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Trade pact a launchpad for growth: U.K. PM

The Trade Agreement presents unparalleled opportunities, says Starmer as he begins visit

Starmer to meet PM Modi today to take stock of India-U.K. Comprehensive Strategic Partnership

The U.K. will offer duty-free access on 99.1% of its tariff lines, immediately upon enforcement

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The opportunities waiting to be seized under the India-U.K. Free Trade Agreement are "unparalleled", British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said in Mumbai on Wednesday as he kick-started his first visit to India after assuming charge.

"It's the biggest deal we've struck since we left the European Union," Mr. Starmer said. "I think it's also the biggest deal that India has ever struck, so it's hugely important."

Mr. Starmer, accompanied by a delegation of nearly 100 entrepreneurs, cultural representatives, and university Vice-Chancellors, arrived in Mumbai for a two-day visit to take advantage of the opportunities brought about by the India-U.K. Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement signed in July.

"It's not just a piece of paper, it's a launchpad for growth. With India set to

be the third biggest economy in the world by 2028, and trade with them about to become quicker and cheaper, the opportunities waiting to be seized are unparalleled," he said.

He will meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday. They will address the sixth edition of the Global Fintech Fest in Mumbai.

"Welcome Mr. Starmer on your historic first visit to India with the largest ever trade delegation from the U.K.," Mr. Modi said on X. "Looking forward to our meeting tomorrow for advancing our shared vision of a stronger, mutually prosperous future."

"During the visit, on October 9 in Mumbai, the two Prime Ministers will take stock of progress in diverse aspects of the India-U.K. Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in line with 'Vision 2035', a focused and time bound 10-year road map of programmes and initiatives in key pillars of trade and investment,



Boosting ties: U.K. Prime Minister Keir Starmer interacts with a delegation accompanying him on his India visit. *AP*

technology and innovation, defence and security, climate and energy, health, education and people to people relations," the External Affairs Ministry said.

Both leaders would engage with business and industry leaders regarding the opportunities presented by the trade agreement. "They will also exchange

views on issues of regional and global importance," it added. The India-U.K. CETA aims at boosting bilateral trade by £25.5 billion annually.

It provides substantial tariff reductions on a range of goods, including textiles, whisky, and cars, enhancing competitiveness for exporters in both mar-

kets. Specifically, the U.K. will offer duty-free access on 99.1% of its tariff lines, covering 100% of the trade value immediately upon enforcement.

Investments and visas Mr. Starmer's trip to India has yielded positive statements from some U.K. companies, such as Rolls-

Royce, about their future plans in India.

"We have deep ambitions to develop India as a home for Rolls-Royce, building on our strong and successful partnership," Tufan Erginbilgic, CEO of Rolls-Royce, said in Mumbai. "Our competitively advantaged technologies across air, land, and sea applications position us to successfully build in-country capabilities and foster strategic partnerships that will accelerate India's progress towards a Viksit Bharat," he said.

Mr. Starmer, however, reportedly indicated that the U.K. would not be revisiting its visa requirements for Indians. According to the BBC, Mr. Starmer reportedly said that no business leaders he had met so far raised the question of visas. It added that, during the flight to India, Mr. Starmer said that visas "played no part" in the CETA and that the situation had not changed.

Mr. Starmer also visited

the Yash Raj Films (YRF) studio, where he met Indian producers and film stars, such as Rani Mukherjee.

The British Prime Minister is reportedly keen to strengthen cultural ties between India and the U.K. and promote collaboration between the film industries of the two countries.

The U.K. government issued a release on Wednesday saying that three new Bollywood movies would be made in the U.K. from next year, with YRF having confirmed plans to bring their major productions to locations across the U.K. from early 2026.

Commerce and Industries Minister Piyush Goyal met Peter Kyle, the U.K.'s Secretary of State for Business and Trade, in Mumbai with a view to moving forward with the operationalisation of the India-U.K. CETA, the Commerce and Industry Ministry said in a statement. Mr. Kyle is part of the delegation accompanying Mr. Starmer.

Trade pact a launchpad for growth: U.K. PM

GS Paper II – International Relations (India-UK relations, Trade agreements)

- English Summary:** British PM Keir Starmer began his first visit to India, highlighting the India-UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) as "unparalleled opportunities." The pact includes tariff-free access on 99.1% UK tariff lines, boosting bilateral trade by £25.5 billion annually. It covers trade, defence, climate, energy, education, and people-to-people ties under *Vision 2035*. However, the UK has ruled out revisiting visa norms.
- Hindi Summary:** ब्रिटिश प्रधानमंत्री कीर स्टारमर ने भारत यात्रा शुरू करते हुए कहा कि भारत-यूके व्यापक आर्थिक और व्यापार समझौता (CETA) "अभूतपूर्व अवसर" प्रदान करता है। इस समझौते से द्विपक्षीय व्यापार में हर साल £25.5 बिलियन की बढ़ोतरी होगी। यह व्यापार, रक्षा, जलवायु, ऊर्जा, शिक्षा और लोगों के बीच संबंधों को *विज़न 2035* के तहत कवर करता है। वीज़ा नीति में कोई बदलाव नहीं होगा।

11 soldiers among 30 killed amid clashes in Pak. border province

Press Trust of India

PESHAWAR

At least 11 Pakistani military personnel, including a Lieutenant-Colonel and a Major, were killed in clashes with the Taliban militants during an operation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province bordering Afghanistan, the Army said on Wednesday.

In a statement, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the media wing of the military, said 19 militants of the 'Fitna al-Khawarij' were also killed during the operation in Orakzai district on Tuesday night.

The Pakistan government last year notified the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) as 'Fitna al-Khawarij', a reference to a group in earlier Islamic history which was involved in violence.

During the "intense" exchange of fire between security forces and the militants, 19 terrorists "were sent to hell", the statement said. It said that 39-year-old Lt. Col. Junaid Tariq, who was leading his troops from the front, and his second-in-command, 33-year-old Major Tayyab Rahat, were killed along with nine of their men.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressed grief over the killing of the soldiers, saying the sacrifices of the fearless sons of the security forces will never go in vain.

He said Pakistan will crush the nefarious intentions of terrorists. "We will not allow elements that harm Pakistan's integrity to succeed," he added.



Pakistan has seen a surge in attacks, in Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. FILE PHOTO

President Asif Ali Zardari paid tributes to the "courageous action of security forces in the Orakzai district".

Mr. Zardari expressed heartfelt sympathy with the families of the soldiers, praying that they bear their loss with patience and courage, a statement issued by the presidency said. "The entire nation stands as a lead wall with its armed forces," the statement quoted him as saying.

Pakistan has seen a surge in militant attacks, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces, after the banned TTP called off its ceasefire with the government in November 2022 and vowed to target security forces, police, and law enforcement agencies.

According to the latest statistics issued by the Centre for Research and Security Studies (CRSS), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was the worst-hit region in the country in the third quarter of 2025.

It suffered nearly 71% (638) of the total violence-linked fatalities, and over 67% (221) of the incidents of violence.

GS Paper II – International Relations (India's Neighbourhood, Terrorism)

- **English Summary:** 11 Pakistani soldiers, including senior officers, were killed in clashes with Taliban militants in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Pakistan faces a surge in militant violence after the TTP ended its ceasefire in 2022. CRSS data shows Khyber Pakhtunkhwa suffered 71% of violence-linked fatalities in Q3 2025.
- **Hindi Summary:** पाकिस्तान के खैबर पख्तूनख्वा प्रांत में तालिबान आतंकियों के साथ मुठभेड़ में 11 सैनिकों सहित 30 लोग मारे गए। 2022 में TTP द्वारा संघर्षविराम तोड़ने के बाद पाकिस्तान में आतंकी हिंसा में वृद्धि हुई है। आँकड़े दिखाते हैं कि 2025 की तीसरी तिमाही में 71% हिंसा की घटनाएँ इसी क्षेत्र में हुईं।

Trio wins Chemistry Nobel for bridging metals and organics

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

An Australian, a Japanese and a Jordanian-American scientists were announced winners of the Nobel Prize in Chemistry for discovering and creating a class of materials, called metal-organic frameworks (MOF).

Metallic and organic substances are as far apart in the chemical world as Australia and the U.S. geographically and it was inconceivable that stable, useful products could be made out of materials formed by integrating them. But beginning Richard Robson's initial conception of them in the mid 1970s, sparked from a science project for his Melbourne University students; to Susumu Kitagawa's dogged determination, in Kyoto University, at creating porous molecules

— despite knowing that they were “useless” — but tinkering with them until he created the right kind of structures that were useful enough to work as a filter whilst remaining flexible and pliant; to finally Omar Yaghi at the University of California, Berkeley, making a variety of metal-organic frameworks, as he named them, that were capable of drawing water vapour out of desert air at night and releasing them as water in the day. The three will equally share the prize of 11 million Swedish kroner, about ₹1 crore.

Following the laureates' groundbreaking discoveries, chemists have since built tens of thousands of different MOFs. Some of these may contribute to solving some of humankind's greatest challenges, with applications that include separating PFAS (a

For the development of
metal-organic frameworks



family of chemicals that are believed to be toxic) from water, breaking down traces of pharmaceuticals in the environment, capturing carbon dioxide or harvesting water from desert air, a press statement noted.

Molecular kit
Researchers have developed a molecular kit with

a wide range of different pieces that can be used to create new MOFs. These have different shapes and characters, providing incredible potential for the rational—or AI-based—design of MOFs for different purposes.

First of the block and inspired by a project to make wooden block representations of chemical bonds,

Mr. Robson began by testing the inherent properties of atoms in a new way. He combined positively charged copper ions with a four-armed molecule; this had a chemical group that was attracted to copper ions at the end of each arm. When they were combined, they bonded to form a well-ordered, spacious crystal. It was like a diamond filled with innumerable cavities.

Mr. Robson immediately recognised the potential of his molecular construction, but it was unstable and collapsed easily. However, Mr. Kitagawa and Mr. Yaghi provided this building method with a firm foundation; between 1992 and 2003 they made, separately, a series of revolutionary discoveries.

Mr. Kitagawa showed that gases can flow in and out of the constructions

and predicted that MOFs could be made flexible.

Mr. Yaghi created a very stable MOF and showed that it can be modified using rational design, giving it new and desirable properties.

Initially, it was challenging for the scientific community to appreciate MOF as they didn't seem to be much better than a class of materials called zeolites. But things changed when they succeeded in developing soft MOFs — a step up over zeolites that were hard. One of those who was able to present a flexible material was Kitagawa himself. When his material was filled with water or methane, it changed shape, and when it was emptied, it returned to its original form. It behaved somewhat like a lung that can breathe gas in and out, changeable but stable.

GS Paper III – Science & Technology (Nobel Prizes, Material Science, Environment)

- **English Summary:** Scientists from Australia, Japan, and Jordan-USA won the 2025 Nobel Prize in Chemistry for developing Metal-Organic Frameworks (MOFs). These porous materials have potential applications in carbon capture, water harvesting from desert air, filtering toxic PFAS, and environmental clean-up.
- **Hindi Summary:** ऑस्ट्रेलिया, जापान और जॉर्डन-अमेरिका के वैज्ञानिकों को 2025 का रसायन विज्ञान का नोबेल पुरस्कार "मेटल-ऑर्गेनिक फ्रेमवर्क्स" (MOFs) के विकास के लिए दिया गया। ये छिद्रदार पदार्थ कार्बन कैप्चर, रेगिस्तान से पानी निकालने, PFAS जैसे विषैले रसायनों को हटाने और पर्यावरण संरक्षण में उपयोगी होंगे।

Tamil Nadu Assembly to adopt resolution for Gaza ceasefire, says CM Stalin

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Wednesday said the State Assembly would adopt a resolution on October 14, calling for a ceasefire in Gaza and urging the Indian government to make every effort to end the Israel-Hamas war.

“The resolution will reflect the sentiments of the people of Tamil Nadu. I hope all parties, cutting across political lines, will support it,” Mr. Stalin said, speaking at a protest organised in Chennai by the CPI (M) and attended by the DMK and its allies.

Mr. Stalin said the indiscriminate bombing of Gaza by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), in violation of inter-



Push for peace: Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin with DMK leader K. Veeramani and CPI(M) State secretary P. Shanmugam during a protest in Chennai on Wednesday. R. RAVINDRAN

national human rights and United Nations policies, had shaken the entire world. “Everyone who has participated in this meeting has condemned Israel’s mass killings,” he said.

Mr. Stalin also noted that over 50,000 people had been killed in the conflict, including 11,000 women, 17,000 children, 175 journal-

ists, and 125 UN employees.

State Congress Committee president K. Selvaperunthagai; CPI(M) leaders P. Shanmugam, K. Balakrishnan, and U. Vasuki; CPI State secretary M. Veerapandian; and Manithaneya Makkal Katchi leader M.H. Jawahirullah were among the participants of the protest.

GS Paper II – International Relations (India’s stand on Israel–Palestine conflict)

- English Summary: Tamil Nadu CM M.K. Stalin announced that the State Assembly will adopt a resolution urging the Indian Government to push for a ceasefire in Gaza. The statement highlights massive civilian casualties in the ongoing Israel-Hamas war.
- Hindi Summary: तमिलनाडु के मुख्यमंत्री एम.के. स्टालिन ने घोषणा की कि विधानसभा गाज़ा में युद्धविराम के लिए प्रस्ताव पारित करेगी और केंद्र सरकार से इस दिशा में कदम उठाने का आग्रह करेगी। इसमें इसराइल-हमास युद्ध में बड़े पैमाने पर नागरिक हताहतों का उल्लेख किया गया।

Odisha govt. to restore Tagore's residence in Puri, make it museum

The Hindu Bureau

BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha government has announced plans to restore 'Pather Puri', the residence of Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore in Puri, and transform it into a museum. The decision was taken at a high-level meeting chaired by State Minister for Culture Suryabanshi Suraj on Wednesday.

The house, located near the seashore on a plot originally allotted to Tagore before India's Independence, was later constructed by the Tagore family. In subsequent years, the property served as a boys' hostel for students of Samanta Chandra Sekhar College in

Puri. The building narrowly escaped demolition by the Puri Municipality after activists launched a campaign to preserve it.

It was also decided at the meeting to establish a theme pavilion highlighting eminent Odia writers and their literary contributions at Cuttack's Bali Jatra.

"Indonesia will be invited as the partner country. Under the 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat' initiative, an Indian State will also be invited as the partner state. Additionally, cultural troupes from several South Asian countries will be invited to participate," said a statement issued by the Department of Odia Language, Literature, and Culture.

GS Paper I – Indian Heritage and Culture (Art & Culture, Personalities & Institutions)

- English Summary:

The Odisha government has announced plans to restore 'Pather Puri', the residence of Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore in Puri, and convert it into a museum. The house, originally allotted to Tagore before Independence and later built by his family, was once used as a boys' hostel. It narrowly escaped demolition after public protests. The government also plans a theme pavilion at Cuttack's Bali Jatra, showcasing eminent Odia writers. Indonesia will be invited as partner country, and under 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat', an Indian state will also join as partner.

- Hindi Summary (हिंदी सारांश):

ओडिशा सरकार ने नोबेल पुरस्कार विजेता रवीन्द्रनाथ टैगोर के पुरी स्थित आवास 'पाथेर पुरी' को पुनः स्थापित कर उसे संग्रहालय में बदलने की योजना बनाई है। यह मकान स्वतंत्रता पूर्व टैगोर को आवांटेत भूखंड पर उनके परिवार द्वारा बनाया गया था और बाद में छात्रावास के रूप में भी प्रयुक्त हुआ। जन आंदोलन के बाद भवन को ध्वस्तीकरण से बचाया गया। सरकार ने कटक के बाली जात्रा में ओडिया साहित्यकारों को प्रदर्शित करने हेतु एक थीम पैवेलियन बनाने का भी निर्णय लिया है। इंडोनेशिया को साझेदार देश और 'एक भारत श्रेष्ठ भारत' पहल के तहत एक भारतीय राज्य को भी साझेदार राज्य बनाया जाएगा।

U.S. Senate confirms Sergio Gor as Indian Ambassador, Kapur as regional official

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

After months of rocky relations, the India-U.S. engagement is set to get a boost as the U.S. Senate confirmed the nominations of Sergio Gor as Ambassador to India and S. Paul Kapur, an American of Indian origin as the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia.

Mr. Gor has also been appointed U.S. President Donald Trump's special envoy on South and Central Asia, a new post that did not require confirmation. His role in the region has been watched keenly, and with some misgivings in New Delhi, especially as Mr. Gor met with leaders of Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Bhutan in New York last month, and Pakistani leadership had travelled to Washington.

Officials did not indicate a date for Mr. Gor to take up his post as Ambassador in Delhi, but did not rule out his arrival in the next few weeks in his role as special envoy, ahead of a possible meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Mr. Trump on the sidelines of the upcoming ASEAN-related summits in Kuala Lumpur on October 26-27, where they may repair ties and discuss scheduling the Quad summit.

At the Senate hearing on September 11, Mr. Gor, who said the U.S.-India relationship would "define the 21st century", indicated that he and U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Christopher Landau would travel to the region in October, and set out the tasks before him. Mr. Gor said that he would work to advance the India-U.S. trade relationship so that it is "fair" to American businesses, adding that "India's protectionist policies and regulatory barriers have prevented [the two countries] from fully realising this partnership". He also said that "getting" India to stop buying Russian oil is a "top priority".

Mr. Gor and Mr. Kapur, who will be the point-per-



Sergio Gor

sons for India and the region, were confirmed among 107 nominees in a single vote with 51 Senators in favour and 47 against, who convened despite the U.S. government shut-down, on Tuesday.

"Ambassador Gor's confirmation is a signal to New Delhi that the U.S.-India relationship is a top priority for the administration and the region, and together, through the right diplomatic channels, [India and the U.S.] can iron out the creases and reach consensus," Mukesh Aghi, president and CEO of the U.S.-India Strategic Partnership Forum, said on Wednesday, referring to Mr. Gor as a "trusted confidant" of Mr. Trump, and Mr. Kapur as a "stellar academic and a South Asia scholar who is second to none in understanding the security of the region and New Delhi's concerns vis-a-vis Beijing and Islamabad".

Kapur, a seasoned hand

While Mr. Gor, a 38-year-old close Trump aide and MAGA (Make America Great Again campaign) insider, has no previous experience on India, Mr. Kapur is an experienced analyst on India and the region, known well in South Block. He has worked in the U.S. State Department's policy planning division in 2020-21. The author of several books and papers on Pakistan-sponsored jihadist groups in South Asia, U.S.-India relations, and India and Pakistan's nuclear programmes, Mr. Kapur has been a frequent visitor to the region and was a visiting fellow at the Delhi-based Observer Research Foundation until recently.

GS Paper II – International Relations (India-US ties)

- **English Summary:** U.S. Senate confirmed Sergio Gor as Ambassador to India and S. Paul Kapur as Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia. Gor prioritised fair trade relations and pressuring India to reduce Russian oil imports. This is expected to reset strained India-US ties.
- **Hindi Summary:** अमेरिकी सीनेट ने सर्जियो गोर को भारत में राजदूत और एस. पॉल कपूर को दक्षिण एवं मध्य एशिया मामलों के सहायक विदेश सचिव के रूप में पुष्टि दी। गोर ने भारत-अमेरिका व्यापार संतुलन और रूस से तेल आयात कम करने पर ज़ोर दिया। इससे दोनों देशों के संबंध बेहतर होने की उम्मीद है।

11 soldiers among 30 killed amid clashes in Pak. border province

Press Trust of India

PESHAWAR

At least 11 Pakistani military personnel, including a Lieutenant-Colonel and a Major, were killed in clashes with the Taliban militants during an operation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province bordering Afghanistan, the Army said on Wednesday.

In a statement, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the media wing of the military, said 19 militants of the 'Fitna al-Khawarij' were also killed during the operation in Orakzai district on Tuesday night.

The Pakistan government last year notified the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) as 'Fitna al-Khawarij', a reference to a group in earlier Islamic history which was involved in violence.

During the "intense" exchange of fire between security forces and the militants, 19 terrorists "were sent to hell", the statement said. It said that 39-year-old Lt. Col. Junaid Tariq, who was leading his troops from the front, and his second-in-command, 33-year-old Major Tayyab Rahat, were killed along with nine of their men.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressed grief over the killing of the soldiers, saying the sacrifices of the fearless sons of the security forces will never go in vain.

He said Pakistan will crush the nefarious intentions of terrorists. "We will not allow elements that harm Pakistan's integrity to succeed," he added.



Pakistan has seen a surge in attacks, in Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. FILE PHOTO

President Asif Ali Zardari paid tributes to the "courageous action of security forces in the Orakzai district".

Mr. Zardari expressed heartfelt sympathy with the families of the soldiers, praying that they bear their loss with patience and courage, a statement issued by the presidency said. "The entire nation stands as a lead wall with its armed forces," the statement quoted him as saying.

Pakistan has seen a surge in militant attacks, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces, after the banned TTP called off its ceasefire with the government in November 2022 and vowed to target security forces, police, and law enforcement agencies.

According to the latest statistics issued by the Centre for Research and Security Studies (CRSS), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was the worst-hit region in the country in the third quarter of 2025.

It suffered nearly 71% (638) of the total violence-linked fatalities, and over 67% (221) of the incidents of violence.

GS Paper II – International Relations (India & Neighbourhood, Terrorism, Security)

- **English Summary:**
At least 11 Pakistani soldiers, including a Lt. Colonel and a Major, were killed in clashes with Taliban militants in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province bordering Afghanistan. Pakistan Army reported 19 militants of *Fitna al-Khawarij* (a renamed banned TTP faction) were also killed in Orakzai district. PM Shehbaz Sharif vowed that sacrifices of security forces would not go in vain. President Asif Ali Zardari praised the soldiers' courage and promised to crush terrorist networks. The Centre for Research and Security Studies (CRSS) reported that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa suffered 71% of total violence-linked fatalities in Q3 2025. Militancy surged after the TTP ended its ceasefire with the government in 2022.
- **Hindi Summary (हिंदी सारांश):**
कम से कम 11 पाकिस्तानी सैनिक, जिनमें एक लेफ्टिनेंट कर्नल और एक मेजर शामिल थे, अफगानिस्तान से सटी खैबर पख्तूनख्वा प्रांत में तालिबान आतंकियों से मुठभेड़ में मारे गए। पाक सेना ने बताया कि *फितना अल-खवारिज* (प्रतिबंधित TTP गुट का नया नाम) के 19 आतंकियों को भी ओरकज़ाई ज़िले में मार गिराया गया। प्रधानमंत्री शहबाज़ शरीफ़ ने कहा कि सुरक्षाबलों की कुर्बानियाँ व्यर्थ नहीं जाएँगी। राष्ट्रपति आसिफ अली ज़रदारी ने सैनिकों की बहादुरी की सराहना की और आतंकवाद को कुचलने का वादा किया। CRSS की रिपोर्ट के अनुसार 2025 की तीसरी तिमाही में खैबर पख्तूनख्वा में कुल हिंसक मौतों का 71% और घटनाओं का 67% हुआ। 2022 में TTP द्वारा संघर्षविराम तोड़े जाने के बाद से आतंकवादी हमलों में तेज़ी आई है।

Relevance for Exams:

- UPSC GS Paper II: Neighbourhood issues, terrorism, India–Pakistan relations, regional security.
- BPSC/JPSC: Regional security dynamics, terrorism in South Asia, implications for India's internal and border security.

Draft labour policy unites social security schemes

It aims at creating universal, portable social security accounts for all workers by 2030; it also seeks to raise women's labour participation to 35%, offer single-window digital compliance for MSMEs

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Universal and portable social security is a major component of the draft National Labour and Employment Policy, which proposes to create a universal account by integrating the Employees Provident Fund Organisation, Employees State Insurance Corporation, Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, e-SHRAM, and State welfare Boards.

The draft policy, known as the Shram Shakti Niti, 2025, was released on Wednesday for public consultation.

The proposals include the implementation of the Occupational Safety and Health Code with risk-based inspections, gender-sensitive standards, and the convergence of various skills schemes. The draft policy presents a renewed vision for a fair, inclusive, and future-ready world of work aligned with the national aspiration of a developed India by 2047, Union Labour Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said.

“Rooted in India’s civilisational ethos of *śrama dharma*, the dignity and moral value of work, the



Workforce reforms : The policy envisions a labour ecosystem that improves protection and productivity for every worker. FILE PHOTO

policy envisions a labour ecosystem that ensures protection, productivity, and participation for every worker. It seeks to create a balanced framework that upholds workers’ welfare while enabling enterprises to grow and generate sustainable livelihoods,” Mr. Mandaviya said.

Policy outcomes

Expected outcomes of the policy include universal worker registration and social security portability, near-zero workplace fatalities, increased female la-

bour-force participation, a sharp reduction in informal jobs through digital compliance, AI-driven labour-governance capacity in all States, the creation of millions of green and decent jobs, and a fully converged “One Nation Integrated Workforce” ecosystem. The last date to submit suggestions on the draft is October 27.

The draft policy seeks to increase women’s participation in the labour force to 35% by 2030, and expand entrepreneurship and career guidance initia-

tives for youth. It also proposes a single-window for digital compliance, with self-certification and simplified returns for MSMEs. Promotion of green jobs, AI-enabled safety systems, just-transition pathways for workers, and a unified national labour data architecture ensuring inter-ministerial coherence and transparent monitoring are also part of the policy document.

Accountability plan

Policy implementation will proceed in three phases. Phase I (2025-27) focuses on institutional setup and social-security integration.

During Phase II (2027-30), the nationwide rollout of universal social security accounts, along with skill-credit systems, and district-level Employment Facilitation Cells. Phase III (beyond 2030) will bring in paperless governance, predictive analytics, and continuous policy renewal.

“Progress will be tracked through real-time dashboards, a Labour & Employment Policy Evaluation Index (LPEI) benchmarking States, and an Annual National Labour Report to Parliament,” the document says.

English Summary:

The Government released the draft National Labour and Employment Policy (Shram Shakti Niti, 2025) for public consultation. The policy aims to create a universal, portable social security system for all workers by integrating EPFO, ESIC, PM Jan Arogya Yojana, e-SHRAM, and State welfare boards.

Key features:

- Implementation of the Occupational Safety and Health Code with risk-based inspections and gender-sensitive standards.
- Creation of a universal labour account for all workers by 2030.
- Focus on productivity, protection, and participation of every worker to build a balanced labour ecosystem.
- Promotion of green jobs, AI-enabled safety systems, digital compliance for MSMEs, and unified labour data architecture.
- Emphasis on increasing women's labour force participation to 35%.
- Phased implementation:
 - *Phase I (2025-27)*: institutional setup and integration.
 - *Phase II (2027-30)*: nationwide rollout of social security accounts and digital systems.
 - *Phase III (beyond 2030)*: predictive analytics, AI-driven governance, continuous renewal.

The draft also stresses paperless governance, simplified MSME compliance, entrepreneurship expansion, and monitoring through Labour & Employment Policy Evaluation Index and Annual Labour Report to Parliament.

Hindi Summary (हिंदी सारांश):

सरकार ने राष्ट्रीय श्रम एवं रोजगार नीति (श्रम शक्ति नीति, 2025) का प्रारूप सार्वजनिक परामर्श हेतु जारी किया। इसका मुख्य उद्देश्य सभी श्रमिकों के लिए सार्वभौमिक एवं पोर्टेबल सामाजिक सुरक्षा प्रणाली स्थापित करना है, जिसमें EPFO, ESIC, प्रधानमंत्री जन आरोग्य योजना, e-SHRAM और राज्य कल्याण बोर्डों को जोड़ा जाएगा।

मुख्य बिंदु:

- व्यावसायिक सुरक्षा एवं स्वास्थ्य संहिता का कार्यान्वयन (जोखिम-आधारित निरीक्षण एवं लैंगिक मानक)।
- वर्ष 2030 तक सभी श्रमिकों हेतु सार्वभौमिक श्रम खाता।
- प्रत्येक श्रमिक के लिए सुरक्षा, उत्पादकता और सहभागिता सुनिश्चित करना।
- हरित रोजगार, AI आधारित सुरक्षा प्रणाली, MSME के लिए डिजिटल अनुपालन और एकीकृत श्रम डेटा संरचना।
- महिलाओं की श्रम भागीदारी 35% तक बढ़ाना।
- चरणबद्ध क्रियान्वयन:
 - *चरण I (2025-27)*: संस्थागत ढांचा और एकीकरण।
 - *चरण II (2027-30)*: सार्वभौमिक सामाजिक सुरक्षा खाता और डिजिटल प्रणाली।
 - *चरण III (2030 के बाद)*: AI आधारित शासन, सतत नीति नवीनीकरण।

नीति में *पेपरलेस शासन*, *MSMEs के लिए सरलीकृत अनुपालन*, *उद्यमिता प्रोत्साहन* और श्रम एवं रोजगार मूल्यांकन सूचकांक के माध्यम से निगरानी की व्यवस्था भी शामिल है।

Relevance for Exams:

- UPSC GS Paper III: Employment generation, labour reforms, digital governance, inclusive growth.
- BPSC/JPSC: National policies on labour, welfare schemes, gender participation, state role in implementation.

After delays, IAF set to receive first Tejas Mk1A fighter jet

Saurabh Trivedi

NEW DELHI

The Indian Air Force (IAF) is set to receive its first light combat aircraft (LCA) Tejas Mk1A on October 17 during a ceremony in Nashik, marking a significant milestone in India's indigenous fighter jet programme.

According to officials, two Tejas Mk1A jets will be handed over to the IAF in the presence of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh. He will visit the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) facility and interact with the staff involved in production.

HAL's contract to deliver 83 Tejas Mk1A aircraft – originally scheduled to begin in February 2024 – has faced delays primarily due to slow engine deliveries from General Electric (GE Aerospace). With only one or two engines being supplied per month, HAL now targets completing deliveries within four years.

Negotiations for an additional 97 Tejas Mk1A fighters are in the final stages, with talks between the Ministry of Defence and GE Aerospace under way.

Defence analysts point out that the IAF is operating with 29 squadrons and that it may take at least five years to bridge the capabil-



The HAL's contract to deliver 83 Tejas Mk1A aircraft faced delays due to slow engine deliveries.

ity gap. Even months after Operation Sindoor, no significant progress has been made in replenishing the depleted fighter squadrons. Recently, two MiG-21 squadrons have been decommissioned.

IAF chief Air Chief Marshal Amar Preet Singh recently voiced his concern, "Hungry mouths are ready; we are waiting for the food," he said, emphasising that to maintain optimal strength, the force requires two squadrons – 30 to 40 aircraft – produced every year. Meanwhile, the IAF's proposal to acquire 114 multi-role fighter aircraft (MRFA) continues to progress through procedural stages.

The Defence Ministry is considering a plan to procure "Made in India" Rafales, with at least 18 expected to be delivered off-the-shelf in the near term.

English Summary:

The Indian Air Force (IAF) will receive its first Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas Mk1A on October 17 at a ceremony in Nashik, in the presence of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh. This marks a significant milestone in India's indigenous fighter jet programme.

Key details:

- Two Tejas Mk1A jets will be handed over initially.
- HAL's contract to deliver 83 Tejas Mk1A aircraft, originally due in February 2024, was delayed due to slow engine deliveries from General Electric (GE Aerospace). HAL now aims to complete deliveries within four years.
- Negotiations are ongoing for an additional 97 Tejas Mk1A fighters.
- IAF currently operates 29 squadrons against the sanctioned 42 squadrons, creating a capability gap. Recent decommissioning of two MiG-21 squadrons worsened the shortage.
- IAF chief Air Chief Marshal Amar Preet Singh highlighted the urgency: "Hungry mouths are ready; we are waiting for the food." He stressed that two squadrons (30-40 aircraft) must be inducted annually to maintain optimal strength.
- In parallel, the MRFA proposal to acquire 114 multi-role fighter aircraft is moving forward. The Defence Ministry is also planning to produce "Made in India" Rafales, with 18 off-the-shelf Rafales expected in the near future.

Hindi Summary (हिंदी सारांश):

भारतीय वायुसेना (IAF) को 17 अक्टूबर को नासिक में आयोजित समारोह में पहला तेजस Mk1A हल्का लड़ाकू विमान (LCA) मिलेगा। यह भारत के स्वदेशी लड़ाकू विमान कार्यक्रम में एक महत्वपूर्ण उपलब्धि है।

मुख्य बिंदु:

- प्रारंभ में दो तेजस Mk1A विमान सौंपे जाएंगे।
- 83 तेजस Mk1A विमानों की आपूर्ति का HAL का अनुबंध फरवरी 2024 तक पूरा होना था, लेकिन GE Aerospace से इंजन आपूर्ति में देरी के कारण विलंब हुआ। अब HAL अगले चार वर्षों में आपूर्ति पूरी करने का लक्ष्य रखता है।
- अतिरिक्त 97 तेजस Mk1A विमानों के लिए वार्ता जारी है।
- वर्तमान में IAF के पास 29 स्क्वाड्रन हैं जबकि स्वीकृत संख्या 42 स्क्वाड्रन है। हाल ही में दो MiG-21 स्क्वाड्रन को सेवानिवृत्त किया गया।
- वायुसेना प्रमुख एयर चीफ मार्शल अमर प्रीत सिंह ने कहा कि "भूखे मुँह तैयार हैं, हमें भोजन का इंतजार है," और जोर दिया कि हर साल दो स्क्वाड्रन (30-40 विमान) शामिल किए जाने चाहिए।
- साथ ही, 114 मल्टी-रोल लड़ाकू विमानों (MRFA) की खरीद की प्रक्रिया चल रही है। रक्षा मंत्रालय "मेड इन इंडिया" राफेल उत्पादन पर भी विचार कर रहा है, जिनमें से 18 सीधे खरीदे गए राफेल जल्द मिल सकते हैं।

Relevance for Exams:

- UPSC GS Paper III: Defence indigenisation, Make in India, Modernisation of Armed Forces.
- BPSC/JPSC: Defence preparedness, indigenous defence manufacturing, India's self-reliance in critical technologies.

India to boost solar pumps scheme in Africa, island nations

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The Union government is looking to showcase the PM-KUSUM (Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthan Mahabhiyan) programme to several African countries and island nations, Union Minister for Renewable Energy (MNRE) Pralhad Joshi said on Wednesday.

“We are looking to showcase both the PM-KUSUM and the PM Surya Ghar (for rooftop solar installations) programme in countries which have problems with connectivity. We are doing this in Africa and island countries through the ISA (International Solar Alliance) platform,” Mr. Joshi said at a curtain-raiser event for the ISA’s eighth General Assembly, sche-

duled later this month. The ₹34,000-crore PM-KUSUM programme is meant to boost solar energy infrastructure in agriculture by setting up 100 GW of solar power plants in farmer-owned land. Launched in 2019, it was to have added a solar capacity of 308 GW by 2022, but has missed targets. The Centre then set a new target, of 348 GW with a deadline of March 2026.

As of September 30, only one part of the scheme, where 17.5 lakh standalone solar pumps were to be installed has made notable progress. About 70% of the pumps have been installed. On the other hand, only 6% of decentralised grid-connected renewable energy power plants, and 16%-25% of grid-connected solar pumps have been installed.

English Summary:

The Union Government plans to showcase the PM-KUSUM (Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthan Mahabhiyan) scheme in several African and island nations, according to Union Minister for Renewable Energy, Pralhad Joshi.

- The programme, along with PM Surya Ghar (rooftop solar), will be promoted in countries facing connectivity challenges.
- It will be taken forward through the International Solar Alliance (ISA) platform.

- PM-KUSUM aims to boost solar energy infrastructure in agriculture by setting up 100 GW solar plants on farmer-owned land.
- Launched in 2019 with a target of 308 GW solar capacity by 2022, the scheme missed the target. The new goal is 348 GW by March 2026.
- Progress so far:
 - Out of 17.5 lakh standalone solar pumps, about 70% installed.
 - Only 6% decentralised grid-connected renewable energy pumps installed.
 - 16%-25% grid-connected solar pumps installed in different states.

This initiative strengthens India's role as a leader in renewable energy diplomacy and aligns with its climate commitments.

Hindi Summary (हिंदी सारांश):

भारत सरकार ने घोषणा की है कि वह पीएम-कुसुम (प्रधानमंत्री किसान ऊर्जा सुरक्षा एवं उत्थान महाभियान) योजना को कई अफ्रीकी और द्वीपीय देशों में प्रदर्शित करेगी। यह जानकारी नवीन एवं नवीकरणीय ऊर्जा मंत्री प्रह्लाद जोशी ने दी।

- इस योजना के साथ पीएम सूर्य घर (रूफटॉप सोलर) कार्यक्रम भी उन देशों में प्रचारित किया जाएगा जहाँ कनेक्टिविटी की समस्या है।
- इसे अंतर्राष्ट्रीय सौर गठबंधन (ISA) के माध्यम से आगे बढ़ाया जाएगा।
- पीएम-कुसुम का लक्ष्य कृषि में 100 गीगावाट सौर संयंत्र लगाना है।
- 2019 में योजना की शुरुआत के समय 2022 तक 308 GW का लक्ष्य रखा गया था, लेकिन लक्ष्य चूक गया। नया लक्ष्य अब 348 GW मार्च 2026 तक है।
- अब तक की प्रगति:
 - 17.5 लाख स्टैंडअलोन सौर पंपों में से लगभग 70% स्थापित हो चुके हैं।
 - 6% विकेंद्रीकृत ग्रिड से जुड़े नवीकरणीय ऊर्जा पंप ही स्थापित हुए।
 - विभिन्न राज्यों में 16%-25% ग्रिड-कनेक्टेड सौर पंप स्थापित हुए हैं।

यह पहल भारत को नवीकरणीय ऊर्जा कूटनीति का अग्रणी बनाती है और जलवायु परिवर्तन लक्ष्यों से भी जुड़ी है।

Relevance for Exams:

- UPSC GS Paper II: India's energy diplomacy, ISA, South-South cooperation.
- UPSC GS Paper III: Renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, government schemes.
- BPSC/JPSC: National energy policies, India's role in climate action, rural energy schemes.

Vote of confidence

Bihar election will be a test case for the neutrality and the efficiency of the ECI

Bihar will vote in two phases, on November 6 and 11, to elect a new Assembly, with counting on November 14. The Bihar Assembly election of 2025 is important not only for political reasons but also for the reasons of electoral integrity in India, which is facing a crisis. The Election Commission of India (ECI) is cognisant of the high stakes in Bihar, and for good measure, the Chief Election Commissioner, Gyanesh Kumar, described it as the ‘mother of all elections’. The ECI also listed 17 measures, beginning with Bihar, that could improve voter participation and public trust in the process. The average number of eligible voters in a polling station will be 819, and the highest number of voters in a booth will now be 1,200 compared to 1,500 earlier. The ECI has also taken into account concerns raised by political parties and other observers about the electoral process. Counting of postal ballots will be complete before the last two rounds of Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) and Voter-Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) counting. If there is a mismatch between the Form 17C and EVM data, and wherever mock poll data had not been erased, the counting of VVPAT slips will be mandatory. Among other measures are mobile phone deposit facilities at polling stations, and a one-stop digital platform named ECINet, for real-time voter turnout updates. Surprising turns in turnout data have been a matter of serious concern in recent elections, and this measure could help clear the air. Live feed from all booths will be available for monitoring purposes.

The Bihar election has gained a special national significance this time, with the ECI’s abrupt announcement of a Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls which began in June. The ECI sees the process as a “purification” of electoral rolls, with plans to have it across the country. In Bihar’s final list, roughly 69 lakh names were removed for reasons such as deaths, unproven citizenship, duplicate entries, or permanent migration to other States. Bihar will be critical for the BJP, the Congress, the RJD and the JD(U), with each party hoping to turn a corner in their journeys. The ruling National Democratic Alliance is at the crossroads with an aging Chief Minister Nitish Kumar who is completing nearly 20 years in office. The BJP may want to formally take over the alliance’s reins but it will have to gauge how this might impact the social dynamics. For the Congress, Bihar will be a test case of its key planks – electoral integrity and social justice. All said, this is one election in which the ECI has the highest stakes, and all those invested in Indian democracy hope to see it come out with flying colours.

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English Summary:

The Bihar Assembly election 2025 will be conducted in two phases on November 6 and 11, with counting on November 14. This election is being described by the Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar as the “mother of all elections”, given its significance for both political outcomes and the credibility of electoral processes in India.

Key points:

- ECI reforms: 17 measures announced, including reducing maximum voters per booth from 1,500 to 1,200; average voters per booth ~819.
- Counting reforms: Mandatory VVPAT slip counting if discrepancies appear in EVM data; postal ballot counting before EVM/VVPAT counting.
- Transparency: Introduction of ECINet, a one-stop digital platform for real-time voter turnout updates; live feeds from all booths for monitoring.
- Electoral rolls: Nearly 69 lakh names removed in Bihar's Special Intensive Revision (SIR) due to deaths, duplicate entries, migration, or citizenship issues.
- Political significance:
 - NDA at crossroads with CM Nitish Kumar completing nearly 20 years in office.
 - BJP may aim to take over alliance leadership.
 - Congress banking on themes of electoral integrity and social justice.
 - RJD and JD(U) eye revival.

The election is being seen as a litmus test of ECI's neutrality, efficiency, and credibility in a climate of declining trust in electoral institutions.

Hindi Summary (हिंदी सारांश):

बिहार विधानसभा चुनाव 2025 दो चरणों में होंगे - 6 और 11 नवंबर को मतदान तथा 14 नवंबर को मतगणना होगी। मुख्य चुनाव आयुक्त ज्ञानेश कुमार ने इसे “सभी चुनावों की जननी” बताया है, क्योंकि यह न केवल राजनीतिक दृष्टि से बल्कि चुनावी प्रक्रिया की विश्वसनीयता के लिए भी अहम है।

मुख्य बिंदु:

- चुनाव सुधार: अधिकतम मतदाता संख्या प्रति बूथ 1,500 से घटाकर 1,200 की गई; औसतन प्रति बूथ 819 मतदाता रहेंगे।
- मतगणना सुधार: यदि EVM और फॉर्म-17C डेटा में अंतर हुआ तो VVPAT स्लिप गिनना अनिवार्य होगा; डाक मतपत्र की गिनती पहले होगी।
- पारदर्शिता: ECINet डिजिटल प्लेटफॉर्म से वास्तविक समय में मतदान प्रतिशत उपलब्ध होगा; सभी बूथों से लाइव फीड भी निगरानी के लिए उपलब्ध होगी।
- मतदाता सूची: विशेष पुनरीक्षण (SIR) में लगभग 69 लाख नाम हटाए गए (मृत्यु, नागरिकता संदेह, प्रवास, डुप्लीकेट प्रविष्टि)।
- राजनीतिक महत्व:
 - NDA और नीतीश कुमार (20 वर्ष पूरे) के लिए मोड़ का चुनाव।
 - भाजपा नेतृत्व संभालने की ओर देख सकती है।
 - कांग्रेस चुनावी निष्पक्षता और सामाजिक न्याय पर जोर दे रही है।
 - राजद और जदयू अपनी स्थिति मजबूत करने की कोशिश में।

यह चुनाव चुनाव आयोग की निष्पक्षता और दक्षता की बड़ी परीक्षा होगा और भारतीय लोकतंत्र में विश्वास की कसौटी भी।

Relevance for Exams:

- UPSC GS Paper II: Election Commission's powers, reforms, challenges.
- BPSC/JPSC: State-level politics, electoral reforms, Bihar's political landscape.

An anchor for India-U.K. ties, economic partnership

Relations between India and the United Kingdom witnessed a major step-up with the signing of the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) in July 2025. The meeting of the Indian and U.K. Prime Ministers this week in Mumbai signals a deep commitment on both sides to scale up bilateral relations and become true partners in progress.

The visit of the British Prime Minister Keir Starmer will anchor India-U.K. ties in a period marked by shifting trade regimes, geopolitical realignments and intensifying competition for technology, capital and talent.

While awaiting ratification, CETA is already being positioned as a strategic foundation for the bilateral relationship, promising to expand trade, investment and cooperation across a spectrum of sectors. The significance of Mr. Starmer's visit lies in consolidating these commitments and in situating the partnership within a rapidly changing global economic landscape.

The backdrop to this visit is India's expanding web of economic partnerships. On October 1, India's Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) with the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) came into effect. This is India's first agreement where market access is explicitly tied to investment commitments, with EFTA countries pledging \$100 billion of investment over 15 years. Parallely, negotiations with the European Union, India's second largest trading partner in goods, with bilateral trade of \$136.5 billion in 2024-25, are advancing well.

Building on CETA

At the heart of the October discussions will be the CETA. It is expected to double bilateral commerce by 2030. For India, the pact promises lower tariffs on its exports – from textiles and agricultural goods to pharmaceuticals – while the U.K. secures reduced duties on Scotch whisky, automobiles and other high-value exports. More importantly, the agreement signals a willingness



Harsha Vardhan Agarwal

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

The British Prime Minister's India visit will strengthen ties with India across a spectrum of sectors

on both sides to blend market access with broader strategic alignment.

Complementing the CETA is the Double Contributions Convention (DCC), which exempts employers of Indian professionals in the U.K. from double social security contributions for up to three years. This will ease mobility for skilled workers and reduce costs for businesses, particularly in services sectors where Indian professionals have played a transformative role.

The ongoing negotiations of a bilateral investment treaty between India and the U.K., alongside the CETA, promise to boost the U.K.'s investments in India. The U.K. is the sixth largest investor, accounting for nearly 5% of India's foreign direct investment, and these inflows have a potential to increase across sectors, in manufacturing and services. Tariff elimination on a large number of products, regulatory cooperation, and talent mobility provisions will make cross-border operations even more competitive and efficient for British companies and U.K. companies can leverage India as a hub for production and global exports. Indian firms stand to gain through technology partnerships, adoption of global standards and easier access to European markets.

Beyond commerce, strategic road maps

Mr. Starmer's visit will also provide an opportunity to review progress under the Vision 2035 road map for India-U.K. relations. This framework envisages deeper cooperation in defence, technology, climate action, education and mobility. The Defence Industrial Road map, unveiled in July, is expected to feature prominently, with an emphasis on joint development and co-production of advanced platforms.

Equally significant is the Technology Security Initiative (TSI) launched in 2024, which brings together the National Security Advisers of the two countries to drive collaboration in sensitive

technologies – artificial intelligence, quantum computing, semiconductors, critical minerals, and advanced materials. This reflects the growing recognition that economic and security domains are now inseparable.

Cooperation in challenging times

The true salience of Mr. Starmer's visit lies in timing and trajectory. The world economy is fragmenting into regional trading blocs even as global value chains are being restructured around resilience and security. The CETA provides an opportunity for both sides to enhance their economic cooperation and contribute to economic growth.

For Britain, India offers access to a vast and growing market, opportunities for collaboration in green finance and digital innovation, and a geopolitical partner in the Indo-Pacific. For India, the U.K. relationship provides advanced technology, investment flows, defence partnerships and expanded opportunities for its services and skilled workforce.

It is time to set contours of a next-generation India-U.K. partnership: one that combines trade liberalisation with joint investments in sustainability; tariff reductions with mobility frameworks for talent; and defence procurement with co-development of critical technologies.

For Indian industry, this is an opportunity to highlight sectors where synergies can be rapidly scaled – renewables, electric mobility, digital finance, aerospace and higher education. For policymakers, it is a moment to align regulatory frameworks, reduce barriers, and ensure that CETA's benefits are widely realised.

Ultimately, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Mr. Starmer will be looking to send a signal that transcends the bilateral. By deepening their partnership, India and the U.K. can position themselves not only as trusted economic partners but also as co-architects of a more resilient, open, and technology-driven global order.

English Summary:

India and the United Kingdom are deepening their bilateral ties with the signing of the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) in July 2025, expected to be ratified soon. British PM Keir Starmer's visit to India is seen as a landmark moment to consolidate commitments in trade, investment, technology, and mobility.

Key highlights:

- **CETA Benefits:**
 - Double bilateral commerce by 2030.
 - Elimination/reduction of tariffs on textiles, pharma, scotch whisky, automobiles, etc.
 - Boost to Indian exports and easier access for Indian professionals in the U.K.
- **Double Contributions Convention (DCC):** Exempts Indian professionals in U.K. from double social security contributions for 3 years – easing mobility and cutting business costs.
- **Bilateral Investment Treaty:** Increases U.K. FDI in India (currently 6th largest investor, ~5% of FDI inflow).
- **Vision 2035 Roadmap:** Framework for cooperation in defence, technology, climate action, education, mobility.
- **Technology Security Initiative (TSI):** Focus on critical technologies – AI, semiconductors, quantum computing, rare earths, advanced materials.
- **Strategic Importance:** In a world shifting towards regional trade blocs, the CETA ensures resilience, cooperation, and strengthens India's role in the Indo-Pacific.

For Britain, India offers access to a vast market, investment opportunities in green finance and digital innovation, and a strategic partner in Indo-Pacific. For India, the U.K. provides advanced technology, investment flows, defence partnerships, and opportunities for skilled workforce mobility.

This partnership aims to move beyond commerce into strategic cooperation, ensuring sustainable

development, defence co-production, and co-development of critical technologies.

Hindi Summary (हिंदी सारांश):

भारत और यूनाइटेड किंगडम के बीच संबंधों को व्यापक आर्थिक और व्यापार समझौते (CETA) के माध्यम से नई गति मिली है, जिसका हस्ताक्षर जुलाई 2025 में हुआ। ब्रिटिश प्रधानमंत्री कीर स्टारमर की भारत यात्रा व्यापार, निवेश, तकनीक और गतिशीलता (mobility) में गहरे सहयोग का प्रतीक मानी जा रही है।

मुख्य बिंदु:

- CETA लाभ:
 - 2030 तक द्विपक्षीय व्यापार दोगुना होगा।
 - वस्त्र, दवाइयाँ, स्कॉच व्हिस्की, ऑटोमोबाइल आदि पर शुल्क में कमी।
 - भारतीय पेशेवरों के लिए यू.के. में काम करने की सुविधा और लागत में कमी।
- डबल कॉन्ट्रिब्यूशन कन्वेंशन (DCC): भारतीय पेशेवरों को 3 वर्षों तक दोहरी सामाजिक सुरक्षा योगदान से छूट।
- निवेश संधि: भारत में ब्रिटेन का FDI बढ़ेगा (वर्तमान में 6वां सबसे बड़ा निवेशक, ~5% हिस्सा)।
- विजन 2035 रोडमैप: रक्षा, तकनीक, जलवायु कार्रवाई, शिक्षा और गतिशीलता में सहयोग।
- प्रौद्योगिकी सुरक्षा पहल (TSI): कृत्रिम बुद्धिमत्ता, क्वांटम कंप्यूटिंग, सेमीकंडक्टर, दुर्लभ खनिज और उन्नत सामग्री पर ध्यान।
- रणनीतिक महत्त्व: वैश्विक व्यापार क्षेत्रीय खंडों में बंट रहा है; ऐसे में CETA भारत और ब्रिटेन के बीच स्थायित्व और सहयोग सुनिश्चित करेगा।

ब्रिटेन के लिए भारत एक बड़ा बाजार और हरित वित्त व डिजिटल नवाचार में अवसर प्रदान करता है। भारत के लिए ब्रिटेन उन्नत तकनीक, निवेश प्रवाह, रक्षा सहयोग और कुशल श्रमिकों के अवसर लाता है।

यह साझेदारी व्यापार से आगे बढ़कर रणनीतिक सहयोग तक जाती है - सतत विकास, रक्षा सह-उत्पादन और महत्वपूर्ण प्रौद्योगिकियों के सह-विकास की दिशा में।

Relevance for Exams:

- UPSC GS Paper II: India-UK diplomatic & trade ties, strategic partnerships.
- UPSC GS Paper III: Trade agreements, technology transfer, FDI, innovation.
- BPSC/JPSC: Bilateral trade agreements, India's foreign policy with U.K., economic diplomacy.

A verdict that misses the fine print

In a ruling that has shaken India's infrastructure and environmental governance, the Supreme Court on May 16 declared post-facto or retrospective environmental clearances illegal. The unambiguous message was that if a project was built without prior environmental clearance (EC), it cannot later be legalised.

Though well intentioned, the verdict has left behind a trail of confusion across States. Will existing buildings, factories and public infrastructure without prior EC be demolished? Will mass demolitions become the new rule of law? For governments, regulators, and citizens, the judgment has frozen decision-making.

To be clear, the attempt here is not to criticise or fault the judge, judgment, judiciary, or the justice delivery system, but to put in perspective the impact of the Supreme Court's order.

A decade in the making

The legal roots of this debate stretch back to October 2013, when the Southern Bench of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) in *S.P. Muthuraman v. Union of India* stayed the Office Memorandum by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change allowing "prospective clearances" for projects that had already started work without prior EC. In *Vanashakti v. Union of India* (2025) and related cases, the Court has upheld that position, closing the chapter on retrospective environmental approvals.

While the legal reasoning is consistent, the timeline is troubling. Over the past 12 years, India's infrastructure and real estate sectors have evolved rapidly. Governments, industries, and citizens have invested heavily in projects that assumed that post-facto approvals could be regularised. The 12-year gap between the NGT's stance and the apex court's confirmation has created a legal vacuum and uncertainty.



Kalaiselvan Periyasamy

Environmental and social expert

Though well-intentioned, the Supreme Court verdict declaring post-facto or retrospective environmental clearances illegal has left behind a trail of confusion across States

Where does the verdict fall short? While it bans post-facto environmental clearances, the verdict offers no guidance on what happens next. As the States have been left to interpret the judgment independently, some of them have already begun action towards demolition drives targeting public infrastructure, residential complexes, schools, colleges, and industrial units.

Ironically, environmental experts warn that these mass demolitions could end up harming the environment rather than helping it. Razing thousands of structures would generate enormous debris, release significant emissions, and displace communities. This would defeat the very purpose of environmental protection.

The verdict also treats all violations alike, ignoring intent, scale and impact. It overlooks the principle of sustainable development under Article 21 of the Constitution.

Also, instead of fostering accountability, fear of demolition may push more projects underground, making monitoring and compliance even harder.

The Court's order pertains to the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification, 2006, but is silent on the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification, 2011 – a separate framework under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. This silence has created legal ambiguity for thousands of coastal projects, from ports to tourism ventures. Assuming that the Court's order automatically covers CRZ cases is untenable; both regimes differ and require stakeholder consultation. A one-size-fits-all approach will deepen the chaos.

India's environmental governance also rests on the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974, and the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981. These Acts underpin the environmental clearance process itself. If the

Court's order is extended to these laws, all enterprises operating without prior consent from State Pollution Control Boards could face closure. The economic and social fallout of such an interpretation would be immense.

Most projects without prior ECs were not born of deliberate violation but due to procedural delays, ignorance, or regulatory confusions. Over 12 years, varying interpretations and interim permissions blurred the line between compliance and breach. Demolition may satisfy legal formalities, but won't serve environmental justice. The law must protect nature without destroying livelihoods and evolve with time.

A balanced way forward

Experts suggest a hybrid compliance model that upholds the Court's intent while preventing socio-economic disaster. The model bars regularisation in eco-sensitive zones, mandates environmental assessments for existing projects, imposes fines and restoration duties, ensures independent monitoring, and sets time-bound compliance windows. The model doesn't pardon violators; it makes them pay, restore, and comply, shifting the focus from punishment to prevention and reform.

The Court has now agreed to review its verdict following petitions by the Confederation of Real Estate Developers' Associations of India and others. This review is not about weakening the judgment but about addressing its unexplored dimensions. India's environmental regulation needs evolution, not upheaval. Instead of wielding the wrecking ball, policymakers should build a smarter compliance system by promoting self-reporting, strict penalties, transparent monitoring, and stronger governance. Environmental protection and economic growth must coexist through intelligent, science-based policy.

English Summary:

The Supreme Court ruling of May 16, 2025 declared post-facto or retrospective environmental clearances (ECs) illegal. The Court stated that projects started without prior EC cannot be regularised later.

Key highlights & concerns:

- **Impact:** This decision has created confusion – questions arise whether existing buildings, industries, and infrastructure projects without prior EC should be demolished. This has frozen decision-making for governments, regulators, and citizens.
 - **Background:** Debate began in 2013 with *S.P. Muthuraman v. Union of India* (NGT case) and culminated in *Vanashakti v. Union of India (2025)*. Over 12 years, infrastructure and real estate evolved rapidly, often relying on interim permissions.
 - **Criticism:**
 - Mass demolitions could harm environment more by creating debris, emissions, and displacement.
 - Many violations stemmed from ignorance, regulatory confusion, or delays, not deliberate intent.
 - Verdict silent on CRZ (Coastal Regulation Zone) Notification, 2011, creating ambiguity for ports and coastal projects.
 - **Governance challenge:** Treats all violations alike, ignoring intent and proportionality.
 - **Way forward:** Experts suggest a balanced compliance model that combines strict accountability with sustainable regularisation. Focus should shift from punishment to prevention, better monitoring, transparent processes, and stronger governance under the Environment Protection Act, Air & Water Acts.
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Hindi Summary (हिंदी सारांश):

16 मई 2025 को सर्वोच्च न्यायालय ने फैसला सुनाया कि पश्चात्ताप या बाद में दी गई पर्यावरणीय स्वीकृतियाँ (ECs) अवैध हैं। अदालत ने स्पष्ट किया कि यदि किसी परियोजना को बिना पूर्व स्वीकृति के शुरू किया गया है, तो उसे बाद में वैध नहीं किया जा सकता।

मुख्य बिंदु और चिंताएँ:

- **प्रभाव:** इससे भ्रम की स्थिति बनी - क्या बिना पूर्व EC वाले मौजूदा भवनों, उद्योगों और अवसंरचना को ध्वस्त किया जाएगा? सरकारों और नियामकों का निर्णय ठप हो गया है।
 - **पृष्ठभूमि:** यह बहस 2013 में *S.P. मुथुरामन बनाम भारत संघ* (NGT केस) से शुरू होकर *वनशक्ति बनाम भारत संघ (2025)* तक चली। इस दौरान अवसंरचना और रियल एस्टेट तेजी से विकसित हुए।
 - **आलोचना:**
 - बड़े पैमाने पर ध्वस्तीकरण से मलबा, उत्सर्जन और विस्थापन होगा, जिससे पर्यावरण को और नुकसान हो सकता है।
 - कई उल्लंघन जानबूझकर नहीं बल्कि नियमों की अस्पष्टता, विलंब या अज्ञानता के कारण हुए।
 - निर्णय सीआरज़ेड (2011 तटीय क्षेत्र विनियमन) पर मौन है, जिससे बंदरगाह और तटीय परियोजनाएँ अनिश्चितता में हैं।
 - **शासन चुनौती:** सभी उल्लंघनों को एक जैसा मान लिया गया, जबकि मंशा और गंभीरता अलग-अलग होती है।
 - **आगे का रास्ता:** विशेषज्ञों का सुझाव है कि संतुलित अनुपालन मॉडल अपनाया जाए, जिसमें सख्त जवाबदेही हो लेकिन सतत नियमितीकरण भी हो। फोकस दंड से हटकर रोकथाम, निगरानी और पारदर्शी प्रक्रियाओं पर होना चाहिए।
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Relevance for Exams:

- UPSC GS Paper III: Environmental Impact Assessment, Judicial interventions, Sustainable Development vs Growth.
- GS Paper II: Judicial activism, rule of law, Centre-State regulatory issues.
- BPSC/JPSC: State-level environmental governance, role of courts in policy implementation.

‘NMIA set to make Mumbai one of Asia’s biggest aviation hubs’

Navi Mumbai International Airport will connect Maharashtra farmers to supermarkets in Europe, Middle East; reduce export costs for SMEs: PM

Lalatendu Mishra
MUMBAI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday inaugurated the first phase of the Navi Mumbai International Airport (NMIA) and said the airport would play a major role in establishing the region as one of Asia’s largest connectivity hubs.

He also remarked that the new airport would connect Maharashtra’s farmers to supermarkets in Europe and the Middle East, enabling fresh produce, fruits, vegetables, and fishery products to reach global markets swiftly.

He noted that the airport would reduce export costs for nearby small and medium industries, boost investment, and lead to the establishment of new enterprises. The greenfield NMIA is built at a cost of about ₹19,650 crore.

It is expected to become



Setting in motion: PM Narendra Modi inaugurating phase one of the Navi Mumbai International Airport on Wednesday. AFP

operational in December this year. As the second international airport for the Mumbai Metropolitan Region, NMIA will work in tandem with Mumbai’s Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA) to ease congestion and elevate Mumbai to the league of global multi-airport systems. To be run by the Adani Group, the airport will handle 90 million passengers annually and 3.25 million metric tonnes of cargo. Among its unique

offerings is an Automated People Mover (APM), a transit system planned to connect all four passenger terminals, as well as a land-side APM linking the city-side infrastructure.

The airport will feature a dedicated storage for Sustainable Aviation Fuel, solar power generation of approximately 47 MW, and EV bus services.

NMIA will also be the first airport in the country to be connected by water taxis.

English Summary:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the first phase of Navi Mumbai International Airport (NMIA), calling it a landmark step to make Mumbai one of Asia's biggest aviation hubs.

Key highlights:

- **Connectivity & Exports:** NMIA will connect Maharashtra's farmers to supermarkets in Europe and the Middle East, boosting export of fresh produce, vegetables, fruits, and fishery products.
- **Economic Benefits:**
 - Reduces export costs for SMEs (small and medium industries).
 - Attracts investments and supports new enterprises.
 - Greenfield project built at a cost of ₹19,650 crore.
- **Capacity:** Expected to be operational in December 2025, handling 90 million passengers annually and 3.25 million tonnes of cargo.
- **Role in Metro Region:** NMIA will function as the second international airport for the Mumbai Metropolitan Region, complementing Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA) to ease congestion.
- **Unique Features:**
 - Automated People Mover (APM) for passenger connectivity.
 - Dedicated storage for Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF), solar power (47 MW), and EV bus services.
 - First Indian airport to be connected by water taxis.
- **Strategic Impact:** Elevates Mumbai into the league of global multi-airport systems and strengthens India's aviation, logistics, and trade competitiveness.

Hindi Summary (हिंदी सारांश):

प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने नवी मुंबई अंतर्राष्ट्रीय हवाई अड्डे (NMIA) के पहले चरण का उद्घाटन किया और कहा कि यह मुंबई को एशिया के सबसे बड़े एविएशन हब में बदलने की दिशा में एक बड़ा कदम है।

मुख्य बिंदु:

- **कनेक्टिविटी व निर्यात:** NMIA महाराष्ट्र के किसानों को यूरोप और मध्य पूर्व के सुपरमार्केट्स से जोड़ेगा, जिससे सब्जियों, फलों और मछली उत्पादों का निर्यात बढ़ेगा।
- **आर्थिक लाभ:**
 - लघु और मध्यम उद्योगों (SMEs) के लिए निर्यात लागत घटेगी।
 - निवेश आकर्षित होगा और नए उद्यमों को बढ़ावा मिलेगा।
 - ₹19,650 करोड़ की लागत से बना ग्रीनफील्ड प्रोजेक्ट।
- **क्षमता:** दिसंबर 2025 तक परिचालन, प्रतिवर्ष 90 मिलियन यात्री और 3.25 मिलियन टन माल की क्षमता।
- **महानगरीय भूमिका:** मुंबई क्षेत्र का दूसरा अंतर्राष्ट्रीय हवाई अड्डा होगा, जो छत्रपति शिवाजी महाराज अंतर्राष्ट्रीय हवाई अड्डा (CSMIA) के साथ मिलकर भीड़भाड़ घटाएगा।
- **विशेषताएँ:**
 - ऑटोमेटेड पीपल मूवर (APM) प्रणाली।
 - सस्टेनेबल एविएशन फ्यूल (SAF) के लिए स्टोरेज, 47 MW सौर ऊर्जा उत्पादन, EV बस सेवाएँ।
 - भारत का पहला हवाई अड्डा जो वॉटर टैक्सी से जुड़ा होगा।
- **रणनीतिक प्रभाव:** मुंबई को वैश्विक मल्टी-एयरपोर्ट सिस्टम के स्तर पर ले जाएगा और भारत की एविएशन, लॉजिस्टिक्स व व्यापार प्रतिस्पर्धा को मजबूत करेगा।

Relevance for Exams:

- UPSC GS Paper III: Infrastructure development, aviation sector, logistics, urban planning.
- UPSC GS Paper II: PPP model, governance in infrastructure.
- BPSC/JPSC: Economic growth via connectivity, logistics, and transport hubs.

India to become the factory of the future: Dassault Systemes' CEO

The Hindu Bureau

BENGALURU

India will become the factory of the future with its software defined economy and intellectual property, said Dassault Systemes CEO Pascal Daloz here on Wednesday.

Speaking at the French tech firm's annual event 3DEXPERIENCE FORUM 2025, Mr. Daloz, who was in Bengaluru as part of his India tour said, "India is one economy that will drive the future of the world because the country has the innovative power, imagination and the workforce of the future.. And intellectual property is becoming the new currency."

Dassault Systemes, a 3D design, engineering and



Pascal Daloz BY ARRANGEMENT

digital simulation software firm, also announced a partnership with ePlane, an Indian startup specialising in electric vertical take-off and landing (eVTOL) aircraft. According to Dassault Systemes, ePlane would leverage its 3DEXPERIENCE platform, including the on-cloud applications, to enable rapid, model-based system engineering and end-to-end

digital simulation. The partnership also would help ePlane to fast-track design iterations, streamline certifications with DGCA.

3DEXPERIENCE (3DX) is a business and innovation platform that provides organisations with a holistic, real-time vision of their business activity and ecosystem. Dassault Systemes' cloud-based solutions have allowed ePlane to accelerate full aircraft design iterations, enhance multidisciplinary collaboration, and optimise complex engineering workflows, ensuring safety, reliability, and accelerated time-to-market, the firm claimed.

Deepak N.G, India Managing Director, Dassault Systemes said, "By leverag-

ing Dassault Systemes' 3DEXPERIENCE platform on the cloud, ePlane is accelerating innovation and achieving efficient, safe, and certifiable development of their ePlane e200 air taxi."

Dassault Systemes was happy to be the technology partner enabling ePlane's vision for zero-emission, accessible, and sustainable urban transportation in India and beyond, he added.

"With Dassault Systemes' robust cloud and simulation technologies, our engineering team can validate designs faster and more efficiently, despite the inherent complexity of eVTOL geometries," said Satya Chakravarthy, Founder & CTO, The ePlane Company.

English Summary:

At the 3DEXPERIENCE Forum 2025 in Bengaluru, Dassault Systemes CEO Pascal Daloz said that India will become the "factory of the future" due to its software-defined economy, intellectual property, and skilled workforce.

Key Highlights:

- **Intellectual Property (IP):** Seen as the "new currency" driving India's innovation-led growth.
- **Partnerships:**
 - Dassault announced collaboration with ePlane, an Indian startup specialising in electric vertical take-off and landing (eVTOL) aircraft.
 - ePlane will use Dassault's 3DEXPERIENCE platform for rapid design, model-based systems engineering, and certification support with DGCA.
- **3DEXPERIENCE (3DX):** A holistic business innovation platform enabling real-time vision, rapid design iterations, multidisciplinary collaboration, and faster time-to-market.
- **Applications:** ePlane's e200 air taxi development is being accelerated with Dassault's cloud-based solutions, aiding zero-emission, safe, accessible, and sustainable urban transport in India and abroad.
- **Future Vision:** India's combination of innovative talent, digital simulation tools, and startup ecosystem positions it as a hub for high-tech manufacturing and sustainable transport solutions.

Hindi Summary (हिंदी सारांश):

3DEXPERIENCE Forum 2025 में बेंगलुरु में बोलते हुए डसॉल्ट सिस्टम्स के सीईओ पास्कल डालोज़ ने कहा कि भारत भविष्य की फैक्ट्री बनेगा, क्योंकि यहाँ सॉफ्टवेयर आधारित अर्थव्यवस्था, बौद्धिक संपदा और कुशल कार्यबल मौजूद है।

मुख्य बिंदु:

- बौद्धिक संपदा (IP): “नई करेंसी” के रूप में भारत की विकास क्षमता।
- साझेदारी:
 - Dassault ने भारतीय स्टार्टअप ePlane के साथ साझेदारी की, जो इलेक्ट्रिक वर्टिकल टेकऑफ़ एंड लैंडिंग (eVTOL) विमान विकसित कर रही है।
 - ePlane को Dassault के 3DEXPERIENCE प्लेटफ़ॉर्म से तेज़ डिज़ाइन, इंजीनियरिंग और DGCA प्रमाणन में मदद मिलेगी।
- 3DEXPERIENCE (3DX): व्यवसाय और नवाचार मंच जो रीयल-टाइम विज़न, डिज़ाइन इटरेशन, बहु-अनुशासनात्मक सहयोग और तेज़ उत्पादन सुनिश्चित करता है।
- उपयोग: ePlane का e200 एयर टैक्सी प्रोजेक्ट Dassault की क्लाउड-आधारित तकनीक से गति पकड़ेगा, जिससे भारत और विदेशों में शून्य-उत्सर्जन, सुरक्षित और टिकाऊ शहरी परिवहन संभव होगा।
- भविष्य दृष्टि: भारत की नवोन्मेषी प्रतिभा, डिजिटल सिमुलेशन तकनीक और स्टार्टअप इकोसिस्टम इसे उच्च-तकनीकी विनिर्माण और सतत परिवहन समाधानों का केंद्र बनाएंगे।

Relevance for Exams:

- UPSC GS Paper III: Startups, innovation policy, Make in India, green tech, AI & simulation.
- BPSC/JPSC: India's role in global digital economy, new-age manufacturing, sustainable transport (urban mobility).

Asia's carbon capture push may jeopardise global climate goals

New report warns CCS reliance could add 25 bn tonne emissions and lock region into fossil fuel pathways; it estimates India would need \$4.3 bn in govt.aid to enable CCS adoption – raising questions if such investment would be better directed toward scalable, low-cost alternatives.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Purnima Sah
MUMBAI

A report by global science and policy institute Climate Analytics has warned that Asia's expansive plans for Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) could lead to nearly 25 billion tonne of additional greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, threatening the Paris Agreement's 1.5°C climate target and locking the region into costly and uncompetitive fossil fuel pathways.

Released on Monday, ahead of the Japan CCS Summit on October 15-16, the report evaluated CCS strategies across nine major economies – China, India, Japan, South Korea, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, and Australia – which together account for over half of global fossil fuel use and greenhouse gas emissions.

Bill Hare, CEO of Climate Analytics, said, "Asia is at a crossroads, while countries haven't yet gone fully down the CCS path, many are tailoring policies to protect fossil fuels. This is a very risky strategy, not only for the Paris Agreement, but for these economies themselves."

The report identifies two major risks: an "underperforming high-CCS" pathway, where CCS is de-



Costly plan: A high-CCS pathway could cost \$30 trillion more globally than a low-CCS one by 2050. AP

ployed but fails to meet expected capture rates, and an "unachieved high-CCS" pathway, where CCS is promoted but not realised, diverting resources from proven zero-emission technologies. In either scenario, the region could emit an additional 24.9 gigatonnes of CO₂-equivalent by 2050 – more than the cumulative fossil fuel emissions of South Korea and Australia combined.

More support

James Bowen, lead author of the report, said, "We find a strong possibility that Asian countries could increase their support for CCS through to 2050, risking a significant lock-in of unabated fossil fuels and stranded asset costs, let



The report highlights India's progress in deploying renewables, EVs, green hydrogen, suggesting it could avoid CCS dependence if it prioritises clean energy

alone risks to the world achieving the Paris Agreement 1.5°C warming limit."

India's emerging role

India, one of Asia's largest emitters alongside China and Japan, is developing a national CCS mission aimed at scaling up deployment. The report noted, however, that India's CCS presence remains minimal, with no significant op-

erational projects or transport and storage infrastructure.

India is largely disconnected from the Japan-South Korea-Southeast Asia-Australia CCS nexus.

Despite this, India's industrial growth trajectory makes it a critical player in the CCS debate. The country is already the second-largest steel consumer globally, with demand projected to grow 6.3% annually between 2025 and 2030. Cement consumption in India and South Asia could rise by over 40% during 2025-2035.

These sectors are considered "hard-to-abate" and potential candidates for CCS, though the report cautions that emerging zero-emission technologies

may offer more cost-effective solutions.

India's largely domestic fossil fuel use gives it flexibility to shift toward renewables without external market pressures. The report highlights India's progress in deploying renewables, electric vehicles, and green hydrogen, suggesting the country could avoid CCS dependence if it prioritises clean energy and industrial innovation.

However, the economic risks stay significant. The report estimates India would need approximately \$4.3 billion in government support to enable CCS adoption – raising questions about whether such investment would be better directed toward scalable, low-cost alternatives.

Lifeline for fossil fuels

Despite being marketed as a climate solution, CCS has consistently underperformed. Capture rates often hover around 50%, far below the 95% needed for meaningful abatement. Moreover, 80% of current CCS projects use captured CO₂ for enhanced oil recovery (EOR), extending fossil fuel extraction.

The report finds CCS in the power sector could result in electricity costs up to twice that of renewables backed by storage, making it economically unviable in most Asian markets.

Most CCS projects in Asia target sectors with via-

ble zero-emission alternatives, such as natural gas, LNG processing, and hydrogen production. Hard-to-abate sectors like cement and steel received minimal CCS investment.

Governments in Japan, South Korea, and Australia are among the most active CCS proponents, offering financial and regulatory support to sustain fossil fuel production. Southeast Asian nations, including Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand, are positioning themselves as CO₂ storage hubs, often in partnership with oil and gas companies. Singapore is developing a regional CCS hub with ExxonMobil and Shell, reinforcing its role as a fossil fuel transit centre.

Alternatives cheaper

The report urges Asian governments to pursue a "deliberate low-CCS pathway," prioritising renewables, electrification, and energy efficiency. These technologies are already more cost-effective than fossil fuels even without CCS.

In 2023, the global average cost of solar and wind power was significantly lower than fossil fuel-based electricity. Countries like China, India, and Vietnam have already seen renewables outcompete fossil fuels in cost.

A high-CCS pathway could cost \$30 trillion more globally than a low-CCS pathway by 2050.

English Summary:

A report by Climate Analytics warns that Asia's heavy reliance on Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) could add nearly 25 billion tonnes of additional emissions by 2050, undermining the Paris Agreement's 1.5°C climate target.

Key highlights:

- **Major CCS push nations:** China, India, Japan, South Korea, Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Australia (together responsible for >50% of global fossil fuel use).
- **Risk:** CCS may fail to meet targets, locking the region into fossil fuel dependence instead of shifting to renewables.
- **India-specific:**
 - Would need \$4.3 billion in govt. aid annually to enable CCS adoption.
 - CCS could divert resources away from proven clean alternatives like renewables, EVs, hydrogen, energy efficiency.
 - India is world's 2nd largest cement producer; CCS deployment seen in cement & industrial hubs.
- **Economic risks:** Globally, CCS could cost \$30 trillion more than low-cost alternatives by 2050.

- Policy concerns:
 - CCS is often treated as a "lifeline for fossil fuels" but may undermine investments in zero-emission pathways.
 - Southeast Asian countries (e.g., Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand) are positioning themselves as CCS hubs in partnership with oil/gas majors.
 - Report stresses that renewables + hydrogen + EVs are more cost-effective and scalable than CCS-heavy pathways.

Hindi Summary (हिंदी सारांश):

क्लाइमेट एनालिटिक्स की रिपोर्ट के अनुसार, एशिया का कार्बन कैप्चर एंड स्टोरेज (CCS) पर अत्यधिक भरोसा 2050 तक लगभग 25 बिलियन टन अतिरिक्त उत्सर्जन पैदा कर सकता है और पेरिस समझौते के 1.5°C लक्ष्य को खतरे में डाल सकता है।

मुख्य बिंदु:

- CCS अपनाने वाले प्रमुख देश: चीन, भारत, जापान, दक्षिण कोरिया, इंडोनेशिया, थाईलैंड, सिंगापुर, मलेशिया, ऑस्ट्रेलिया (ये मिलकर वैश्विक जीवाश्म ईंधन उपयोग का 50% से अधिक उपभोग करते हैं)।
- जोखिम: CCS लक्ष्यों को पूरा नहीं कर पाएगा और क्षेत्र को जीवाश्म ईंधन निर्भरता में फंसा देगा।
- भारत संदर्भ:
 - CCS अपनाने के लिए भारत को हर साल \$4.3 बिलियन सरकारी सहायता की ज़रूरत होगी।
 - CCS से संसाधन हटकर नवीकरणीय ऊर्जा, EVs, हाइड्रोजन, ऊर्जा दक्षता जैसे प्रमाणित समाधानों से दूर हो सकते हैं।
 - भारत विश्व का दूसरा सबसे बड़ा सीमेंट उत्पादक है, जहाँ औद्योगिक केंद्रों में CCS लागू करने की योजनाएँ हैं।
- आर्थिक जोखिम: वैश्विक स्तर पर CCS की लागत 2050 तक लो-कॉस्ट विकल्पों की तुलना में \$30 ट्रिलियन अधिक हो सकती है।
- नीति चिंता:
 - CCS को "फॉसिल ईंधन का लाइफलाइन" कहा जा रहा है, लेकिन यह शून्य-उत्सर्जन विकल्पों में निवेश को कमजोर कर सकता है।
 - दक्षिण-पूर्व एशियाई देश (सिंगापुर, मलेशिया, इंडोनेशिया, थाईलैंड) तेल-गैस कंपनियों के साथ मिलकर CCS हब बनने की तैयारी कर रहे हैं।
 - रिपोर्ट के अनुसार नवीकरणीय ऊर्जा + हाइड्रोजन + EVs CCS-आधारित मार्गों से अधिक किफायती और स्थायी हैं।

Relevance for Exams:

- UPSC GS Paper III: Climate mitigation technologies, Paris Agreement, energy transition policies.
- UPSC GS Paper II: International environmental cooperation, India's climate diplomacy.
- BPSC/JPSC: Renewable energy vs CCS debate, India's role in climate negotiations, industrial emission policies.

Hamas hands over lists of names for prisoner swap at Gaza truce talks

One of the biggest sticking points will be to pressure Hamas to disarm, an issue it has so far been unwilling to discuss; also, the timing of the implementation of the first phase of Donald Trump's 20-point peace initiative has not been agreed so far

Reuters

SHARM EL-SHEIKH

Hamas handed over lists on Wednesday of hostages and Palestinian prisoners to be exchanged in a swap, and said it was optimistic about negotiations to end the war in Gaza, while U.S. President Donald Trump's son-in-law and envoy were due to join the talks.

Negotiations are focused on the mechanisms to halt the conflict, the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza and the swap deal, the Palestinian militant group added, in a seemingly upbeat assessment



Dire straits: An injured man walks among the rubble of his house to inspect the damage in Sabra in Gaza City on Wednesday. REUTERS

ment of the talks over a plan put forward by Mr. Trump, the closest diplomats have come to silencing the guns.

One of the biggest sticking points will be pressure on Hamas to disarm, an issue it has so far been unwilling to discuss at the

talks which began on Monday in the Egyptian resort town of Sharm el-Sheikh.

The timing of the implementation of the first phase of Mr. Trump's 20-point initiative has not been agreed so far.

Mr. Trump expressed optimism about progress toward a deal on Tuesday, the second anniversary of Hamas' attack on Israel that triggered Israel's assault on Gaza.

He is sending a team that includes his special envoy Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner. Mr. Trump's son-in-law who served as West Asia envoy during the President's first

term.

Other senior figures were also expected to join the talks on Wednesday, including Israeli Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer – Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's close confidant – and Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al-Thani, a long-standing mediator.

Another participant will be Turkish spymaster Ibrahim Kalin, pointing to a growing role for Türkiye, a powerful NATO member which has close contacts with Hamas but which Israel has not previously viewed as a mediator.

English Summary:

- **Event:** Hamas handed over lists of hostages and Palestinian prisoners for a potential prisoner swap as part of the Gaza truce talks.
- **Talks Venue:** Ongoing negotiations in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, with U.S., Israel, Qatar, and Turkey participating.
- **Key Points:**
 - Negotiations focus on ending the Israel-Hamas conflict, withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza, and prisoner exchange.
 - Donald Trump's 20-point peace initiative is being discussed; however, its first phase implementation remains undecided.
 - A major sticking point is Hamas's disarmament, which it has resisted.
- **Participants:**
 - U.S. delegation includes Trump's envoy Jared Kushner and Steve Witkoff.
 - Israeli delegation includes Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer.
 - Qatar represented by PM Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al-Thani (long-standing mediator).
 - Turkey's spymaster Ibrahim Kalin also engaged, highlighting Ankara's growing role.
- **Context:** The talks come after the second anniversary of Hamas's attack on Israel, which had triggered Israel's military operations in Gaza.
- **Significance:** International mediation efforts are intensifying, but achieving consensus on Hamas's disarmament and implementation of a peace roadmap remains challenging.

Hindi Summary (हिंदी सारांश):

- **घटना:** हमास ने बंधकों और फिलिस्तीनी कैदियों की सूचियाँ सौंप दीं, जिन्हें संभावित कैदी अदला-बदली (prisoner swap) में शामिल किया जाएगा।
- **वार्ता स्थल:** शर्म अल-शेख, मिस्र, जहाँ अमेरिका, इज़राइल, क़तर और तुर्किये भाग ले रहे हैं।
- **मुख्य बिंदु:**
 - वार्ता का केंद्र इज़राइल-हमास संघर्ष समाप्त करना, गाज़ा से इज़राइली सेनाओं की वापसी और

- कैदियों की अदला-बदली है।
- डोनाल्ड ट्रम्प की 20-सूत्री शांति पहल पर चर्चा जारी है, लेकिन इसका पहला चरण अभी तक लागू नहीं हुआ है।
- सबसे बड़ा मुद्दा हमास का निरस्त्रीकरण है, जिसे वह मानने को तैयार नहीं।
- प्रतिभागी:
 - अमेरिका की ओर से जारेड कुश्रर और स्टीव विटकॉफ़।
 - इज़राइल की ओर से रणनीतिक मामलों के मंत्री रॉन डेरमर।
 - क़तर के प्रधानमंत्री शेख मोहम्मद बिन अब्दुलरहमान अल-थानी, जो लंबे समय से मध्यस्थ रहे हैं।
 - तुर्किये के खुफिया प्रमुख इब्राहिम कलिन भी शामिल, जो अंकारा की बढ़ती भूमिका को दर्शाता है।
- प्रसंग: वार्ता हमास के इज़राइल पर हमले की दूसरी वर्षगांठ के समय हो रही है, जिसने गाज़ा में इज़राइल की सैन्य कार्रवाई को जन्म दिया था।
- महत्त्व: अंतरराष्ट्रीय मध्यस्थता तेज़ हो रही है, लेकिन हमास का निरस्त्रीकरण और शांति योजना का क्रियान्वयन अभी भी चुनौतीपूर्ण है।

Relevance for Exams:

- UPSC GS Paper II: Middle East geopolitics, role of U.S., Qatar, Turkey in mediation, peace-building challenges.
- BPSC/JPSC: Global conflict resolution, hostage negotiations, India's diplomatic balancing in West Asia.