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GS 2: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

INDIAN EXPRESS PAGE : 1

PROVINCIAL GOVERNOR PROMISES REWARD FOR CAPTURE OR KILLING OF CREW

First time, Iran downs US jet, one of two crew rescued

F-15E shot down in Iran southwest, US conducting search operations

Phil Stewart
Washington, April 3

A US fighter jet has been shot down over Iran and search-and-rescue efforts have so far recovered one of two crew members who ejected, a US official told *Reuters* Friday, in the first known incident of its kind in the nearly five-week-old war.

The Pentagon and US Central Command did not respond to requests for comment.

Two US officials said the aircraft was an F-15E fighter jet, which has two seats: one for a pilot and the second for a weapons systems officer. It was unclear which of the two was recovered, and the US official who confirmed the recovery did not offer any details on how it took place.

The prospect of a US pilot being alive and on the run inside Iran raises the stakes for the US in a conflict that, according to opinion polls, has struggled to win popular support among Americans.

It also presents a challenge to the US military, which faces the twin goals of trying to save

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At the Imam Ali Hospital in Iran's Karaj Friday after the US hit a key bridge. Eight people were killed in the strike, Iran said. *REUTERS*

Iran mission uses donations to buy 40 tonnes of medicine, unable to send them home

Divya A
New Delhi, April 3

A CONSIGNMENT of 40 tonnes of medicine bought in India is lying with the Iranian embassy in New Delhi, waiting to be sent to Iran.

Ever since a Mahan Air aircraft that was to come to India to fetch the consignment was damaged in an air strike at Mashhad airport last week, the embassy has been trying to find a way to send the medicines home, an of-

icial told *The Indian Express*.

"The plane that was attacked by US-Israeli forces was scheduled to land in New Delhi to collect the 40-tonne cargo of medicines that the embassy had bought. We are now trying to figure out an alternative arrangement which is not easy in these circumstances," the official said.

"Two smaller batches of medicines bought in India were earlier sent to Tehran through the Armenian route. This

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India-bound oil tanker with Iran crude changes course, heads to China port

Sukalp Sharma
New Delhi, April 3

AN OIL tanker carrying Iranian crude that was on course for India changed its declared destination to a Chinese port after coming quite close to Gujarat, according to ship tracking data Friday.

For nearly seven years now, India has not bought Iranian oil. This was to be the first delivery.

Eswatini-flagged tanker Ping Shun, which was approaching the Vadinar port in Gujarat, later signalled Dongying in China's Shandong province as its destination, according to data from commodity market analytics firm Kpler.

Trade sources said payment-related issues could be the reason behind the diversion.

The tanker, carrying about 600,000 barrels of Iranian crude, had taken a path that was headed to Vadinar, and as of Thursday afternoon, it was indicating arrival at the Gujarat port between late Thursday and early Friday. Later, it took a

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GS 2: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

INDIAN EXPRESS PAGE : 2

First time, Iran downs US fighter

the life of an American behind enemy lines while safeguarding anyone involved in perilous rescue missions.

Iranian officials called on civilians to be on the lookout for survivors and have flooded social media with images that purport to show wreckage from the aircraft.

William Goodhind, a forensic imagery analyst with Contested Ground, said images of

the plane's tail fin seen in photos posted on social media are consistent with that of an F-15E Strike Eagle, which carries two crew.

The governor of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad province said anyone who captured or killed the crew "would be specially commended," Iran's semi-official news agency ISNA reported.

The incident follows threats by US President Donald Trump

to bomb the country back to the "Stone Age," including attacks on Iran's energy infrastructure and desalination plants, as he presses Tehran to end the war on US terms.

So far, 13 US military service members have been killed in the conflict and more than 300 have been wounded, according to the US Central Command. No US troops have been taken prisoner by Iran.

While Trump has repeatedly sought to portray the Iranian military as defeated, Reuters has reported on US intelligence showing Iran retains large amounts of missile and drone capability.

As of last week, the US could only determine with certainty that it has destroyed about one-third of Iran's missile arsenal. The status of about another third was less clear but bombings likely damaged, destroyed or buried those missiles in underground tunnels and bunkers, Reuters sources said. - REUTERS

Iran mission unable to send medicines

ould have been the biggest shipment of medicines, which what the country urgently needs," he said. The mission is using the donations collected in India amid the war to procure medicines, the official said, adding that over the past few days, pharmaceutical companies and facilities in Iran were being targeted, so there was concern

about paucity of medicines.

On March 30, the Iranian embassy, quoting Tehran's civil aviation organisation, said, "The attack on an Iranian aircraft carrying medicines and medical equipment constitutes a war crime and a clear violation of international law."

An official source in New Delhi said, "Iran has conveyed

its intention to use the funds to purchase medicines in India, for which permission was granted."

While the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations does not clearly address fundraising by foreign missions, it does call upon the host country to offer them banking rights, the source said.

The rules prohibit embassies

from using their primary bank accounts for receiving donations. "A separate bank account must be created with permission of the Ministry of External Affairs," the source added. Initially, Iranian embassy sought donations through its main bank account, but later opened a separate one with SBI for the purpose. According to the source, the Indian government also delivered a consignment of medicines to Iran recently as a humanitarian gesture.

GS 3: INTERNAL SECURITY
INDIAN EXPRESS PAGE : 1

INS ARIDAMAN, STEALTH FRIGATE INS TARAGIRI COMMISSIONED

India inducts third n-sub, strengthens deterrence



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh presided over the commissioning ceremony of India's latest stealth frigate, INS Taragiri, in Visakhapatnam, Friday. PTI

Other than guarding coastline, ensure security of sea lanes, choke points, digital infrastructure, says Rajnath

Amrita Nayak Dutta
New Delhi, April 3

INDIA FRIDAY inducted its third nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine (SSBN), INS Aridaman, significantly strengthening its sea-based nuclear deterrent capabilities. The Indian Navy also commissioned the advanced stealth frigate INS Taragiri at a separate ceremony.

Defence Minister Rajnath

Singh presided over the commissioning ceremonies. The inductions signify a major enhancement in India's naval strength and maritime combat capabilities.

There was no official statement on the commissioning of INS Aridaman. Singh, in a one-line cryptic post on X Friday morning, said: "Shabd nahi, shakti hai 'Aridaman'" - "Aridaman isn't just a word, it is power."

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A more advanced nuclear submarine

INS ARIDAMAN, a 7,000-tonne vessel, has eight vertical launching system tubes — double the number of its predecessors.

CAN CARRY more K-15 (range 750 km) and K-4 (range 3,500 km) ballistic missiles.

POWERED BY advanced reactor which can keep it submerged for longer durations.

A FOURTH submarine of the Arihant-class is currently under construction.

EXPLAINED, PAGE 16

GS 3: INTERNAL SECURITY

INDIAN EXPRESS PAGE : 2

Third n-submarine

At the commissioning ceremony of INS Taragiri, the fourth vessel of Project 17A of the Nirghat-class stealth-guided-missile frigates, Singh said it is a unique platform, as it fits perfectly into every role – from high-intensity combat to maritime security, anti-piracy operations to coastal surveillance, and humanitarian missions.

With INS Aridaman's induction, India will have three operational ballistic missile submarines at sea for the first time. The indigenous SSBN is designed to carry more long-range nuclear-tipped missiles than INS Arihant and INS Arighaat, which were commissioned in 2016 and 2021, respectively.

A larger 7,000-tonne vessel, INS Aridaman will carry more K-15 missiles, as well as the intermediate-range K-4 nuclear-capable submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBM) – with nearly double the number of VLS tubes than its predecessors – that can hit targets 3,500 km away.

A fourth SSBN is currently under construction.

India is also pursuing a nuclear-powered attack submarine (SSN) programme. The Navy plans to build two SSNs indigenously and acquire one on lease from Russia, which is expected to arrive by 2027-28 and bridge the capability gap until India's own boats are ready.

INS Aridaman will join its predecessors as a key component of India's nuclear triad, which refers to a country's ability to launch nuclear missiles from platforms in the air, land, and at sea. India is part of a select group of countries with nuclear triad capabilities. These include the United States, Russia and China.

India is committed to using nuclear weapons only for deterrence and retaliation. The ability to survive a nuclear attack and then launch a retaliatory strike makes a nuclear submarine a very strong deterrent.

The Ministry of Defence said INS Taragiri, with a displacement of approximately 6,670 tonnes, was designed by the Warship Design Bureau and built by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited, with the support of MSMEs, for multi-role operations.

"It utilises advanced stealth technology to achieve a significantly reduced radar signature, providing a lethal edge in contested environments," it stated, adding "With over 75% indigenous content and built in significantly reduced timelines, INS Taragiri exemplifies India's shipbuilding prowess and strong public-private collaboration."

The ship features a lethal array of supersonic surface-to-surface missiles, medium range surface-to-air missiles, and an advanced indigenous anti-submarine suite.

At its commissioning ceremony, Singh said INS Taragiri is capable of high-speed transit and can remain deployed at sea for extended periods.

"It is equipped with systems designed to monitor enemy movements, ensure its own security, and if necessary, deliver an immediate response,"

he said.

"It features modern radar, sonar, and missile systems, such as BrahMos and surface-to-air missiles, which further augment its operational prowess. From high-intensity combat to maritime security, anti-piracy operations, coastal surveillance, and humanitarian missions, it fits perfectly into every role, making it a unique naval platform," he said.

In a country with a coastline stretching over 11,000 km and surrounded by the sea on three sides, he said its development cannot be viewed in isolation from the ocean.

Approximately 95 per cent of the country's trade, he said, is conducted via maritime routes, and energy security is dependent on the sea, which makes building a strong and capable Navy not merely an option, but an absolute necessity.

"The vast expanse of the ocean contains numerous sensitive points, where our Navy has consistently maintained an active presence to ensure the smooth flow of goods," he said.

"Whenever tensions flare, the Indian Navy steps in to guarantee the security of commercial vessels and oil tankers. It is not only safeguarding India's national interests, but it is also prepared to take every necessary measure to protect our citizens and trade routes across the globe," he said, referring to the Navy's recent operations in escorting Indian tankers from the Strait of Hormuz where shipping has been disrupted by the war in West Asia.

"It is this capability that firmly establishes India as a responsible and formidable maritime power," he said.

He said the vast majority of the world's data travels through undersea internet cables, and any damage to them could disrupt global order.

"We must not limit ourselves to safeguarding our coastlines; we must also ensure the security of critical sea lanes, choke points, and digital infrastructure that are inextricably linked to our national interests," he said, adding that the Navy is proactively engaged in all these security endeavours.

Navy chief Admiral Dinesh K. Tripathi said INS Taragiri carries forward a proud legacy of operational excellence and technological ingenuity.

"The former Taragiri was the fifth of the Leander-class frigates, commissioned in 1980. The Leander-class was pioneering in its time, marking the Navy's transition towards digital electronic systems and multi-dimensional capabilities," he said.

"The tensions in West Asia clearly demonstrate how these factors cumulatively impact the maritime domain. Any disruption at sea is no longer local. It immediately affects global energy security and maritime trade," he said. "Additionally, increasing incidents of interference in GPS and satellite services pose new challenges to the safety and reliability of maritime operations. These challenges demand continuous surveillance, sustained presence, and modern combat capabilities," he said.

GS 3: INDIAN ECONOMY

INDIAN EXPRESS PAGE : 16

● WAR IN WEST ASIA

Between oil shock and El Niño, how high inflation could go



GRAPHS, DATA, PERSPECTIVES
BY BYUDITH MISRA
WEEKLY ECONOMIC AND POLICY INSIGHTS USING DATA



A longer war will result in higher prices of crude oil. NYT

SINCE THE day that the United States attacked Iran in late February, the biggest policy concern has been the impact on India's domestic inflation rate. This is the rate at which the general price level goes up from one year to another.

Typically, Indian policymakers (read the Reserve Bank of India) hope to achieve an inflation rate of 4%, that is, the general price level goes up by 4% from one year to the next. This level has been chosen because it is considered ideal — high enough to incentivise producers to produce more and earn more profits, and low enough to not hit consumer demand.

However, since late 2019, thanks to a series of supply shocks like the Covid pandemic and Russia's war in Ukraine, not to mention unseasonal rains and such disturbances within the country, India's inflation rate often stayed above the RBI's target, and often even outside its comfort zone. This zone ranges between 2% to 6% of inflation. The inflation rate has been moderating since the highs of 2022-23, and as of the last

financial year (2025-26) that ended in March, inflation was closer to 2% — the other end of the RBI's comfort zone. A lower inflation rate had opened up the space for lower interest rates, making it cheaper for people and businesses to borrow money. Lower interest rates imply lower EMIs for home and car loans.

But just in the last month, the severity of the energy supply shock in the wake of the US attack on Iran and the latter's decision to choke the Strait of Hormuz has raised the spectre of a sharp spike in inflation.

The key question is: By how much?

There are two big variables that are likely to decide how inflation will pan out. One, the price of crude oil. Many had hoped

● **Retail inflation rate forecast for 2026-27**

BRENT CRUDE OIL PRICE (\$ PER BARREL)	NORMAL MONSOON	EL NIÑO (MODERATE)	EL NIÑO (EXTREME)
\$80.00	4.7%	4.9%	5.4%
\$85.00	5.0%	5.2%	5.7%
\$90.00	5.3%	5.5%	6.0%
\$95.00	5.5%	5.8%	6.3%
\$100.00	5.9%	6.2%	6.6%
\$125.00	7.5%	7.7%	8.2%
\$150.00	9.1%	9.4%	9.8%

SOURCE: HSBC, INDIAN EXPRESS RESEARCH

Little respite

- Many had hoped that in his April 2 address, President Trump would signal a withdrawal from the war. But he did not
- After his speech, Brent crude oil prices for future contracts shot up to almost \$110 per barrel

that when US President Donald Trump addressed the American public on April 2, he would signal a withdrawal, thus starting a process whereby energy prices would start to moderate.

But contrary to such expectations, he signalled another 2-3 weeks of hostilities with a distinct possibility of intensified bombing in Iran. Not surprisingly, following his speech, Brent crude oil prices for future contracts, the global benchmark, shot up to almost \$110 per barrel. The spot prices reportedly skyrocketed to over \$141 per barrel — the highest since 2008, just before the global financial crisis. Given how this war has panned out, it is anybody's guess what the health of energy markets will be in three weeks.

The second big variable that is almost

equally important in India's case is El Niño, which refers to a natural climatic phenomenon that essentially results in higher temperatures and lower rainfall during the monsoon. The more severe the El Niño, the worse it is for the economy, and the country's agriculture sector starves for water availability.

The intensity of these two factors is likely to have the biggest impact on India's inflation in the coming months.

The table alongside is compiled by Pranjal Bhandari of HSBC Global Investment Research and lays out the different possible scenarios for inflation. HSBC's pre-energy shock inflation forecast for FY27 was 4%.

The key takeaway from this table is that with a moderate El Niño effect, inflation in India will stay within the RBI's comfort zone (green coloured boxes) even if crude oil prices stay close to \$100 a barrel. However, if India suffers an extreme case of El Niño this year, then even at \$90 a barrel, inflation rates may breach RBI's comfort zone (red boxes).

As the inflation rate moves from the green zone to the red zone, the chances of the RBI raising interest rates go up.

Of course, if the US-Iran conflict drags on (like the Russia-Ukraine war) or worsens, crude oil prices could go up further from the current level, raising the prospects of significantly high levels of domestic inflation.

GS 3: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

INDIAN EXPRESS PAGE : 17

● PROPOSED REGULATIONS REQUIRE CLEAR LABELLING, AND A BAN ON SERVICES THAT COULD MISLEAD CHILDREN OR FUEL ADDICTION

China moves to regulate digital humans, issues draft rules

Reuters
Beijing, April 3

CHINA'S CYBERSPACE regulator issued draft regulations on Friday to oversee the development online of digital humans, requiring clear labelling and banning services that could mislead children or fuel addiction.

The Cyberspace Administration of China's proposed rules would require prominent "digital human" labels on all virtual human content and prohibit digital humans from providing "virtual intimate relationships" to those under 18, according to rules published for public comment until May 6.

The draft regulations would also ban the use of other people's personal information to create digital humans without consent, or using virtual humans to bypass identity verification systems, reflecting Beijing's efforts to maintain control in the face of advances in artificial intelligence.

Digital humans are also prohibited from disseminating content that endangers national security, inciting subversion of state power, promoting secession or undermining national unity, the draft rules said.

Service providers are advised to prevent and resist content that is sexually suggestive, depicts horror, cruelty or incites



Digital humans are computer-generated virtual beings that mimic human appearance, conversations and emotions. REUTERS

discrimination based on ethnicity or region, according to the document.

Providers are also encouraged to take necessary

measures to intervene and provide professional assistance when users exhibit suicidal or self-harming tendencies. China made clear its ambitions to

● TAMING MACHINES

THE DRAFT regulations would ban the use of other people's personal information to create digital humans without consent or using virtual humans to bypass identity verification systems

DIGITAL HUMANS are also prohibited from disseminating content that endangers national security, inciting subversion of state power

aggressively adopt AI throughout its economy in the new five-year policy blueprint issued last month.

The push comes alongside

tightening governance in the booming industry to ensure safety and alignment with the country's socialist values.

The new rules aim to fill a gap in governance in the digital human sector, setting clear red lines for the healthy development of the industry, according to an analysis published on the cyberspace regulator's website.

"The governance of digital virtual humans is no longer merely an issue of industry norms; rather, it has become a strategic scientific problem that concerns the security of the cyberspace, public interests, and the high-quality development of the digital economy," it added.