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# **Important Issues of the Day**

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# State support key for tribal welfare, says Social Justice Ministry report

**Abhinay Lakshman**  
NEW DELHI

Support from State governments has been lacking in efforts to extend welfare measures to denotified, nomadic, and semi-nomadic tribes (DNTs), the Union government has said, adding that even now only seven States are issuing DNT community certificates. In its annual report for 2025-26, the Union Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry said support from States was awaited despite letters and advisories issued for close to a decade.

In the report, the Ministry said that State and Union Territory governments were yet to share lists of eligible DNT beneficiaries awaiting housing allotments under the Centre's PMAY-G. Further, the Ministry said it had requested the States to share other



DNT communities have raised the issue of not getting community certificates, which affects their ability to claim benefits. FILE PHOTO

details such as population estimates of DNTs and lists of these communities residing in each State, and had urged them to issue DNT certificates and set up grievance redress mechanisms in letters written since as far back as 2015.

Over the past few years, DNT communities across various parts of the country had repeatedly raised the issue of community

certificates not being provided, which, in turn, affected their ability to claim benefits targeted at them.

Nearly 1,200 such communities, which were tagged as “criminal” by the colonial administration, were denotified in 1952 when the Criminal Tribes Act was repealed. Since then, a majority have been classified under the Scheduled Castes, the Sche-

duled Tribes or the Other Backward Classes lists, though nearly 300 communities are yet to be classified.

Community leaders have argued that the lack of community certificates and their “misclassification” into SC, ST and OBC lists has further marginalised them within these respective groupings. Sections of DNT communities have taken this argument further to mobilise for a separate classification for DNTs on a par with SC, ST, and OBC classifications.

However, even as the Ministry has maintained that there are no proposals under consideration for creating a new classification for DNTs, government officials have said that the ongoing Census 2027 exercise will count the population of these communities during the enumeration phase.

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- **In its annual report for 2025-26, the Union Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry said support from States was awaited despite letters and advisories issued for close to a decade.**
- **In the report, the Ministry said that State and Union Territory governments were yet to share lists of eligible DNT beneficiaries awaiting housing allotments under the Centre's PMAY-G.**
- **Further, the Ministry said it had requested the States to share other details such as population estimates of DNTs and lists of these communities residing in each State, and had urged them to issue DNT certificates and set up grievance redress mechanisms in letters written since as far back as 2015.**

- **Nearly 1,200 such communities, which were tagged as “criminal” by the colonial administration, were denotified in 1952 when the Criminal Tribes Act was repealed.**
- **Since then, a majority have been classified under the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes or the Other Backward Classes lists, though nearly 300 communities are yet to be classified.**
- **Community leaders have argued that the lack of community certificates and their “misclassification” into SC, ST and OBC lists has further marginalised them within these respective groupings.**
- **Sections of DNT communities have taken this argument further to mobilise for a separate classification for DNTs on a par with SC, ST, and OBC classifications.**
- **However, even as the Ministry has maintained that there are no proposals under consideration for creating a new classification for DNTs, government officials have said that the ongoing Census 2027 exercise will count the population of these communities during the enumeration phase.**

- **These tribes were labeled criminal tribes under the Criminal Tribes Act,1871 during British rule, stigmatizing them for generations.**
- **Despite being denotified in 1952, the stigma persists, impacting their social and economic inclusion.**
- **Historically, Nomadic Tribes and De-notified Tribes never had access to private land or home ownership.**
- **Unclassified Communities: The Idade Commission (2017) identified a total of 1,526 DNT, NT and SNT communities.**
- **Out of these 1,526 identified communities, 269 communities are still unclassified under the categories of either SC, ST or OBC.**
- **Similarly, many individuals from these communities are unable to obtain caste certificates in 29 states, limiting their access to welfare schemes.**
- **Several estimates suggest a significant population of over 25 crore individuals, yet many lack basic identity recognition.**

- **The term De-notified Tribes refers to communities that were once classified under the Criminal Tribes Acts, 1871 which were implemented by the British Government.**
- **The Acts were abolished by the Government of India in 1952, leading to the De-Notification of these communities.**
- **A few of these communities which were listed as de-notified were also nomadic.**
- **Nomadic and semi-nomadic communities are defined as those who move from one place to another rather than living in one place all the time.**
- **While most DNTs are spread across the SC, ST and OBC categories, some DNTs are not covered in any of the SC, ST or OBC categories.**
- **The Scheme for Economic Empowerment Denotified, Nomadic, Semi Nomadic communities was launched in February 2022 by the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment.**
- **Aim and Components: It aims to provide free competitive exam coaching to these students for Civil Services, entry to professional courses like medicine, engineering, MBA, etc.**
- **To provide health insurance to families, to uplift clusters of these communities through livelihood initiatives, and to provide financial assistance for housing.**

## **Idate Commission, 2014**

- **About:** It was established in 2014 under the leadership of Bhiku Ramji Idate, to compile a statewide catalogue of Denotified, Nomadic, and Semi-Nomadic Tribes (DNTs).
- **Mandate:** It was mandated to recognize those excluded from Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and Other Backward Classes (OBC) categories and recommend welfare measures for their well-being.

## **Recommendations:**

- **Create a permanent commission with legal standing for the DNTs, SNTs, and NTs.**
- **Assign individuals not identified in the SCs/STs/OBCs list to the OBC category.**
- **Enhance legal and constitutional safeguards by incorporating a third schedule into the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 to prevent atrocities and restore the feeling of security amongst the members of the community.**
- **Form a distinct department to address the welfare of these communities in states with significant populations.**

# NHRC issues notices as plaint alleges poor adoption of NCERT textbooks

**Maitri Porecha**

NEW DELHI

Following allegations that private schools continue to prescribe textbooks from private publishers instead of those prescribed by the government, a Bench of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has issued notices to the Centre and States asking if they have conducted any inspection, survey or audits into the issue.

A complaint received by the NHRC had alleged that substitution of textbooks published by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) or the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) with private materials translates to exorbitant financial burden on families.

“The NCERT textbooks are priced minimally by design but private publish-



The complaint has sought school-wise audit of book lists for the current academic year.

er books are sold at much higher prices. This contradicts National Educational Policy (NEP) 2020’s explicit vision of making school education equitable, inclusive and affordable for all children,” the complaint says.

The complaint further says that the NEP prescribes weight limits for school bags based on class, and mandates that no refe-

rence book be carried to school. Prescription of multiple textbooks and workbooks from private publishers violates this norm, it says. It further alleges that the non-compliance of Section 29 under the Right to Education Act has created a two-tier education system – one governed by NCERT curriculum and the other by the commercial interests of private publishers.

The NHRC has issued notices to Chief Secretaries of all States, Administrators of all Union Territories, and the Secretary, Department of School Education and Literacy, Union Education Ministry, seeking an inquiry into concerns highlighted in the complaint and action-taken reports to the commission.

The NHRC further noted that differences in textbooks and curriculum

based solely on whether a school is privately or government-run amount to academic discrimination.

The NHRC notice asks “if the State has issued any direction, circular, or government order to District Magistrates (DMs), District Education Officers, Block Education Officers for monitoring private schools’ compliance with Section 29 of RTE Act”

It further says, “If no such direction has been issued, an order may be issued to the DMs to ensure that all private schools within the State prescribe only NCERT/SCERT books at the elementary level.”

The rights watchdog has also asked for “a school-wise audit of booklists for the current academic year within 30 days” and submission of findings “to the State Education Department for further submission to the Commission”.

- **It was constituted under the Protection of Human Rights Act (PHRA), 1993, which was later amended by the Protection of Human Rights Act (PHRA) 2006.**
- **Section 2(1)(d) of the PHRA act defines Human Rights as those relating to life, liberty, equality, and dignity of the individual guaranteed by the Constitution or embodied in the International Covenants and enforceable by courts in India.**
- **PHRA complies with the Paris Principles (1991).**
- **The act lays down qualifications for the appointments in the Commission.**
  
- **Chairperson must be a former Chief Justice of India or a Supreme Court judge.**
- **Ex-officio members: Chairpersons of National Commission for Scheduled Castes, National Commission for Scheduled Tribes, National Commission for Minorities, National Commission for Women, National Commission for Backward Classes, National Commission for Protection of Child Rights and Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities.**
- **Apart from these, it has five full-time members.**
- **The appointment is made by the President based on the recommendations of a six-member committee.**

- **Six-member selection committee: Prime Minister, Speaker (Lok Sabha), Deputy Chairman (Rajya Sabha), leaders of the Opposition in both Houses of Parliament, and Union Home Minister.**
- **Term: Three years or until they reach the age of 70.**

### **Powers and Functions of NHRC**

- **Powers of a civil court with judicial proceedings.**
- **Investigation of human rights violations with the help of central or state government officers or investigation agencies.**
- **The nature of action to be taken is only recommandatory, not binding.**
- **Matters are to be raised within one year of the incident.**
- **It does not have its own investigation agency. It has to rely on other government agencies for it.**
- **It does not have jurisdiction in cases related to armed forces.**

## Cycle of violence

Manipur sees little respite despite a change of guard under the BJP

**E**thnic quagmires are among the most difficult situations for governments to untangle, given the violence and persistence of hostilities – even for those committed to restoring peace. The reason is the intransigent nature of ethnic divides, where hostile elements resist any efforts at normalisation. Any space for empathy is restricted as every incident is ethnicised. The situation is compounded when the government of the day fails to nip the descent into ethnicised hostilities in the bud, making it even more difficult for civil society and subsequent governments to restore peace and normalcy. This is the kind of situation that Manipur finds itself in. Even a relatively moderate Chief Minister such as Yumnam Khemchand Singh, who has sought – at least through nominal gestures – to rise above the ethnic fray, has found the going tough. Violence has flared up again following a bombing attack on April 7 that killed a five-year-old boy and an infant girl in Bishnupur district. Reports of the alleged involvement of a Kuki extremist organisation in bombing attacks – denied by Kuki groups – triggered a series of protests in the valley and renewed violence led to more deaths. With disinformation and rumour-mongering adding fuel to the fire, Manipur has returned to a cycle of violence and hardening stances among groups in its persistent ethnic quagmire.

The Bharatiya Janata Party initially believed that the resignation of former Chief Minister N. Biren Singh, efforts to curb violent ethnic organisations, and the passage of time would help restore normalcy. After a spell of President's Rule, and in an apparent effort to promote a more moderate form of governance before elections are due, the BJP formed a new government under Mr. Khemchand Singh. However, the inadequate involvement of political leaders – including from the Union government – in a genuine peace-building exercise shows that the situation has not improved despite these nominal changes by the BJP. A more thoroughgoing carrot and stick approach, empowering civil society leaders willing to advance peace and punishing those promoting and engaging in violence, would have certainly helped. But political variables focused more on retaining power than achieving peace appear to have kept those seeking to advance hardline views in positions of influence on both sides of the divide. A more pro-active role by the Home Ministry and a genuine effort by the BJP to involve all political actors in easing tensions should help. This should be supplemented by a strategy that empowers security agencies to crack down on hardline elements engaging in wanton violence such as bombings. Short of these measures, Manipur will continue to convulse with recurring incidents of violence, reactions and reprisals.

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## High heat

### India must address the underlying vulnerability to hot weather

India's summers are known to be hot, but this year the high heat has arrived noticeably early. The India Meteorological Department has sounded heat alerts in central and south India, including in Vidarbha, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Telangana and Kerala. Parts of Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat have also scaled the 40°C mark, with Tamil Nadu and Karnataka not far behind. Local conditions in coastal areas, in particular, could be worse due to humidity and the urban heat island effect. Warmer nights also delay physiological recovery, increasing the local health-care burden. Such temperatures are usually encountered in May-June but have become apparent in April. While pre-monsoon heatwaves are common in India, they are becoming larger and more intense. This year, a lack of western disturbances and thunderstorms, along with lower convective activity, has also done away with natural cooling, with residual effects of the previous El Niño adding to the heat. Persistently high heat is linked to a significantly higher risk of death from cardiovascular causes. Some 247 billion work-hours were lost in 2024 to heat, according to *The Lancet Countdown Global Report*, with workers in construction and agriculture the most affected. Heat stress is an ongoing concern for farmers during the *rabi* harvest. Hot weather accelerates crop maturity, threatening food security and feeding inflationary pressure.

Experts have complained that most heat action plans (HAPs) – India's primary institutional response to heat – focus on emergency response and lack funds for structural interventions such as urban re-greening and mandatory heat-safety legislation for workers in the informal sector. They have thus failed to address underlying vulnerabilities. On April 23, in the Tamil Nadu and West Bengal polls, and Gujarat and Maharashtra by-elections, lakhs of electors had to brave the heat. Concerns about voter turnout in the heat prompted the Election Commission of India to keep polling booths open longer during the 2024 general election; such reactive measures alone will not suffice this year. If warming continues along current trajectories, more than a few parts of India will begin approaching human survivability limits. HAPs desperately need sufficient, long-term funding while public systems must roll out mobile health units and doorstep delivery of essential services during peak heat to reduce the income penalties that deter access. Colombia has convened a coalition of roughly 50 countries to explore a faster transition away from fossil fuels in a parallel 'climate conference'. India should join it, not least because of the greater access to climate adaptation finance it could afford.

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## Mains Question

**Q.** Heat waves are emerging as a major climate-induced hazard in India. Examine their causes and socio-economic impacts. Also discuss the effectiveness of government measures such as Heat Action Plans and suggest improvements for building long-term resilience.

**प्रश्न:** हीट वेव (लू) भारत में एक प्रमुख जलवायु-जनित आपदा के रूप में उभर रही है। इसके कारणों तथा सामाजिक-आर्थिक प्रभावों का परीक्षण कीजिए। साथ ही, हीट एक्शन प्लान जैसे सरकारी उपायों की प्रभावशीलता का मूल्यांकन करते हुए दीर्घकालिक समाधान सुझाइए।

# Scaling climate adaptation from policy to grassroots

India is the ninth most climate-vulnerable country globally, with 430 extreme weather events recorded between 1995 and 2024, causing losses of \$170 billion and impacting 1.3 billion people. India's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) for 2031-35 acknowledge these risks and emphasise the mainstreaming of climate resilience and adaptation into the country's development strategy.

The updated NDCs strengthen adaptation across coastal resilience, infrastructure, disaster preparedness, heat mitigation, biodiversity conservation and sustainable livelihoods. This aligns with global commitments to triple adaptation finance by 2035 and the adoption of Belém Adaptation Indicators at COP30. However, achieving these goals will require sustained financing and institutionalising adaptation from national to the grass-root levels.

Among key adaptation efforts, the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)'s National Innovations in Climate Resilient Agriculture (NICRA) pilot spans 448 villages across 151 climate-vulnerable hotspots and maps risks in 651 districts, focusing on climate-smart agriculture and farmer capacity-building.

## A model to watch

India's Economic Survey for 2025-26 recognises Tamil Nadu's Climate Resilient Villages (CRV) programme as a good practice. Under the Tamil Nadu Climate Change Mission (TNCCM), with support from the World Resources Institute (WRI) India, the CRV takes a holistic approach across 11 vulnerable districts, in consultation with local communities and administration. Interventions span water management, flood/drought mitigation, waste management, renewable energy, biodiversity conservation, alternate livelihoods and climate information.

Scaling up such models can help build adaptive capacity throughout the country. However, India's efforts towards adaptation have been scattered which makes financing these



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Adaptation can be advanced through coordinated governance, finance and local efforts

efforts difficult. While India's Economic Survey 2025-26 estimates adaptation and resilience spending at 5.6% of GDP in FY22, the Union Budget 2026-27 remains skewed toward mitigation.

## Financing adaptation action

Developing countries face an annual financing gap of \$284-\$339 billion through 2035, as per the United Nations Environment Programme's (UNEP) Adaptation Gap Report, 2025. As India looks to sharpen its adaptation focus, domestic resource mobilisation will be key – requiring a clear typology for adaptation finance (which is prioritisation of sectors and assessment of the resources required for each vulnerable sector). However, India's Draft Framework of Climate Finance Taxonomy (2025) remains largely mitigation-focused and looks at emission avoidance, emission intensity reduction (with possible adaptation co-benefits) and activities supporting transition in hard-to-abate sectors.

It is vital to quantify adaptation benefits such as avoidable losses and socio-economic and environmental benefits including mitigation co-benefits. A WRI study estimates a ten-fold return on adaptation investment, making a case for leveraging private and international investment towards adaptation. Adaptation facilities at the state-level can help identify bankable adaptation projects that map benefits and widen the resource base.

Additionally, domestic public finance should be streamlined by tracking adaptation activities within State budgets, following which the Ministry of Finance can mandate climate budgeting through State Finance Departments. This can be integrated within annual budgetary planning processes through a budget circular. Such a mandate must incorporate timeframes for prioritisation of adaptation action with a monitoring framework. This should be complemented with cross-department consultative approaches and capacity building at

nodal departmental levels. NDCs are expected to be operationalised through a National Adaptation Plan, national missions and State Action Plans on Climate Change (SAPCCs). While most States drafted an initial SAPCC, only a few States submitted revisions in tune with NDC updates until 2030. Institutionalising planning requires regular climate vulnerability assessments at the State, district, and block levels, integrating socio-economic and livelihood factors. This calls for robust methodologies, updated data, capacity-building, and standardised monitoring, with periodic reviews and continuous data collection.

Adaptation strategies should ideally go beyond resilient infrastructure to encompass skill development, alternative livelihoods and guidelines for rehabilitation of affected populations. This can be done by leveraging existing State and district climate change cells or setting up new functional cells with a dedicated workforce. Clear reporting channels can further support cross-learning and timely interventions.

## Facilitating locally led adaptation

Institutional mechanisms should extend to the level of urban local bodies and panchayati raj institutions to scale adaptation action. Locally Led Adaptation (LLA) was stressed at COP30. Co-developing resilience planning with communities – from planning and implementation to management, ownership, and leadership of needs-based interventions – is central to people-centric climate action. Applying place-based and context-specific approaches, such as extending the CRV initiative to different geographies, not only helps raise climate awareness but also enables communities to be a part of decision-making processes.

Preparedness for future climate impacts requires capacity-building and behavioural change across multiple levels. A whole-of-systems approach to adaptation is needed, where national commitments are met through grassroots action.

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# Lebanon yearns for peace and deliverance

Page No. 8, GS 2

The high-octane din of the ongoing Operation Epic Fury against Iran, which began on February 28, 2026, has largely subsumed an equally ferocious war being waged simultaneously in Lebanon. While this fracas between the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) and Lebanon's Hezbollah militia has some linkages to the Iranian imbroglio, it would be simplistic to regard it as a mere sideshow of the latter. The Lebanon conflict predates the formation of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979 and has its own background, drivers and ramifications.

## A battleground

Indeed, for much of its 83 years as an independent nation, Lebanon, with a current population of five million, has been used as a springboard for foreign causes against Israel, with which it shares a 79-km land border. Following the creation of Israel in 1948, nearly 1,00,000 Palestinians took refuge in Lebanon. They eventually led to the establishment of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), based in Beirut, forming a state within the Lebanese state. The PLO, under its Chairman Yasser Arafat, conducted guerrilla activities against Israel, provoking Israeli wrath against Lebanon. A civil war broke out in Lebanon in 1975, pushing ethnic identities over nationalism. The PLO joined the conflict. In 1982 the IDF invaded Lebanon to expel it, causing the PLO to relocate to Tunis. However, most Palestinian residents remained in Lebanon and are now estimated at around 5,00,000, roughly one-tenth of the population. Syria, a neighbouring big brother under the al-Assad regime, also intervened in the civil war, maintaining a so-called "deterrent force" ostensibly to maintain order.

Lebanon's relief at the PLO's exit was short-lived. Revolutionary Iran soon waded in to seed the Hezbollah militia to collectivise and militarise the country's sizable, but poorer, Shia population in the southern areas bordering Israel. Over the next few decades, Iran invested billions of dollars into bankrolling Hezbollah, transforming it into Lebanon's most powerful militia, a Shia welfare organisation, and a key pillar of Iran's "Axis of Resistance". Through guerrilla tactics, Hezbollah fighters inflicted steady losses on the IDF, evicting it from the buffer zone in southern Lebanon in 2000. Subsequently, in 2006, Hezbollah fought off the IDF in a month-long conflict. This "success" prompted the militia's conversion into a regular proto-army with a fortified Israeli border with sizeable missile and drone capabilities.

Following the Hamas attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, Hezbollah joined the battle against the IDF. In the autumn of 2024, Israel leveraged its deep intelligence penetration to devastating effect: decapitating Hezbollah hierarchy, including its long-time leader, Syed Hassan Nasrallah, and several regional commanders. In a dramatic manner, Israel simultaneously exploded a large number of



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Despite a tenuous ceasefire, Lebanon remains fragile; the scheduled second round of talks with Israel in Washington offers a sliver of hope

paggers and walkie-talkies to kill, maim, and demoralise hundreds of Hezbollah fighters. Hezbollah kept a steady barrage of missile and drone attacks, forcing many Israeli citizens to relocate from northern Israel. However, by the time of the ceasefire in late October 2024, Hezbollah had been reduced to a pale shadow of its former self. The fall of the al-Assad regime in Syria, which acted as a land bridge with Iran, was a serious setback. Although Hezbollah conspicuously stayed out of Iran's 12-day war with Israel and the United States in June 2025, the degradation of Iranian defence capabilities impacted it. Within Lebanon, too, its political fortunes suffered, and the country was able to elect a Hezbollah-agnostic President and Prime Minister after a long hiatus. Under the new domestic political order, calls for disarming Hezbollah became more strident as the militia was seen more as the cause of the insecurity than as a self-proclaimed deterrent against Israel.

## Conflict and engagement

Against this sombre backdrop, Israel and the U.S. suddenly launched a joint air campaign against Iran on February 28, 2026, assassinating Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in its first salvo. This shocked Hezbollah into attacking Israel with artillery, drones and missiles across the common border, breaking the 15-month ceasefire. The IDF responded in kind with intense air attacks on Hezbollah assets. Both sides internalised the lessons of the last round: Hezbollah used the interregnum to recoup its losses and make operational changes to avoid intelligence leakages. It revived guerrilla tactics, conserving its assets for a long war of attrition. It adopted a decentralised command structure and toned down its political rhetoric. The IDF initially avoided infantry engagements, deploying more armour and airpower.

After an Iranian ceasefire was announced on April 8, Tehran demanded that Lebanon be brought under its ambit. To the contrary, IDF intensified its attacks on Hezbollah, launching "100 air strikes in 10 minutes" and demolishing buildings without prior notice. The IDF depopulated much of the south to create, once again, a buffer zone south of the Litani river. After nine days of ferocious war, U.S. President Donald Trump declared a ceasefire on April 17. The announcement was preceded by a preliminary meeting on April 14 between the Israeli and Lebanese ambassadors in Washington, facilitated by U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio. This engagement was noteworthy for many reasons. It was the first contact since the abortive Madrid process in the mid-1990s between the two states formally still at war. The meeting took place despite Hezbollah's stiff opposition and Iranian insistence on the matter being put under Iran-U.S. ceasefire negotiations. There was considerable opposition within Israel to the ceasefire from hardliners who wanted Hezbollah defanged. In the end, the interests of both the Israeli and Lebanese governments overlapped in

hiving off the Iranian connection to Hezbollah. The second round of bilateral talks is scheduled to take place in Washington on April 23, amid sporadic violations of the ceasefire. The second round of Iran-U.S. negotiations in Islamabad, Pakistan, remains stalled.

This Washington process also faces considerable challenges. First, the respective objectives of the stakeholders differ: Beirut wants a permanent ceasefire, an IDF withdrawal to the international border supervised by the United Nations peacekeepers and avoidance of any new civil war, as the Lebanese armed forces are too weak to take on Hezbollah. Jerusalem's priority is just the opposite: to disarm Hezbollah even if it triggers a Lebanese civil war. On the other hand, Mr. Trump can hardly wait to conclude these negotiations to his list of peace deal trophies; he may eventually wish to include Lebanon among the Abraham Accord signatories. As Hezbollah is stubbornly unwilling to disarm, citing an existential threat from Israel, any reckless move in that direction could precipitate a civil war in a country still deeply fragmented along confessional/ethnic lines. This sensitive issue needs discreet handling, with Hezbollah being offered some assurances to persuade it to disarm. Besides, Lebanon, still recovering from the civil war (1975-1990), has faced two devastating conflicts with Israel in the past two years, which have left 5,282 people dead, displaced 1.2 million, and caused financial losses of \$8.5 billion. By early 2026, 35% of Lebanese were living below the national poverty line.

## Hope amid prolonged crisis

Lebanon today is a cautionary tale of nearly half a century of accumulated crises, which its ossified nomenclature swept under the carpet. An early resolution of the Lebanese imbroglio is as elusive as it is important for the country, the entire region and beyond. More Lebanese live outside Lebanon than in the country itself. Further, Lebanon is the only Arab country with a significant proportion of Christians. In the past, tensions between various confessions have sucked in their co-religionist foreign backers, exacerbating the problems. The converse is also true: Lebanese militias have often meddled abroad. Hezbollah, for instance, acted as a protector of Syria's al-Assad regime and stirred the Shias in the Gulf states and supported al-Houthis in Yemen. At its best, a multi-ethnic Lebanon was a model state with a tolerant, productive and prosperous society that Indians related to. It was a civilisational bridge between Christian Europe and Muslim Arabs. It enriched the world beyond its microcosm – from philosopher Khalil Gibran to thinker Kamal Jumlatt and from historian Philip Hitti to Arabic singer Fairuz. The past half-century has tormented Lebanon with fratricidal civil wars overlaid with foreign causes. The current ceasefire and talks offer a sliver of hope that this jinx has finally been broken and the country can cautiously move towards normalcy.

- **Indeed, for much of its 83 years as an independent nation, Lebanon, with a current population of five million, has been used as a springboard for foreign causes against Israel, with which it shares a 79-km land border.**
- **Following the creation of Israel in 1948, nearly 1,00,000 Palestinians took refuge in Lebanon.**
- **They eventually led to the establishment of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), based in Beirut, forming a state within the Lebanese state. The PLO, under its Chairman Yasser Arafat, conducted guerrilla activities against Israel, provoking Israeli wrath against Lebanon.**
- **A civil war broke out in Lebanon in 1975, pushing ethnic identities over nationalism. The PLO joined the conflict. In 1982 the IDF invaded Lebanon to expel it, causing the PLO to relocate to Tunis.**

- **Against this sombre backdrop, Israel and the U.S. suddenly launched a joint air campaign against Iran on February 28, 2026, assassinating Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in its first salvo. This shocked Hezbollah into attacking Israel with artillery, drones and missiles across the common border, breaking the 15-month ceasefire.**
- **After an Iranian ceasefire was announced on April 8, Tehran demanded that Lebanon be brought under its ambit. To the contrary, IDF intensified its attacks on Hezbollah, launching "100 air strikes in 10 minutes" and demolishing buildings without prior notice.**
- **Besides, Lebanon, still recovering from the civil war (1975–1990), has faced two devastating conflicts with Israel in the past two years, which have left 5,282 people dead, displaced 1.2 million, and caused financial losses of \$8.5 billion. By early 2026, 35% of Lebanese were living below the national poverty line.**

# The Druzhba Pipeline



- **The resumption of Russian oil flows through the Ukrainian section of the Druzhba pipeline, has led Hungary to lift its veto on a critical 90 billion euro EU loan for Kyiv.**
- **The Druzhba (meaning Friendship) pipeline is one of the world's longest and largest crude oil pipeline networks. It serves as a vital energy artery connecting Russia to several countries in Central and Eastern Europe.**
- **Established In: The system was constructed by the Soviet Union and began operations in 1964 to supply oil to the then-socialist bloc countries of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON).**
- **It originates in the Almetyevsk region of central Russia, where several pipelines carrying crude from Siberia, the Urals, and the Caspian Sea converge. It runs through Belarus and then splits into two major branches:**

- **Northern Branch: Continues through Poland to Germany.**
- **Southern Branch: Runs through Ukraine to Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic.**

**Aim of the Pipeline:**

- **To provide a reliable, high-capacity overland route for transporting Russian crude oil directly to European refineries, bypassing maritime routes.**
- **Historically designed to integrate the economies of Eastern Europe with the Soviet Union; today, it remains a critical infrastructure for landlocked refineries in Central Europe.**



Thank You!

