as possession appears to be yielding to nuclear use.

A messier age

The third nuclear age is messier because the renewed salience of nukes is superimposed on a global order in flux. China views its aggressive nuclear build up as providing a "strategic counterbalance" to shape the global balance of power. The U.S.'s apparent retreat under Mr. Trump has prompted NATO's European allies to look to France and Britain to deter a resurgent Russia. Britain is reconsidering an airborne deterrent 25 years after scrapping it and has budgeted £15 billion for warhead development and modernisation in its 2025 Strategic Defence Review. France is modernising and reopening old bases; it may consider basing nuclear assets with its neighbours, at their request. After the consolidation of the 1980s and '90s, nuclear weapons are moving out once again. Last year, Vladimir Putin transferred tactical nuclear weapons to Belarus.

Overshadowing these developments is the real fear of nuclear use. During the Cold War, the risk was that the two adversaries could slide into a nuclear war through accident or miscalculation. Deterrence was the ultimate guarantor of the status quo. However, Mr. Putin's nuclear threats over Ukraine show that nuclear weapons are being used to change the status quo. He is believed to have contemplated some nuclear use in 2022.

After Hiroshima, nuclear deterrence has been based on nukes being the final resort. If thinking on deterrence shifts in this nuclear age at a time of global realignment and potential instability, then we are entering a period of self-inflicted nuclear insecurity.

QUESTION CORNER

What is synthetic aperture radar?

Vasudevan Mukunth

Q

Synthetic aperture radar (SAR) is a way to make sharp pictures even when it's dark or cloudy. Instead of using visible light like a regular camera, SAR systems send out microwave pulses and record the echoes that bounce back from the ground, ocean, ice or buildings. Then, clever signal processing turns those echoes into detailed images.

The key element is the antenna that receives the echoes. Usually, the longer a physical antenna, the better the resolution — but a large antenna is hard to build and maintain. On a SAR, a small antenna is carried on a moving platform like a satellite. As a result each echo is recorded at a slightly different position. By stitching them together with precise timing and phase information, software can help mimic a single antenna hundreds of metres long.

Since microwaves penetrate clouds, smoke, and even light rainfall, SAR can collect data 24/7. If a SAR unit is mounted on an orbiting satellite, it can map swaths of land hundreds of kilometres wide in a single overpass. Different materials like soil, vegetation, water, and metals reflect microwaves differently, allowing SAR to detect changes invisible to optical sensors.

An artist's concept of the NISAR satellite in earth orbit. The radar antenna reflector is deployed on top. NASA

On June 12, NASA said the NASA-ISRO SAR (NISAR) mission had arrived at ISRO's spaceport in Sriharikota. Once it's launched, NISAR will "scan nearly all of earth's land and ice surfaces twice every 12 days," providing "an unprecedented amount of information about our planet's environment."

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Rice reveals surprise ability to adapt to cold faster than evolution

A landmark study has shown that rice plants that have learned to tolerate cold temperatures by changing epigenetic marks on a gene called *ACT1* could also pass the ability to express this gene down five generations; this change was induced by exposing normal rice plants to low temperatures which gives credence to Lamarck's views on evolution

Arun Panchapakesan

In the early 1800s, 'the theory of acquired characters' was the most widely accepted explanation of evolution. Simply put, the theory stated that characteristics that an organism developed during its lifetime, through use, disuse or environmental influence, could be inherited by its offspring.

The French naturalist Jean-Baptiste Lamarck formalised this idea in two laws in 1809, and it remained unrivalled until half a century later. In 1859, Charles Darwin proposed natural selection, which said that variations are passed from parents to offspring and that changes that confer benefits survive while the detrimental ones perish. The two ideas co-existed for a brief while until two major scientific developments challenged Lamarck's views.

The first was German evolutionary biologist August Weismann's demonstration that even after cutting the tails of mice continuously for over five generations, there was no inheritance of this acquired characteristic in the offspring. The second was the rediscovery of the work of Gregor-Johann Mendel, who showed that inheritance is governed by stable, particulate units (now called genes) that are passed unchanged from parents to offspring.

The integration of Mendel's work with Darwin's ideas laid the foundation for understanding heredity. When DNA was later identified as the genetic material, it explained how changes in DNA sequence (called mutations) are passed from parents to offspring. Traits that improve an organism's chances of survival and reproduction are more likely to be passed on while less advantageous traits tend to be lost over time. This was called, in short, survival of the fittest.

For a long time, Lamarck's ideas lay forgotten.

If you have it, express it

In 1956, Canadian plant geneticist Royal Alexander Brink noticed something strange in maize. Despite having two copies of the gene for rich, purple-coloured kernels, some plants produced only weak pigments. Even more curious, their offspring also showed weak pigmentation despite carrying the same genes. This suggested that something other than DNA was influencing the trait and that this mysterious influence was heritable.

Scientists soon realised that having a gene is not enough: it must also be expressed, meaning its information must be used to make proteins. This expression is regulated in various ways.

Researchers subjected the rice plant *Oryza sativa* to low temperatures and used the number and quality of seeds produced as a way to assess how well the rice adapted. WOODY YAN/UNSPLASH

One important method involves small chemical tags added to the DNA that help cells decide whether a gene should be switched on or off. This system of gene regulation without altering the DNA sequence is called epigenetics.

In 1975, scientist Arthur Riggs proposed that these chemical tags, or epigenetic marks, could be inherited. This meant organisms could potentially pass on instructions about gene activity without changing their DNA sequence. Since it's easier to change these marks than to mutate DNA, it raised an intriguing possibility: if an environmental trigger caused a heritable epigenetic change, then Lamarck might have been partly right.

Inheritance, at least in some cases, could be due to environmental influence. The DNA itself didn't need to change.

Over the next 50 years, sporadic reports appeared stating that this might be the case – but none were convincing enough to firmly prove that a natural environmental cue could induce a heritable epigenetic change.

Lamarck redeemed

On May 22, a landmark study published in *Cell* showed, for the first time, that rice plants can acquire tolerance to cold temperatures by changing the epigenetic marks on a gene called *ACT1*. Surprisingly, this change was induced by exposing normal rice plants to low temperatures. Even more surprisingly, the change was heritable over five generations – proof that what Lamarck suggested over two centuries ago could indeed happen, albeit in a laboratory. The authors of the study achieved the feat by subjecting the rice plant *Oryza sativa* to low temperatures and using the number and quality of seeds produced as a way to assess how well the rice adapted. They observed that from the second generation onwards, seed quality improved and, importantly, the improvement was sustained across subsequent generations.

ACT1 is normally expressed at high levels in rice. But when exposed to cold, its expression is switched off by the addition of a methyl group, an epigenetic tag that tells the plant's cells not to produce the protein. Without sufficient _ACT1_, normal rice plants struggle to survive in the cold

Then they sequenced the total DNA of the cold-adapted rice and compared it with a control group grown under identical conditions but without the cold exposure. Although they found multiple genetic differences, none appeared to account for the enhanced cold tolerance. They next examined differences in gene expression between the two groups and identified 12 genes whose activity varied.

To understand why these 12 genes produced different levels of protein, the researchers investigated epigenetic marks and discovered more than 12,380 differences between the two groups. One of these changes was near a gene they called *ACT1*. Interestingly, *ACT1* was also among the 12 genes with altered expression.

What life has endured

The team then explored how this epigenetic change regulated *ACT1*. They found that ACT1, a gene involved in plant growth and development, is normally expressed at high levels in rice. But when exposed to cold, its expression is switched off by the addition of a methyl group, an epigenetic tag that tells the plant's cells not to produce the protein. Without sufficient *ACT1*, normal rice plants struggle to survive in the cold. The cold-adapted plants, however, didn't add this methyl signal. As a result, they continued to produce the *ACT1* protein, which supported their development under cold stress. These epigenetic marks were then passed on to their offspring, ensuring subsequent generations also expressed *ACT1* and survived in cold conditions.

In the century or so since they were discarded, Lamarck's ideas on evolution have been exhumed several times – mostly for criticism. It is perhaps poetic that nature itself had to step in to show us that he was not entirely wrong and that the environment can indeed influence heredity. The cold-adapted rice has shown us that sometimes, very rarely, inheritance is not determined by the code for life but rather by what that life has endured.

(Arun Panchapakesan is an assistant professor at the Y.R. Gaitonde Centre for AIDS Research and Education, Chennai. arun.panchapakesan@gmail.com)

THE GIST

The French naturalist Jean-Baptiste Lamarck formalised the theory of acquired characters; Darwin proposed natural selection. The two ideas co-existed for a brief while until major developments forced Lamarck's theory into dormancy

When researchers proposed that epigenetic marks could be inherited, it raised the possibility that if an environmental trigger caused a heritable change, then Lamarck might have been partly right. Inheritance could be due to environmental influence. The DNA itself didn't need to change

Lamarck's ideas on evolution have been exhumed several times — mostly for criticism. It is perhaps poetic that nature itself had to step in to show us that he was not entirely wrong and that the environment can indeed influence heredity

India increased its nuclear warhead count to 180 in 2024: SIPRI report

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Nearly all of the nine nuclear-armed countries, including India and Pakistan, continued intensive nuclear modernisation programmes in 2024, upgrading existing weapons and adding newer versions, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), a global think tank, says in its 2025 report.

India is believed to have once again "slightly expanded" its nuclear arsenal in 2024 and continued to develop new types of nuclear delivery systems. "India's new 'canisterised' missiles, which can be transported with mated warheads, may be capable of carrying nuclear warheads during peacetime, and possibly even multiple warheads on each missile, once they become operational," the SIPRI says.

'Nearly all of the nine nuclear-armed countries upgraded weapons, added newer versions'

"Pakistan also continued to develop new delivery systems and accumulate fissile material in 2024, suggesting that its nuclear arsenal might expand over the coming decade," it says, observing that in early 2025, tensions between India and Pakistan briefly spilled over into armed conflict.

"The combination of strikes on nuclear-related military infrastructure and third-party disinformation risked turning a conventional conflict into a nuclear crisis," says Matt Korda, associate senior researcher with SIPRI's Weapons of Mass Destruction Programme and associate director for the Nuclear Information Project at FAS. "This should act as a stark warning for states seeking to increase their reliance on nuclear weapons," he says.

The findings, SIPRI says, are that a dangerous new nuclear arms race is emerging at a time when arms control regimes are severely weakened. The nine nuclear-armed countries are the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, China, India, Pakistan, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea), and Israel.

Call for caution

According to the SIPRI estimates, India's stored warheads increased to 180 in January 2025, from 172 in January 2024; whereas that of Pakistan remained at 170. The U.S. has 1,770 deployed and 1,930 stored warheads, while its inventory stands at 5,177 in 2025 compared with 5,328 in 2024.

Russia has 1,718 deployed and 2,591 stored warheads, and its inventory stands at 5,459, as against 5,580 in 2024. China has 24 deployed warheads and 576 stored ones, with its inventory rising to 600 in January 2025 from 500 in 2024.

The total inventory stands at 12,241, of which 9,614 warheads are in "military stockpiles for potential use". An estimated 3,912 warheads are deployed with missiles and aircraft, and the rest are in central storage.

The report cautions that if no new agreement is reached to cap their stockpiles, the number of warheads deployed on strategic missiles might increase after the expiry of the bilateral 2010 Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (New START) in February 2026.

Army team leaves for India-France joint exercise

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

An Army contingent left for France on Tuesday to participate in the eighth edition of the India-French joint military exercise named 'Shakti', which will be conducted at Camp Larzac, La Cavalerie in France from June 18 to July 1.

The Indian contingent comprises 90 personnel, primarily from a battalion of the Jammu and Kashmir Rifles.

The French contingent comprises 90 personnel from the 13th Foreign Legion Half-Brigade (13th DBLE), the Defence Ministry said.

The exercise is a biennial training engagement between the Indian and French Armies, aimed at enhancing interoperability, operational coordination, and military-to-military connect. The training will be conducted in semi-urban terrain.

Working with India to help evacuate those waiting to leave: Israeli envoy

Reuven Azar says New Delhi has expressed concern about regional stability; he conveys Israel's 'appreciation' for India's decision to break with other members of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation for a statement condemning Israel's action

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

Israel is coordinating with the Indian Embassy in Tel Aviv to help those wanting to leave the country amid air strike exchanges between Iran and Israel, Israel's Ambassador to India Reuven Azar said on Tuesday. While India has so far not announced a plan to evacuate most citizens from either country, the government is encouraging them to move away from major cities that will face the brunt of the military action.

Iran has retaliated to Israel's strikes, on Iranian nuclear installations on June 13 and other military targets, with a barrage of strikes on several Israel cities, ports, military and research installations.

"We are now starting to organise through [Israel's] Ministry of Transport, evacuation commutes for diplomats and foreign citizens that want to leave. There are a few options for this, both terrestrial and maritime, and we are discussing these [with Indian authorities as well]," Mr. Azar told presspersons here. According to officials, the land routes via the Allenby Bridge/King Hussein Bridge to Jordan, as well as over the Eilat-Taba border crossing to Sharm el-Sheikh in Egypt are operational, while cruise ships to Cyprus from Israeli ports at Haifa and Ashdod may be another possibility.

> We are going to continue our dialogue with the International Atomic Energy Agency in order to assess the situation and see how we can continue attacking, because we have to attack, but at the same time minimise casualties. We are now starting to organise through Israel's Ministry of Transport, evacuation for foreign citizens
>
> **REUVEN AZAR**
> Israel's Ambassador to India

In a briefing detailing Israel's claims that it attacked Iran "pre-emptively" to avoid an "imminent" attack by Iranian forces that were poised to develop nuclear weapons, Mr. Azar said the Israeli government had reached out to partners, including India, to explain its actions.

IAEA has flagged serious implications for nuclear safety, security and safeguards

In a post about his phone call with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said he had shared India's "concerns" with him and called for the early restoration of peace and stability in the region.

Asked if New Delhi had expressed specific concerns with regard to the attacks on Iranian nuclear installations, including the facilities at Natanz and Isfahan that the IAEA had criticised, Mr. Azar said India's concerns were restricted to stability in the region.

"For a country like India that is a rapidly rising power, any disturbance to world peace is detrimental to the national interest. So it's very natural that India will be concerned. We understand those concerns and try to ameliorate what we can," Mr. Azar said. "We are going to continue our dialogue with the IAEA in order to assess the situation and see how we can continue attacking, because we have to attack, but at the same time to minimise casualties."

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) chief Rafael Grossi said the strikes were "deeply concerning", adding that "nuclear facilities must never be attacked, regardless of the context or circumstances"."Such attacks have serious implications for nuclear safety, security and safeguards, as well as regional and international peace and security," Mr. Grossi said.

Mr. Azar expressed Israel's "appreciation" for India's decision to break with other members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation for a statement that had condemned Israel's attacks.

He dismissed questions about whether the Israeli government had lost bipartisan support in India, given criticism from the Congress about its bombardment of Gaza and the attack on Iran.

"I engage equally with people from all parties and all regions of India," Mr. Azar said, adding that he remains in touch with "very prominent people" at the Congress party. "Sometimes people are more critical of you. It doesn't mean that they are not your friends. They have concerns," he added.

Turmeric farming a new way to thwart wild animal threat in Kerala's Munnar

Sandeep Vellaram
IDUKKI

The once-abandoned cropland in the tribal settlements of Munnar in Kerala's Idukki district will soon adorn a green carpet.

Farmers had left large areas uncultivated for years owing to attacks by wild animals.

According to officials, the tribal population under the wildlife division has now introduced turmeric farming on the abandoned lands, as wild animals stay away from such farms. The tribal population took it up with the financial support of the Forest Department.

Rich dividends: Forest department officials and tribal farmers sowing turmeric seeds on farms in the Munnar wildlife division.

Munnar Wildlife Warden K.V. Harikrishnan says that last year, turmeric was cultivated on two acres under the Munnar forest division, and it reaped rich dividends. "This year, turmeric farming will be done on 55.56 acres in the tribal settlements of the Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary, Eravikulam National Park, and Anamudi National Park. The trial farming conducted here found that turmeric farming is very practical in these lands," says Mr. Harikrishnan.

Threat recedes

According to officials, all wild animals, including elephants and wild boars, stay away from turmeric farms. "During the trial farming, the department and tribal farmers monitored the wild animals and confirmed this," he says.

Over the months, the officials noted that the crop-raiding threat has waned. "Turmeric farming is a new hope for farmers, giving an average yield of five tonnes per acre of land," said an official.

Will highlight priorities of Global South at G7: Modi

Kallol Bhattacherjee
NEW DELHI

Summit time: Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrives in Calgary, Alberta, to attend the G7 meeting hosted by Canada. AP

India will highlight the priorities of the Global South at the G7 summit in Canada, said Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who reached Calgary on Tuesday to participate in the G7 Outreach Summit. Besides the Summit, Mr. Modi is expected to participate in four bilateral meetings with the leaders of Germany, Canada, Ukraine, and Italy.

"Will be meeting various leaders at the Summit and sharing my thoughts on important global issues. Will also be emphasising the priorities of the Global South," said Mr. Modi.

Soon after reaching the venue of the Summit in Kananaskis, Mr. Modi met South Korean President Lee Jae-myung and Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum. The pull-aside meeting with Ms. Sheinbaum was the first such interaction between the two leaders.

In a prelude to his speech at the G7, the Prime Minister, in his just-concluded visit in Cyprus, had conveyed support for a negotiated settlement to the currently escalating Israel-Iran and Russia-Ukraine conflicts.

The conflicts left an early impact on the summit as U.S. President Donald Trump left the event soon after the early interactions without waiting for the outreach summit where the guest leaders were to feature. The departure of the U.S. President took place against the backdrop of reports that the U.S. was mobilising fire power and refueling platforms for an operation in the Gulf region.

Before leaving, Mr. Trump also supported the idea that he would rather expand G7 into a possible 'G9' by including Russia and China.

"Very big mistake"

President Trump said that it was a "very big mistake" to remove Russia from the grouping after it annexed Crimea.

"I think you would not have a war right now if you had Russia in, and you would not have a war right now if Trump were President four years ago," Mr. Trump said. He argued that exclusion of Russian President Vladimir Putin from the G7 high table "makes life more complicated".

Mr. Modi's meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy will be watched closely as the meeting will be held ahead of the expected visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin of Russia to India for the India-Russia annual summit.

Earlier in May, President Putin accepted Mr. Modi's invite to visit New Delhi for the annual summit.

The Modi-Zelenskyy discussion is likely to add to the context of the India-Russia discussion that will taken place during the upcoming India visit of Russian President Sergey Lavrov.

The G7 Outreach Summit of this year being hosted by Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney is themed around three core pillars of "Protecting our communities around the world", "Building energy security and accelerating the digital transition" and "securing the partnerships of the future".

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