

**NO MATTER  
HOW YOU FEEL.  
GET UP, DRESS  
UP, SHOW UP  
AND NEVER  
GIVE UP.**

# **Important Issues of the Day**

- **Bitter milk – Page No.6 , GS 2**
- **India's strategic challenge – Page No. 6, GS 2**
- **Open Market Operations – Page No. 13, GS 3**
- **Terminal High Altitude Area Defence –  
Prelims**
- **Khelo India Tribal Games – Prelims**

## Bitter milk

Detecting violation of rules in time is better than stringent penalties

**T**he events in Rajamahendravaram in Andhra Pradesh involving the mass poisoning of consumers by milk contaminated with ethylene glycol sound a regulatory alarm. As of March 8, the death toll was 11, with approximately 20 other people, including infants, hospitalised. The police have invoked Sections 103 (punishment for murder) and 105 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder) of the BNS. The vendor allegedly continued to supply the milk despite complaints about a bitter taste and being warned that a coolant leak could be poisonous, so it seems reasonable that the State is treating gross negligence in food safety as a serious criminal offence. However, there could also be counterproductive effects. Milk is a staple in Indian households and contamination by an industrial compound already infamous in India for its lethality carries the potential to trigger a crisis of confidence in local, unbranded milk supplies. Children and the elderly are most affected by ethylene glycol poisoning due to their higher metabolic sensitivity and lower renal reserves, respectively. This could push people towards pasteurised milk from regulated cooperatives such as Amul or Vijaya, which seems desirable, but a large share of milk is also distributed in India through small vendors. Since the State has invoked criminal charges, including ‘murder’, against the offenders, marginal actors may quit

Though the State may be projecting a strong hand at work by criminalising the vendor’s alleged conduct, the importance of regulations cannot be overstated. Food-safety compliance is as much about punishing bad actors as about reducing the cost of doing the right thing. In the informal supply chain, cold-chain monitoring and hygiene inspections are almost entirely absent, leaving room for contamination. Subsidised testing kits and cooperative chilling facilities can thus reduce the risk at small dairies. Regulators may also consider safe-harbour provisions that ease penalties for dairy operators who report contamination at their facilities; this could also encourage early disclosure, giving authorities time to save lives. But this also makes consistent enforcement crucial. That a dairy could operate without a safety licence for 11 years raises serious questions about the oversight of the local government and the FSSAI: the local authorities failed to conduct periodic field audits, and the FSSAI did not enforce standardised safety protocols. The risk of being detected becomes negligible and even the harshest criminal charges cannot amount to a meaningful preventive measure. An effective system must realise that reliably detecting violations and imposing timely sanctions are a better deterrent than stringent penalties that do not aid enforcement and rarely lead to convictions.

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- **Ethylene glycol and diethylene glycol are toxic alcohols with a slightly sweet taste.**
- **Contamination of cough syrups with these glycols can occur, especially in products containing paracetamol.**
  
- **Diethylene glycol and ethylene glycol are adulterants that are sometimes illegally used as solvents in liquid drugs as an alternative to non-toxic solvents such as glycerine or propylene glycol to cut costs.**
  
- **A fatal oral dose is around 1,000-1,500 milligrams per kilogram of body weight.**
  
- **Toxicity can also occur with lower doses consumed over several days or weeks.**
  
- **Symptoms of contamination may not appear until large amounts have been consumed.**

- Ethylene glycol is a colourless and odourless alcoholic compound that can be fatal if consumed.
- It is mostly used as an automotive antifreeze and as a raw material for manufacturing polyester fibres.
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- Diethylene glycol and ethylene glycol may be used by pharma companies as an alternative to non-toxic solvents such as glycerine or propylene glycol to cut costs.
  
- It is also found in several products such as:
  - hydraulic brake fluids
  - stamp pad inks
  - ballpoint pens
  - solvents, paints
  - cosmetics
  - plastics.

- **The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is an autonomous statutory body established under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India.**
- **It was formed under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, a consolidating statute aimed at regulating food safety and standards across the country.**
- **Headquartered in New Delhi, the FSSAI is chaired by a non-executive Chairperson appointed by the Central Government.**

**FSSAI has been entrusted with wide-ranging statutory powers, including:**

- **Framing regulations to establish food safety standards.**
- **Accrediting laboratories for food testing and setting testing guidelines.**
- **Providing scientific and technical support to the Central Government.**

## Mains Question

*Food adulteration has emerged as a serious threat to public health and consumer rights in India. Discuss the causes and consequences of food adulteration. Also examine the effectiveness of regulatory mechanisms in India to curb this problem.*

*खाद्य पदार्थों में मिलावट भारत में जनस्वास्थ्य और उपभोक्ता अधिकारों के लिए एक गंभीर चुनौती बनती जा रही है। खाद्य मिलावट के कारणों और इसके प्रभावों की चर्चा कीजिए। साथ ही इस समस्या को नियंत्रित करने के लिए भारत में मौजूद नियामक तंत्र की प्रभावशीलता का मूल्यांकन कीजिए।*

# The Iran war intensifies India's strategic challenge

**T**he Iran war is not a war to eliminate the "imminent threat" to the United States. Neither is it a pre-emptive strike to stop Iran from striking Israel or American assets. Nor is it a war to stop the rebuilding of Iran's nuclear programme. It is not even a war to destroy Iranian ballistic missiles.

## Eliminating an ideology

It is a war to destroy the ideology which drives the Iranian government. And as Israel and the U.S. claim, regime change is the path to achieve it. The U.S. has joined Israel to actively prosecute the war by owning this idea.

Iran is seen as the great disrupter of West Asia. Israel wants to end Iran's proxy war which it sees as an existential threat. This means asphyxiating Iranian support to non-state actors in the region that are inimical to Israel. This again means eliminating the ideology (as opposed to the religion) – effectively a regime change.

Iran has consistently nurtured and used non-state actors to wage a proxy war against Israel. In fact, some non-state actors have quite literally become a state within a state and destabilised them. The Iranian-backed Hezbollah in Lebanon occupies parts of Lebanon and has even held up the formation of governments. The Iranian-backed Houthis in Yemen have carved out a large chunk of Yemen. Houthi missiles hit Saudi Aramco installations in 2021 serving as a catalyst for Saudi Arabia and Iran to restore diplomatic relations in 2023. Iraqi Shia non-state militia are also supported by Iran.

It was Iran's support for Hamas' brutal attacks of October 7, 2023, which exposed Iran's proxies to fierce Israeli retaliation and eventual degradation. Ironically, Hamas itself was initially propped up by Israel (later by Qatar) to weaken Yasser Arafat and the Palestine Liberation Organization, split the Palestinians and discredit the Palestinian Authority. When this writer lived in Gaza, the co-founder and spiritual guru of Hamas, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, was released in 1997 and sent to Gaza by Israel precisely for this.

Iran's ideology of exporting instability unnerved the region, especially the Gulf monarchies where public opinion is controlled. Consequently, under American prodding, the Gulf states began signing the Abraham Accords to normalise relations with Israel to stabilise the region at the cost of even the Palestinian issue.

If Israel and the U.S. are going after Iran again, when their June 2025 bombing campaign effectively buried the Iranian nuclear enrichment process, then it can only be for a much bigger goal - elimination of Iranian radical ideology and regime change. The attacks on Iran have caused unprecedented devastation on military and security apparatus as well as oil and other infrastructure, hoping to break the cohesion of governance structure and provoke the people to



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Relations, Chennai

The ongoing war will have a much greater impact on India than it had anticipated, forcing New Delhi to navigate complex regional dynamics

overthrow the government. U.S. President Donald Trump even promised to Make Iran Great Again. Can regime change be effected by mere air bombings on military and civilian targets? This has not happened so far and Israelis and Americans are reluctant to put boots on the ground.

The Iranians, having borne the brunt of the June 2025 war, are prepared for the worst. Since Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei never tried to hide and, in fact, welcomed martyrdom, it did not require special intelligence information to kill him. Anticipating such assassinations, Iran has decentralised authority across multiple arms of government and decided that the period of strategic restraint, as in 2025, is over. Facing an asymmetry in firepower, Iran has widened the war to include regional targets beyond U.S. bases in the Gulf, making this conflict as much political as it is military. It has exposed the U.S. security umbrella over the Gulf states, shown the Gulf states as vulnerable and put the energy security of many countries at serious risk. The pressure is clearly on the U.S. to end the war early.

Israel's view of the endgame differs from that of the U.S.: Israel has no compunctions about pursuing a purely military campaign regardless of the internal, regional, or political fallout, whereas America cannot afford to leave behind an Iran in turmoil without a political settlement for the region. This raises the hope that the Iran campaign will be shorter.

## America's mixed messaging

Mr. Trump dislikes getting bogged down in long conflicts. He stabilised the situation in Venezuela by working with the same but more pliable regime, after abducting its President, and in Syria by sanctifying a former ISIS terrorist leader as President. He is eyeing a quick regime change in Cuba now. Last year, he reached a deal with the Houthis to prevent attacks on American ships. With Iran threatening to attack ships passing through the Strait of Hormuz, Mr. Trump is discovering that West Asia is not Latin America, and Iran is not Venezuela. The war is not ending as quickly as Mr. Trump would like. Hence, the mixed messaging from the U.S. – whether to stop and declare victory or to prolong the conflict, risking global economic disruption, regional and American casualties, and political resistance both in Congress and among the public. The U.S. has just requested India to buy more Russian oil to stabilise prices.

The Americans getting bogged down in West Asia can only gladden China and Russia since the U.S. will have less bandwidth to focus on them. With each day of relentless attacks, China's case for taking over Taiwan grows stronger, while

Russia's logic in the Ukraine war is reinforced. Rising oil prices are good for Russia but not China. But a distracted U.S. is not good news for India, which is hoping to attract greater U.S. attention after the trade deal and find a place in the world view of Mr. Trump.

## India and regional policy

India's role as an observer at Mr. Trump's first Board of Peace meeting in Washington DC., indicated a welcome willingness to take a more proactive role in the region. While India immediately reached out to meet the needs of the Indian community in the Gulf, it slipped back to default mode when Khamenei was assassinated and when an Iranian navy vessel leaving Indian shores was torpedoed by a U.S. submarine in the high seas. Yes, India has excellent bilateral relations with the Gulf, Israel and many regional countries. But with India's stakes in the region, including in Iran, a more balanced regional policy is essential, at the very least to manage contradictions between friends, such as the recent schism between Saudi Arabia and the

Emiratis. Regional policy is much more than an aggregation of many bilateral relations, whether in tackling West Asia, Europe, Central Asia or South-East Asia.

The Iran war is the American way of attempting to reorder West Asia, though it has only exposed the inability of the U.S. to protect the Gulf states. Mr. Trump has reordered the transatlantic alliance amicably when the Europeans caved in to everything that he asked.

The U.S. attempt to reorder its relations with Russia met with Russian President Putin's resistance. The world will soon witness a reordering of U.S.-China relations when Mr. Trump and Xi Jinping meet soon – an event being watched anxiously by Japan, South Korea, India, and, of course, Taiwan, to see whether Mr. Trump will end up making not MAGA, but MCGA: Make China Great Again.

The strategic and security architecture of the region will now have to be rewritten. Ironically, Iran has effectively pushed the region even deeper into America's arms. Whether China or Russia can offer counter-security arrangements is debatable. Israel will continue to be a predominant force in the region. But others will also benefit such as Türkiye, Saudi Arabia and even Pakistan. With a strong Iran out of the way, their ambitions and stock will rise to fill the regional space.

This is not good news for India. With its strategic space constricted by both the U.S. and China, the Iran war is having a much greater impact on India than it anticipated. India's neighbourhood has just become that much tougher to negotiate.



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## Mains Question

*India has adopted a balanced diplomatic approach in West Asia by maintaining relations with multiple competing regional actors. Discuss the significance of this strategy for India's energy security, diaspora protection, and strategic interests.*

भारत ने पश्चिम एशिया में विभिन्न प्रतिस्पर्धी क्षेत्रीय शक्तियों के साथ संबंध बनाए रखते हुए एक संतुलित कूटनीतिक दृष्टिकोण अपनाया है। भारत की ऊर्जा सुरक्षा, प्रवासी भारतीयों की सुरक्षा तथा सामरिक हितों के संदर्भ में इस रणनीति के महत्व की चर्चा कीजिए।

## RBI buys ₹50,000 cr. G-Secs for liquidity, tranche 2 on Friday

**Lalatendu Mishra**  
MUMBAI

With the prolonged war in West Asia likely to have far-reaching consequences on the Indian economy, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) held Open Market Operations (OMO) buying ₹50,000 crore Government of India securities (G-Secs) of various maturities.

On Friday, 'on a review of the current liquidity and financial conditions,' the RBI decided to conduct OMO for buying G-Secs of ₹1,00,000 crore in two tranches of ₹50,000 crore each on March 9 and 13.

### Monetary policy tool

OMOs are key money market policy tools used by the RBI to regulate money supply by buying or selling G-Secs.

The latest move is aimed at injecting liquidity.

The OMO is to offset liquidity constraints arising out of advance tax outflows and have sufficient funds for lending by banks.

### Previous operations

In December 2025 and January this year, the RBI had conducted OMO purchases of ₹2,00,000 crore in four tranches of ₹50,000 crore each.

In May 2025, the RBI had conducted OMO purchases totalling ₹1,25,000 crore to support growth.

On Monday, the RBI also notified the Government of India had bought back G-Secs worth ₹6,309 crore via switch auction conducted by it and issued bonds worth ₹6,431 crore.

The securities purchased by the government were a part of the bonds scheduled to mature in the



The rupee ended 39 paise down versus previous close.

next financial year.

### Rupee plunges

The Indian rupee fell to a record low of 92.36 against the U.S. Dollar on Monday owing to fears of a prolonged war in West Asia and on account of crude oil prices surging to more than \$110 a barrel.

With the reported intervention of the RBI, the Indian rupee, as per Clearing Corporation of India spot rate, closed at 92.21 a U.S. Dollar as compared with its previous close of 91.82, down 39 paise.

"In line with broader weakness across Asian currencies, the Indian rupee has depreciated against the U.S. Dollar as international crude oil prices surged past \$100 per barrel, reclaiming levels not seen since 2022," said Dilip Parmar, research analyst, HDFC Securities.

"These soaring energy costs pose a significant threat to India's trade deficit, GDP growth, and inflation, given the country's high reliance on oil imports. Amid heightening geopolitical uncertainty, the spot USDINR is expected to remain firm, with a resistance level near 93.00 and established support at 91.80," he added.

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- **A G-Sec is a tradable instrument issued by the Central Government or the State Governments.**
- **A G-Sec is a type of debt instrument issued by the government to borrow money from the public to finance its Fiscal Deficit.**
- **A debt instrument is a financial instrument that represents a contractual obligation by the issuer to pay the holder a fixed amount of money, known as principal or face value, on a specified date.**
- **It acknowledges the Government's debt obligation.**
- **Such securities are short-term (usually called treasury bills, with original maturities of less than one year- presently issued in three tenors, namely, 91-day, 182 days and 364 days) or long-term (usually called Government bonds or dated securities with original maturity of one year or more).**

**When the Reserve Bank of India reduces the Statutory Liquidity Ratio by 50 basis points which of the following is likely to happen?**

- (a) India's GDP growth rate increases drastically**
- (b) Foreign Institutional Investors may bring more capital into our country**
- (c) Scheduled Commercial Banks may cut their lending rates**
- (d) It may drastically reduce the liquidity to the banking system**

**Which one of the following activities of the Reserve Bank of India is considered to be part of 'sterilization'?**

**(a) Conducting 'Open Market Operations'**

**(b) Oversight of settlement and payment systems**

**(c) Debt and cash management for the Central and State Governments**

**(d) Regulating the functions of Non-banking Financial Institutions**

**In the context of Indian economy, 'Open Market Operations' refers to**

- (a) borrowing by scheduled banks from the RBI**
- (b) lending by commercial banks to industry and trade**
- (c) purchase and sale of government securities by the RBI**
- (d) None of the above**

## Terminal High Altitude Area Defence



- **THAAD is a highly mobile, sophisticated missile defence system designed to intercept and destroy short, medium, and limited intermediate-range ballistic missiles during their terminal phase (the final stage of flight as they descend toward their target).**
- **Developed by:**
- **It is a key component of the United States' Ballistic Missile Defence System (BMDS), primarily developed by Lockheed Martin for the U.S. Missile Defence Agency.**
- **Mobility: The system is truck-mounted, allowing it to be rapidly deployed to any global flashpoint.**
- **It is designed to intercept and destroy short-range (up to 1,000 km), medium-range (1,000–3,000 km), and intermediate-range (3,000–5,000 km) ballistic missile threats during their terminal phase of flight.**

**What is “Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD)”, sometimes seen in the news?**

**(a) An Israeli radar system**

**(b) India’s indigenous anti-missile programme**

**(c) An American anti-missile system**

**(d) A defence collaboration between Japan and South Korea**

Khelo India Tribal Games



- **The first-ever Khelo India Tribal Games (KITG) will be held from March 25 to April 6, 2026 in Chhattisgarh, announced by Union Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya.**
- **Host Cities: Raipur, Jagdalpur, and Surguja**
- **Participants: Tribal athletes from most States and Union Territories of India.**
- **Medal Sports (7): Athletics, Football, Hockey, Weightlifting, Archery, Swimming, and Wrestling.**
- **Demonstration Sports: Mallakhamb and Kabaddi**

### **Organising Bodies**

- **Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports**
- **Sports Authority of India**
- **Indian Olympic Association**
- **National Sports Federations and the Chhattisgarh State Organising Committee.**

## **Mascot**

- **“Morveer”**
- **Derived from “Mor” (mine/our) and “Veer” (brave) in Chhattisgarhi.**
- **Symbolises pride, courage and identity of tribal communities.**
  
- **Note: A mascot is a person, animal, or object adopted by a group—such as a sports team, school, or brand—to represent them, foster a public identity, and bring good luck.**
  
- **First national sports event dedicated exclusively to tribal athletes.**
- **Aims to identify and nurture talent from tribal regions.**
- **Strengthens grassroots sports under the Khelo India Scheme.**



Thank You!

