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THE HINDU ANALYSIS

16 JULY 2026

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1

Kudankulam Nuclear Plant Data Leak Sparks 'Absolute Commotion'

GS 3 · PAGE 1

THE HINDU · 16 JULY 2026

WHY IN NEWS

The leak of highly sensitive files of Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant (KKNPP), reportedly accessed by a ransomware group from a contractor's server, has triggered “absolute commotion” in the plant, KKNPP sources said.

- ◆ After commissioning two 1,000 MWe VVER reactors, KKNPP is building four more such units with Russian collaboration.
- ◆ Sources said the top brass of the upcoming nuclear park is “completely clueless” about the development, which poses a security threat as it may let an adversary map the support system and identify vulnerabilities.
- ◆ According to *Reuters*, more than 19,000 files dating between 2016 and mid-2025 — linked to KKNPP's engineering blueprints on control, cooling and ventilation systems, and lists of vendors and suppliers — had been accessed by **World Leaks**.
- ◆ Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL) said the information claimed to be in the public domain pertains to “conventional balance of plant common service facilities” and does not relate to any nuclear safety or nuclear security-related systems.
- ◆ The leak originated from a server hosted by third-party provider **Yotta**. The plant's contractor, Anil Ambani's Reliance Group, admitted that a “partial breach” had happened and the government had been informed.
- ◆ Suspicious activity on Yotta's server was noted on May 29 and reported in June-end; investigations by NPCIL, the project proponent, and the Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) are on.

Kudankulam nuclear plant data leak sparks 'absolute commotion'

P. Sudhakar
TIRUNELVELI

The leak of highly sensitive files of Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant (KKNPP), reportedly accessed by a ransomware group from a contractor's server, has triggered “absolute commotion” in the plant, KKNPP sources said on Wednesday.

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According to *Reuters*, more than 19,000 files dating between 2016 and mid-2025, and linked to KKNPP's engineering blueprints on control, cooling and ventilation systems,



The reported data leak comes amid construction of four VVER reactors at the plant. FILE PHOTO

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pened and the government had been informed.

“Suspicious activity on Yotta's server was noted on May 29 last and it was reported in June-end. Investigations by Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited, the project proponent, and Computer Emergency Response Team are on,” the sources said.

Reliance Group's Reliance Infrastructure bagged the contract in 2018 to build infrastructure for reactors 3 and 4, both under construction.

When the KKNPP encountered a similar incident in 2019, wherein a North Korean malware infection on its administrative network exposed the plant's vulnerability, NPCIL had dismissed it saying that their “unbreachable standalone network” was intact and no data could be accessed by any dark web.

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VVER REACTOR DOME AT KUDANKULAM — THE HINDU (FILE PHOTO)

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KNOW YOUR FACTS — KUDANKULAM NUCLEAR POWER PLANT

- ◆ Located in Tamil Nadu's **Tirunelveli district**, KKNPP is India's largest nuclear power facility and a critical component of long-term national energy planning.
- ◆ Developed jointly by **NPCIL** and Russia's **Atomstroyexport** using VVER-1000 pressurised water reactors.
- ◆ Construction began in **March 2002**; once all 6 units are commissioned, the complex will generate **6,000 MW** of electricity.

ABOUT NPCIL

- ◆ A Public Sector Enterprise under the administrative control of the **Department of Atomic Energy (DAE)**, Government of India.
- ◆ Registered as a Public Limited Company under the Companies Act, 1956 in **September 1987** to operate atomic power plants and implement atomic power projects under the **Atomic Energy Act, 1962**.
- ◆ NPCIL also has equity participation in **BHAVINI**, another DAE PSU implementing the Fast Breeder Reactor programme in the country.

PRELIMS POINTERS — TERMS IN NEWS

- ◆ **World Leaks:** the group reported by *Reuters* to have accessed more than 19,000 KKNPP-linked files dating between 2016 and mid-2025.
- ◆ **Yotta:** the third-party provider whose hosted server was the origin of the leak; suspicious activity noted on May 29, reported in June-end.
- ◆ **CERT-In:** the Computer Emergency Response Team, investigating the breach alongside NPCIL, the project proponent.
- ◆ **2019 incident:** a North Korean malware infection on KKNPP's administrative network had earlier exposed the plant's vulnerability.

MAINS PRACTICE

GS 3 · 12 Marks · 150 Words

Q. Repeated cyber incidents at India's critical nuclear installations reveal that the weakest link often lies outside the plant's own network. Examine the cybersecurity challenges posed by third-party contractors and vendors to critical infrastructure, and suggest a framework to secure such supply chains.

प्रश्न: भारत के महत्वपूर्ण परमाणु संस्थानों में बार-बार होने वाली साइबर घटनाएँ दर्शाती हैं कि सबसे कमजोर कड़ी प्रायः संयंत्र के अपने नेटवर्क से बाहर होती है। तीसरे पक्ष के ठेकेदारों और विक्रेताओं से महत्वपूर्ण अवसंरचना को होने वाली साइबर सुरक्षा चुनौतियों का परीक्षण कीजिए तथा ऐसी आपूर्ति श्रृंखलाओं को सुरक्षित करने हेतु एक ढांचा सुझाइए।

2

Marginal Dip in Rural Job Scheme Workers: MGNREGS to VB-G RAM G

GS 2 · PAGE 12

THE HINDU · 16 JULY 2026

WHY IN NEWS

In the fortnight following the transition from MGNREGS to the Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission Gramin (VB-G RAM G), the number of registered workers fell from 27 crore to 26.33 crore — a net reduction of 67.6 lakh workers (2.5%), according to an analysis by LibTech India, a consortium of academics and activists.

- ◆ The number of **active workers** — those who have worked at least once in the last three years under the programme — also fell from 10.84 crore to 10.57 crore, a decline of about 26.3 lakh workers (2.43%).
- ◆ The **VB-G RAM G 2025** came into force on **July 1, 2026**.
- ◆ Rural Development Ministry officials disputed the findings, saying the analysis covered only a short period and did not reflect the continuous verification, updating and renewal of worker and job card records undertaken by States and UTs; registered and active worker numbers are a **dynamic figure**.
- ◆ The Ministry also put the onus on the States, arguing they have to follow the Standard Operating Procedures prescribed by the Centre for any deletions.
- ◆ No complaints have been received regarding denial of employment due to non-completion of e-KYC or face authentication; about **84,000 Gramin Rozgar Guarantee Cards** covering 1.91 lakh workers had already been issued under the new law.
- ◆ According to LibTech India, three States — **Bihar (5.98 lakh removed), Uttar Pradesh (8.06 lakh) and Telangana (7.2 lakh)** — accounted for a large portion of the net fall in registered workers.

Marginal dip in number of rural job scheme workers

The analysis finds a dip in registered and active workers coinciding with shift from MGNREGS to VB-G RAM G; govt. counters the claim saying it does not reflect the continuous verification

Sobhana K. Nair
NEW DELHI

In the fortnight following the transition from the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) to the Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission Gramin (VB-G RAM G), the number of registered workers fell from 27 crore to 26.33 crore, a net reduction of 67.6 lakh workers, or 2.5% of the total workforce enrolled under the rural employment programme, according to an analysis by LibTech India, a consortium of academics and activists.

The number of active workers — those who have worked at least once in the last three years under the programme — also fell from 10.84 crore to 10.57 crore, a decline of about 26.3 lakh workers (2.43%).

The VB-G RAM G 2025 came into force on July 1, 2026.

'Dynamic figure'

Rural Development Ministry officials, however, disputed the findings, saying the analysis covered only a short period and did not reflect the continuous veri-



An analysis notes that public data does not indicate the reason of removal or the gender, age or caste of the affected. ARUN KULKARNI

fication, updating and renewal of worker and job card records undertaken by States and Union Territories. The number of registered and active workers is a dynamic figure and changes as records are updated, the officials said.

The Ministry officials also put the onus on the States, arguing that they have to follow the Standard Operating Procedures prescribed by the Centre for any deletions. They added that no complaints had been received regarding denial of employment due to non-completion of e-KYC or face authentication and that about 84,000 Gramin Rozgar Guarantee Cards covering 1.91 lakh workers had already been

issued under the new law.

According to LibTech India, three States — Bihar and Uttar Pradesh and Telangana — accounted for a large portion of the net fall in registered workers and the decline in active workers. Bihar saw 5.98 lakh workers removed from the rolls, Uttar Pradesh 8.06 lakh and Telangana 7.2 lakh.

E-KYC in question

The group said that although transition guidelines provided that e-KYC-verified MGNREGA Job Cards would remain valid and workers should not be denied employment because of pending e-KYC, there was little clarity on how workers unable to com-

plete e-KYC or facial recognition-based verification would be protected from omission.

"The publicly available framework did not explain in comparable operational detail how workers unable to complete e-KYC or Face Recognition System (FRS) would be carried over, how omissions would be identified, or how prompt restoration would work," said Venkateswarlu Kuruvu, researcher at LibTech India.

LibTech described the latest decline as the fourth major reduction in worker numbers in recent years to coincide with a digital compliance measure, following Aadhaar-based payments in 2022-23, mandatory e-KYC in 2025 and facial recognition-based attendance verification in 2026.

The organisation noted that publicly available data do not indicate why workers were removed, whether they had pending e-KYC or facial recognition verification, whether prior notice was issued, whether Gram Sabha verification was conducted or whether an appeal mechanism was available. It also does not reveal the gender, age or caste of those affected.

WORKERS UNDER THE RURAL EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME — THE HINDU

- ◆ **e-KYC in question:** Although transition guidelines provided that e-KYC-verified MGNREGA Job Cards would remain valid and workers should not be denied employment because of pending e-KYC, there was little clarity on how workers unable to complete e-KYC or facial-recognition-based verification would be protected from omission.
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- ◆ Publicly available data do not indicate why workers were removed, whether prior notice was issued, whether Gram Sabha verification was conducted, or whether an appeal mechanism was available; nor do they reveal the gender, age or caste of those affected.

KNOW YOUR FACTS — VB-G RAM G

- ◆ **Employment Guarantee:** Provides **125 days** of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every rural household whose adult members volunteer for unskilled manual work; mandates wage payment within **15 days** of completion of work.
- ◆ **Funding:** 60:40 Centre-State ratio; **90:10** for Northeastern and Himalayan states; **100%** central funding for UTs without legislatures.
- ◆ **Funding Formula:** Draft rules propose using the **16th Finance Commission's** horizontal devolution formula to determine Central allocations to States.
- ◆ **60-Day Agricultural Pause:** States can notify a combined 60-day no-work period during peak sowing and harvesting seasons, while ensuring workers still receive 125 days of employment in the remaining year.
- ◆ **4 priority areas:** water security, rural infrastructure, livelihoods and climate resilience — with normative funding and institutionalised convergence with infrastructure planning.



PIB INFOGRAPHIC — WHAT MAKES VIKSIT BHARAT-G RAM G DIFFERENT FROM MGNREGA

MAINS PRACTICE

GS 2 · 8 Marks · 100 Words

Q. Digital compliance measures in welfare schemes often improve targeting but risk excluding the most vulnerable. In light of the transition from MGNREGS to VB-G RAM G, discuss how technology-driven verification can be balanced with the right to work.

प्रश्न: कल्याणकारी योजनाओं में डिजिटल अनुपालन उपाय लक्ष्यीकरण को बेहतर बनाते हैं परंतु सबसे कमजोर वर्गों के बहिष्करण का जोखिम भी उत्पन्न करते हैं। मनरेगा से VB-G RAM G में संक्रमण के संदर्भ में चर्चा कीजिए कि प्रौद्योगिकी-आधारित सत्यापन को कार्य के अधिकार के साथ कैसे संतुलित किया जा सकता है।

3

The Index of Services Production (ISP)

GS 3 · PAGE —

PRELIMS

THE HINDU · 16 JULY 2026

WHY IN NEWS

The Government of India released the first sub-sectoral trial Index of Services Production (ISP) for April 2026, covering 19 sub-sectors representing nearly 60% of India's services sector.

- ◆ The ISP is **India's first high-frequency macroeconomic indicator** dedicated to measuring the performance of the services sector.
- ◆ It tracks short-term changes in the **volume of output** produced by the formal services sector relative to a specified base year.
- ◆ **Published by:** The ISP framework has been developed by the **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)**.
- ◆ **Aim:** To provide a dedicated, high-frequency measure of services sector output, filling the statistical gap left by the **Index of Industrial Production (IIP)**, which measures only industrial activity.
- ◆ **Base Year 2024–25:** Aligns the ISP with other statistical series using the new 2024-based Consumer Price Index.
- ◆ **Monthly indicator:** Designed to track short-term fluctuations in services output and give more timely information on economic activity.
- ◆ **Release schedule:** Regular monthly trial indices will be published with a lag of approximately **60 days** — generally on the 29th of every month, or the next working day if the 29th is a holiday.
- ◆ Of the 19 sub-sectors covered in the first trial, **14 recorded double-digit year-on-year growth**.



PIB INFOGRAPHIC — SERVICES SUB-SECTORS COVERED UNDER THE ISP

EXAM POINTER

- ◆ The ISP joins the IIP and CPI in India's high-frequency statistics toolkit — with **MoSPI** as the nodal ministry for its compilation and release.

THE UNDERLYING DATA ECOSYSTEM — THREE PILLARS

- ◆ **GST Data:** Used for the first time in statistical applications — powering calculations for trade, accommodation, road transport, real estate, and professional services.
- ◆ **Administrative/Secondary Data:** Captures the performance of air transport, railway transport, banking, and insurance.
- ◆ **ASISSE Data:** The Annual Survey of Incorporated Services Sector Enterprises will provide the database to eventually cover non-government health and education sectors.

TOP 5 PERFORMING SUB-SECTORS (APRIL 2026, YOY)

- ◆ Accommodation and food: **37.2%**
- ◆ Retail trade: **30.8%**
- ◆ Administrative and support services: **28.7%**
- ◆ Real estate: **27.7%**
- ◆ Telecommunications: **22.8%**

ISP VS IIP — QUICK COMPARISON

- ◆ **IIP** measures only industrial activity; the **ISP** fills the statistical gap by tracking the formal services sector's output volume.
- ◆ Both are high-frequency **monthly** indicators; the ISP is published with a lag of about 60 days, generally on the 29th of every month.
- ◆ The ISP's **2024–25 base year** aligns it with the new 2024-based Consumer Price Index series.
- ◆ The first trial ISP (April 2026) covers **19 sub-sectors** $\approx$ 60% of India's services sector; coverage will widen as ASISSE results arrive.

SIGNIFICANCE FOR POLICYMAKING

- ◆ Gives policymakers, the RBI and analysts a **timely read on services momentum**, which dominates India's GVA but lacked a dedicated monthly gauge.
- ◆ Marks a milestone in the reuse of **administrative and tax data (GST)** for official statistics, reducing survey burden and lags.

MAINS PRACTICE

GS 3 · 8 Marks · 100 Words

Q. The services sector contributes over half of India's GVA, yet high-frequency statistics have historically tracked only industry. Evaluate the significance of the Index of Services Production (ISP) for evidence-based policymaking, highlighting the role of GST data in its compilation.

प्रश्न: सेवा क्षेत्र भारत के GVA में आधे से अधिक योगदान देता है, फिर भी उच्च-आवृत्ति आँकड़े ऐतिहासिक रूप से केवल उद्योग को ट्रैक करते रहे हैं। साक्ष्य-आधारित नीति निर्माण के लिए सेवा उत्पादन सूचकांक (ISP) के महत्व का मूल्यांकन कीजिए तथा इसके संकलन में GST डेटा की भूमिका पर प्रकाश डालिए।

4

The Thukkachi Temple: UNESCO Award of Distinction

PRELIMS

THE HINDU · 16 JULY 2026

WHY IN NEWS

The 12th-century Abathsaahayeswarar Temple at Thukkachi received global recognition after being conferred the prestigious UNESCO Asia-Pacific Award of Distinction (2024) for outstanding heritage conservation.

- ◆ The Abathsaahayeswarar Temple is a historic 12th-century Hindu shrine — a remarkable testament to the architectural brilliance of the **later Chola period**. It is designated a **living historic temple**: an active house of worship preserved as a protected heritage monument.
- ◆ **Location:** Thanjavur district of Tamil Nadu.
- ◆ **Royal foundations:** Closely associated with later Chola emperors **Kulottunga I** and his son **Vikrama Chola**; Kulottunga I initially endowed the shrine specifically for daily recitation of sacred **Thevaram** hymns.
- ◆ **Vikrama Chola connection:** Perhaps the only major temple built entirely during the reign of Vikrama Chola, who expanded and renovated the earlier structure.
- ◆ **Epigraphy:** Inscriptions on the temple walls refer to Thukkachi as **Thenthirukalathi** or **Vikramacholeeswaram**.



THE ABATHSAHAYESWARAR TEMPLE, THUKKACHI — THE HINDU

WHY THE CONSERVATION WON GLOBAL PRAISE

- ◆ **Unique chariot design (Kara Kovil):** The temple sanctuary is built in the physical shape of a processional chariot — a rare architectural style in Tamil history.
- ◆ **Oldest Sarabeshwarar depiction:** Houses an idol of Lord Sarabeshwarar considered among the oldest stone iconographic representations of the deity in existence.
- ◆ **Precision digital anastylosis:** Drone surveys and digital mapping catalogued the structure; every shifting granite block was individually numbered before dismantling and reassembled into its precise original position.
- ◆ **Interdisciplinary framework:** Combined traditional temple-building knowledge (**Sthapatya Veda**) and **Agama Shastra** rules with modern conservation engineering — traditional sthapathis working alongside structural engineers.

5

Fulfil the Promise: Restoration of Statehood to J&K

GS 2 · PAGE 6

THE HINDU · 16 JULY 2026

WHY IN NEWS

Editorial: New Delhi cannot keep stalling the restoration of Statehood to Jammu and Kashmir, more than two and a half years after the Supreme Court recorded the Union government's solemn assurance.

- ◆ The Supreme Court set no timeline, but the expectation was that Statehood would be restored within a reasonable period, with steps taken progressively.
- ◆ The retention of Union Territory status even after popular elections subordinates the elected government to an **unelected Lieutenant Governor** who retains preponderant authority over the bureaucracy, the police and other institutions.
- ◆ There is no principled justification for perpetuating this arrangement once elections have been held and a government installed.
- ◆ New Delhi's rationale for inaction has been “security” — invoked by the Solicitor-General before the Court, citing the Pahalgam attack, in a hearing on a petition seeking restoration of Statehood.
- ◆ The editorial argues this cuts no ice: a cross-border provocation has no logical bearing on whether J&K's elected representatives are to be trusted with the powers of a full State.
- ◆ Empowering elected leaders to address local grievances is precisely how a polity assuages concerns before they turn into resentment — which fed into cycles of militancy in the Kashmir Valley for decades.
- ◆ Governance that treats a border region as politically dispensable only deepens alienation; instability soon spills over and unsettles governance overall. A promise made to the Court, to Parliament and to the people of J&K cannot be held in abeyance until political circumstances turn expedient.

FROM THE EDITORIAL — KEY DETAILS

- ◆ Prime Minister Narendra Modi pledged restoration of Statehood in the run-up to the J&K elections; Home Minister Amit Shah reiterated it on the floor of Parliament.
- ◆ The inaction has driven J&K Chief Minister Omar Abdullah to organise a series of agitations and rallies, culminating in a sit-in at **Jantar Mantar on July 20**.
- ◆ The Centre's handling of J&K, Ladakh and even Manipur reveals a troubling pattern in how border regions with substantial minority populations are treated.
- ◆ The political arithmetic in J&K has already been sought to be reworked through **delimitation**.

MAINS PRACTICE

GS 2 · 12 Marks · 150 Words

Q. “Prolonged Union Territory status after popular elections creates a democratic deficit.” In the context of Jammu and Kashmir, critically examine the constitutional and governance implications of deferring the restoration of Statehood, and the role of the Supreme Court's assurances in holding the executive accountable.

प्रश्न: “लोकप्रिय चुनावों के बाद लंबे समय तक केंद्र शासित प्रदेश का दर्जा बनाए रखना लोकतांत्रिक घाटा उत्पन्न करता है।” जम्मू-कश्मीर के संदर्भ में राज्य का दर्जा बहाल करने में विलंब के संवैधानिक और शासन संबंधी निहितार्थों का आलोचनात्मक परीक्षण कीजिए।

6

Export Gains: India's June Trade Data

GS 3 · PAGE 6

THE HINDU · 16 JULY 2026

WHY IN NEWS

Editorial: India's trade weaknesses are becoming episodic, its strengths structural — June trade data offers insights into how the country is weathering the West Asia crisis and the prospect of a deficient monsoon.

- ◆ The trade deficit jumped **430% in June** — alarming at first sight, but a deeper look at its composition eases much of that alarm.
- ◆ The bulk of the increase was due to a sharp rise in merchandise imports, led by **crude, gold, fertilizers and electronic goods**.
- ◆ Crude oil imports rose **40%** in value in June 2026, reflecting the skyrocketing oil prices of a few months earlier; gold prices have also risen amid West Asia uncertainty, and the **doubling of gold import duties in May** pushed prices further.
- ◆ With India's natural gas supplies hit by West Asia constraints, fertilizer imports rose **201% by value** over last June.
- ◆ Electronic goods is the only category where imports rose due to domestic factors: as India's electronics manufacturing and assembly grow, more parts come from abroad — encouraged by the removal of basic customs duty on imported display-assembly parts.
- ◆ **The good news:** merchandise exports grew **15.5% in June** and **16% in Q1 of 2026-27**; non-petroleum exports grew a robust **16.5% in June** and **12.4% in Q1**.
- ◆ India's exports to every region of the world except West Asia grew in Q1, with a large portion of growth in volume terms as well as value — exporters are commended for diversifying quickly.
- ◆ Service exports, however, grew only **2.9% in June** and **6.2% in Q1**. CEA V. Anantha Nageswaran has warned that success in areas such as **Global Capability Centres** should not be considered an end in itself — complacency will rob India of its advantage.

KEY NUMBERS AT A GLANCE (JUNE 2026)

- ◆ Trade deficit: **+430%** · Crude oil imports: **+40%** by value · Fertilizer imports: **+201%** by value.
- ◆ Merchandise exports: **+15.5%** (June), **+16%** (Q1 2026-27) · Non-petroleum exports: **+16.5%** (June), **+12.4%** (Q1).
- ◆ Service exports: only **+2.9%** (June) and **+6.2%** (Q1) — the soft spot flagged by CEA V. Anantha Nageswaran.
- ◆ Electronic goods was the only import category driven by domestic factors — growth in electronics assembly, aided by removal of basic customs duty on imported display-assembly parts.

MAINS PRACTICE

GS 3 · 8 Marks · 100 Words

Q. India's June 2026 trade deficit widened sharply even as exports grew at their fastest pace in the quarter. Analyse how import composition can make a widening trade deficit less alarming than headline numbers suggest, with reference to the West Asia crisis.

प्रश्न: जून 2026 में भारत का व्यापार घाटा तेजी से बढ़ा, जबकि निर्यात तिमाही में सबसे तेज गति से बढ़े। पश्चिम एशिया संकट के संदर्भ में विश्लेषण कीजिए कि आयात संरचना कैसे बढ़ते व्यापार घाटे को शीर्ष आँकड़ों की तुलना में कम चिंताजनक बना सकती है।

7

Iran's Disruptive Strategy & Its Global Consequences

GS 2 · PAGE 6

THE HINDU · 16 JULY 2026

WHY IN NEWS

Iran's recent actions over the Strait of Hormuz and its strategy of targeting its Gulf neighbours as retribution for U.S. actions may seem operational masterstrokes — but in the long run they may prove strategic blunders that antagonise the world and leave Iran outside the global mainstream.

- ◆ **A strategy of disruption:** For decades, Iran has presented itself as standing up to “continued Western imperialism” and supporting the Palestinian cause through the lens of Islamic resistance — a policy not endorsed by most other developed and developing Islamic nations.
- ◆ In the late 1990s, Iran engineered the second phase of its disruptive strategy by developing and supporting proxies — **Hezbollah, Hamas and Houthis**, the “Axis of Resistance” — liberally endorsing their use of terrorism to cause widespread disruption in the region.
- ◆ The Iranians achieved tactical success over two decades and kept West Asia on tenterhooks, but widened the chasm between themselves and the rest of the world — barring **Russia, China and North Korea**, the quartet shaping fundamentally disruptive resistance to the existing global order.
- ◆ **India's approach:** India has only modest diplomatic leverage with Iran and rightly chose not to position itself as an interlocutor during the recent conflict, preferring quiet back-channel diplomacy and frequent calls for restraint.
- ◆ India co-sponsored **UN Security Council Resolution 2817 (2026)**, which officially condemned Iran's military attacks and aggressive actions against the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations and Jordan.
- ◆ Adopted on **March 11, 2026**, the resolution demanded that Iran immediately cease all attacks and threats, particularly those targeting international navigation through the Strait of Hormuz.
- ◆ Iran has come out of the conflict battered and embittered but still standing — with large portions of its military capacity intact and a regime that now seems dominated by a combination of the **Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)** and hard-line clerics.
- ◆ The frenzy of stage-managed grief and genuine hatred towards the U.S. and Israel on Tehran's streets during the funeral of its slain leader, **Ali Khamenei**, does not augur well for the future — the region can expect continued acts of isolated belligerence below the threshold of conflict.
- ◆ Notwithstanding civilisational and cultural linkages, India has maintained a steady transactional relationship with Iran — revolving principally around energy flow, trade corridors and the **Chabahar port** — navigating the Western sanctions regime based on national interest.

INDIA-IRAN — ANCHORS OF THE RELATIONSHIP

- ◆ **Energy flow:** India maintained some import of Iranian crude based on national interest till it found alternate means, then gradually reduced it.
- ◆ **Chabahar port & trade corridors:** the principal pillars of a steady, transactional relationship, in tune with India's multilateralism in a multipolar world.
- ◆ India, like others, is challenging the existing global order with a call for **greater multilateralism through dialogue and consensus** — in clear contrast to Iran's disruptive path.

- ◆ Iran's proposal to levy '**special rates**' on friendly countries for transit through the Strait of Hormuz is another disruptive attempt at preventing collective action from energy-hungry countries eager to benefit from the offer.
- ◆ Iran's strikes on tankers following the Omani route through the Strait of Hormuz highlight its propensity for **coercive brinkmanship** — highly unsettling for much of the world, including India, with energy and trade corridors running through a volatile geopolitical arena.
- ◆ **The choice before Iran:** It is time collective pressure from countries other than the West builds on Iran to desist from coercive methods. As the U.S.'s appetite to stay embroiled waxes and wanes, and Israel strains to 'finish off the job it started', Iran needs to step back and not overplay the advantageous geopolitical hand it currently holds.
- ◆ As a first step, Iran must extract legitimate leverage from the proposed de-freezing of its assets and widening energy flow from its embattled oil fields and refineries. Despite isolation from the West, Iran is categorised as an **upper-middle-income economy** with much potential for rapid growth.

SPOTLIGHT — STRAIT OF HORMUZ

- ◆ A narrow chokepoint connecting the **Persian Gulf** with the **Gulf of Oman** and the Arabian Sea — among the world's most critical energy transit corridors.
- ◆ Iran's recent tanker strikes followed the **Omani route** through the Strait, underscoring the vulnerability of international navigation — the specific concern of UNSC Resolution 2817.

KNOW YOUR FACTS — NPT & JCPOA

- ◆ **JCPOA:** The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action's abandonment by the Donald Trump administration in **2018** sent a message that resonated far beyond Tehran.
- ◆ **NPT:** The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty marked 55 years on 5th March 2025 — approved by the UN General Assembly on **12th June 1968**, in force from **5th March 1970**.
- ◆ It is the only multilateral binding treaty committing Nuclear-Weapon States (NWS) to disarmament while promoting peaceful nuclear energy use.
- ◆ **NWS defined:** countries possessing nuclear weapons before 1st January 1967 — USA, UK, France, China and USSR/Russia.
- ◆ **Membership:** 191 members including the 5 NWS; **India is not a member**. The **IAEA** monitors compliance.
- ◆ **India and NPT:** India opposes the NPT, calling it discriminatory — it legitimises nuclear weapons for five countries while denying the same right to others.

MAINS PRACTICE

GS 2 · 12 Marks · 150 Words

Q. India's Iran policy has been described as 'steady transactionalism' — balancing energy needs, the Chabahar corridor and civilisational ties against its deepening partnerships with the Gulf, Israel and the West. Critically evaluate this approach in light of Iran's coercive brinkmanship in the Strait of Hormuz.

प्रश्न: भारत की ईरान नीति को 'स्थिर लेन-देन आधारित' कहा गया है — जो ऊर्जा आवश्यकताओं, चाबहार गलियारे और सभ्यतागत संबंधों को खाड़ी, इजरायल और पश्चिम के साथ गहराती साझेदारियों के साथ संतुलित करती है। होर्मुज़ जलडमरूमध्य में ईरान की दबावपूर्ण नीति के आलोक में इस दृष्टिकोण का आलोचनात्मक मूल्यांकन कीजिए।

Q

Prelims Practice — Multiple Choice Questions

PRELIMS

THE HINDU · 16 JULY 2026

Prelims Practice · 10 MCQs — based on today's edition. Attempt all questions before checking the answers.

Q1. With reference to the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant (KKNPP), consider the following statements:

1. It is developed jointly by NPCIL and Russia's Atomstroyexport using VVER-1000 pressurised water reactors.
2. Once all six units are commissioned, it will generate 6,000 MW of electricity.
3. It is located in the Thanjavur district of Tamil Nadu.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

✓ Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only — KKNPP is in Tirunelveli district

Q2. The 2026 data leak at Kudankulam reportedly originated from:

- (a) The plant's standalone operational network (b) A server hosted by third-party provider Yotta
(c) A phishing attack on NPCIL headquarters (d) The IAEA's inspection database

✓ Answer: (b) A server hosted by third-party provider Yotta

Q3. With reference to the Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission Gramin (VB-G RAM G), consider the following statements:

1. It guarantees 125 days of wage employment per rural household in a financial year.
2. It is funded entirely by the Central Government for all States.
3. States can notify a combined 60-day no-work period during peak agricultural seasons.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

✓ Answer: (b) 1 and 3 only — funding is 60:40 (90:10 for NE/Himalayan states)

Q4. The draft rules of VB-G RAM G propose determining Central allocations to States using:

- (a) The NITI Aayog's SDG Index (b) The 16th Finance Commission's horizontal devolution formula
(c) The 2011 Census population weights only (d) The Multidimensional Poverty Index

✓ Answer: (b) 16th Finance Commission's horizontal devolution formula

Q5. With reference to the Index of Services Production (ISP), consider the following statements:

1. It has been developed by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI).
2. It uses 2024–25 as its base year.
3. GST data has been used for the first time in statistical applications for its compilation.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

✓ Answer: (d) 1, 2 and 3

Q

Prelims Practice — Continued

PRELIMS

THE HINDU · 16 JULY 2026

Q6. Which of the following was the strongest-performing sub-sector in the first trial ISP (April 2026)?

- (a) Telecommunications (b) Real estate
(c) Accommodation and food (d) Retail trade

✓ Answer: (c) Accommodation and food — 37.2% YoY growth

Q7. The Abathsahayeswarar Temple at Thukkachi, recently conferred the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Award of Distinction, is associated with which dynasty?

- (a) Pallavas (b) Later Cholas
(c) Pandyas (d) Vijayanagara

✓ Answer: (b) Later Cholas — Kulottunga I and Vikrama Chola

Q8. The term 'Kara Kovil', in the context of the Thukkachi temple, refers to:

- (a) A temple built inside a rock cave (b) A temple sanctuary designed in the shape of a processional chariot
(c) A temple dedicated exclusively to Sarabeshwarar (d) A temple administered by the hereditary priesthood

✓ Answer: (b) A sanctuary shaped as a processional chariot

Q9. UN Security Council Resolution 2817 (2026), co-sponsored by India, is related to:

- (a) Ceasefire in the Russia-Ukraine conflict (b) Condemning Iran's attacks on GCC nations and Jordan
(c) Sanctions on North Korea's missile programme (d) Maritime piracy off the Horn of Africa

✓ Answer: (b) Condemning Iran's attacks on GCC nations and Jordan; adopted March 11, 2026

Q10. With reference to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), consider the following statements:

1. It came into force on 5th March 1970.
2. It defines Nuclear-Weapon States as those possessing nuclear weapons before 1st January 1967.
3. India is a member of the NPT.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

✓ Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only — India is not a member, calling the treaty discriminatory

ANSWER KEY — AT A GLANCE

◆ 1. (a) 2. (b) 3. (b) 4. (b) 5. (d) 6. (c) 7. (b) 8. (b) 9. (b) 10. (a)

RAPID REVISION — ONE-LINERS

◆ KKNPP (Tirunelveli, TN): NPCIL + Atomstroyexport, VVER-1000, 6,000 MW · VB-G RAM G: 125 days, 60:40 funding, 16th FC formula, in force July 1, 2026.