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THE HINDU CURRENT AFFAIRS ANALYSIS

Daily News Decoded for UPSC & State PCS



13 JULY 2026

GS 2 · GS 3 · 7 TOPICS · MAINS · PRELIMS MCQs

COMPILED BY

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EXCELLENCE · DISCIPLINE · SUCCESS

In This Issue

01

Iran Strikes West Asian Nations after U.S. Attacks

Strait of Hormuz crisis · CENTCOM strikes · Indian seafarers

GS 2 · IR

02

ISRO Tests Gaganyaan Crew Module Systems

CMUS uprighting · umbilical separation · apex cover

GS 3 · Sci-Tech

03

Five Crore Indians Wait When Courts Take a Break

Judicial vacations · 5.39 crore pendency · reform routes

GS 2 · Polity

04

Oil Conundrum: Russian Crude & Strategic Autonomy

Import concentration · secondary sanctions · SPR

GS 3 · Economy

05

Insular Incentive: Rethinking the E20 Ethanol Policy

Feedstock choice · 2G ethanol · consumer burden

GS 3 · Economy

06

The Making of Israel's Retreat into Isolation

Abraham Accords strain · U.S.–Israel rift · West Bank

GS 2 · IR

07

Judging Graduates, Not Entrance Scores

IIT placement reform · NEP 2020 · equity in hiring

GS 2 · Education

HOW TO USE THIS ANALYSIS

- | | |
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| Step 1 | Read each topic's "Why in News" box to anchor the issue, then move to the key points. |
| Step 2 | Study the fact-boxes and original newspaper clippings for data, maps and quotes usable in answers. |
| Step 3 | Attempt the reframed Mains questions within the word limit, then solve the 10 Prelims MCQs and check the key. |

01

Iran Strikes West Asian Nations after U.S. Attacks

GS 2 · INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

THE HINDU · PAGE 1

INDIA & WEST ASIA · ENERGY SECURITY

WHY IN NEWS

The U.S. attacked Iran early on Sunday over an Iranian strike on a container ship in the Strait of Hormuz that left one Indian sailor missing. Iran retaliated with attacks on Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Jordan and Oman — states hosting U.S. military forces — and declared the Strait of Hormuz closed.

- ◆ **Escalation ladder:** A second round of U.S. strikes followed on Sunday; Iran's IRNA cited the Governor of Qeshm island saying projectiles hit military targets with no casualties. Explosions were reported in Bandar Abbas and Hajiabad.
- ◆ **CENTCOM claims:** The U.S. Central Command said it hit **140 targets** — missile and drone launch sites, ammunition dumps and communication equipment — to weaken Iran's ability to threaten shipping.
- ◆ **Strait status disputed:** The U.S. military and President Trump asserted the strait remained open; Iran insisted it alone controls the strait and that it stays closed until "calm is restored".
- ◆ **India angle:** New Delhi condemned the attack on the Cyprus-flagged vessel *GFS Galaxy* off Oman, in which one of its 11 Indian crew members went missing — a direct stake in seafarer safety and energy flows.

Page No.1 , GS 2

Iran attacks West Asian nations after U.S. strikes

Tehran targets Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Jordan, and Oman, says Strait of Hormuz is closed; U.S. says strikes will weaken Iran's ability to threaten shipping, insists traffic flowing through vital waterway

Associated Press
DUBAI

The U.S. attacked Iran early on Sunday over an Iranian strike on a container ship in the Strait of Hormuz that left one Indian sailor missing. Iran responded with attacks on several countries in West Asia, including Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Jordan, and Oman.

The U.S. struck again later on Sunday. Iran's state-run IRNA news agency cited the Governor of Qeshm island near the strait as saying projectiles had been fired at military targets, with no casualties. It said explosions were heard in the coastal city of Bandar Abbas and Hajiabad city to the north.

The U.S. military's Central Command (CENTCOM)



The U.S. says it hit 140 targets, including missile and drone launch sites and communication equipment, in Iran. REUTERS

said it hit 140 targets, including missile and drone launch sites, ammunition dumps, communication equipment, and other sites. It said the attacks, heavier than in recent days, would weaken Iran's ability to threaten shipping. "We bombed the hell out of them last night," Pre-

sident Donald Trump said.

Iranian state media later reported U.S. strikes across the country, including military sites in a province near Tehran. Semi-official news agencies said that a Navy officer was killed.

Iran retaliated by attacking nations in the region hosting U.S. military forc-

Govt. slams ship attack off Oman; seafarer missing

CHENNAI

The government has condemned the attack on a Cyprus-flagged commercial vessel off the coast of Oman that left one of its 11 Indian crew members missing. "We condemn the attack on the commercial vessel *GFS Galaxy*..." it said. » **PAGE 12**

es, while insisting it alone must control the strait.

The U.S. military and Mr. Trump asserted that the strait remained open on Sunday. Iran said the strait would be closed until calm is restored.

CONTINUED ON
» **PAGE 12**

Original clipping — The Hindu, Page 1 (13 July 2026)

FACT-BOX: STRAIT OF HORMUZ

Location	Chokepoint between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman; Iran to the north, Oman/UAE to the south.
Why critical	Around a fifth of global oil and a major share of LNG trade transits it; no full sea alternative exists.
India's stake	Bulk of India's crude from West Asia (Iraq, Saudi Arabia, UAE) passes through; closure spikes freight, insurance and inflation.
Instruments	UNCLOS transit-passage regime; Indian Navy's Operation Sankalp escorts in the Gulf region.



Southwest Asia — states targeted by Iran (Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Jordan, Oman) host U.S. forces

UPSC CONNECT

Prelims	Map-marking: Strait of Hormuz, Qeshm island, Bandar Abbas, Gulf states.
Mains GS 2	India's balancing act in West Asia; protection of diaspora and seafarers; energy diplomacy.
Mains GS 3	Impact of chokepoint closure on India's energy security and inflation.

02

ISRO Tests Gaganyaan Crew Module Systems

GS 3 · SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

THE HINDU · PAGE 14

SPACE TECHNOLOGY · HUMAN SPACEFLIGHT

WHY IN NEWS

ISRO announced it successfully carried out three major tests of the Gaganyaan crew module systems — the uprighting system (CMUS), the umbilical connect-disconnect mechanism, and the apex cover separation — key crew-safety milestones for India's first human spaceflight.

- ◆ **Test 1 — CMUS:** A stored cold-gas-based **Crew Module Uprighting System** ensures the module stays upright after sea splashdown. A system-level qualification set-up was realised; inflation tests used high-pressure stored gas to inflate floats via control valves.
- ◆ **Test 2 — Umbilical separation:** The umbilical mechanism links the crew module (where astronauts live) with the service module (power and propulsion). It has two parts — **CSU-1** on the crew-module side and **CSU-2** on the service-module side.
- ◆ **Re-entry sequence:** During earth re-entry, the service module separates first after CSU-1 disconnects; just before re-entry, CSU-2 is also separated. The test demonstrated clean CSU-2 separation and structural stability of the crew-module panel and interfaces.
- ◆ **Test 3 — Apex cover:** Validated the crew module's structural integrity during apex-cover separation. The apex cover protects parachutes and subsystems and is jettisoned before parachutes deploy to decelerate the module.

Page No.14 , GS 3

ISRO successfully carries out tests of Gaganyaan systems

One of the tests involved separation of the 'umbilical mechanism' that serves as a link between the crew module, where astronauts live, and the service module that provides propulsion, agency says

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

The Indian Space Research Organisation on Sunday said it had successfully carried out three major tests of the Gaganyaan crew module systems.

The first test pertained to ensuring an upright position of the crew module after splashdown in the sea, considered one of the most important crew safety requirements. To do this, a stored cold-gas-based uprighting system was developed and tested.

"A system-level qualification test set-up consisting of all the elements of CMUS (crew module uprighting system) was realised," the ISRO said, adding it successfully conducted inflation tests "for the primary inflation module wherein stored gas in the high-pressure gas bottle was made to inflate the floatation by operating the control valves."

The second test involved examining the separation of the umbilical mechanism that serves as a link between the crew module, where astronauts live, and the service module, which provides power and propulsion. The mechanism consists of two parts, each located at the crew module side, called CSU-1, and the service module side, called CSU-2.



Step-by-step: (Clockwise from left) The crew module uprighting system, the service module connect-disconnect system, and the apex cover that underwent testing, ISRO

Clean separation
During the crew module's earth re-entry stage, the service module first separates from the crew module after the CSU-1 disconnects. Subsequently, just before re-entry, the CSU-2 is also separated.

"Separation test of CSU-2 from simulated crew module was carried out. The test demonstrated the clean separation of CSU-2 as well as structural stability of the crew module panel and their interfaces,"

the space agency said. The third test validated the structural integrity of the crew module during the apex cover separation event. The apex cover protects the parachutes and associated subsystems during the mission. It is separated before parachutes are deployed to decelerate the crew module.

Original clipping — The Hindu, Page 14: CMUS, connect-disconnect system and apex cover under test

FACT-BOX: GAGANYAAN MISSION

Objective	Demonstrate human spaceflight to ~400 km LEO for up to 3 days and safe sea recovery.
Modules	Crew Module (habitable) + Service Module (power & propulsion) = Orbital Module.
Safety chain	Crew Escape System → apex cover separation → parachute deceleration → splashdown → CMUS uprighting.
Precursors	Test Vehicle aborts, uncrewed missions with Vyommitra ahead of crewed flight.

UPSC CONNECT

Prelims	CMUS, CSU-1/CSU-2, apex cover — functions and sequence; cold-gas systems.
Mains GS 3	Indigenous human-rated technologies; spin-offs of human spaceflight; India's space economy roadmap.

03

Five Crore Indians Wait When Courts Take a Break

GS 2 · POLITY & JUDICIARY

THE HINDU · PAGE 8 (OPINION)

JUDICIAL PENDENCY · ADR · REFORMS

WHY IN NEWS

As the Supreme Court resumes after its June 1–July 12 summer break (sitting with only 3–4 vacation Benches a week), an opinion piece by Vijay L. Kelkar and Pradeep S. Mehta argues that synchronised court vacations deepen India’s pendency crisis of over 5.39 crore cases.

- ◆ **Scale of pendency:** As of end-2025 — **5.39 crore** cases pending: 4.76 crore in district courts, 63.6 lakh in High Courts, and 92,000+ in the Supreme Court (its heaviest load in 30 years). A government study estimated clearing the pile at the present pace could take **three centuries**.
- ◆ **Undertrial burden:** Roughly three in four prisoners are undertrials — unconvicted, presumed innocent, often serving longer than the sentence a guilty plea would have brought.
- ◆ **Colonial hand-me-down:** The vacation calendar was built for English judges escaping the Indian summer; in 2024 the Court merely renamed the break “partial court working days” — sitting days (~190/year) did not change.
- ◆ **Not anti-judge:** Judges are among the most overworked in the world; the recess is when reserved judgments get written. The critique targets *everyone resting together*, not rest itself.
- ◆ **The fix urged:** A 2023 parliamentary standing committee, the Law Commission and the Malimath Committee all proposed the same: **stagger leave, rotate Benches, never let the court run thin** — the way hospitals roster doctors.
- ◆ **Vacancies caveat:** Up to a third of High Court seats lie empty; but a half-strength Bench thinning further each summer is the strongest case *against* the recess, not a defence of it.

BEYOND COURTS — THE SOLUTION RESERVOIR

Lok Adalats	2.59+ crore cases settled in a single national sitting last December; 23.5+ crore in three years.
Mediation Act 2023	Nudges parties to attempt settlement before litigation; arbitration can take commercial disputes out of courts — both badly underused.
Retired judges	Retiring at 62/65 in full command; a dedicated corps could map bottlenecks, set public disposal targets and account for progress.
Core message	“Reform that belongs to everyone belongs to no one” — calendar reform needs only the judiciary’s own will.

Five crore Indians wait when the courts take a break

The Supreme Court of India and the major High Courts are on a summer holiday break, i.e., shut down with some vacation Benches functioning to hear urgent matters. However, shops, markets, eating places, government and private offices, hospitals and police stations do not cease to work even though their staff enjoy personal leave. On the other hand, somewhere in an Indian jail tonight, a man who has been convicted of nothing is finishing another year behind bars, his trial still ongoing and perhaps years away from ending. He is one of the roughly three in four prisoners in this country who are undertrials: unconvicted, presumed innocent, yet serving time anyway — often longer than the sentence they would have received had they pleaded guilty. And as you read this, the courts, the public institutions that hold the fate of the poor in their hands, are functioning at only a fraction of their strength.

A three-century backlog

From June 1 to July 12, the Supreme Court is on its summer break, sitting with three or four Benches a week instead of a full court and resuming in earnest on July 13. The doors are not bolted; urgent pleas are still heard. But for six weeks, the most powerful court in the world’s most populous democracy idles.

Now hold that against the number it is meant to be fighting. As of the last day of 2025, more than 5.39 crore cases were pending in Indian courts: over 4.76 crore in the district courts, 63.6 lakh in the High Courts, and more than 92,000 in the Supreme Court itself, its heaviest load in over 30 years. A government study once calculated that, at the present pace, clearing the pile could take three centuries.

Three centuries. And the Court takes the summer and winter vacations off.

To be fair, the judges deserve it. The recess is when reserved judgments finally get written, when the brutal daily cause-list eases enough to think.



Vijay L. Kelkar

Vice-Chairman of the Pune International Centre



Pradeep S. Mehta

Secretary-General of CUTS International (Consumer Unity and Trust Society)

When courts rest together for vacations, crores of litigants across the country wait longer for justice

Last year the Chief Justice of India and his four senior-most colleagues worked clean through the first week of the break. Indian judges are among the most overworked in the world. This is not an accusation of laziness; no one who has seen a judge’s docket could make one.

Because that is precisely the point. When the people doing the work are exhausted and the backlog is biblical, what conceivable logic shuts the whole shop at once? Not that judges rest — which they should — but that almost all of them rest together, so the institution goes quiet for six-plus weeks every year. And the habit is a colonial hand-me-down: the calendar was built for English judges who could not stand the Indian heat and retreated to cooler climes each summer, then enjoyed long Christmas holidays in the winter.

In 2024, the Court announced a fix: it renamed the “summer vacation” as “partial court working days”. That was it. The number of days it actually sits — about 190 days in a year — did not change. You cannot rebrand your way out of a backlog; a litigant whose case is stuck does not care what the recess is called, only whether his matter is heard and disposed of.

Justice needs court continuity

So what would actually help? The first answer is one the judiciary’s own watchdogs have urged for years: do not abolish judicial rest; stagger it. A parliamentary standing committee in 2023 objected to “the entire court going on vacation en masse”, and proposed the obvious: rotate the leave, keep the Benches full, and never let the court run thin. A hospital does not empty its wards because its doctors are owed time off; it builds a roster. The Law Commission and the Justice Malimath Committee said the same, long ago. They were not enemies of the courts; they were trying to save them from themselves.

The standard objection is that all this is a sideshow: the real disease is vacancies, not vacations. It is true that courts are starved of judges, with up to a third of High Court seats

lying empty. But the objection boomerangs. If the Bench is already running at half strength, thinning it further for six weeks every summer is not a defence of the recess; it is the strongest case against it. And while filling those seats depends on the government and the collegium and will drag on for years, the calendar is the judiciary’s to fix. One reform needs permission; the other needs only will.

Beyond courts, towards solutions

Staggering the leave, though, only treats the symptom. The deeper fix is to keep disputes out of the courtroom in the first place; it was never meant to be the first stop for every quarrel, but the last. India already has the tools. Lok Adalats settled more than 2.59 crore cases in a single national sitting last December, and over 23.5 crore in three years. The Mediation Act of 2023 now nudges parties to attempt settlement before going to court, and arbitration can take commercial disputes entirely out of judges’ hands; yet these routes remain badly underused. But none of this happens on its own.

The country has a reservoir of experience it scarcely draws on: its retired judges, who spent their careers mastering this very machinery and step down, still in full command of it, at 62 or 65. Their expertise need not retire with them. Albeit many of them do function as heads of quasi-judicial bodies and tribunals. Freed from any daily docket, a dedicated corps of former judges could be invited to take up a single targeted charge: identify where cases pile up, set public targets for their disposal, and account for progress openly. Reform that belongs to everyone belongs to no one.

The judges will keep working through the heat, as they always do. The honest demand is not that they stop resting, but that the courts stop closing ranks and falling silent at the same moment, because justice, for five crore Indians, is not on vacation. It is overdue.

With contributions from Anushka Kewlani of CUTS

Original clipping — The Hindu, Page 8: Kelkar & Mehta on judicial vacations

04

Oil Conundrum: Russian Crude & Strategic Autonomy

GS 3 · ECONOMY & ENERGY

THE HINDU · PAGE 8 (EDITORIAL)

ENERGY SECURITY · EXTERNAL SECTOR

WHY IN NEWS

Commerce Ministry data show India's May crude receipts from Russia crossed pre-sanction levels of 40%+ — a two-year high. The editorial argues India's Russian-oil swings look driven by confusion rather than strategy.

- ◆ **Currency cost:** Though defended as commercially prudent, **yuan-based payments** give China an edge in internationalising its currency at India's expense (even if the rupee is insulated by strict capital controls).
- ◆ **Concentration risk:** Single-source dependence — while paying a premium — contradicts India's long-pursued diversification strategy; secondary sanctions could hit trade channels and expose refiners to severe supply shocks.
- ◆ **Price paradox:** MCI data show Russian imports carried a **\$46-per-ton premium**; import value surged 83% amid a 2% fall in volume — squeezing refiners' margins on products made from Russian crude.
- ◆ **Discounts shrinking:** Spot purchases had fetched discounts up to \$10/barrel on Urals vs Brent, but after February the discounts narrowed while weak product cracks and geopolitical risk moderated gross refining margins.
- ◆ **Contract structure:** Until the Russia-Ukraine conflict, nearly **70% of India's crude came via long-term contracts**, mainly from West Asia; the piece urges balancing stable multi-producer contracts with selective spot-market use.
- ◆ **Strategic autonomy?** India cut Russian imports under U.S. pressure when crude was cheap, and returns to it now at a premium amid the Iran war — decisions "far removed from any sense of strategic autonomy". Expanding **Strategic Petroleum Reserves** is a must.

Page No.8 , GS 3

Oil conundrum

India's energy imports from Russia seem driven by confusion, not strategy

Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MCI) data on India's May crude imports show that receipts from Russia had reached the pre-sanction levels of more than 40%, which is also the highest in two years. Though India has defended this as commercially prudent, its yuan-based payments give China an edge to internationalise its currency at India's expense, even if it has no bearing on the domestic strength of the Indian rupee due to strict capital controls. Oil import concentration from a single source, and paying a premium, is risky for India, which has long pursued a diversified energy strategy. Moreover, sourcing fuel from the Gulf spot market amid evolving sanctions has its own risks. Secondary sanctions could hit trade channels, exposing Indian refiners to severe supply shocks. India's crude imports from Russia surged in June, while UAE shipments were at record levels as refiners sought to secure supplies after the Strait of Hormuz reopened. However, renewed Iran-U.S. hostilities have put those flows at risk. And even as Venezuela has emerged as a key supplier, increasing and unsustainably high one-country concentration could weaken India's bargaining power, reduce flexibility, and erode its credibility as an independent balancing power.

MCI data highlight the price impact: Russian imports carried a \$46-per-ton premium. Import value surged 83% amid a 2% fall in volume, likely diminishing Indian refiners' margins on refined products using Russian crude. While spot purchases have enabled refiners to capture discounts of up to \$10 per barrel on Russian Urals crude relative to Brent during some periods, after February this year, narrowing discounts, weaker product cracks, and geopolitical risks have moderated gross refining margins. India must strike a balance between having long-term stable contracts with multiple producers, and selectively using the spot-market to mitigate the procurement risks. Until the Russia-Ukraine conflict, nearly 70% of India's crude imports came through long-term contracts, particularly from West Asia. True, India cannot overlook the diplomatic costs as Russian energy dependence risks sanctions. When Russian crude was cheap because of discounts on account of the Ukraine war, India reduced imports under U.S. pressure; now when it is being sold at a premium because of the Iran war, India is moving back to Russian crude. India must expand its strategic petroleum reserves to cushion temporary disruptions. Whether it increases or cuts down Russian oil imports, India seems to make decisions that are far removed from any sense of strategic autonomy.

Original clipping — The Hindu editorial, Page 8

05

Insular Incentive: Rethinking the E20 Ethanol Policy

GS 3 · ECONOMY & AGRICULTURE

THE HINDU · PAGE 8 (EDITORIAL)

BIOFUELS · SUBSIDIES · FOOD SECURITY

WHY IN NEWS

The editorial critiques the government's policy of continuing E20 petrol at a cost higher than pure petrol when oil dips under \$70 a barrel to "compensate farmers adequately" — calling it a deceptively well-formulated proposition.

- ◆ **Feedstock problem:** Most blending feedstock is **sugarcane** — among India's most water- and fertilizer-intensive crops, grown mainly in water-stressed Maharashtra and Karnataka.
- ◆ **Net-benefit test:** The policy pays off only if gains from lower crude imports, environmental improvement and higher rural incomes outweigh the added costs.
- ◆ **Who pays first:** Consumers — including people poorer than sugarcane farmers — pay more at the pump; OMCs buy ethanol at administered prices; distilleries buy feedstock; farmers receive higher prices only at the end of the chain.
- ◆ **Perverse incentive:** Rewarding every unit of ethanol irrespective of feedstock favours the largest installed base — sugarcane. Objectives should instead be **resource efficiency and food security**.
- ◆ **Better crops & 2G:** Maize/millet are less thirsty (with caveats); sweet sorghum is less water-intensive with a shorter season; **2G ethanol** from rice/wheat straw, maize stover and groundnut shells avoids cropland diversion and tackles stubble burning — costlier, but "a better problem to solve".
- ◆ **Policy menu:** Premium for residue-based ethanol, subsidised residue collection/storage, aggregator–distillery contracts, viability-gap funding and offtake agreements. Ethanol policy must not be divorced from agricultural policy; import substitution is no excuse for making consumers pay more for lower-mileage fuel.

Page No.8 , GS 3

Insular incentive

Ethanol-blended fuel should not be forced on consumers irrationally

The Indian government's policy to continue producing E20 petrol at a cost higher than that of pure petrol when oil prices dip under \$70 a barrel to "compensate farmers adequately" is a deceptively well-formulated proposition. Most feedstock for the fuel-blending programme is from sugarcane, one of India's most water- and fertilizer-intensive crops, mainly grown in water-stressed Maharashtra and Karnataka. Whether the policy's net economic benefit remains positive will depend on the gains from lower crude imports, environmental improvements, and higher rural incomes outweighing these additional costs. Efficiency also remains a concern. Consumers – including people who are poorer than sugarcane farmers – pay more at the pump, oil marketing companies procure ethanol at the administered price, distilleries buy feedstock, and only then do farmers receive higher prices. Higher feedstock prices also do not address most reasons farmers have lower incomes, such as post-harvest losses and limited market access. Crucially, if the government rewards every unit of ethanol irrespective of feedstock, the policy will favour whichever feedstock has the largest installed base: sugarcane. Instead, the objectives should include resource efficiency and food security. The state could invest in irrigation and logistics and institute revenue-sharing arrangements with ethanol producers and cooperatives.

India has encouraged maize and grain-based distillation capacity has expanded rapidly, periodically allowed ethanol to be produced from the Food Corporation's surplus or damaged rice holdings, and has supported commercial plants using agricultural residues such as rice straw under Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas schemes. Maize and millets are less thirsty but maize still demands significant fertilizer inputs while millets produce less fermentable starch per hectare. Sweet sorghum is less water-intensive and has a shorter growing season than sugarcane. Lignocellulosic biomass such as rice and wheat straw, maize stover and groundnut shells can also support second-generation (2G) ethanol. 2G ethanol from agricultural residues can avoid using cropland for fuel, reducing competition with food crops and addressing stubble burning. It is more expensive and technologically demanding but that is a better problem to solve, with proactive policymaking. The government could pay a premium for ethanol produced from residues, subsidise equipment and infrastructure to collect and store crop residue, facilitate contracts between aggregators and distilleries, and provide viability-gap funding and offtake agreements. Ultimately, ethanol policy should not be independent of agricultural policy. And import substitution is no excuse for consumers being forced to pay more for lower-mileage fuel than pure petrol.

Original clipping — The Hindu editorial, Page 8



1st Generation Biofuel

- It has **High Carbon Content**.
- Made from Edible Items. Eg- **Sugar, Corn, Starch** etc.



2nd Generation Biofuel

- **Greenhouse Gas content less than 1st Generation Biofuel**
- Made from leftover of Food Crops. Eg- **Rice Husk, Wood Chips** etc.



3rd Generation Biofuel

- It is **Carbon Neutral** in. (CO₂ Emitted = CO₂ Sequestered)
- Produced using Microorganisms. Eg. **Algae**



4th Generation Biofuel

- Made from '**Genetically Engineered Crops**'.
- They are **Carbon Negative**.

Generations of biofuels — 1G (edible feedstock) to 4G (genetically engineered, carbon-negative)

06

The Making of Israel's Retreat into Isolation

GS 2 · INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

THE HINDU · PAGE 8 (OPINION)

WEST ASIA · ABRAHAM ACCORDS · TWO-STATE

WHY IN NEWS

Prof. Mohammed Ayoob argues Israel — created so Jews could escape European isolation and later integrated via peace treaties and the Abraham Accords — is now recreating that isolation through unrestrained military power and settlement expansion. This time it is self-inflicted.

- ◆ **Original goal:** Transform Israel from a besieged regional outlier into an accepted member of the West Asian order — made difficult by the expulsion of almost two-thirds of the Palestinian population from the territory that became Israel.
- ◆ **Breakout & reversal:** Peace with Egypt and Jordan, quiet Gulf understandings and the Abraham Accords broke the “strategic ghetto”; wars in Gaza, Lebanon, Syria and Iran plus West Bank settlement expansion are reversing it — militarily stronger, politically more isolated.
- ◆ **Root cause:** The leadership's belief that **military superiority can substitute for political strategy**; Gaza's devastation became the defining symbol, altering global perceptions.
- ◆ **Gulf calculus:** The Accords rested on an implicit assumption of Israeli restraint. Gaza's destruction and strikes on Iran exposed Gulf states to risks they never sought — a growing gap between Gulf rulers' calculations and Israeli priorities.
- ◆ **U.S. strain:** Washington pays the diplomatic and economic costs of Israeli actions with limited influence; V-P J.D. Vance's blunt rebuke — Trump is “the only head of state sympathetic to Israel at this moment” — acknowledged Israel's isolation. Unconditional U.S. support can no longer be taken for granted.
- ◆ **West Bank endgame:** Settlement expansion has eroded the territorial basis for a viable Palestinian state; by foreclosing the two-state solution, Israel replaces a political problem with a permanent system of domination the world finds reprehensible.

The making of Israel's retreat into isolation

The primary justification for the creation of Israel was that Europeans of Jewish origin persecuted and ghettoised, deserve their own state where they can live like other "normal" nations. For much of its history, Israel sought to escape the isolation that marked Jewish existence in Europe before the creation of the Jewish state. One of its goals was to transform Israel from a besieged regional outlier into an increasingly accepted member of the West Asian political order, a goal made very difficult if not impossible because of the expulsion of almost two-thirds of the Palestinian population from the territory that became Israel. However, through peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan, quiet understandings with Gulf monarchies, and ultimately the Abraham Accords, Israel appeared to have broken out of its strategic ghetto.

A war's global fallout

Now, Israel seems determined to reverse that achievement. Through the unrestrained exercise of military power in Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, and Iran, and through its relentless expansion of settlements in the West Bank, it is steadily recreating the very isolation from which it once sought to escape. The result is a country that is militarily stronger than ever but politically more isolated than at any time in recent decades.

The principal cause of this growing isolation is the belief among Israel's current leadership that military superiority can substitute for political strategy. The devastation of Gaza has become the defining symbol of this approach. What began as a response to the Hamas attacks of October 7, 2023, evolved into a campaign that much of the world views as collective punishment on a massive scale. Images of destroyed neighbourhoods, displaced populations, and mounting civilian casualties have profoundly altered global perceptions of Israel.

Israel's actions in Iran and Lebanon have reinforced this trend. The repeated resort to military force beyond its borders reflects a



Mohammed Ayoob

University Distinguished Professor Emeritus of International Relations, Michigan State University, and the author most recently of 'From Regional Security to Global IR' (2024)

Israel's isolation is no longer imposed; it is increasingly self-inflicted

doctrine that prioritises immediate tactical gains over long-term strategic consequences. While Israel has demonstrated impressive military capabilities, its attacks have also intensified regional instability and generated resentment among states that are forced to absorb the political and economic consequences of escalating conflict.

This is particularly evident in the Gulf. The Abraham Accords were founded on a convergence of interests among Israel and several Arab states. Economic cooperation, technological exchange and a shared security concern about Iran created a basis for normalisation. But the success of the Accords depended on an implicit assumption that Israel would act with sufficient restraint to make continued cooperation politically sustainable for Arab governments.

That assumption has been severely undermined. The destruction of Gaza and the ethnic cleansing of much of its population has generated enormous anger across Arab societies. Israel's attacks on Iran have further complicated matters by exposing Gulf states to risks that they never sought. These states may share concerns about Iranian influence, but they do not wish to become collateral victims of Israeli military adventures. The result is a growing gap between the strategic calculations of Gulf rulers and Israeli priorities.

An alliance under strain

The deterioration of Israel's relationship with the United States is even more significant. Washington increasingly finds itself paying the diplomatic and economic costs of Israeli actions while exercising limited influence over Israeli decision-making.

Recent tensions surrounding the U.S.-Iran memorandum illustrate this dynamic. Reports of sharp exchanges between Washington and Jerusalem over the agreement culminated in United States Vice-President J.D. Vance's unusually blunt rebuke of Israeli criticism.

"Donald J. Trump is the only head of state in the entire world who is sympathetic to the nation of Israel at this moment in time," Mr. Vance declared, adding that if he were a member of the Israeli cabinet, he might not be attacking "the only powerful ally that I have anywhere left in the entire world".

The significance of the remark lay not merely in its criticism of the Benjamin Netanyahu government but in its clear acknowledgment of Israel's international isolation. The dispute is not merely about Iran. It reflects a deeper concern within the U.S. administration that Israeli policies are complicating broader American strategic objectives in West Asia. The widening daylight between the two allies does not mean that the partnership is ending, but it does indicate that unconditional American support can no longer be taken for granted.

The return of isolation

Perhaps the most self-defeating aspect of Israel's current trajectory is its policy in the West Bank. Settlement expansion has accelerated to the point where the territorial basis for a viable Palestinian state has disappeared. Simultaneously, attacks by Jewish settlers against Palestinian communities have become increasingly frequent. Reports that such actions often occur with the protection or acquiescence of elements within the Israeli security forces have further eroded Israel's international legitimacy.

By making a two-state solution impossible, Israel is replacing a political problem with a permanent system of domination that much of the world finds morally and politically reprehensible.

History offers a striking irony. Zionism sought to ensure that the Jewish people would never again live isolated behind walls of fear and hostility as they did in Europe. But contemporary Israeli policies risk producing a modern version of that condition. The difference is that this isolation is no longer imposed; it is self-inflicted.

Original clipping — The Hindu, Page 8: Mohammed Ayoob's essay

Second (1995)

- Expanded on Oslo I Accords
- Mandated **complete Israeli withdrawal** from several cities and towns in **West Bank**

POST 2000 CONFLICT AND RESPONSES

- **2013** - US-led peace process began
- **2014-18** - Gaza Conflict (2014)
 - Palestine announced break from territorial divisions under Oslo Accords (2015)
- **2018-20** - US Cancelled funding for Palestinian refugees under UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA)
 - US proposed "**Peace to Prosperity**" plan
- **2020** - **Abraham Accords**
- **2022-2023:**
 - Israel raids on **Jenin refugee camp**
 - Hamas launched "**Operation Al-Aqsa Flood**" and Israel launched "**Operation Iron Swords**" (both in 2023)
 - ◆ Israel declared a **State of War**
 - **India's Stand:**
 - ◆ Supports a **Two State solution** for Israel and Palestine
 - ◆ **Condemned the recent attack** by Hamas on Israel

ISRAEL-PALESTINE

The Israel-Palestine conflict is a long-standing geopolitical dispute over

BEGINNING

- UN adopted **Resolution 181** - the Partition Plan in 1947
- State of Israel created in 1948, sparking the **first Arab-Israeli War** (Israel won)
 - Palestinians displaced
 - Division of territory into - State of Israel, West Bank and Gaza Strip

INITIAL TENSIONS AND CONFLICTS (1956-1979)

- **Suez Crisis** and Israeli **invasion of Sinai Peninsula** in 1956
- **Six-Day War (1967)** - Israel gained control over Sinai Peninsula, Gaza Strip, West Bank, East Jerusalem and Golan Heights

Controversy over Jerusalem as Capital

- **Israel view:** Complete and united Jerusalem
- **Palestinians view:** East Jerusalem future capital

- **Yom Kippur War (1973)** - Surprise attack by Egypt and Syria
- **Camp David Accords (1979)** b/w Egypt and Israel

Intifada (Arabic for 'shake off')

- **First Intifada** - 1987 to 1993
 - ◆ Led to the foundation of Hamas (1987) - a Palestinian political party designated as a foreign terrorist org by US
 - ◆ Response - **Madrid Conference 1991** (chaired by the US and Russia)
- **Second Intifada** - 2000-2005
- The latest escalation (2023) is being called the beginning of "**Third Intifada**"

OSLO ACCORDS (MEDIATED BY US)

- **First (1993)**
 - Estd framework for **Palestinian self-governance** in West Bank and Gaza
 - Enabled mutual recognition between Israel and Palestine

Israel-Palestine conflict timeline: 1947 Partition Plan to Abraham Accords (2020) and Operation Al-Aqsa Flood (2023); India supports a two-state solution

07

Judging Graduates, Not Entrance Scores

GS 2 · EDUCATION & GOVERNANCE

THE HINDU · PAGE 9 (OPINION)

NEP 2020 · EQUITY · HIGHER EDUCATION

WHY IN NEWS

The All IITs Placement Committee has decided to exclude JEE ranks, GATE scores and percentiles from standard placement resumes. Prof. Mamidala Jagadesh Kumar argues the decision deserves wide support.

- ◆ **Snapshot vs journey:** An entrance exam captures a single day's performance; a degree reflects years of classrooms, labs, projects, internships, teamwork, failures, recoveries and growth. Privileging entrance rank reduces the IIT experience to an interlude between JEE and employment.
- ◆ **NEP alignment:** Consistent with NEP 2020's call to move beyond an examination-dominated system towards critical thinking, creativity, ethical judgment and problem-solving.
- ◆ **Bias prevention:** Ranks can let recruiters infer social category or admission route by comparing programme-level opening/closing ranks — a potentially prejudicial, often irrelevant default filter.
- ◆ **Employers have better tools:** CGPA thresholds, technical interviews, coding tests, case discussions, design tasks, project reviews, research and behavioural assessments; JEE/GATE scores do not reliably capture these.
- ◆ **Equity & wellbeing:** First-generation, rural, non-English-medium and economically disadvantaged students may start slow and grow substantially; making ranks part of identity breeds anxiety, hierarchy and comparison.
- ◆ **Median over maximum:** Publicising only highest salary packages misleads students and parents — they are outliers; **median salary** better signals how the whole cohort fared. Admission selection and recruitment selection serve different purposes; confusing the two weakens both.

Judging graduates, not entrance scores

Few institutions in India carry the popularity of the IITs. Getting into them requires intense preparation and intellectual discipline. JEE ranks and GATE scores used for admissions to India's premier institutions are, therefore, important. Recruiters, too, have often treated them as an indication of a student's ability. Recently, however, the All IITs Placement Committee has decided to exclude JEE ranks, GATE scores, percentiles, and other such credentials from standard placement resumes. Even if some consider it unnecessary, this decision deserves wide support.

Beyond entrance ranks

An entrance examination captures a snapshot of a student's performance on a single day. A degree reflects years of learning. Between the two lie classrooms, laboratories, projects, internships, peer learning, teamwork, participation in various extended curricular activities, failures, recoveries and personal growth. If campus recruitment continues to privilege entrance rank, it quietly reduces the IIT experience as a whole to an interlude between JEE and employment. That is unfair to the student and to the institution.

To treat a student's entrance rank as permanent proof of ability is a constricted view. A more serious view examines whether a student has solved problems, completed meaningful projects, worked in teams, built prototypes, written code, contributed to research, communicated clearly and shown the maturity required in the workplace. Preparing oneself for work requires competence and a willingness to be a lifelong learner. It does not



Mamidala Jagadesh Kumar

Chairman, Review Committee for NEP 2020, Ministry of Education, GoI and former Vice-Chancellor, JNU and former Chairman, UGC. Views are personal

creating an ecosystem that enables students to develop critical thinking, creativity, ethical judgment, problem-solving, and holistic development. If our higher education institutions are expected to provide these capabilities to our students, why shouldn't placement systems recognise them?

There could be another, more sensitive reason for the decision. It could be possible to infer social category or admission route from entrance ranks by comparing programme-level opening and closing ranks. Such inference may not always be explicit, but it can influence perception. What recruiters should be looking for is not how the student entered IIT, but what the student can do now.

Both public institutions and recruiters play important roles in designing hiring processes that reduce avoidable bias. Removing entrance ranks from standard resumes prevents a potentially prejudicial and often irrelevant data point from becoming a default filter. Some may say that recruiters need filters. Nobody is contesting that need. But employers already have better instruments. They use CGPA or CPI thresholds, technical interviews, coding tests, case discussions, design tasks, project reviews, research work, communication abilities and behavioural assessments. It has long been recognised that JEE or GATE scores do not reliably capture these.

A student's entrance rank may say something about past preparation. It cannot say enough about future contributions. With enhanced access, our higher education institutions attract many first-generation learners,

present what they have achieved years after obtaining their entrance scores.

Student well-being should be our top priority. If recruiting methods make ranks part of students' identities, they become a burden for many students. When the recruitment process turns ranks into hierarchies, students can experience anxiety and comparison. IITs are places where students grow beyond the circumstances of entry. Then why can't our placement system let students know that the work they do after admission matters, not their ranks?

This does not mean that entrance examinations are unimportant. But the selection process for admission and the selection process for recruitment are different altogether. The first decides entry into an academic programme. The second should judge current professional readiness. Confusing the two weakens both.

The decision to move away from publicising only the highest salary packages also deserves attention. Highest packages create headlines. They may lead students and parents to believe that high packages are normal, when in reality they are often outliers. Median salary is a better representative measure to get an overall sense of how the larger graduating cohort has fared. It is important to encourage a more mature public conversation on employment by emphasising median salaries.

A better signal

Together, these decisions show welcome institutional seriousness. They recognise that campus recruitment must assess students

Removing entrance ranks from standard

Mains Practice Questions

SET I — LONG ANSWER

12 MARKS · ~225 WORDS

Q1 · GS 2 / GS 3

12 Marks

Recurrent instability around the Strait of Hormuz has repeatedly exposed the fragility of India's energy lifelines. Examine how chokepoint crises in West Asia test India's policy of strategic autonomy, and suggest a framework that balances diversified sourcing, strategic reserves and diaspora protection.

होर्मुज जलडमरूमध्य के आसपास बार-बार उत्पन्न अस्थिरता ने भारत की ऊर्जा जीवन-रेखाओं की संवेदनशीलता को उजागर किया है। परीक्षण कीजिए कि पश्चिम एशिया के चोकपॉइंट संकट भारत की रणनीतिक स्वायत्तता की नीति की किस प्रकार परीक्षा लेते हैं, तथा विविध स्रोतों, रणनीतिक भंडार और प्रवासी सुरक्षा में संतुलन हेतु एक रूपरेखा सुझाइए।

Approach: Define strategic autonomy → Hormuz dependence & current crisis → costs of oscillating Russia policy (premium, yuan payments, sanctions risk) → framework: long-term multi-producer contracts + selective spot buys + SPR expansion + naval escorts/Op Sankalp + seafarer welfare → conclude.

Q2 · GS 2

12 Marks

"The problem is not that judges rest, but that the entire institution rests together." In the light of India's pendency of over 5.39 crore cases, critically evaluate the case for restructuring judicial vacations, and discuss how ADR mechanisms and retired judicial talent can be leveraged to decongest courts.

“समस्या यह नहीं कि न्यायाधीश विश्राम करते हैं, बल्कि यह है कि पूरी संस्था एक साथ विश्राम करती है।” 5.39 करोड़ से अधिक लंबित मामलों के आलोक में न्यायिक अवकाशों के पुनर्गठन के पक्ष का समालोचनात्मक मूल्यांकन कीजिए, तथा चर्चा कीजिए कि वैकल्पिक विवाद समाधान तंत्र और सेवानिवृत्त न्यायिक प्रतिभा का उपयोग अदालतों का बोझ घटाने में कैसे किया जा सकता है।

Approach: Pendency data & undertrial burden → colonial-origin calendar; 2024 renaming vs unchanged ~190 sitting days → standing committee/Law Commission/Malimath prescriptions (staggered leave, rosters) → vacancies counter-argument & rebuttal → Lok Adalats, Mediation Act 2023, arbitration, corps of retired judges → conclude with accountability targets.

SET II — SHORT ANSWER

8 MARKS · ~150 WORDS

Q3 · GS 3

8 Marks

India's ethanol-blending programme risks rewarding the most water-intensive feedstock the most. Suggest policy corrections that align E20 with resource efficiency and food security, with special reference to second-generation ethanol.

भारत का एथेनॉल-समिश्रण कार्यक्रम सर्वाधिक जल-गहन फीडस्टॉक को ही सर्वाधिक पुरस्कृत करने का जोखिम रखता है। द्वितीय पीढ़ी के एथेनॉल के विशेष संदर्भ में, E20 को संसाधन-दक्षता और खाद्य सुरक्षा के अनुरूप बनाने हेतु नीतिगत सुधार सुझाइए।

Approach: Sugarcane's water/fertilizer load → feedstock-neutral incentives problem → corrections: residue premium, collection infrastructure, VGF & offtake, aggregator contracts, alternative crops → consumer-cost safeguard.

Prelims Practice — 10 MCQs

Q1. The Strait of Hormuz connects which of the following water bodies?

- (a) Red Sea and Gulf of Aden
- (b) Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman
- (c) Mediterranean Sea and Red Sea
- (d) Caspian Sea and Black Sea

Q2. With reference to Iran's recent retaliation after U.S. strikes, consider the following countries: 1. Bahrain 2. Kuwait 3. Qatar 4. Jordan 5. Oman. How many of the above were reported as targets of Iranian attacks?

- (a) Only two
- (b) Only three
- (c) Only four
- (d) All five

Q3. In the Gaganyaan mission, the 'CMUS' recently tested by ISRO is designed to:

- (a) Abort the mission during ascent
- (b) Keep the crew module upright after sea splashdown
- (c) Provide propulsion during orbital manoeuvres
- (d) Shield the module from re-entry heat

Q4. Consider the following statements about the Gaganyaan umbilical mechanism: 1. CSU-1 is located on the service-module side and CSU-2 on the crew-module side. 2. The service module separates from the crew module during the earth re-entry stage. Which of the statements is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q5. The 'apex cover' of the Gaganyaan crew module primarily protects:

- (a) The astronauts' viewing ports
- (b) The parachutes and associated subsystems
- (c) The cryogenic fuel tanks
- (d) The docking mechanism

Q6. As of the end of 2025, the approximate pendency of cases across Indian courts was:

- (a) 3.2 crore
- (b) 4.1 crore
- (c) 5.39 crore
- (d) 6.8 crore

Q7. Which of the following have recommended staggering judicial vacations or keeping Benches full year-round? 1. A Parliamentary Standing Committee (2023) 2. The Law Commission 3. The Justice Malimath Committee. Select the correct answer:

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

Q8. Consider the following statements on India's crude imports: 1. Russian imports in May reached pre-sanction shares of over 40%. 2. Before the Russia-Ukraine conflict, nearly 70% of India's crude came through long-term contracts, mainly from West Asia. Which is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q9. Second-generation (2G) ethanol is produced from:

- (a) Sugarcane juice and molasses (b) Edible corn starch
(c) Lignocellulosic biomass such as rice straw and maize stover (d) Genetically engineered algae

Q10. The Abraham Accords (2020), referred to in the context of Israel's regional integration, were founded upon which common basis? 1. Economic cooperation 2. Technological exchange 3. A shared security concern about Iran. Select the correct answer:

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

ANSWER KEY

Q1 — (b)

Q2 — (d)

Q3 — (b)

Q4 — (b)

Q5 — (b)

Q6 — (c)

Q7 — (d)

Q8 — (c)

Q9 — (c)

Q10 — (d)

Notes: Q2 — Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Jordan and Oman were all attacked. Q4 — CSU-1 is on the crew-module side (statement 1 wrong); the service module separates during re-entry stage (statement 2 correct). Q6 — 5.39 crore: 4.76 cr district courts + 63.6 lakh High Courts + 92,000+ Supreme Court. Q8 — Both statements reflect MCI data and pre-war contract structure. Q9 — 2G ethanol uses agricultural residues (rice/wheat straw, maize stover, groundnut shells), avoiding cropland diversion and stubble burning. Q10 — The Accords rested on economic cooperation, technological exchange and shared security concern about Iran.

REVISION SNAPSHOT — 13 JULY 2026

Maps	Strait of Hormuz · Qeshm · Bandar Abbas · Gulf states hosting U.S. forces.
Sci-Tech	CMUS · CSU-1/CSU-2 · apex cover · cold-gas uprighing.
Data	5.39 crore pendency · \$46/ton Russian premium · 2.59 crore Lok Adalat settlements · ~190 SC sitting days.
Concepts	Strategic autonomy · 2G ethanol · Abraham Accords · median vs highest salary signalling.