

Important Issues of the Day

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U.S. sinks Iranian vessel near Sri Lanka

Sri Lankan Navy responds to distress call, rescues 32 sailors and recovers 83 bodies

U.S. submarine used torpedo to sink Iran's ship in international waters, says Hegseth

Ship was returning from Visakhapatnam after global maritime exercise in February

Meera Srinivasan
COLOMBO

A U.S. submarine attacked an Iranian warship on Wednesday, which sank in the Indian Ocean off the coast of Sri Lanka, bringing the West Asian conflict closer to the Indian subcontinent. At least 83 people were killed in the torpedo attack.

U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth confirmed the strike at a press conference in Washington DC. "An American submarine sunk an Iranian warship that thought it was safe in international waters. Instead, it was sunk by a torpedo," Mr. Hegseth said, terming it a "quiet death" and the "first sinking of an enemy ship" by a torpedo since the Second World War. "Like in that war," Mr. Hegseth said, "we are fighting to win".

The Sri Lankan Navy rescued 32 sailors and recovered 83 bodies after a dawn distress call from the Iranian frigate *IRIS Dena*, which sank about 40 naut-

Out in the open

The Iranian ship that sunk off Sri Lankan coast on Wednesday was returning from the International Fleet Review 2026 held in Visakhapatnam in February

IRIS Dena, one of 6 **Mouge Class Frigates** of Iran, was commissioned in June 2021

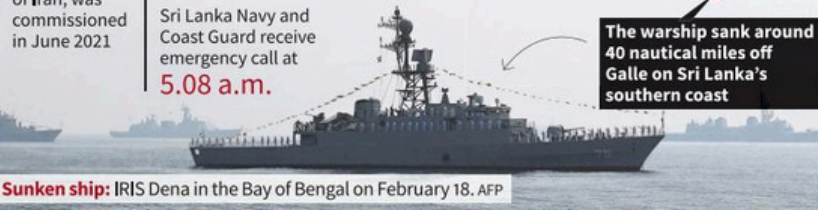
IRIS Dena had a crew capacity of nearly 180 with around **140 persons** believed to be on board

Sri Lankan Navy rescued **32 sailors** and recovered **83 bodies**

The U.S. has not sunk enemy ships by torpedo since the Second World War



The warship sank around 40 nautical miles off Galle on Sri Lanka's southern coast



Sunken ship: IRIS Dena in the Bay of Bengal on February 18. AFP

ical miles off Galle on the island's southern coast, Sri Lankan authorities said.

Distress call

The distress call from the frigate came at 5.08 a.m. IST, Sri Lanka's Foreign Minister Vijitha Herath told the nation's Parliament later in the day. Sri Lanka responded swiftly, owing to its obligations under the International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue, Mr. Herath said.

"By 6 a.m. we dispatched a naval vessel and by 7 a.m. the second naval vessel," he told the House. The injured sailors were taken to a state-run hospital in the southern Galle district.

According to Sri Lankan Navy spokesperson Buddhika Sampath, the frigate was not visible when the rescuers reached the spot. The Navy is yet to probe the cause for the distress call, and is currently "fo-

cused on search and rescue operations," he added. "As of now we have recovered 83 bodies," he told *The Hindu* at 9.45 p.m.

Naval sources told *The Hindu* that while the personnel capacity of *IRIS Dena* was nearly 180, only around 140 people were believed to be on board at the time of the incident.

IRIS Dena was returning to Iran after participating in the International Fleet Review 2026, a global mar-

U.S. and Israel hammer Iran on fifth day of war

DUBAI

The U.S. and Israel hit Iran's capital and other cities in air strikes on Wednesday, the fifth day of the war with Iran, as the Islamic Republic responded with missile barrages and drone attacks across the region. The Israeli military said air defences were activated to intercept Iranian missiles fired at targets around the country, and explosions were heard around Jerusalem. » PAGE 12

Indices tumble as markets respond to oil uncertainty

MUMBAI

Indian investors continued selling on Wednesday, triggering the benchmark indices to tumble in the second consecutive session as oil prices surged on closure of Strait of Hormuz. The benchmark Nifty 50 and Sensex 30 closed at 24,480.50 and 79,116.19 points, down 1.5% and 1.4% respectively on Wednesday, responding to the oil shock. » PAGE 11

torpedo attack on the Iranian vessel.

Sri Lanka had expressed "deep concern over the rapid escalation of hostilities" in the widening war in West Asia, now in its fifth day, and called on "all concerned parties to exercise maximum restraint and to take immediate and decisive action to de-escalate tensions".

MORE REPORTS ON

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Out in the ocean

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NORTH AMERICA

EUROPE

ASIA

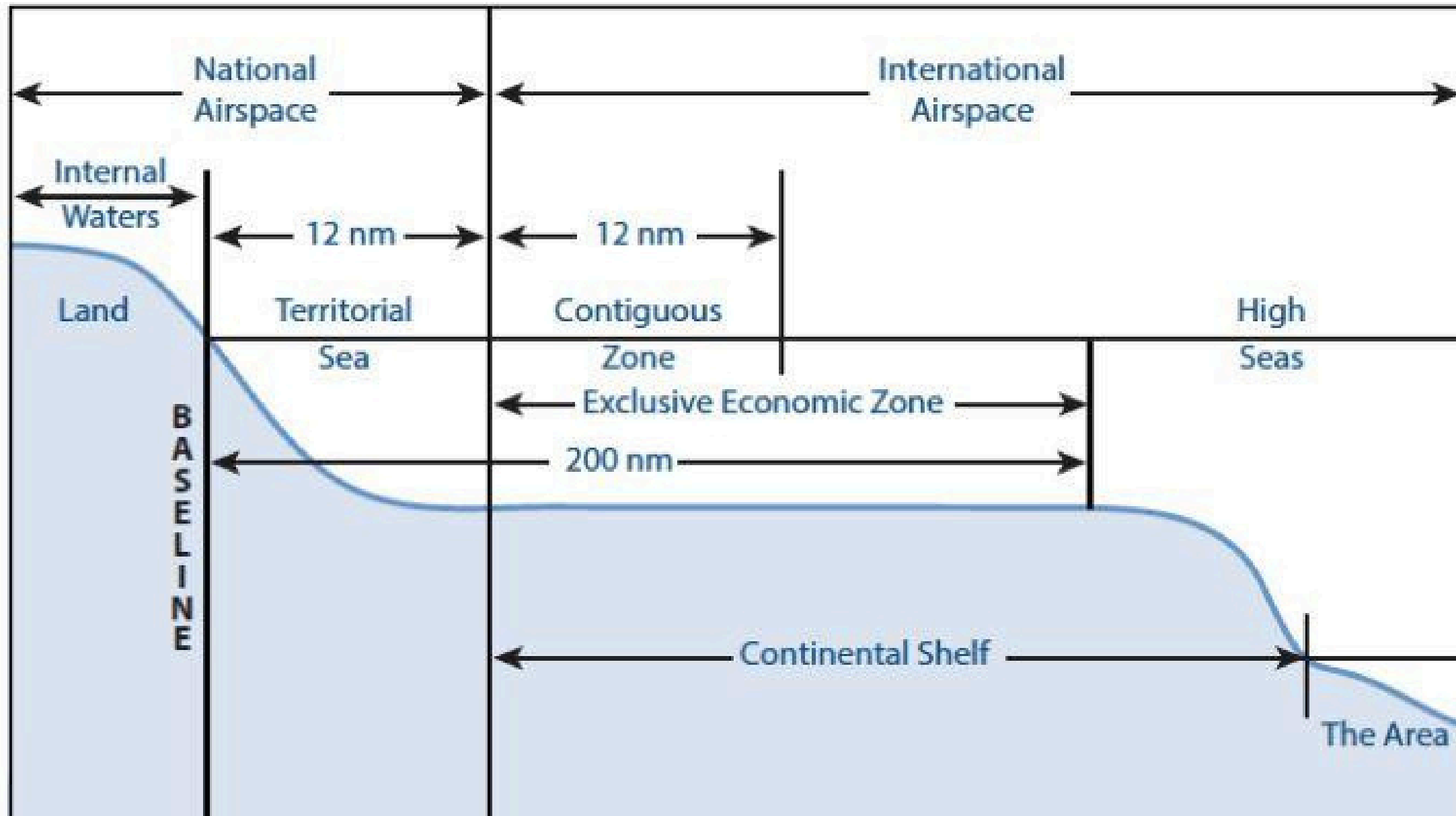
AFRICA

SOUTH AMERICA

INDIAN OCEAN

AUSTRALIA

ANTARCTICA



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The Sri Lankan Navy rescued 32 sailors and recovered 83 bodies after a dawn distress call from the Iranian frigate IRIS Dena, which sank about 40 nautical miles off Galle on the island’s southern coast, Sri Lankan authorities said.

- **IRIS Dena was returning to Iran after participating in the International Fleet Review 2026, a global maritime exercise held in Visakhapatnam in February.**
- **Sri Lanka has not commented on the U.S. claim of responsibility for the torpedo attack on the Iranian vessel. Sri Lanka had expressed “deep concern over the rapid escalation of hostilities” in the widening war in West Asia, now in its fifth day, and called on “all concerned parties to exercise maximum restraint and to take immediate and decisive action to de-escalate tensions”.**
- **MILAN is a biennial (once every two years) multilateral naval exercise hosted by the Indian Navy. Launched in 1995 under the Andaman and Nicobar Command with participation from just four foreign navies—Indonesia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, and Thailand—it has since grown into one of the largest maritime engagements in the Indo-Pacific region.**
- **The U.S. Navy should have exercised some restraint,” he said. More importantly, he noted, both the**
- **United States and Iran had participated in the IFR and MILAN exercises, with officers from the two countries staying under the same roof in city hotels.**

India ranks second globally in childhood obesity: study

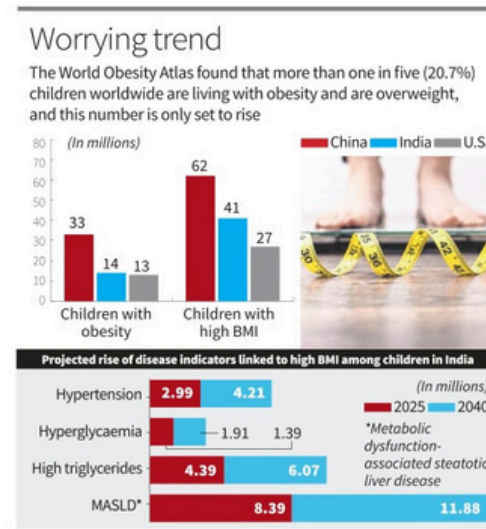
China, India and the U.S. each have over 10 million children with obesity; the World Obesity Atlas' report highlights risk factors such as poor physical activity levels and sub-optimal breastfeeding

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Nearly 15 million children aged five to nine and more than 26 million children aged 10 to 19 in India were overweight or obese in 2025, according to the World Obesity Atlas, 2026 released on World Obesity Day, which falls on March 4.

The World Obesity Federation, a global organisation focused on obesity, warned that the world was set to miss the 2025 global target to halve the rise in childhood obesity. Though the deadline is now being extended to 2030, most countries remain off track, and India is no exception, it said.

Over 200 million school-age children aged five to 19 who are overweight and living with obesity are concentrated in just 10 countries across the world. By the end of 2025, eight countries were projected to have over 10 million children with high Body Mass Index (BMI). China, India and the United States each had over 10 million children living with obesity. India stood second only to China in the num-



ber of children with high BMI (41 million high BMI; 14 million obesity). China led the two categories with 62 million children with high BMI and 33 million with only obesity. The U.S. had 27 million children with high BMI and 13 million with obesity.

This rise in childhood obesity is expected to have serious health consequences. The Atlas pointed out that in India, the number of children with disease indicators linked to

high BMI is projected to rise substantially by 2040.

The report also highlighted several preventable risk factors across different age groups in the country. It noted that 74% of adolescents aged 11 to 17 failed to meet recommended physical activity levels, while only 35.5% of school-age children (primary and secondary) receive school meals. Nearly 32.6% of infants aged one to five months experience sub-optimal breastfeeding.

Among women aged 15 to 49, 13.4% have high BMI and 4.2% live with Type 2 diabetes. Children aged six to 10 consumed sugary drinks, averaging up to 50 ml per day. The Atlas found that over one in five (20.7%) children worldwide are living with obesity and are overweight. This was an increase from 14.6% in 2010. The Federation predicts that by 2040, a total of 507 million children will be living with obesity or be overweight.

Call for action

There is an emphasis on governments to act immediately. Johanna Ralston, chief executive of the World Obesity Federation, said, "The increase in childhood obesity worldwide shows we have failed to take seriously a disease that affects one in five children. Governments urgently need to step up prevention and management efforts for children living with overweight and obesity, and ensure that they receive the care they need."

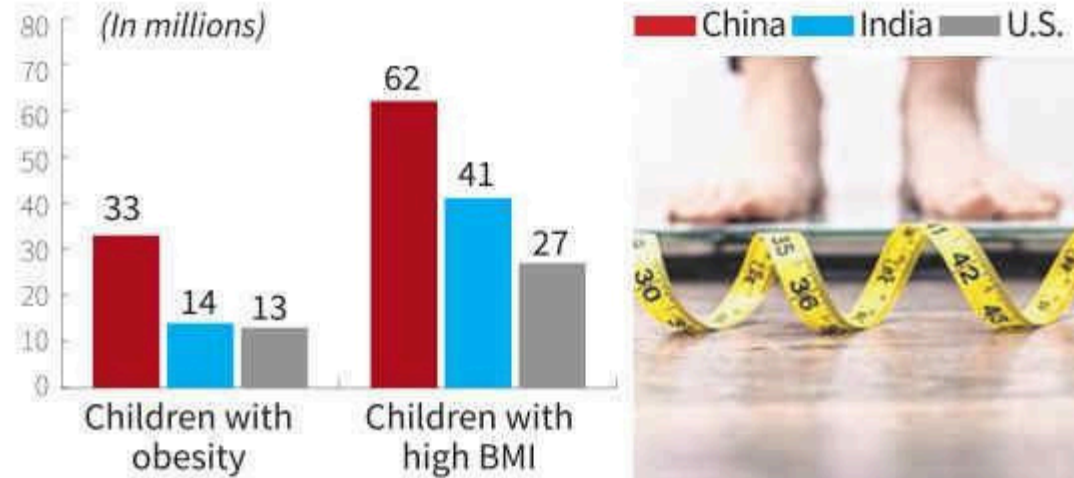
It has called for strong action to reverse current trends, including taxes on sugar-sweetened beverages and restrictions on marketing to children.

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Worrying trend

The World Obesity Atlas found that more than one in five (20.7%) children worldwide are living with obesity and are overweight, and this number is only set to rise



Projected rise of disease indicators linked to high BMI among children in India



Mains Question

Childhood obesity is emerging as a major public health concern in India.

Discuss the causes and consequences of rising child obesity. Suggest policy measures and lifestyle interventions needed to address this challenge. (250 words)

बाल मोटापा भारत में एक गंभीर सार्वजनिक स्वास्थ्य चिंता के रूप में उभर रहा है। भारत में बढ़ते बाल मोटापे के कारणों और इसके सामाजिक-स्वास्थ्यप्रभावों की चर्चा व कीजिए। इस समस्या के समाधान के लिए आश्चर्यकरी नवीनतम उपायों तथा जीवशैली संबंधी सुधारों का सुझाव दीजिए। (250 शब्द)

Climate risks must prompt international legal reforms

So far, states have focused on addressing climate change's biophysical impacts and finding burden-sharing formulae that avoid serious socio-economic harm to developing and least-developed countries. The grave consequences of climate change are likely to prompt a renegotiation of some of the fundamentals of international law, including permanent sovereignty over natural resources (PSNR), requirement of territory for statehood, and unsettling of maritime zones.

The principle of PSNR is a fundamental right of states and peoples, which represents the resolve of developing countries to attain economic independence. Under the PSNR, a state has the right to extract fossil fuels above and below ground. The urgency to restrict global average temperature below 1.5° Celsius is giving rise to the demand among many states, scholars and policymakers to phase out fossil fuel. Scholarly writings increasingly support a Fossil-Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty to keep large swathes of fossil fuels that remain in the ground

The issue of fossil fuels, first raised at COP 28 and again at COP 30 – even outside the formal agenda – highlights growing momentum for a phase-out. The developing countries may accept limited obligations impinging on PSNR towards a common concern of mankind but these must not be permanent or disregard the interests of high fossil-fuel-dependent nations. The limited obligations should be accompanied by developed countries providing sufficient finance and transferring carbon-neutral 'best available technologies' to developing nations

Climate change and territory

International law specifies that territory is a necessary prerequisite for statehood. The 1933 Montevideo Convention in Uruguay established



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Climate change may drive a renegotiation of key international law principles, including statehood territory and maritime zones

the four criteria of statehood – territory, permanent population, government, and the capacity to enter into relations with another state – as the benchmark for state recognition. Sea-level rise (SLR) threatening small island states poses the question of their continued statehood. Although the presumption of state continuity is unquestionably part of customary international law, several states are not categorical about its application to SLR. The International Court of Justice, in its advisory opinion, has said that once a state is established, the disappearance of one of its constituent elements would not necessarily entail the loss of its statehood. Scholars have described the ICJ's opinion on this aspect as a very modest legal claim.

In 2023, the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) declared that international law does not contemplate its demise in the context of climate change-related SLR. Even the Montevideo Convention does not mention how much territory is to be lost to lose statehood. James Crawford, an authority on creation of state, is of the view that while a state must possess territory, there is no rule specifying a minimum size. Despite these arguments and legal claims, statehood generally remains precarious and often borderline.

The unprecedented risks to be faced by small-island states must prompt the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to use the forum of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to apply equitable principles, addressing gaps in existing law beyond strict legal rules

Climate change-induced migration

In international law, the status of people who are likely to move to another country in the context of SLR is unclear. Such people also lose

protections and benefits which accrued to them in their own country. The 1951 Refugee Convention defines a refugee as someone who moves to another country, or is unwilling to seek protection from their country of nationality, due to a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. As climate refugees do not fit in the 1951 ambit, Frank Biermann, an expert on Earth System Governance, suggests a separate independent legal and political regime created under a Protocol to the UNFCCC on the recognition, protection and resettlement of climate refugees. Such a protocol could build on the political support from almost all countries as parties to the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement.

Unsettling of maritime zones

SLR is likely to unsettle baseline (the legal expression of coast), which will correspondingly affect other maritime zones such as territorial sea, contiguous zone, exclusive economic zone and continental shelf. The adverse scenario has prompted an increasing number of states, especially Pacific Island states and the other small island states to declare the existing baselines as permanent, which means that coastal states do not need to adapt to their existing baseline due to SLR.

This approach is at odds with another approach which a state is permitted under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) to adopt (ambulatory baseline) in the context of SLR. Accepting either of these approaches would require changes in the interpretation of UNCLOS rules.

Thus, climate change-induced risks posed to the international legal order need to be renegotiated by the states on a priority basis.

- **he urgency to restrict global average temperature below 1.5° Celsius is giving rise to the demand among many states, scholars and policymakers to phase out fossil fuel. Scholarly writings increasingly support a Fossil-Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty to keep large swathes of fossil fuels that remain in the ground. The issue of fossil fuels, first raised at COP 28 and again at COP 30 — even outside the formal agenda — highlights**
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The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), 1982 is an

- **international agreement that establishes the legal framework for marine and maritime activities.**

It is also known as Law of the Sea. It divides marine areas into five main zones

- **namely- Internal Waters, Territorial Sea, Contiguous Zone, Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and the High Seas.**

It is the only international convention which stipulates a framework for state

- **jurisdiction in maritime spaces. It provides a different legal status to different maritime zones.**



Genesis: It emerged from **1992 Earth Summit at Rio de Janeiro**, adopted in 1994.



It is one of the **three sister conventions (Rio Conventions)**, the other two being UN Convention on Biological Diversity (**UNCBD**) and **UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)**.



The **first COP** meeting of the **UNFCCC** was held in **Berlin, Germany, 1995**.



Signatories: 198 (India is a member)

Bullying Anthropic

The U.S.'s demands for maximum flexibility on AI use are dangerous

Over the last few days, the U.S. Department of Defence unceremoniously cast out the AI firm Anthropic, which develops the coding assistant Claude, and designated the firm a “supply chain risk”, the kind of cattle branding reserved for firms that are compromised by hostile foreign states. The reason was simple: Anthropic refused to relent on allowing its tools to be used for widespread domestic surveillance and fully autonomous weaponry. The high-octane conflict with the U.S. government – which accused Anthropic of following a “woke” and “radical” agenda – is a shocking escalation, despite prior concessions that would allow the U.S.'s defence establishment's use of Claude, which helps create and update code bases quickly. The conflict also sends a chilling message – a great power can do anything, with or without safeguards, to attain a strategic upper hand. This is a dangerous message to send in a multipolar world where shared standards around safety are increasingly difficult to achieve.

This is no longer the world of the Bletchley Park AI safety summit. It was a gathering that acknowledged the rapidly growing power of AI systems, and the shared global imperative to ensure that high stakes risks be mitigated. What was

reportedly, some assistance from Claude – is grinding on? Firms need to show some backbone when dealing with outrageous demands that could have chilling consequences in their home country and around the world. After all, if the U.S. demands the policy space for domestic surveillance in such a full-throated fashion, where does that leave countries where infiltrating the political opposition with spyware on their phones is already the norm? Anthropic showed this backbone, and it deserved the solidarity of its peers. Sadly, that is not what happened, as ChatGPT maker OpenAI appeared to give the U.S. defence department the flexibility it sought just hours after Anthropic became persona non grata. Despite OpenAI's assurances that its agreement provides key safeguards, AI safety has been harmed, with the other superpower and a host of middle powers around the world watching closely. Firms may not be the ideal characters to take a stand – taking into consideration, after all, their profit motivations – but as strong institutions are worn down around the world, there are few places to look to for leadership on safety. When a firm with billions of dollars at stake says ‘no’, it is not a promising sign of things to come when another steps in to say ‘maybe, yes’.

- **The U.S. Department of Defence (styled as the Department of War under the second Donald Trump administration) has entered into a public spat with the AI firm Anthropic, which makes the Claude AI product.**

The DoD has threatened to designate Anthropic a “supply chain risk,” dissuading a wide variety of

- **firms that work with the U.S. government from patronising Anthropic’s products.**

Claude is an AI chatbot that helps organisations and individual users create and modify code. Its Claude Code product has been received extraordinarily well due to its capabilities.

- **Anthropic was onboarded to the DoD as a part of a \$200 million contract last June, which allowed the U.S. government to use Claude’s services from dedicated infrastructure hosted by Amazon Web Services.**
- **The issues between the firm and the DoD started on January 9, when defence secretary Pete Hegseth published a memorandum entitled “Accelerating America’s Military AI Dominance,” in which he called for the elimination of “blockers to data sharing, Authorizations to Operate (ATOs), test and evaluation and certification, contracting, hiring and talent management, and other policies that inhibit rapid**
- **experimentation and fielding”.**

- **Anthropic has a much-publicised “constitution” for Claude that discourages the model from supporting widespread surveillance and enabling fully autonomous weaponry.**
- **The conflict also sends a chilling message — a great power can do anything, with or without safeguards, to attain a strategic upper hand. This is a dangerous message to send in a multipolar world where shared standards around safety are increasingly difficult to achieve.**

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Reckless wreckers

Damaging nuclear facilities under an unstable regime poses great risks

Nuclear facilities have faced unprecedented threats of late. Since its capture by Russian forces in 2022, Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant has faced repeated shelling and drone strikes. While Russia wished to be the sole nuclear-armed successor to the Soviet Union, Israel has viewed Iran's nuclear programme as an existential threat and has attacked its weapons sites since 2024. In 2025, the U.S. launched targeted strikes against Fordow and Natanz, which enrich uranium, and Isfahan, a fuel cycle complex. U.S. President Donald Trump claimed they were "obliterated" but the IAEA found that the enriched uranium stockpile was largely intact at Isfahan. On March 2, the IAEA had said that the Bushehr and Tehran reactors had not been hit or damaged until then, although strikes on March 3 surfaced reports of damage to the Bushehr airport (according to Iran's state media) and again in Natanz. The broader pattern of attacking nuclear facilities is worrisome. Aside from overt attempts, at least one hacking attempt has breached the National Nuclear Security Administration, which manages the U.S.'s nuclear stockpile, while ransomware groups have targeted global energy firms and Brazil's state nuclear operator. The Geneva Conventions prohibit

Physically destroying a facility only removes one layer of risk; the humanitarian and environmental effects are often intractable. A damaged reactor core or spent fuel pool could release caesium-137, a long-lived isotope that causes acute radiation sickness and contaminates land for decades. Radioactive particles can be carried by winds, affecting global food security. Damaging nuclear facilities overseen by an unstable regime also risks loss of custody of enriched uranium. Such strikes do not achieve a strategic resolution and could in fact accelerate Iran's resolve, marked by its shift of assets to deeper, more clandestine facilities. Military force also destroyed the diplomatic and verification frameworks required for long-term safety, leaving negotiations as the safest way to restore stability in the region. Iran is already facing 60% inflation and the U.S. can trade sanctions relief for IAEA monitoring. Iran has also finalised long-term deals with Russia and China, in return securing air defences and navigation systems to negate western advantages, and bringing Tehran back to the table could also reduce its dependence on these burgeoning partnerships. Conversely, military action risks refugee exodus from a population of 93 million, asymmetric retaliation against the U.S.'s Gulf bases, and the inalienable threat of nuclear disaster.

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 - In 2025, the U.S. launched targeted strikes against Fordow and Natanz, which enrich uranium, and Isfahan, a fuel cycle complex.
 - The Geneva Conventions prohibit states from endangering nuclear facilities if they release "dangerous forces" but neither the U.S. nor Israel seems mindful of the risks.
- Iran has also accused the IAEA of spying for Israel.

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International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

- **IAEA is an intergovernmental organisation that seeks to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy and to inhibit its use for any military purpose, including nuclear weapons.**
- **It was established in 1957 as the world's "Atoms for Peace" organisation within the UN, and governed by its own founding treaty - the Statute of the IAEA.**
- **It reports to both the UNGA and the UNSC and is headquartered at the UN Office at Vienna, Austria**
- **In 2005, it was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for its work for a safe and peaceful world.**
- **The IAEA has 178 member states, India being one of the founding members of it.**
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Operation Sankalp



- **Against the backdrop of escalating tensions in West Asia, Indian Navy warships deployed under Operation Sankalp have been placed on standby for potential Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) operations. Operation Sankalp (Sanskrit for Commitment) is the Indian Navy's proactive maritime security initiative launched to ensure the safety of Indian-flagged merchant vessels and maintain regional stability in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).**
- **Launched in: The operation was officially launched on June 19, 2019, following escalating security concerns and attacks on commercial shipping in the Gulf of Oman and the Strait of Hormuz.**
- **Organizations Involved: The mission is executed through meticulous coordination between the Indian Navy and several key ministries.**

- **To guarantee the secure passage of Indian commercial vessels through the Strait of Hormuz, Gulf of Aden, and Gulf of Oman.**
- **To combat the growing threat of piracy in the IOR.**
- **To safeguard India's substantial maritime trade, particularly oil imports, from unconventional threats.**

Key Features:

- **Continuous Presence: Maintains a steady deployment of frigates and destroyers in the Gulf of Aden and the Gulf of Oman.**
- **First Responder Status: Positions the Indian Navy as the Preferred Security Partner in the region, providing immediate assistance during maritime emergencies.**