



Sanskriti IAS

1st May 2026



IMPORTANT

EDITORIAL HIGHLIGHTS

DELHI CENTRE:
636, Mukherjee Nagar
New Delhi-110009

PRAYAGRAJ CENTRE:
1/1/8A, Stanley Rd,
Maharana Pratap Chauraha,
Civil Lines, Prayagraj, UP - 211002

 **9555-124-124**

 **sanskritiias.com**

GS 2: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

THE HINDU PAGE : 1

Iran vows to protect its nuclear programme

Both sides are locked in a stalemate after having blocked shipping through the Strait of Hormuz

Blockade to continue until Iran agrees to a deal on the nuclear issue, says U.S. President Trump

Iran President says Persian Gulf is 'inseparable' part of Iran's identity, blockade 'doomed to fail'

Stanly Johny

Iran's Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei said on Thursday that the country would "safeguard" its "nuclear and missile" capabilities and lay down new rules for managing the Strait of Hormuz, hours after U.S. President Donald Trump said a blockade of Iranian ports would remain until a nuclear deal is reached.

"A new chapter for the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz is taking shape," he said in a statement, marking Persian Gulf Day.

"The Islamic Republic will secure the Persian Gulf region and dismantle the enemies' exploitative schemes in this waterway. The legal frameworks and implementation of new management for the strait will bring peace and pro-

gress to the benefit of all the region's nations," he said.

The war on Iran, launched by the U.S. and Israel, has turned into a maritime battle of wills after Mr. Trump announced a ceasefire on April 8.

While the ceasefire is still holding, Iran's chokehold of the strait, the mouth of the oil-rich Persian Gulf, remains intact. The U.S. has imposed a blockade on Iran-linked vessels in the Gulf of Oman to exert economic pressure on Tehran.

Last week, U.S. media reported that Iran made a proposal to the U.S. via Pakistan promising to ease its control of the strait in return for the U.S. lifting its blockade. Iran said it would discuss outstanding issues, including the nuclear programme, in the second round.

Mr. Trump, in an inter-



The Islamic Republic will secure the Persian Gulf region... The legal frameworks and implementation of new management for the strait will bring peace, progress to the benefit of all the region's nations

MOJTABA KHAMENEI, Iran's Supreme Leader



The [U.S.] blockade is somewhat more effective than the bombing... They want to settle. I don't want to [lift the blockade], because I don't want them to have a nuclear weapon

DONALD TRUMP, U.S. President

view, said on Wednesday that he wanted a deal from Iran addressing America's core concerns, including the nuclear issue.

"The blockade is somewhat more effective than the bombing... They want to settle. They don't want me to keep the blockade. I don't want to [lift the

he had "obliterated" the nuclear programme.

Mr. Khamenei on Thursday said Iranians would safeguard all of the country's technological advances, including the nuclear and missile programmes. Iranians "will regard all their national identity capacities – spiritual, human, scientific, industrial, and foundational and cutting-edge technologies, from nano and bio to nuclear and missile – as their national capital, and will safeguard them just as they do their maritime, land, and air borders," he said in the statement.

"U.S. causing insecurity" He added that the U.S. presence is the "most important factor of insecurity" in the region. "America's illusory bases lack even the ability to ensure their own security, let alone any

hope that America could provide security for the region's dependents and Americanophiles."

U.S. Central Command stated on Wednesday in a social media post that it had reached a "significant milestone after successfully redirecting the 42nd commercial vessel attempting to violate the blockade".

There are "41 tankers with 69 million barrels of oil that the Iran can't sell", it said. Oil prices soared to four-year highs on Thursday, with the global benchmark Brent spiking more than 7% to \$126.41 a barrel for June delivery.

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian said the Persian Gulf is an "inseparable" part of Iran's identity, adding that the U.S. blockade is "doomed to fail". "As we have repeatedly announced, the presence and

interference of foreigners will not help improve security in the region but will create tension and disrupt lasting peace in the Persian Gulf," he said in a statement. Mr. Pezeshkian added that Iran would adhere to "the principles of freedom of navigation and maritime safety, except for hostile countries".

Iran's Parliament Speaker and chief negotiator Mohammad-Bagher Ghalibaf signalled that Tehran would not give up its control over the Strait of Hormuz. "Iran, by exercising control over the Strait of Hormuz, will ensure that it and its neighbours enjoy the precious blessing of a future free from the presence and interference of America," he wrote in a social media post.

SHIP HEADS TO STRAIT » PAGE 5

GS 3: INDIAN ECONOMY

THE HINDU PAGE : 1

States with revenue deficits may face fiscal stress: Centre

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

The Union Finance Ministry has warned that States with revenue deficits and high debt burdens will find it harder to deal with fiscal shocks, including from the West Asia crisis, forcing them to either reprioritise expenditure away from productive areas, or approach the Centre for more funds at a time when it is trying to consolidate its own finances.

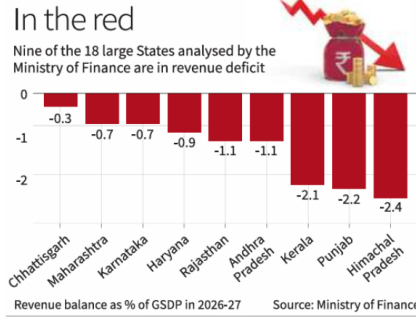
In its Monthly Economic Review for April, the Department of Economic Affairs in the Ministry said nine of the 18 large States analysed were in revenue deficit as per their own projections for 2026-27. Seven are projected to be revenue surplus, while one is

in revenue balance.

A revenue deficit is when expenditure on recurring items such as salaries, pensions, subsidies, and interest payments exceed the revenue earned from sources such as taxes and fees.

The States with projected revenue deficits as a percentage of their gross state domestic products (GSDP) are Himachal Pradesh (-2.4%), Punjab (-2.2%), Kerala (-2.1%), Andhra Pradesh (-1.1%), Rajasthan (-1.1%), Haryana (-0.9%), Karnataka (-0.7%), Maharashtra (-0.7%), and Chhattisgarh (-0.3%).

Tamil Nadu and West Bengal were excluded from the analysis as they have so far presented only interim budgets for 2026-27. "Revenue-deficit States



are constrained by the debt servicing obligations and carry, on average, significantly higher outstanding liabilities than revenue-surplus States, and many of them spend more than 15% of their revenue receipts on interest pay-

ments," the report noted.

Of all the States analysed, Punjab has the highest projected ratio of interest payments to revenue receipts of 22.8%.

"States simultaneously running a revenue deficit and high outstanding lia-

bilities have fewer degrees of freedom to respond to fiscal shocks," the report said. "Specifically, they may have to resort to expenditure restructuring or may demand higher central transfers to meet the present unforeseen shocks."

On the other hand, the report highlighted the States that were doing fiscally well. The eight States with projected revenue surpluses as a percentage of their GSDPs are Odisha (3%), Jharkhand (2.5%), Uttar Pradesh (1.6%), Goa (1.3%), Gujarat (0.8%), Uttarakhand (0.6%), Telangana (0.3%), and Bihar (0.1%). "Notably, eight States which have budgeted revenue surpluses for 2026-27, save for Telangana, have their capital out-

lay as a percentage of State GDP higher than their projected fiscal deficit," the report said.

It highlighted the example of Odisha: while the State's 3.5% fiscal deficit is higher than the 3% norm, the fact that it is in revenue surplus and its capital outlay is 6.5% of GSDP "mark it as a case of deliberate investment rather than fiscal stress".

"States that are unable to maintain the golden rule of fiscal financing, that is, zero revenue deficit, will face increased stress as a result of the present crisis," the report said. "Stressed states with compressed fiscal space make demands on the Centre at precisely the moment that the Centre is attempting consolidation."

GS 2: E-GOVERNANCE

THE HINDU PAGE : 5

EC set to implement QR code-based access at counting centres

Poll body launches new photo identity cards with QR codes for persons authorised to enter counting halls, including officials and candidates

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Election Commission on Thursday introduced a QR code-based photo identity card system to eliminate the possibility of any unauthorised persons entering counting centres.

After its introduction during the counting to be held on May 4 for the Assembly elections in Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Puducherry and the byelections in seven Assembly constituencies across five States, the system will be extended to all future general and byelections to the Lok Sabha and Legislative Assemblies, the EC said in a statement.

A three-tier security mechanism has been prescribed for verification of identity at counting centres. At the first and second tiers, photo identity cards issued by the Returning Officer (RO) shall be checked manually. At the third and innermost security cordon near the counting hall, entry shall be permitted only after successful verification through QR code scanning.

The new QR code-based



Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar with the two Election Commissioners at the ECINET launch on January 22. ANI

cards will be applicable for categories of persons authorised by EC to enter counting centres and halls, including ROs, Assistant Returning Officers (AROs), counting staff, technical personnel, candidates, election agents and counting agents, among others.

The EC has also introduced a module on the ECINET 2.0 platform for the QR code-based cards.

A media centre will be set up near the counting halls in each centre for the facilitation of authorised presspersons. Entry of presspersons will continue to be permitted on the basis of authority letters issued by the EC in accor-

dance with the existing instructions of the commission.

All Chief Electoral Officers, District Election Officers (DEOs), ROs and AROs have been directed to ensure strict compliance with these instructions to uphold the highest standards of transparency, security and efficiency in the counting process.

The DEOs and ROs have been directed to make all necessary arrangements for the effective implementation of this system, including deployment of trained personnel at designated checkpoints to ensure seamless and secure access control.

GS 3: INDIAN ECONOMY
INDIAN EXPRESS PAGE : 1

BRENT CRUDE PRICES HIT \$126/BARREL

Rupee breaches 95-mark amid fresh war concerns, spike in oil prices

Akash Mandal
Mumbai, April 30

THE RUPEE fell past the 95-per-dollar mark Thursday on its way to hitting a new all-time low of 95.34-per-dollar as fresh concerns about the war in West Asia propelled global crude oil prices to a four-year high. Having closed at 94.85 Wednesday, the rupee ended Thursday only slightly weaker at 94.92.

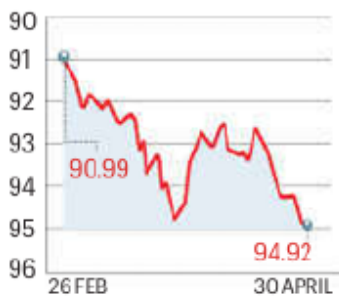
Domestic stock markets also behaved similarly, with Nifty and Sensex falling as much as 1.6% during the day before closing 0.75% lower. However, for April as a whole, the two benchmark indices were up 7-8% — the biggest monthly gain in over two years — after falling more than 11% in March.

Investor apprehension weighed heavy Thursday as Brent crude oil prices surged to \$126 per barrel, with worries mounting that the conflict in West Asia could escalate after American news website Axios reported that US President Donald Trump would be briefed on “new plans for potential military action” in Iran.

Market sentiment was also weighed down by cautious commentary by the US Federal Reserve, which late Wednesday left the federal funds rate target range unchanged at 3.5-3.75%.

“The Fed’s messaging has

•4% fall since Feb-end



FIGURES ARE DAILY CLOSING LEVELS OF RUPEE'S US DOLLAR EXCHANGE RATE.

SOURCE: INVESTING.COM

THE WORLD

IRAN THREATENS 'PAINFUL' RESPONSE IF U.S. ATTACKS PAGE 18

certainly turned more hawkish,” Madhavi Arora, Chief Economist at Emkay Global Financial Services, said. It is unlikely the central bank “will move on rates until there is greater clarity” on the conflict and evidence that effects of the US tariffs are fading, Arora said.

The rupee is now down more than 4% since the US and Israel attacked Iran on February 28, with Foreign Portfolio

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

GS 3: INDIAN ECONOMY

INDIAN EXPRESS PAGE : 2

Re breaches 95-mark

Investors (FPIs) continuing to leave Indian financial markets due to concerns about how exposed the country's economy is to higher energy prices.

According to Barclays analysts, the rupee is "one of the more vulnerable currencies to an energy price shock". "After breaking through the key psychologically important level of 95.0, risks of further INR weakness remain, with potential to hit our 2026 year-end forecast of 96.80 sooner than expected," Barclays said Thursday.

After selling \$12.7 billion of stocks in March, April has seen FPIs pull out to the tune of \$6.5 billion. So far in 2026, FPIs' net equity sales have totalled \$20.7 billion — more than the \$18.9 billion they withdrew in all of 2025. Several foreign brokerages, including HSBC and Morgan Stanley, have downgraded their view on Indian equities in recent weeks.

"...what we are witnessing is a textbook reflexive trade — rising oil prices triggering FII (Foreign Institutional Investors) outflows, FII outflows compounding the dollar demand from oil importers, and the combination overwhelming whatever defence the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is putting up," said Anindya Banerjee, Head of Commodity and Currency Research at Kotak Secur-

ities.

"The RBI is intervening and will continue to intervene. But the central bank's strategy here is volatility management, not level defence," Banerjee said.

The rupee breaching the 95-mark marks a reversal of the gains made in late March and early April after the RBI acted to curb speculative bets against the currency. Economists have warned that India's Balance of Payments — the balance of the trade deficit and capital inflows such as Foreign Direct Investment and remittances — could be in the negative zone for a third straight year in 2026-27 and requires structural solutions.

"Exchange rate cannot be construed a shock absorbing mechanism in perpetuity, as increased levels of uncertainties and volatilities render it to transform into a pass-through mechanism of imported inflation seeping through multiple channels," Soumya Kanti Ghosh, SBI's Group Chief Economic Advisor, said in a note Wednesday. "It is thus imperative that a comprehensive set of measures are required given that BoP (Balance of Payments) could be negative for the third consecutive year."

Ghosh expects India's Balance of Payments to be (-)\$28 billion in 2026-27.

GS 2: SOCIAL ISSUES

INDIAN EXPRESS PAGE : 1

DON'T MAKE IT A FIGHT BETWEEN STATE, CITIZENS: SC

AIIMS can't choose for parents: SC refuses to hear plea against ending minor's pregnancy

Amend law to remove time limit in case of unwanted pregnancy on account of rape of minor girl: CJI

Ananthakrishnan G
New Delhi, April 30

UNDERLINING THAT an unwanted pregnancy cannot be thrust on anyone, the Supreme Court on Thursday refused to entertain a curative petition filed by the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), contesting the court's earlier decision to allow a 15-year-old rape survivor to terminate her 30-week pregnancy. The court said it "will not allow the institution to choose for the parents".

"This is a case of child rape. The victim will have a lifelong scar and trauma. It is now a fight between the foetus and the child. The child must survive, and she must have a dignified life," observed Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, heading a two-Judge bench which included Justice Joymaya Bagchi.

The CJI also said the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act should be amended to remove the time limit for legal termination of pregnancies arising out of rape of minor girls.

On April 24, another two-Judge bench of Justices B V Nagarathna and Ujjal Bhuyan had allowed the medical termination of pregnancy. AIIMS had then filed a review petition, which was dismissed by the bench on Wednesday. AIIMS then filed a curative petition against the dismissal of the review petition.

Appearing for AIIMS on Thursday, Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati said the foetus was already 30 weeks old, and waiting for four more weeks would be in the interest of the minor as well as the foetus. "What has to be done is

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

In the past, courts allowed Govt stand of carrying foetus to full term

Apurva Vishwanath
New Delhi, April 30

IN RECENT cases involving minors seeking termination of advanced pregnancies, even in cases of rape, the Centre has advocated for carrying the foetus to full term followed by adoption, instead of approving abortions beyond the 24-week statutory limit.



The Centre's lawyers and the All India Institute of Medical Sciences

(AIIMS), which is the nodal medical body assigned by the court for abortion cases, have argued that termination of pregnancy in advanced cases is "akin to foeticide".

Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati made this argument on Thursday, too, in the curative plea filed by AIIMS, pressing for the 15-year-old rape survivor to carry the foetus for "four more weeks" in the interest of the minor as well as the foetus.

While the SC refused to entertain the plea in this case, courts have declined to allow

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

GS 2 : SOCIAL ISSUES

INDIAN EXPRESS PAGE : 2

Courts allowed Govt stand of carrying foetus to full term

the termination of pregnancy in other cases in the past, allowing the Centre's stand.

In January 2024, the Delhi HC recalled its order allowing a widow, who was then 32 weeks pregnant, to go for an abortion.

In July 2025, when the Delhi HC allowed abortion for a 16-year-old rape survivor, AIIMS moved an appeal arguing that the termination of a pregnancy at over 27 weeks would be "akin to foeticide". After the HC's division bench "suggested" to the minor's mother to consider the Centre's stand, it was agreed that the 16-year-old would carry the pregnancy to full term.

On October 10, 2023, AIIMS

had written to the Supreme Court in the case of a 27-year-old married woman seeking to end her 26-week pregnancy. The doctor's email sought a directive on whether "foeticide" must be performed to give effect to the judicial order allowing termination. After receiving the AIIMS report, the same two-judge SC bench was split on allowing the abortion. One of the judges, Justice Hima Kohli, had asked which court would say "stop the foetal heartbeat".

A larger three-judge bench then rescinded the order on abortion, observing that "we cannot kill a child".

However, in April 2024, the

SC allowed a 14-year-old minor, a sexual assault survivor, to terminate her pregnancy at 31 weeks. The minor had said that she discovered her pregnancy at around 25 weeks. The Bombay HC initially denied termination because it exceeded the 24-week statutory limit, but subsequently allowed it when the state government consented. As the pregnancy progressed to 30 weeks, a hospital in Mumbai, through ASG Aishwarya Bhati, expressed caution and sought guidance, citing the mother's "changing statements" and the medical risks associated with foeticide via intracardiac injection at such an advanced stage.

The SC allowed the termination, noting the medical advice that though termination of pregnancy at this stage was risky, there was a greater threat to the minor's life if the pregnancy continued to its full term. The opinion of doctors is crucial since the MTP Act allows termination of pregnancy only on the advice of doctors. Medical termination of pregnancies is allowed up to 24 weeks.

After 24 weeks, the MTP Act requires a medical board to be set up in "approved facilities", which may allow it only if there is a substantial foetal abnormality.