

Important Issues of the Day

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Registration now mandatory for e-sports

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) on Wednesday notified rules allowing registration of e-sport games and the firms running them, which will come to effect from May 1. The rules come as subordinate legislation for the Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Act, 2025, which prohibited real money gaming in India.

The Online Gaming Authority of India (OGAI), which will run as an attached office within MeitY as a fully digital organisation, has been set up under the rules. Representatives from the Ministries of



The rules also have provisions to regulate age classifications of video games should the govt. deem it necessary. GETTY IMAGES

Home Affairs and Law have been added to the OGAI.

Under the new rules, registration for “online social games” will only be required and triggered when the Centre notifies a specific category of games as requiring such registration. Registration for e-sports is mandatory.

IT Secretary S. Krishnan told the media that the rules have enabling provisions to regulate and require age classifications of video games in the future, should the government deem it necessary to address issues like addiction.

The rules provide for a “code of practice” the the

IT Ministry could notify in the future covering video games, such as games with microtransactions.

“Most games which are not money games should be able to operate with no obligation to necessarily either be determined or registered,” Mr. Krishnan said. “That entire process is optional.”

On the issue of betting markets hosting wagers on Indian elections and cricket matches, Mr. Krishnan said that such sites were being blocked as and when they were brought to notice.

“Access through VPNs is a slightly thorny issue,” he added. “We are trying to see how we can regulate VPNs more effectively”.

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- **The Online Gaming Authority of India (OGAI), which will run as an attached office within MeitY as a fully digital organisation, has been set up under the rules. Representatives from the Ministries of Home Affairs and Law have been added to the OGAI.**
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Online games are classified in the following manner:

- **E-Sports: Recognized as a legitimate sport, competitive digital sports played through organized tournaments, requiring skill.**
- **Online Social Games: Primarily skill-based games designed for entertainment, or social interaction. Examples: Wordle.**
- **Online Money Games: Games involving financial stakes, whether based on chance, skill, or both. Players pay fees or deposit money with the expectation of monetary or other gains. Examples: Dream11, Poker, Rummy.**

MINISTRY OF ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**NOTIFICATION**

New Delhi, the 22nd April, 2026

S.O. 1992(E).— In exercise of the powers conferred by sub-sections (1) and (2) of section 8 of the Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Act, 2025 (32 of 2025), the Central Government hereby constitutes the Online Gaming Authority of India, consisting of the following persons, namely:—

1.	Additional Secretary, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology	Chairperson, <i>ex officio</i> ;
2.	Joint Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs	Member, <i>ex officio</i> ;
3.	Joint Secretary, Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Finance	Member, <i>ex officio</i> ;
4.	Joint Secretary, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting	Member, <i>ex officio</i> ;
5.	Joint Secretary, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports	Member, <i>ex officio</i> ;
6.	Joint Secretary, Department of Legal Affairs, Ministry of Law and Justice	Member, <i>ex officio</i> .

[F. No. AA-11018/1/2025-CL&ES]

AJIT KUMAR, Jt. Secy.

Tribunal gives last opportunity to Odisha, Chhattisgarh to settle Mahanadi dispute

Satyasundar Barik
BHUBANESWAR

The Mahanadi Water Disputes Tribunal (MWDT) may soon deliver its judgment on the water-sharing formula between Odisha and Chhattisgarh with both States failing to place a concrete proposal for mutual settlement. The tribunal has given a last opportunity to the two States to come up with a formula by May 2, the next date of hearing.

An order passed by the MWDT, headed by former Supreme Court judge Justice Bela M. Trivedi, noted that though both States had jointly submitted on April 11 that the annual water availability would be finalised by the next date of hearing on April 20, Advocates General of Odisha and Chhattisgarh again sought more time to submit a concrete proposal.

“They have also not been able to place on record the suggestions with



The Mahanadi river, which originates in Chhattisgarh, flows for 494 km in Odisha before meeting with the Bay of Bengal. FILE PHOTO

regard to the recasting of issues already framed in both the reference proceedings to narrow down the disputes between the party States,” the tribunal observed.

Panel unhappy

The three-member MWDT - comprising Justice Trivedi, Justice Ravi Ranjan, and Justice Indermeet Kaur - expressed unhappiness over the manner in which the proceedings are being conducted. “We make it clear

that if they are not able to finalise the same or place on record any consensus on any of the issues by the next date, the tribunal will proceed with the proceedings on merits,” the tribunal noted.

The 851-km-long Mahanadi river, which originates from the Amarkantak hills in the Bastar plateau of Chhattisgarh, flows for 494 km in Odisha before meeting with the Bay of Bengal.

Following its formation as a separate State, Chhat-

tisgarh’s demand for water skyrocketed, which led it to create major, medium, and minor irrigation projects, including industrial barrages. When Odisha found out there was considerable reduction in Mahanadi water in its territory, it noticed Chhattisgarh’s extensive upstream construction and increased water usage.

According to the Odisha government, Chhattisgarh has built more than 500 anicuts and 30 barrages, many primarily for industrial use.

No headway

The then Naveen Patnaik-led government had moved the Supreme Court in 2018 for river-water sharing. With the case dragging on, the MWDT’s formation was subsequently announced.

With BJP governments in both States after 2024, they submitted before the tribunal about settling the dispute amicably but haven’t made much headway.

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- **The Mahanadi River system is the third largest of peninsular India after Godavari and Krishna, and the largest river of Odisha state.**
- **The catchment area of the river extends to Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Jharkhand and Maharashtra.**
- **Its basin is bounded by the Central India hills on the north, by the Eastern Ghats on the south and east and by the Maikala range in the west.**

Source:

- **It rises from a place near Sihawa, near Raipur in the state of Chhattisgarh to the south of Amarkantak.**

Major Tributaries:

- **The Seonath, the Hasdeo, the Mand and the Ib joins Mahanadi from left whereas the Ong, the Tel and the Jonk joins it from right.**

Mahanadi River Dispute:

- **The Central Government constituted Mahanadi Water Disputes Tribunal in 2018.**

Major Dams/Projects on Mahanadi:

- **Hirakud Dam: This is the longest dam of India.**
- **Ravishankar Sagar, Dudhawa Reservoir, Sondur Reservoir, Hasdeo Bango and Tandula are other major projects.**

Urban Centres :

- **Three important urban centres in the basin are Raipur, Durg and Cuttack.**

Industries:

- **Mahanadi basin, because of its rich mineral resource and adequate power resource, has a favourable industrial climate.**
- **Iron and Steel plant at Bhilai**
- **Aluminium factories at Hirakud and Korba**
- **Paper mill near Cuttack**
- **Cement factory at Sundargarh.**

Q. Consider the following rivers: (2015)

- 1. Vamsadhara**
- 2. Indravati**
- 3. Pranahita**
- 4. Pennar**

Which of the above are tributaries of Godavari?

- (a) 1, 2 and 3**
- (b) 2, 3 and 4**
- (c) 1, 2 and 4**
- (d) 2 and 3 only**

Prelims



INS Nireekshak arrives in Colombo for bilateral exercise

INS Nireekshak, the Indian Navy's Diving Support and Submarine Rescue Vessel, arrived in Colombo on Tuesday to participate in the fourth edition of the India-Sri Lanka Diving Exercise (DIVEX 2026), scheduled from April 21.

According to the Indian Navy, the bilateral exercise will be conducted over a week and brings together diving teams from both navies to undertake specialised underwater operations.

The engagement aims at enhancing interoperability, operational cohesion, and the exchange of best practices between the two maritime forces. The vessel was accorded a ceremonial welcome by the Sri Lankan Navy.

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'Toxic workplaces take lives of 8.4 lakh people annually'

A.M. Jigeesh

NEW DELHI

More than 8,40,000 people die each year around the globe from health conditions linked to psychosocial risks, including long working hours, job insecurity, and workplace harassment, according to a new global report by the International Labour Organization (ILO) released in Geneva on Wednesday.

These work-related psychosocial risks are mainly associated with cardiovascular diseases and mental disorders, including suicide, according to the report titled "The psychosocial working environment: global developments and pathways for action".

The report prescribes policy interventions at both levels of government and industry to address the situation, along with empowering collectivisa-

The report calls for policy interventions at both central and State levels of government

tion of the workforce.

The report said work-related psychosocial risks represent a major and growing threat to workers' safety and health, organisational productivity, and broader economic performance. Psychosocial risk factors are responsible for more than 8,40,000 deaths annually due to associated cardiovascular diseases and mental disorders, the report added. "These risks also lead to nearly 45 million disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) lost each year. The combined impact of cardiovascular disease and mental disorders associated with psychosocial risk factors is

estimated to result in 1.37% of global GDP lost annually," the report said.

"The ILO estimates that globally, 35% of workers work more than 48 hours per week. Exposure to bullying and other forms of violence and harassment is another major concern. The ILO estimates that 23% of workers globally have experienced at least one form of violence or harassment in their working life, with psychological violence being the most prevalent at 18%," the report said.

The ILO estimated the figure of over 840,000 deaths per year by using two key sources of evidence, including the global prevalence of five major psychosocial risk factors at work – job strain, effort-reward imbalance, job insecurity, long working hours, and workplace bullying and harassment.

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- **Psychosocial risk factors are responsible for more than 8,40,000 deaths annually due to associated cardiovascular diseases and mental disorders, the report added.**
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- **Established in 1919 by the Treaty of Versailles as an affiliated agency of the League of Nations.**
- **Became the first affiliated specialized agency of the United Nations in 1946.**
- **Headquarters: Geneva, Switzerland**
- **Founding Mission: social justice is essential to universal and lasting peace.**
- **Promotes internationally recognized human and labour rights.**
- **Received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1969.**

The eight-core conventions of the ILO are:

- **Forced Labour Convention (No. 29)**
- **Abolition of Forced Labour Convention (No.105)**
- **Equal Remuneration Convention (No.100)**
- **Discrimination (Employment Occupation) Convention (No.111)**
- **Minimum Age Convention (No.138)**
- **Worst forms of Child Labour Convention (No.182)**
- **Freedom of Association and Protection of Right to Organised Convention (No.87)**
- **Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention (No.98)**

- **India is a founding member of the ILO and it has been a permanent member of the ILO Governing Body since 1922.**
- **International labour standards are legal instruments drawn up by the ILO's constituents (governments, employers and workers) and setting out basic principles and rights at work. They are either:**
 - **Conventions and Protocols: They are legally binding international treaties that member States may ratify, or**
 - **Recommendations: They serve as non-binding guidelines.**
- **Conventions, Protocols and Recommendations are drawn up by representatives of governments, employers and workers and are adopted at the annual International Labour Conference.**
- **India has not ratified the two core/fundamental conventions, namely Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87) and Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98).**

Objectives

- Promote and realize standard and fundamental labour rights.
- Create greater opportunities for women and men.
- Enhance social protection.
- Strengthen social dialogue and tripartism.



Fundamental Conventions of ILO

- An integral part of the United Nations Human Rights Framework
- Conventions 1-6 are ratified by India

01 Forced Labour Convention (No. 29)

02 Abolition of Forced Labour (No. 105)

03 Equal Remuneration (No. 100)

04 Discrimination (No. 111)

05 Minimum Age (No. 138)

06 Right to Organise & Collective Bargaining (No. 98)

07 Freedom of Association (No. 87)

08 Worst Forms of Child Labour (No. 182)



International Labour Standards

Legal instruments drawn up by the ILO's constituents (governments, employers and workers) & setting out basic principles and rights at work

01 Conventions & Protocols

Legally binding international treaties

02 Recommendations

Non-binding guidelines



ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work

Adopted in 1998, amended in 2022

Focus areas

- Freedom of association
- Elimination of forced labour
- Abolition of child labour
- Elimination of employment discrimination
- Safe & healthy working conditions



Key Reports

World Employment and Social Outlook (WESO)



Global Wage Report



World Social Protection Report



World Employment and Social Outlook for Youth



World of Work Report



Prelims



- **Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change Shri Bhupender Yadav on Tuesday announced the designation of Shekha Jheel Bird Sanctuary in Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh, as a Ramsar site, taking India's total to 99 and the State's tally to 12.**
- **Highlighting the ecological importance of the site, Shri Yadav said Shekha Jheel acts as a crucial stopover on the Central Asian Flyway, providing a vital habitat for migratory birds such as the Bar-headed Goose, Painted Stork and various ducks during the winter season. The Minister also encouraged people to visit the site.**
- **Patna Bird Sanctuary (Uttar Pradesh) and Chhari-Dhand (Gujarat) as Ramsar sites, raising the national total to 98**
- **Ramsar Convention on Wetlands in 1971 at Ramsar, Iran.**

About

- Also known as the Convention on Wetlands.
- An intergovernmental treaty, adopted in 1971, in Ramsar, Iran.
 - Entered into force in 1975.
- Wetlands that are of international importance are declared as Ramsar sites.
- **Largest Ramsar Site in World: Pantanal: South America**

Montreux Record

- Adopted in Montreux (Switzerland) in 1990.
- Identifies Ramsar sites that need priority conservation attention at national or international level.

Wetlands

- A place in which the land is covered by water – salt, fresh, or somewhere in between – either seasonally or permanently.
- Take many forms including rivers, marshes, bogs, mangroves, mudflats, ponds, swamps, billabongs, lagoons, lakes, and floodplains.
- **World Wetlands Day: 2nd February**



India's post-LWE future, from red sun to new dawn

Page No. 6, GS 3

Fourteen years ago, in West Midnapore in West Bengal and Simdega in Jharkhand – two districts worst affected by Left Wing Extremism (LWE) – young tribal girls often practised hockey with battered sticks and boundless resolve, even juggling footballs on uneven earth amid sal forests. As Prime Minister's Rural Development Fellows with the Ministry of Rural Development, our close work with the District Magistrates in both districts, and, many other initiatives, helped set up an astroturf hockey academy and a block football training centre under the central government-financed Integrated Action Plan.

Today, Salima Tete carries forward Simdega's hockey legacy as captain of the Indian women's hockey team, and Mamta Hansda from that same rugged football centre in West Midnapore is now part of the Indian women's senior football team. These are sweat-soaked fields which speak a thousand words.

A change in the arc

In 2009, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh identified LWE as the most serious internal security threat facing the nation. In April 2010, India witnessed its deadliest Maoist attack on security forces, resulting in the loss of 76 Central Reserve Police Force personnel in Dantewada (Chhattisgarh). For years afterward, the violence did more than claim lives; it hollowed out the state's everyday legitimacy, crippled routine governance across vast areas, and normalised an abnormal reality in which citizens lived in fear of both gunfire and encounters.

Sixteen years later, on March 30, 2026, during the Budget session of Parliament, Union Home Minister Amit Shah informed the House that India is now free of Maoist insurgency. It is important to acknowledge what this has required – and what it signals. There has been visible political commitment, improved coordination, and a willingness to work closely with State governments across political parties, through joint strategic and operational planning, institutional focus and an insistence that security gains are consolidated. But if security has delivered a decisive outcome, governance in LWE-affected regions must now deliver a decisive transformation. Over the last decade and a half, in our work with dedicated governance action plans in some of these difficult regions, one lesson stands out: security gains do not complete the journey; they create an opening. What secures the peace dividend is governance credibility led by an empathetic and focused political and executive leadership.

For a post-LWE future, that credibility must translate into local value economies in erstwhile affected districts and blocks that have long lived with the double bind of extractive development and a resource curse. Learnings from dedicated



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Governance
in Left Wing
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area-based plans – Jungle Mahal in West Bengal; Saranda and Budha Pahad in Jharkhand; Malkangiri in Odisha; and the recent multi-year Bastar plan in Chhattisgarh – point to a common direction; a community-centred, diversified economic strategy that strengthens local consumption, attracts patient public and private capital, and restores community stewardship over the commons. These plans have mattered not because they are perfect, but because they signalled a necessary shift – from episodic interventions to sustained reconstruction, with the state showing up not occasionally, but reliably.

The foundation to build on

That shift must now be deepened by strengthening forest produce systems with fair procurement and local processing; agroforestry and allied livelihoods; incentives for small and medium enterprises through capital support; community-led eco-tourism; and regional economic plans that enable stable employment close to home. Designed with safeguards, and ensuring benefit-sharing and genuine local ownership, these measures can lead to dignified livelihoods that end insecurity and fear.

However, this economic transition will be achieved only if administrative presence sustains beyond the strategic “area domination” exercise. Rural roads, schools, health services, banking access, women's collectivisation, nutrition systems and accountable frontline delivery must be pursued swiftly and predictably, alongside patient community listening and respectful citizen engagement – treating people not as “beneficiaries” but as rights-bearing stakeholders.

This is why the post-LWE moment is not an end in itself, but a moral threshold. We must acknowledge the paradox at the heart of the “red corridor” – the tribal citizen. The Adivasi household in a forested hamlet beyond the last motorable road has lived for decades between the state and the non-state – between the gun and the encounter, the slogan and the raid, forced levy and forced silence. A citizen, yet invisible; a rightful claimant of the Constitution, yet peripheral in its everyday delivery. When policy language speaks of “incidents” and “districts”, it often forgets that the unit of pain is a human being: a mother whose son was recruited; a schoolgirl whose hostel barely functioned; forest-dwelling communities whose rights claims still await clearance; a young man who learnt to fear the uniform and the insurgent alike. These sons and daughters of red earth cannot be mere statistics; and peace is not merely the absence of firing. The danger now is quieter: as violence recedes, policy attention can recede too. But the harder work of legitimacy-building demands sustained presence. Thus, a humane

post-LWE approach, we feel, should signal a new dawn.

The framework

First, forthcoming policy focus in LWE areas should enable stronger rights, credible justice, functioning institutions and visible opportunity – with dignity as the organising principle. U.S. conflict expert John Paul Lederach's idea of conflict transformation is relevant here: conflict is not simply a malfunction to be suppressed; it signals broken relationships that must be rebuilt through institutions, trust and fairness.

Second, initiate a structured, region-specific post-LWE transformation action plan for identified districts and blocks, jointly designed and executed by the Union government and respective States, that ties outcomes to finance. Our public policy does not lack schemes; it lacks convergence and accountable delivery in hard and complex geographies. We propose the AIEEEE governance framework for this transition – accountability, innovation, evidence, equity, empathy and efficiency.

This framework can drive focused convergence – the Aspirational Districts and Aspirational Blocks framework for monitoring; tribal-first missions such as Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyaan (PM-JANMAN) and Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan (DAJUGA) for saturation and inclusion; the Adi Karmayogi Abhiyan for capacity-building of field systems; and constitutional provisions such as Article 275(1) and Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) grants, backed by 16th Finance Commission-enabled devolution – to close last-mile gaps at the panchayat level.

Third, the humane state must show up through a small set of non-negotiables, beginning with rights with respect. Justice must be believable: this requires humane policing, effective grievance redress, faster case disposal, legal aid, and a principled review of prolonged undertrial cases and minor-offence burdens disproportionately borne by Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

Finally, harness and consolidate youth aspirations towards a secure future. Sport has proved its quiet power in these landscapes – discipline, pride, pathways, belonging – but aspiration must extend beyond sport into higher education scholarships, residential schooling, skilling aligned to local economies and women-led enterprises.

The final mile in India's LWE journey is as much psychological as it is administrative, and this closing chapter must build strong structural confidence in the state and governance. These regions are not India's periphery; they are India's core, and the true spirit of cooperative federalism must enable a shift from counter-insurgency coordination to inclusion-led, post-conflict transformation.

- **In 2009, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh identified LWE as the most serious internal security threat facing the nation. In April 2010, India witnessed its deadliest Maoist attack on security forces, resulting in the loss of 76 Central Reserve Police Force personnel in Dantewada (Chhattisgarh).**
- **Sixteen years later, on March 30, 2026, during the Budget session of Parliament, Union Home Minister Amit Shah informed the House that India is now free of Maoist insurgency. It is important to acknowledge what this has required — and what it signals.**
- **For a post-LWE future, that credibility must translate into local value economies in erstwhile affected districts and blocks that have long lived with the double bind of extractive development and a resource curse.**

- **That shift must now be deepened by strengthening forest produce systems with fair procurement and local processing; agroforestry and allied livelihoods; incentives for small and medium enterprises through capital support; community-led eco-tourism; and regional economic plans that enable stable employment close to home. Designed with safeguards, and ensuring benefit-sharing and genuine local ownership, these measures can lead to dignified livelihoods that end insecurity and fear.**
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- **Rural roads, schools, health services, banking access, women’s collectivisation, nutrition systems and accountable frontline delivery must be pursued swiftly and predictably, alongside patient community listening and respectful citizen engagement — treating people not as “beneficiaries” but as rights-bearing stakeholders.**

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Persian deadlock

Donald Trump should lift the blockade
for Iran to keep the Strait open

President Donald Trump's decision to extend the ceasefire with Iran indefinitely underscores the wide gap between his social media victory declarations and the ground reality in the Persian Gulf. Mr. Trump, who, along with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, launched the war on Iran on February 28, claims that all of Iran's military capabilities have been destroyed. Yet, he appears to have no viable military option to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, which Iran's Navy shut after the war began. He also said that Iran was begging for a deal because it had no other choice, but Tehran, in open defiance, refused to send a delegation to Pakistan for a second round of talks with the U.S. Snubbed by Iran and with no viable military options as the two-week ceasefire neared expiry, Mr. Trump on Wednesday extended the truce while maintaining the blockade on Iranian ports to keep up the economic pressure. This is the second time in two weeks that he has taken a U-turn, suggesting that he is seeking a way out of the deadlock.

When Mr. Trump announced the ceasefire on April 8, a key sticking point was Israel's war in Lebanon. Last week, he forced Mr. Netanyahu to declare a limited ceasefire in Lebanon following which Iran said it would open the Strait of Hormuz for commercial traffic, raising hopes for a settlement. But instead of advancing the diplomacy, he set the process back by announcing that he would not lift the U.S. blockade of Iranian

macy, he set the process back by announcing that he would not lift the U.S. blockade of Iranian ports. Iran swiftly reversed its decision and tightened its control over the Strait. When the U.S. seized an Iran-flagged vessel in the Gulf of Oman, apparently to increase pressure on the country's leadership, Iran cancelled the talks altogether. Mr. Trump's extension of the ceasefire is only a tactical pause, not an end to the war. None of the outstanding issues – Iran's nuclear programme, its control of the Hormuz Strait and U.S. sanctions – has been resolved. If the strategic deadlock persists, keeping Iran and the global economy on the brink, one of the parties could again resort to violence to break the impasse. The logical next step is to kickstart talks. For that, Mr. Trump needs to accept the new strategic reality. He wants Iran to bend, but his threats are hardening its position, and the blockade is only deepening the mutual mistrust. He cannot demand a deal one day and threaten to kill Iranian leaders and erase its civilisation the next. If he wants a negotiated exit, he should lift the blockade in return for Iran easing its restrictions on the Strait of Hormuz. Tehran, too, should step back from maximalist positions and be ready to make concessions on the nuclear front in exchange for sanctions relief and security guarantees. What West Asia needs is economic and strategic stability, not forever wars.

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- **When Mr. Trump announced the ceasefire on April 8, a key sticking point was Israel's war in Lebanon. Last week, he forced Mr. Netanyahu to declare a limited ceasefire in Lebanon following which Iran said it would open the Strait of Hormuz for commercial traffic, raising hopes for a settlement.**
- **But instead of advancing the diplomacy, he set the process back by announcing that he would not lift the U.S. blockade of Iranian ports. Iran swiftly reversed its decision and tightened its control over the Strait.**
- **When the U.S. seized an Iran-flagged vessel in the Gulf of Oman, apparently to increase pressure on the country's leadership, Iran cancelled the talks altogether. Mr. Trump's extension of the ceasefire is only a tactical pause, not an end to the war.**
- **None of the outstanding issues — Iran's nuclear programme, its control of the Hormuz Strait and U.S. sanctions — has been resolved. If the strategic deadlock persists, keeping Iran and the global economy on the brink, one of the parties could again resort to violence to break the impasse.**

Common concerns

India and South Korea can coordinate on weathering geopolitical storms

Strengthening trade and technology ties between India and Republic of Korea (South Korea) was at the top of the list of outcomes from the two-day visit of President Lee Jae Myung to Delhi and meetings with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The visit, eight years after the last by a South Korean President and seven since Mr. Modi's trip to Seoul, was long overdue and focused on building futuristic ties amid the recent global turmoil. The two leaders committed to taking trade levels to \$50 billion by the end of the decade, launched a joint vision for the India-RoK Special Strategic Partnership, framework statements on shipbuilding and maritime logistics, energy resource security and sustainability, and signed 15 memoranda of understanding on cooperation in a number of economic areas. In particular, the two nations are seeking to use Korean technology skill and India's capacity to scale to build partnerships in critical minerals and quantum computing as they have in manufacturing heavy equipment and consumer goods; a number of Korean companies are household names in India, which has become the largest production base for many of these companies.

Despite the present-day successes, an ancient history dating back to Korean princess Suriratna (also known as Heo Hwang-ok) who was believed to have travelled from "Ayuta" or Ayodhya, and

shared their potentials. The current level of cooperation in bilateral trade is particularly low for two economies among the world's top 15 by GDP. Korean dramas and K-pop are popular in India while Indian cultural and religious influence is evident in South Korea; yet, tourist flows remain low, and each has fewer than 15,000 resident expatriates. Before his departure to Vietnam from India, President Lee pointed out that while India's population is 15 times larger than Vietnam's, India has just 12,000 Korean residents while Vietnam has 2,00,000. Closer ties between them will require greater efforts for political and strategic relations, building stronger ties in the Indo-Pacific, and fast-tracking talks for the CEPA trade agreement which has failed to be finalised despite talks. Welcoming Mr. Lee, Mr. Modi listed three qualities – "democratic values, a market economy, and respect for the rule of law" – as "deeply embedded in the DNA" of both nations. Both countries have many common concerns and have much to lose at present from the effects of the U.S.-Israel war with Iran, disruptions in maritime trade and long-term energy shortages. The visit was a timely opportunity for India and Korea to seek new ways to engage with each other, and develop a common outlook on weathering future shocks arising from the war.

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- **Despite the present-day successes, an ancient history dating back to Korean princess Suriratna (also known as Heo Hwang-ok) who was believed to have travelled from “Ayuta” or Ayodhya, and plans for the future, India-South Korea ties have belied their potential.**
- **The current level of \$27 billion in bilateral trade is particularly low for two economies among the world’s top 15 by GDP.**
- **Korean dramas and K-pop are popular in India while Indian cultural and religious influence is evident in South Korea; yet, tourist flows remain low**
- **Both countries have many common concerns and have much to lose at present from the effects of the U.S.-Israel war with Iran, disruptions in maritime trade and long-term energy shortages.**

Thank You!

