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## GS 2: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

### INDIAN EXPRESS PAGE: 10

# US, Iran claim progress in talks; Trump will speak to Gulf leaders

## An MoU is being fine-tuned: Pak security official

Reuters  
Washington, Dubai, May 23

IRAN, THE US and mediator Pakistan all said on Saturday that progress had been made in talks on ending almost three months of war. Iran said it was focused on finalising a memorandum of understanding after its top officials met Asim Munir, the army chief of Pakistan.

President Donald Trump said on Saturday that negotiators for the US and Iran were "getting a lot closer" to finalising an agreement to end the war, according to an interview with CBS News.

He said a final agreement would prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon and would ensure that Iran's enriched uranium would be "satisfactorily handled," according to CBS. "I will only sign a deal where we get everything we want," Trump was quoted as saying.

The Pakistani army said the negotiations had resulted in "encouraging" progress towards a final understanding.

"An MoU is being fine-

tuned," said a Pakistani security official who was briefed on Munir's visit.

Sources have told Reuters the proposed framework would unfold in three stages: formally ending the war, resolving the crisis in the Strait of Hormuz and launching a 30-day window for negotiations on a broader agreement, which can be extended.

President Trump said he would discuss the latest Iran draft agreement with advisers and might make a decision on Sunday on whether to resume attacks on Iran, Axios reported, citing an interview with Trump.

"Either we reach a good deal or I'll blow them to a thousand hells," Axios quoted him as saying. Trump, whose ratings have been hit by the war's impact on energy prices for US consumers, said on Friday he would not attend his son's wedding this weekend, citing Iran among the reasons he planned to stay in Washington.

An Arab official told Reuters Trump would hold a phone call on Saturday with leaders from Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the UAE, Egypt, Turkey and Pakistan.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio repeated Trump's demands: "Iran can never have a nuclear weapon. The straits need to be open without tolls. They need to turn over their en-



Iran Parliament Speaker Mohammad Ghalibaf (right) with Pakistan army chief Asim Munir in Tehran on Saturday. AP

riched uranium."

Iran denies it is pursuing nuclear weapons and says it has a right to enrich uranium for civilian purposes. It has demanded supervision of the strait, an end to the US blockade on its ports and the lifting of sanctions on Iranian oil sales.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei said, "The trend this week has been towards a reduction in disputes, but there are still issues

that need to be discussed through mediators. We will have to wait and see where the situation ends in the next three or four days."

Pakistan's army chief Munir left Tehran on Saturday after talks with Iran's top negotiator Mohammad Baqer Ghalibaf and Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi.

Baghaei said the issue of the US blockade on Iran's shipping was important, but that its prior-

ity was ending the threat of new US attacks and the ongoing conflict in Lebanon, where Iran-allied Hezbollah militants are fighting Israeli troops who have moved into the south.

Ghalibaf said Iran would pursue its "legitimate rights," both on the battlefield and through diplomacy, but added that it could not trust "a party that has no honesty at all," an allegation Iran has made times before.

He said Iran's armed forces had rebuilt their capabilities during the ceasefire and that, if the US "foolishly restarts the war," the consequences would be "more forceful and bitter" than at the start of the conflict.

The Financial Times reported on Saturday that mediators are nearing an agreement to extend the US ceasefire with Iran by 60 days and set a framework for talks on Tehran's nuclear programme. The deal would include a gradual reopening of the Strait of Hormuz, discussions on diluting or transferring Iran's stockpile of enriched uranium, and steps by Washington to ease its blockade of Iranian ports and sanctions relief, the report added.

The talks reportedly centred on a 14-point document proposed by Iran, which it considers the main framework for the discussions.

# GS 2: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS INDIAN EXPRESS PAGE: 10

## Once Trump's co-pilot against Iran, Netanyahu is now a mere passenger

David M Halbfinger & Ronen Bergman  
May 23

IN THE run-up to the Feb. 28 attack on Iran, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel was not only in the Situation Room with President Donald Trump, he was leading the discussion, predicting that a joint US-Israeli strike could very well lead to the demise of the Islamic Republic.

Just a few weeks later, after those sanguine assurances proved inaccurate, the picture

was starkly different. Israel was so thoroughly sidelined by the Trump administration, two Israeli defense officials said, that its leaders were cut almost entirely out of the loop on truce talks between the US and Iran.

Starved of information from their closest ally, the Israelis have been forced to pick up what they can about the back-and-forth between Washington and Tehran through their connections with leaders and diplomats in the region as well as their own surveillance from inside the Iranian regime, said the two officials. Like



US President Donald Trump with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at Mar-a-Lago in Florida. FILE

others for this article, they spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive matters.

The banishment from the cockpit to economy class has potentially significant consequences for Israel, and especially for the prime minister, who faces an uphill reelection battle this year.

Netanyahu has long sold himself to Israeli voters as a kind of Trump whisperer, uniquely capable of enlisting and retaining the president's support. In a televised speech early in the war,

he portrayed himself as the president's peer, assuring Israelis that he talked to Trump "almost every day," exchanging ideas and advice, "and deciding together."

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He had led Israel to war in February with grand visions of achieving a goal he has pursued for decades: stopping Iran's push for nuclear weapons once and for all. As the war began with a stunning decapitation of much of the government in Tehran, it seemed as though an even more grandiose dream might come

true; the toppling of the regime. But many in Trump's inner circle had always viewed the idea of regime change as absurd.

And it wasn't long before US and Israeli priorities began to diverge more, especially after Iran closed the Strait of Hormuz, sending oil prices soaring and pressuring Trump into agreeing to a ceasefire.

Far from vanquished, the Islamic Republic has behaved as though it won the war, merely by surviving it. Israel, by contrast, has seen its biggest objectives for the war elude its grasp. NYT

## GS 2: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

### THE HINDU PAGE: 1

# India important to U.S. Indo-Pacific policy: Rubio

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

India plays an important role in the U.S. Indo-Pacific policy, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who met and invited Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Washington later this year, said on Saturday.

Mr. Rubio, who began his four-day trip to India on Saturday morning, will hold bilateral talks with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on Sunday and attend the Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting (FMM) along with Ministers from Australia and Japan on Tuesday. One of his missions in India was to "renew" the Quad engagement, Mr. Rubio said, crediting Mr. Modi and U.S. President Donald Trump as drivers of the India-U.S. engagement.

"Secretary Rubio briefed PM Modi on the sustained progress in bilateral cooperation across a wide range of sectors, including defence, strategic technologies, trade and investment, energy security, connectivity, education and people-to-people ties," a statement by the Press Information Bureau said.

The two leaders are expected to meet in June when they travel to Evian in France for the G-7 summit, where India is one of the countries invited to an outreach summit.

In addition, Mr. Modi, who has visited the Trump White House once already in February 2025, is expected to travel to the U.S. for the G-20 summit in Mar-a-Lago in December this year.

U.S. State Department spokesperson Tommy Pigott added that Mr. Rubio had extended an invitation, on behalf of Mr. Trump, to the Prime Minister to visit the White House and had discussed the conflict with Iran.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio during a meeting, in New Delhi, on Saturday. #1

"The Secretary emphasised that the U.S. will not let Iran hold the global energy market hostage and affirmed that U.S. energy products have the potential to diversify India's energy supply," he said.

The PIB statement said Mr. Modi had stated India's "consistent support for peace efforts" and "reiterated the call for peaceful resolution of the conflicts through dialogue and diplomacy".

#### Quad meet

This is the third time the Quad Foreign Ministers will meet since Mr. Trump returned to power, as they met in January and July 2025.

However, they have not so far been able to schedule a date for the Quad Summit, due to be held in India for the past two years, partly due to the strain in ties between both countries over American tariffs, sanctions, and visa restrictions, as well as Washington's claims of having mediated the India-Pakistan ceasefire in 2025, which New Delhi has denied.

"My very first meeting officially as Secretary of State was a meeting of the Quad. We are going to renew that," Mr. Rubio said, speaking at an event at the

U.S. Embassy's premises to inaugurate a new 'Support Annexe Building'. The Quad FMM in India was important "as a tangible sign of what an important role India plays for the United States and [its] posture and approach to the Indo-Pacific", he said.

The Support Annexe building will contain several consular and visa section offices, Mr. Rubio said, announcing that the U.S. would shortly begin a priority visa service for Indians travelling to the United States for business and investment.

The timing of the event, however, coincided with new U.S. restrictions on H-1B visas and regulations, mandating Permanent Resident Card applicants leave the U.S. and complete their applications in their home countries, which would mean considerable dislocation for Indian professionals.

On Saturday evening, Mr. Rubio attended a reception in his honour hosted by Mr. Gor, where External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri as well as Delhi Lieutenant-Governor Taranjit Singh Sandhu were present.

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## THE HINDU PAGE: 5

### 'India, Nordic countries are on the same page on peace'

While India has a different relationship with Russia, it does not mean that Nordic nations cannot engage on other points, says Iceland's Prime Minister. The biggest growth areas in a partnership between India and Iceland will be in renewable energy, cultural cooperation and people-to-people ties, she adds, making a pitch for film crews to consider her country's landscape as a backdrop for new projects

INTERVIEW

**Kristrún Mjöll Frostadóttir**

Suhasini Haidar  
OSLO

India and the Nordic countries have a new engagement, driven in part by a desire for middle powers to find common ground in the face of concerns about global powers. However, there are clear differences on ties with Russia, says Iceland's Prime Minister Kristrún Mjöll Frostadóttir. Speaking to *The Hindu* on the sidelines of the recent India-Nordic Summit in Oslo, Ms. Frostadóttir, who, at 38, is one of the world's

youngest leaders, and an economist by training, said she hopes to discuss new areas to improve bilateral trade, which is currently at extremely low levels, through a focus on renewable energy technologies. She also pitched for more Indian films to be shot against Icelandic backdrops.

Is the emergence of the relationship between India and Nordic countries driven by concerns that the three big powers right now are seen as breaking the international rule of law?

The relationship between the Nordics and India has a longer history than maybe what we've been seeing ov-

er the course of the last couple of years, so I don't want to tie it directly to that, but I think, in general, a lot of countries are looking outward... Things are shifting, new deals are being done. You see this with the EU as well, you see it with Canada, and you see it now with India.

The most important message out of the [India-Nordic] summit is, there's hope for international relations. There are still large democratic countries like India that are opening up instead of closing off, and this is what the world needs to hear.

Even so, there's a basic difference between Nordic countries and India, over ties with Russia...



REUTERS

I won't deny that India has a different relationship with Russia than the Nordics do. I do know, however, that Prime Minister Modi wants this war to end, and I think we're all on that page. We believe Ukraine needs to win this war. For small Nordic countries,

this is important, that you know people respect the rule of law, they respect borders, that we don't set up double standards. We had the issue with Greenland [and the U.S.], and we want to ensure that we don't set a precedent in that regard. That doesn't

mean that we can't interact at other levels, but we've sent out clear messages on our stand on Ukraine.

India and Iceland trade relations are nascent, just about \$30-40 million... Where do you see the biggest growth areas? And do you plan a visit to India?

I would love to go to India. I think that's definitely something that we're looking into. We should work with what we already have. We have a great relationship when it comes to renewables. There's so much growth potential for India there with its goal of 500 gigawatts renewable energy. We also have potential in cultural ties, and [PM Modi and I] discussed the

Indian film industry. We have had outside film crews coming in and using Icelandic territory as backdrop. I think that would be a very interesting cooperation that we could have.

Also, we have many people, including Indians, coming to Iceland with their skills, becoming a part of the community in a very positive way. So there's also development opportunities there.

On that issue, when we speak to the Indian community their worry is that they are no longer welcome the way they used to be. What is the future of immigration to Europe?

I understand that [concern]. I think there's been a

big shift in attitudes to migration, especially when it comes to, I mean, I can only speak from my part of the world, where we've maybe been pushed into a setting where we're focusing too much on low-skilled, low-value immigration. I don't see that as an issue when it comes to Indian migration.

These are usually people coming in with high levels of education, going into productive jobs, so it's also a matter of how you frame it, but this is a responsibility of the government as well.

The full interview is at [newsth.live/ice/land](https://www.newsth.live/ice/land) (The reporter was in Oslo at the invitation of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to cover the India-Nordic Summit)

## GS 2: INDIAN POLITY

### THE HINDU PAGE: 8

# What did the SC say about bail under UAPA?

What are the disagreements between recent Supreme Court rulings on UAPA bail? Why is bail so difficult under Section 43D(5) of the UAPA? What did the Court say in K.A. Najeeb about prolonged incarceration and bail? What role does Article 21 play in UAPA bail jurisprudence?

**Krishnadas Rajagopal**

**The story so far:**

**I**n May 22, the Supreme Court granted six months of interim bail to two accused in the 2020 Delhi riots case – Abdul Khalid Saifi and Tasleem Ahmad. It also referred to a larger Bench the question of whether prolonged incarceration and delay in trial can override the stringent bail curbs under anti-terror laws such as the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (UAPA). This particular law empowers the Centre to designate not only organisations but also individuals as ‘terrorists’.

**What concerns did the Court raise about UAPA bail rulings by smaller Benches?**

A three-judge Bench in the 2021 judgment, *Union of India v. K.A. Najeeb*, had settled the principle that an undertrial cannot be made to indefinitely wait behind bars for completion of trial, however grave the offence may be.

On May 18, a Bench of Justices B.V. Nagarathna and Ujjal Bhuyan in *Syed Iftikhar Andrabi v. National Investigation Agency*, voiced serious reservations about smaller Benches ‘hollowing out’ the principle laid down in the *Najeeb* verdict – that constitutional courts must intervene and grant bail in UAPA cases in which accused persons had spent years in pre-trial incarceration.

Justice Bhuyan, who authored the judgment, questioned the Supreme Court judgment of January 5, 2026 (*Gulfisha Fatima v. State, Government of NCT Delhi*), which denied bail to former JNU student leader Umar Khalid and his co-accused Sharjeel Imam, who were charged under the UAPA in the Delhi riots ‘larger conspiracy’ case. While granting five others bail, a Division Bench of Justices Aravind Kumar and N.V. Anjaria had denied the two of them relief,

The *Najeeb* verdict was the Court’s response to the growing use of Section 43D(5) as a weapon in the hands of the state

prima facie acknowledging that they were the ‘alleged masterminds’. Mr. Khalid had already spent over five years in jail.

Justice Bhuyan’s remarks prompted the Delhi Police to raise objections before Justice Kumar, the author of the *Gulfisha Fatima* verdict, during the bail hearing of Mr. Saifi and Mr. Ahmed.

Additional Solicitor General S.V. Raju argued the *Andrabi* judgment had muddied the bail waters in UAPA cases. He rhetorically asked whether Ajmal Kasab – or Hafiz Saeed, if extradited from Pakistan – would also be entitled to bail merely because they had spent five years in prison awaiting trial.

Justice Kumar referred the question of law to a larger Bench, saying that a ‘perceived conflict’ between two coordinate Benches (of equal strengths) of the Court did not need expressions of ‘serious reservation’, but ‘resolution’.

**Why is bail so difficult under Section 43D(5) of the UAPA?**

The section makes securing bail under the UAPA difficult. The proviso to it mandates that an accused person will not get bail if a court, on perusing the case diary or chargesheet, found ‘reasonable grounds’ to believe that the accusations were prima facie true.

The apex court’s 2019 judgment in *National Investigation Agency v. Zahoor Ahmad Shah Watali* saw a Division Bench headed by Justice A.M. Khanwilkar (now retired and currently serving as chairperson of the Lokpal) hold that an ‘elaborate examination’ of evidence was not necessary for a court to establish prima facie guilt. The court was merely required to glance through ‘broad probabilities’ to decide if the allegations were true, and deny bail.

Section 43D(5) turned bail jurisprudence on its head. The normal presumption of ‘bail, not jail’ was reversed. While ordinary bail jurisprudence was rooted in the fundamental principle that a person was innocent until proven guilty, Section 43D(5) turned the burden onto the accused, supposing the person to be guilty until found innocent.

**How did the K.A. Najeeb judgment soften the bail bar?**

The *Najeeb* verdict was the Court’s response to the growing use of Section 43D(5) as a weapon in the hands of the state. For incarcerated accused persons with limited financial and legal resources, disproving terror charges becomes an uphill battle even as the prospect of trial recedes with passing years. It was in this context that the *Najeeb* judgment, authored by Justice Surya Kant (as he was then), clarified that constitutional courts could ‘melt down’ the rigour of Section 43D(5) and grant bail to a UAPA accused who

had already spent a ‘substantial period of time’ in jail due to gross delay in trial.

The *Najeeb* verdict quoted precedents to hold that constitutional courts cannot become mute spectators before the power of Section 43D(5). They had to intervene to protect the fundamental right to life and personal liberty under Article 21 of the Constitution.

**What did the Court clarify in the Andrabi verdict about Section 43D(5) and Article 21?**

In the *Andrabi* judgment, Justice Bhuyan said the Court must not play ball to the Centre’s argument that the gravity of offences under UAPA outweighed the human right to bail. The judge pointed out that the conviction rate under UAPA was only 2.6% across the country.

Justices Nagarathna and Bhuyan observed that an undertrial cannot be punished with denial of bail for the state’s ineptitude to hold a trial on time. If the alleged offence was a serious one, it was all the more necessary for the prosecution to conclude the trial expeditiously. Bail cannot be denied solely on the ground that the charges were very serious.

The *Andrabi* judgment said the Supreme Court in *Gulfisha Fatima* case read *Najeeb* judgment wrong when it said the three-judge Bench had created an automatic entitlement to bail on account of delay. Justice Bhuyan clarified that the *Najeeb* verdict had never advanced the proposition that bail should be given in every UAPA case of prolonged incarceration. Rather, *Najeeb* case only cautioned constitutional courts against treating the statutory embargo under Section 43D(5) as the sole justification for continued detention while ignoring broader constitutional principles of personal liberty and speedy trial. It held that Section 43D(5) was subordinate to Article 21.

**Did the Gulfisha Fatima judgment stray from the ‘binding precedent’ of Najeeb verdict?**

The May 22 order, referring the question of bail in UAPA to a larger Bench, argued that the *Andrabi* judgment had misunderstood the reasoning behind the *Gulfisha Fatima* verdict. It said the judgment, which had denied bail to Mr. Khalid and Mr. Imam, had correctly applied the *Najeeb* principle. It said the *Najeeb* judgment had appreciated the strict bail regime of Section 43D(5) while advising relaxation only in cases in which there was no likelihood of completion of trial within the reasonable time and the accused had already spent a long time behind bars.

The May 22 order took pains to clarify that the *Gulfisha Fatima* judgment accepted the *Najeeb* judgment as a binding precedent. It had recognised the central place of Article 21 in the constitutional scheme and that pre-trial incarceration cannot assume the character of punishment in UAPA cases. It said that the two were denied bail on an ‘accused-specific evaluation’ based on factors such as the evidence, their roles in the alleged conspiracy, and the need to protect the integrity of the trial.



Activist Umar Khalid being detained by the Delhi Police for defying prohibitory orders during the anti-CAA protests at Red Fort in New Delhi in 2019. PTI

## GS 3: HEALTH AND DISEASE

### THE HINDU PAGE: 9

# A deadly pathogen

## Bundibugyo ebolavirus

The strain that causes an often-fatal viral haemorrhagic fever is the primary causative agent in the current Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda

**Ramya Kannan**

At the heart of the current outbreak of Ebola in Central Africa is a quirky name – Bundibugyo. The less-known Bundibugyo ebolavirus strain that causes an often-fatal viral haemorrhagic fever is the primary causative agent in the outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Uganda. While related to the more common Zaire ebolavirus and the Sudan ebolavirus, there have been only two documented Bundibugyo-related outbreaks (Uganda in 2007, and another in the DRC in 2012). Currently, there are no vaccines or specific therapies against it, though efforts are on to fast-track the development of a vaccine.

The World Health Organization (WHO) declared with unusual alacrity, a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) even bypassing conventional consultations with expert bodies to do so. Soon after the DRC and Ugandan governments declared an outbreak of Ebola, on May 15, the WHO announced a PHEIC.

The name Bundibugyo comes from the days when pathogens used to be named after the places they were discovered in, though that naming convention is no longer considered fashionable. It was



REUTERS

first identified in 2007 in the Bundibugyo district of western Uganda. Bundibugyo, in the Western Region of Uganda, bordering the DRC, is the headquarters of the Bwamba Kingdom. After a mysterious illness broke out in 2007, the Bundibugyo ebolavirus was identified in diagnostic samples submitted to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, U.S., in November 2007, according to a 2010 article in the journal *Emerging Infectious Diseases*.

Previously documented Bundibugyo outbreaks have reportedly had case fatality rates of 30% and 50% – more or less the same fatality rate as the more common Zaire ebolavirus strain that caused havoc in Africa between 2014 and 2016. While this has caused fears that the virus is probably as deadly, the extra concern is because the outbreak has started in a conflict-ridden area, making case detection and contact tracing difficult and access to care uneven.

As of May 21, 2026, a total of 83 confirmed cases, including nine deaths, and 746 suspected cases, including 176 deaths, have been reported from 15 health zones in the DRC. Four health worker deaths have been reported to date. An American national who was working in the DRC as a surgeon has also been confirmed to have Ebola, reportedly having been exposed to the virus during a procedure he performed on May 11. He is being treated in isolation in Germany.

### Similar symptoms

According to an article in the *Scientific American*, the symptoms of an infection with the Bundibugyo virus resemble those of other orthoebolaviruses. Early on, they include an intense headache, high fever, body ache and fatigue. This is known as the “dry symptoms”, but as the infection progresses, people can develop “wet symptoms” of intense vomiting and diarrhoea, which can become

life-threatening. It further says: the viruses are also known to cause hemorrhagic fever, infecting specific immune cells and triggering a massive inflammatory response that can lead to internal bleeding and organ failure.

Efforts are in place to improve identification of persons with suspected infection, trace their contacts, contain the spread of infection and make sure that everyone with the symptoms receives appropriate care at a health facility.

Meanwhile, the WHO has raised the public risk from the Ebola outbreak in DRC from ‘high’ to ‘very high’. The scheduled India-Africa Forum Summit has been cancelled due to the ongoing crisis. British media has reported that scientists at Oxford University are working on developing a new vaccine to tackle the Bundibugyo strain, and that it might be ready for clinical trials in two or three months. Additionally, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, a global partnership working to accelerate the development of vaccines and other biologicals, has claimed that it is working at pace with partners, including Africa CDC, WHO and national authorities, to identify opportunities to rapidly advance vaccine development.