



**Sanskriti IAS**

*15th Mar 2026*



**IMPORTANT**

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# GS 2: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

## INDIAN EXPRESS PAGE : 1

STRAIT OF HORMUZ CLOSURE; TANKERS CARRYING 92,700 TONNES OF LPG HEADED FOR GUJARAT

# 2 India-flagged LPG tankers cross, efforts on for 22 more ships: Govt

Navy is learnt to have deployed warships in Persian Gulf for safe passage of Indian vessels

Sukalp Sharma & Amrita Nayak Dutta  
New Delhi, March 14

TWO INDIAN-FLAGGED liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) tankers headed to ports in Gujarat transited the critical maritime chokepoint of the Strait of Hormuz safely between Friday night and Saturday, the government announced on Saturday.

It said diplomatic efforts are on to facilitate safe passage for the remaining 22 Indian vessels — many of which are carrying hydrocarbons — that are stuck in the Persian Gulf, which is to the west of the war-hit Strait.

According to sources, the Indian Navy has deployed multiple warships to the Gulf region to escort merchant vessels carrying fuel to India amid heightened maritime tension in the region. At least two warships were known to have been on operational standby since Iran started the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz that

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



US embassy personnel inspect the damage caused by a bombing in Baghdad, Saturday. AP

Adequate stock of fertilisers for kharif season, says Vaishnav

Express News Service  
New Delhi, March 14

ANTICIPATING geopolitical uncertainty, the Central government Saturday said it had started preparing itself for the kharif season by procuring and advancing orders for fertiliser stocks from different geographies mid-February itself. This has ensured that "adequate" stocks of urea, diammonium phosphate (DAP) and NPK (nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium) fertilisers are available despite the supply disruption caused by the ongoing US and Israel war with Iran.

Demand for fertilisers peaks in the middle of May, with farmers sowing seeds over the

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### Iran's 'crown jewel'



NATION PAGE 7  
DIFFICULT TO FORGE BRICS CONSENSUS: MEA ON CONFLICT

## US hits key Iran island; oil prices may mount

Anil Sasi  
New Delhi, March 14

IN WHAT marks a new escalatory phase, the US Friday bombed Iran's Kharg Island, a small 8-km-long rocky outcrop in the Persian Gulf around 50 km off the Iranian mainland. Despite some 5,000 places targeted in Iran since the start of the

US-Israel military operation, Kharg had been spared so far.

In a post on Truth Social, US President Trump said military targets on Kharg Island had

been "totally obliterated" in "one of the most powerful bombing raids in the History of the Middle East." He said he had chosen not to target oil infrastructure on the island for now.

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

### LATEST

● IRAN STRIKES UAE'S FUJAIRAH PORT; U.S. SENDS 2,500 MARINES TO REGION

● TRUMP CALLS ON ALLIES TO SEND WARSHIPS

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## 2 tankers

connects the Persian Gulf (west) to the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea (east).

Under the Navy's Operation Sankalp, warships remain deployed in the Gulf of Aden and Gulf of Oman for anti-piracy and to secure maritime trade. Following the West Asian crisis, multiple warships have sailed to the region, the sources said. They had earlier indicated that New Delhi was in discussions with Tehran to facilitate safe passage of vessels headed for India, particularly energy tankers, through the Strait of Hormuz.

The two LPG tankers of the state-owned Shipping Corporation of India (SCI) that crossed the Strait of Hormuz — the narrow waterway between Iran and Oman that connects the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea — are very large gas carriers (VLGCs) *Shivalik* and *Nanda Devi*. They are

cumulatively carrying 92,700 tonnes of LPG, of which there is short supply in India. To put this in perspective, the annual domestic LPG demand with no restrictions on consumption is 33 million tonnes, which translates to about 90,000 tonnes a day.

The country's LPG imports have been severely hit by the effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz, forcing New Delhi to cut LPG supplies to commercial and industrial consumers to meet the kitchen fuel needs of over 33 crore households.

*Shivalik* crossed the fraught waters of the Strait of Hormuz late Friday, as per ship tracking data, and is on its way to Gujarat's Mundra port, where it is expected to arrive on Monday. Shipping Ministry Special Secretary Rajesh Kumar Sinha informed that *Nanda Devi*, too, crossed the Strait on Saturday morning, and is likely to reach Kandla port in Gujarat on Tuesday. Both the VLGCs were chartered by government-owned refiner and fuel retailer Indian Oil

Corporation, according to industry sources.

Maritime traffic through the Strait of Hormuz — which usually accounts for a fifth of global oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) flows and a bulk of India's energy imports — has effectively come to a halt since the West Asia military conflict started on February 28. A number of merchant vessels have come under attack in the region in recent days.

The effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz has created a major headache for India, which depends on imports to meet a bulk of its energy needs. Around 40% of India's crude oil imports, over 50% of its LNG imports, and a whopping 90% of its LPG imports transited the Strait, making the chokepoint particularly critical for India's LPG supplies.

India's annual LPG consumption stands at a little over 33 million tonnes, with an import dependency level of 60%. With 90% of India's LPG imports coming from West Asia, the Strait of Hormuz effectively sees

the movement of around 54% of India's LPG consumption.

With the crossings by *Shivalik* and *Nanda Devi*, there is growing hope of more vessels carrying energy supplies and other important cargo making their way to India, even as the situation in West Asia remains volatile.

Majority of the Indian vessels waiting to cross the Strait of Hormuz to get to India are oil and gas tankers. According to data provided by Sinha, there are six LPG tankers, four crude oil tankers, one LNG carrier, and one chemical or petroleum products tanker among the 22 Indian vessels in the Persian Gulf. All of these are loaded with energy cargoes. The remaining Indian vessels include three container ships, two bulk carriers, one dredger, and one empty vessel; three other vessels are on dry docks for routine maintenance. In all, these 22 vessels have 611 seafarers, according to Sinha. Three vessels — with 76 seafarers — are also stuck to the east of the Strait of Hormuz.

## GS 3: INDIAN ECONOMY

INDIAN EXPRESS PAGE: 7

# Govt reiterates strict action against hoarding as LPG bookings surge

LPG bookings by households rose by nearly 60% on Friday: Ministry

Sukalp Sharma  
New Delhi, March 14

DESPITE REPEATED assurances from the government about requisite LPG stock availability for meeting household requirements, cylinder bookings have shot up further, reflecting a spurt in panic booking.

According to a senior Petroleum Ministry official, LPG bookings by household consumers jumped nearly 60% on Friday over the average daily booking levels for the April-February period of the current financial year. On Thursday, it was over 35% higher than 11-month average of daily bookings.

The government appealed to consumers to book cylinders only when required given the constrained and difficult LPG supply situation, which has arisen due to the massive dis-



People wait in a queue to collect LPG cylinders amid the ongoing fuel crisis in Jaipur. ROHIT JAIN PARAS

ruption in vessel movements through the chokepoint of the Strait of Hormuz. It also said that action against hoarding and black marketing of LPG has intensified all over the country.

As per data shared by Petroleum Ministry Joint Secretary Sujata Sharma in a media briefing on Saturday, LPG bookings by households, which averaged at 55.7 lakh cylinders a day in April-February, surged to 88.8 lakh on Friday; Thursday's figure was 75.7 lakh. Sharma said despite the constraints in LPG imports, the government is

prioritising supplies to households over commercial and industrial consumers, even as it is closely monitoring the supply situation in view of the West Asia conflict that has hit India's energy imports.

"The situation is a matter of concern for all of us, but we are ensuring that household consumers do not face inconvenience. Domestic consumers have been prioritised, and LPG cylinder supply is being ensured for them," Sharma said on Saturday, adding that none of the 25,000-odd LPG distribu-

torships across the country have reported a "dry out"—running out of stock—yet. She has also been saying that public sector oil marketing companies (OMCs) are maintaining their earlier average of over 50 lakh cylinder deliveries per day.

The government has ordered refiners to maximise LPG production, and directed them to divert propane, butane and other streams from petrochemical manufacturing to LPG production.

Regarding action against hoarding and black marketing

Centre: PNG users cannot obtain or keep LPG connections

New Delhi: In an order by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, as shared by PTI in a post of X, those with a Piped Natural Gas (PNG) connection as well as domestic LPG connection need to surrender the latter.

"No person having a Piped Natural Gas (PNG) connection and also having domestic LPG connection shall retain a domestic LPG connection, or take refills of domestic LPG cylinders from any Government oil company, or through their distributors. Such persons will be required to immediately surrender their domestic LPG connection," reads the order. Also, those with a PNG connection can't apply for a new LPG connection, it said. **ENS**

of LPG, authorities have stepped up raids and surprise checks, Sharma said.

## GS 3 : INDIAN ECONOMY

### INDIAN EXPRESS PAGE: 11

# KYC compliance loop continues to strain bank staff & account holders

George Mathew  
Mumbai, March 14

OVER EIGHT months after the central bank relaxed Know Your Customer (KYC) norms in a bid to simplify compliance and reduce inconvenience for customers, complaints from bank account holders show little sign of abating. Despite regulatory efforts to streamline the process and make KYC updation less cumbersome, many customers continue to face repeated requests for documentation, account restrictions and delays in verification.

"Happy to inform that I have successfully updated my KYC for the 18th time in my rather short adult life. Gratitude to my Investment Adviser, my father (he is overjoyed his name is spelt correctly) and my smart phone," a customer wrote on X recently.

He went on to add, "But the deepest gratitude is to the government agencies who have repeatedly given me an opportunity to KYC myself over the last two decades. They keep me on my toes. Every time I think it is done, they throw a new challenge. Just so that I don't slip into a comfort zone."

The satirical tone couldn't mask the anger though.

In June last year, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced a string of changes to its Master Direction on KYC norms, which included allowing business correspondents to help conduct the KYC and giving banks one year — till June 2026 — to complete KYC updation of 'low risk' category customers.

But the sheer number of bank accounts, which further swelled after the implementation of Centre's ambitious cash transfer scheme — Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana — made the task of verifying the customer's identity even more difficult, bankers claim.

It leaves both the affected customers and the depositors on tenterhooks. Regulatory pressure has triggered a wave of account restrictions and occasional freezes, leaving customers rattled — even as the bank staff scrambled to keep up with compliance demands.

The insistence stems largely from compliance pressures, in-

**E.** EXPLAINED

### Identity verification becomes a challenge

Staff shortages and a huge number of bank accounts — that have further swelled after the implementation of Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana — have made the task of verifying the customer's identity even more difficult

ternal risk controls and an operational caution within the banking system, according to banking sources. Customers, however, say the repeated demands for KYC updates are no less than harassment.

Infosys co-founder Mohandas Pai too wrote in his 'X' post recently, "@RBI, Please have a look at the harassment to individuals, firms and businesses due to repeated KYC. Banks are asking for the same documents they already have, unnecessary documents, threatening freezing of accounts."

"When asked why they are asking so many details, again they point to RBI. Can RBI please stop this kind of harassment and threats? We are not crooks and have been banking for 50+ years but harassment has only increased," Pai wrote.

But it's not just the customer. The service providers too are facing the pressure.

Bank officials say the compliance burden has become overwhelming as there are over 250 crore bank accounts in India. State Bank of India alone has over 50 crore bank accounts. The manager of a leading nationalised bank recently alleged irregularities in the KYC updation process and shot off a complaint to enforcement agencies.

"There are 44 branches under the control of the regional business office... I came to know about the fact that KYC were updated without obtaining actual KYC documents from the account holder. Clerical staff from the branches were called to the regional office and

were pressurised and threatened to do the KYC updation without physical documents or any annexure from the account holder," the manager wrote in the letter.

"It not only jeopardises the bank's interest but can also lead to frauds & money mules accounts which is a major threat for the organisation and for our nation too. It's a big threat for our nation too as these can be money mule accounts which can be used for frauds and financing of terrorism."

"I have raised the matter at each and every level even to the chairman but no one paid heed to my words," the manager said. There was no response from RBI to the emailed queries sent by *The Indian Express* seeking clarification on the KYC issue till the press time.

Bank officials say that the pressure to ensure KYC compliance has intensified over the past year. Regulations mandate 'high risk' customers to submit KYC documents every two years, 'medium risk' customers every eight years and 'low risk' customers every 10 years.

However, this norm is often violated by banks. "Low-risk" customers are placed in the "high-risk" category, and KYC updates are demanded every two years," said a salaried customer who faced the consequences of KYC verification.

According to an official of a nationalised bank, the industry has been under sustained regulatory scrutiny to ensure that every account is fully KYC compliant.

At the same time, banks are grappling with acute staff shortages. When customers visit branches to resubmit documents, employees often ask them to leave the papers behind for processing.

"These papers sometimes get misplaced and the staff are forced to request them again. This is causing inconvenience to customers but we are also overworked," the official said.

For customers who fail to submit documents despite repeated reminders, banks often freeze accounts until the papers are provided. **FULL REPORT ON**

[WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM](http://WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM)

**GS 2: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**  
**INDIAN EXPRESS PAGE: 12**

# Iran strikes UAE's Fujairah Port; US deploys 2,500 more troops to region

**US attacked from bases in the UAE, says Tehran**

Associated Press  
Dubai, March 14

IRAN ISSUED an evacuation warning for three major ports in the United Arab Emirates on Saturday, including the busiest in the Middle East, openly threatening a neighbouring country's non-US assets for the first time as its war with the US and Israel entered its third week.

Iran said the US had used "ports, docks and hideouts" in the UAE to launch strikes on Iran's Kharg Island, without providing evidence. It urged people to evacuate areas where it said US forces were sheltering.

Hours after the threat, there was no sign of an attack on Dubai's Jebel Ali port - the Middle East's busiest - or the Khalifa port in Abu Dhabi. But Associated Press images showed a fire at the third port, in Fujairah, caused by debris from an intercepted Iranian drone hitting an oil facility.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi told MS NOW that the US attacked Kharg Island and Abu Musa Island with low-range artillery from two locations in the UAE, Ras Al-Khaimah and a place "very close to Dubai," calling that dangerous and saying Iran "will try to be careful not to attack any populated area" there.

Iran has fired hundreds of missiles and drones at Arab Gulf neighbors during the war, but it said it was targeting US

assets, even as hits or attempts were reported on civilian ones such as airports and oil fields.

On Friday, US President Donald Trump said the US "obliterated" military sites on Kharg Island, home to the main terminal handling Iran's oil exports.

He said oil infrastructure could be next if Tehran continues to interfere with ships' passage through the Strait of Hormuz, where vessels are backed up and one-fifth of global oil supplies usually transit.

Iran's parliamentary speaker has said strikes against country's oil infrastructure would provoke a new level of retaliation. Trump said Saturday that he hopes China, France, Japan, South Korea, the UK and others send warships to keep the Strait of Hormuz "open and safe".

A US official said Friday that 2,500 more Marines with the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit and the amphibious assault ship USS Tripoli are being sent to the Middle East, adding to military's largest buildup of warships and aircraft in the region in decades.

The official spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive military plans.

Marine Expeditionary Units are able to conduct amphibious landings but also specialize in bolstering security at embassies, evacuating civilians and providing disaster relief.

The deployment doesn't necessarily indicate that a ground operation will take place.

The Wall Street Journal first reported the Marine deployment. The Tripoli was spotted by satellite sailing near Taiwan, putting it more than a week away from the waters off Iran.



Plumes of smoke and fire rise after debris from an intercepted Iranian drone struck an oil facility, according to authorities, in Fujairah, United Arab Emirates, on Saturday. AP

## Iran war fuels fears for West Asia water supplies reliant on desalination plants

Mira Rojanasaku, Claire Brown & Hiroko Tabuchi  
March 14

LAST WEEK, Abbas Araghchi, Iran's foreign minister, said an attack on a desalination plant on Qeshm Island, in the Persian Gulf, on March 7 had affected the water supply to 30 villages. While Iran blamed the United States for the attack, the Pentagon has denied responsibility, as has Israel.

And in Bahrain, the Interior Ministry blamed an Iranian drone for "material damage" to a desalination plant, though the country's water and electricity authority said water supplies had not been affected.

Over the last few decades, the arid countries of the Persian Gulf have become increasingly reliant on desalination plants to supply water to cities and towns.

Desalination plants have be-

### Share of water from desalination plants



DATA FOR ISRAEL, LEBANON, YEMEN AND IRAN AS OF 2022. ALL OTHER COUNTRIES AS OF 2025. SOURCES: GLOBAL WATER INTELLIGENCE, FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION AQUASTAT

come crucial infrastructure in places like Qatar and Bahrain, both of which now rely on the technology for more than 50 percent of their fresh water.

Efforts to remove salt from seawater and brackish groundwater in the Middle East go back more than a century. But desalination plants have proliferated on the Persian Gulf as climate change has made droughts more frequent and severe, and as desalination technology has improved.

Damage to a single large desalination plant, including a plant shutdown, could have immediate and widespread effects on the region, said Menachem

Elimelech, an environmental engineer at Rice University. "The Al Dur plant in Bahrain, for example, supplies over one million people with water each day, providing more than a third of the country's needs. Desalination facilities are complex, and extensive damage could take a long time to repair.

While countries like the United Arab Emirates have tried to build up strategic water reserves, analysts say that some stocks would be depleted within days.

"The response would be to truck in bottled water, mobile desalination systems, tanker water," said David Michel, a fellow in the Global Food and Water Security Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a policy research organization. "Those supply chains exist," he said. "But that's still a huge logistical hurdle. It's extremely disruptive."

NYT

## Hamas urges Iran to avoid targeting neighbours but affirms right to self-defence

Reuters  
Cairo, March 14

THE PALESTINIAN Iranian-led militant group Hamas

## Missile hits US Embassy helipad

## GS 2: INDIAN POLITY

### THE HINDU PAGE : 8

# Why did the SC allow passive euthanasia?

What test did the Supreme Court apply in the Harish Rana case to decide if continuing treatment was in his best interest? What nuanced distinction did it provide between active and passive euthanasia? What have been India's past positions on the right to die?

Krishnadas Rajagopal

The story so far:

In March 11, in India's first judicial approval of passive euthanasia, the Supreme Court allowed the withdrawal of life support for Harish Rana, 32, who had been in a vegetative state for nearly 13 years following a fall. The Bench of Justices J.B. Pardiwala and K.V. Viswanathan said that medical boards and Mr. Rana's family had both said that treatment had become futile and was not in his best interest. It held that the right to life included the right to die with dignity.

**What is passive euthanasia?**

A simplistic view holds that passive euthanasia involves a negative act or an omission, such as withdrawing or withholding life support, while active euthanasia is an intrusion or positive act, such as administering a lethal injection. Active euthanasia is currently illegal in India.

However, the latest judgment helps us understand the difference in a more nuanced way. The Court noted that withdrawing life-sustaining treatment, such as switching off a ventilator, is a positive act. Relying on a simplistic 'act versus omission' test could wrongly place withdrawal of life support outside legal protections for passive euthanasia. Justice Pardiwala explained that the distinction lies in the source of harm: active euthanasia introduces a "new, external agency of harm, such as a lethal

The Court held that the right to live with dignity would include the right to die with dignity for a patient with an irreversible medical condition

injection." Passive euthanasia does not involve a new risk of death, but the removal of an artificial barrier, which then allows the natural trajectory of life to continue and reach its inevitable conclusion. When a ventilator is withdrawn, death is "accelerated" only in the sense that the patient dies sooner than they would have if the machine had continued.

**What did the Court say about the 'right to die'?**

The Court said there comes a point when even the state's interest in preserving life must yield to an individual's right to die with dignity. It said, "Temporarily keeping alive a terminally-ill patient who is brain dead or in a persistent vegetative state, solely because doctors are able to leverage the technological advancements in medicine, and compelling such patients to endure a slow, agonising death, cannot fully be compatible with the constitutional ideal of dignity." The Court observed that as the end of life approaches, a loss of control over human faculties denudes life of its meaning. It declared that the right to live with dignity under Article 21 of the Constitution extends beyond the preservation of life to encompass the right to die with dignity for a patient with an irreversible medical condition.

The Court also remarked that the term 'passive euthanasia' is obsolete. It said the term 'euthanasia' in India would strictly refer only to active euthanasia. The usage 'withdrawing or withholding of medical treatment' would replace the term 'passive euthanasia'.

**What is the 'best interests' test?**

The test is based on the common law principle that any medical treatment constitutes a trespass against the person and must always be justified. The 'best interests' inquiry does not ask whether it is in the patient's best interest to die, but whether continuing life support through Clinically Assisted Nutrition and Hydration, as was done in Mr. Rana's case, artificially serves their best interest. The Supreme Court said there is no narrow, straight-jacket formula to understand what would be in the best interest of an unconscious or incompetent patient; that would require both medical and non-medical

considerations. The Court explained that, at its core, the 'best interests' inquiry is anchored in a strong presumption in favour of preserving life, reflecting the sanctity of life. But this presumption was not absolute and may be displaced when medical treatment artificially and futilely prolongs the suffering of a patient with an irreversible medical condition.

**What have been the past positions in India on the 'right to die'?**

The Supreme Court and the Law Commission of India have often addressed the right to die. In 1996, in *Gian Kaur v. State of Punjab*, a Constitution Bench distinguished between an attempt to suicide and abetment of suicide from "acceleration of the process of natural death". It held that the right to live with dignity also includes the right of a patient to die with dignity when life was already ebbing out.

In 2006, the 196th Law Commission of India Report recommended that a terminally ill patient's decision to discontinue medical treatment should not attract criminal liability if such withdrawal was in their best interests.

In 2011, the tragic case of the nurse, Aruna Shanbaug, in Maharashtra, saw the Supreme Court grapple with questions on the right to die amid a legislative vacuum. It prompted the Court to draw guidance from comparative jurisprudence and foreign legal frameworks. The Court then laid down guidelines permitting withholding of medical treatment for terminally ill patients with no chance of recovery.

A year later, the Law Commission, in its 21st Report, reiterated its 2006 suggestions. Four years later, the Health Ministry published a draft law, The Medical Treatment of Terminally-Ill Patients (Protection of Patients and Medical Practitioners) Bill, 2016, but no follow-up has been made in the past decade.

In 2018, a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court, in *Common Cause v. Union of India*, laid down fresh guidelines detailing procedures, including constitution of medical boards, to deal with applications for withdrawal of life support and advanced medical directives (AMDs). The need for judicial intervention arose in the absence of law. One of the judges on the Bench expressed a "pious hope" that Parliament would wake up to enact a specific law.

In 2023, the Court intervened again to simplify the procedure for AMDs. In June 2024, the government released guidelines on withdrawal of life support for public consultations. However, no action has followed.



GETTYIMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO