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**IMPORTANT**

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# GS 2: INDIAN ECONOMY THE INDIAN EXPRESS PAGE : 1

NEW FLIGHT TO UTTAR PRADESH'S GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT: CM YOGI

## PM opens Jewar airport, flags ethanol push as shield against energy crisis



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Governor Anandiben Patel, Union Civil Aviation Minister K Rammohan Naidu and Deputy CM Keshav Prasad Maurya in Jewar on Saturday. PRAVEEN KHANNA

### Highlights role of farmers, especially sugarcane growers in Western UP

Neetika Jha  
New Delhi, March 28

AMID THE war in West Asia, Prime Minister Narendra Modi Saturday stressed that India's ethanol push has helped the country through the global energy crisis, and acknowl-

edged the crucial role that farmers, especially sugarcane growers in Western UP, have played in reducing the country's dependence on crude oil.

Speaking at the inauguration of Phase I of the Noida International Airport (NIA) in Jewar, Modi highlighted the

significant role of ethanol produced from sugarcane and said, "If the production of ethanol had not increased, and its blending with petrol, then the country would have had to import an additional 4.5 crore barrels, which is almost 700 crore litres of crude oil, every year.."

The PM was accompanied by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, UP Governor Anandiben Patel, Union

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

### INSIDE

● IGIA VS NOIDA AIRPORT: SHORT-TERM COMPETITION BUT LONG-TERM NECESSITY

● DELHI JOINS MUMBAI IN TWO-AIRPORT CLUB: HERE'S WHAT IS DIFFERENT, THOUGH

● AIRPORT LAUNCHPAD FOR UP'S BRIGHT FUTURE: CM

PAGE 6

# Jewar airport

Aviation Minister Rammohan Naidu and several ministers of the UP government at the event. Phase I, spanning an area of 1,334 hectares, includes one terminal and a runway.

At the ceremony, the PM said the airport would be inaugurated by everyone present. "Turn on the flashlights of your phone and now you will inaugurate the airport," he said to the crowd as people chanted 'Modi, Modi'.

Addressing the gathering, he said: "You are all seeing how worried the whole world is today... In West Asia, there has been a war going on for a month, creating crises of essential commodities including food, petrol, diesel, gas, and fertilisers in many countries..." He said India has relied on domestic resilience to navigate the crisis. "The hard work of farmers has given the country such a big relief in this time of crisis," he said.

The PM said ethanol has also yielded economic benefits, estimating that about Rs 1.5 lakh crore in foreign exchange has been saved. "If not for ethanol, this money would have gone abroad," he said.

Noting that India imports a very large quantity of crude oil and gas from the conflict-affected region, he said the government has been taking steps to ensure such crises do not impose an undue burden on citizens. "Every country is trying

something or the other and our India is also fighting this crisis with all its strength. It is relying on the strength of its citizens," he said.

"We have to face this crisis calmly, with patience, unity... What is in the interest of India, that is the policy and strategy of the Indian government," he said, cautioning against misinformation and political statements that could harm national interests.

"To make India a developed country, everyone's effort is very important... 140 crore Indians must work hard and face the economic crisis together," he said.

Speaking about the Noida Airport, the PM said India's largest state has now become one of the states with the highest number of international airports. He described it as a "symbol of the development of Uttar Pradesh" and of 'India's new spirit'.

In his address, CM Adityanath said the inauguration of NIA had provided a new flight to UP's growth and development. "[It] was part of the decision where the public gets relief. This will present UP on the map of global aviation in a new way," he said.

Referring to the global crisis, Adityanath said, "The world is in doubt. Prices of petroleum products are touching the sky but it is controlled in India and its supply is smooth..."

## GS 2: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

## INDIAN EXPRESS PAGE : 1

MILITARY OPS SET TO CONCLUDE IN WEEKS: RUBIO

# Iran war expands as Yemen's Houthis fire missiles at Israel

12 US service personnel injured in attack on base in Saudi Arabia

Menna AlaaEIDin,  
Nayera Abdallah  
& Humeyra Pamuk

Cairo, Dubai, March 28

YEMEN'S IRAN-ALIGNED Houthis launched missiles at Israel on Saturday, their first such attack since the start of the Iran war, heightening the risk that a conflict now in its fifth week could expand further across the region.

Speaking before the strike, Secretary of State Marco Rubio said the United States expected to conclude military operations within weeks, but the Houthis said they would continue their operations until the "aggression" on all fronts ended.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian spoke to Pakistan's Prime Minister, Shehbaz Sharif, whose government hosts a meeting with the Turkish and

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



## Sri Lanka's supplies hit, India sends fuel shipment

Shubhajit Roy  
New Delhi, March 28

IN A significant outreach, India has sent a shipment of fuel to Sri Lanka, days after the phone conversation between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake.

Fuel shortage and panic buying have led to queues in the island nation, which depends on

imports for its energy demand.

"...A shipment of 38,000 MT (metric tonnes) of petroleum, of which 20,000 MT is diesel and 18,000 MT petrol, has arrived in Colombo today 28th March, 2026," the Indian High Commission in Colombo said in a statement.

"Lanka IOC had earlier  
»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

MORE REPORTS, P 7, 9, 11

## GS 2: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

### INDIAN EXPRESS PAGE : 3

SECOND CALL SINCE WAR BEGAN

# Modi, Saudi Crown Prince discuss West Asia conflict

Shubhajt Roy  
New Delhi, March 28

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi spoke to Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman on Saturday and they "agreed on the need to ensure freedom of navigation and keeping shipping lines open and secure".

Modi also condemned the attacks on regional energy infrastructure — a reference to Iranian attacks on energy installations in the Gulf including Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

This was their second conversation since the war started on February 28, when the US and Israel attacked Iran, and Tehran counter-attacked US military bases, facilities and personnel in the Gulf region, as well as energy infrastructure there — expanding the theatre of the conflict.

After the call, PM Modi posted on X: "Spoke with Crown Prince and PM of Saudi Arabia, HRH Prince Mohammed bin Salman and discussed the ongoing conflict in West Asia. I reiterated India's condemnation of attacks on regional energy infrastructure. We agreed on the need to ensure freedom of navigation and keeping shipping lines open and secure."

"Thanked him for his continued support for the welfare of the Indian community in Saudi Arabia," he said, referring to the 27 lakh Indians living and working in the country. There are about one crore Indians in the Gulf and West Asian region.

After the March 2 phone conversation — their first contact after the war began — PM Modi had said they discussed the evolving situation in West

## E. EXPLAINED

### Diplomatic bind

Saudi Arabia has been navigating a difficult situation diplomatically, as it hosts the American military and is perceived to be helping the US against Iran.

Asia and India condemned the recent attacks on Saudi Arabia in violation of its sovereignty and territorial integrity. "We agreed that the earliest restoration of regional peace and stability is of utmost importance. I thanked him for looking after the well-being of the Indian community in these difficult times," he had said.

Iran has engaged in retaliatory strikes, with reports of drones and missiles targeting the Prince Sultan Air Base (south of Riyadh), where US personnel are stationed. Twelve US troops were injured, two of them seriously, in an Iranian military strike on Prince Sultan Air Base, a US official told Reuters on Friday.

Iran has targeted key Saudi Aramco energy facilities, including the massive Ras Tanura refinery and a SAMREF refinery in Yanbu, causing fires and temporary shutdowns.

These incidents, amid wider regional conflict involving US-Israeli strikes on Iran, forced a precautionary reduction in operations, sent Brent Crude prices up by 8-10% and disrupted global shipping. Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen have engaged in broader conflict, increasing the risk of renewed attacks on Saudi infrastructure.

## GS 2: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

### INDIAN EXPRESS PAGE : 6

AGREEMENT INCLUDES EXCHANGE OF EXPERTISE IN COUNTERING MISSILES AND UNMANNED AERIAL SYSTEMS

# Zelenskyy signs defence deals with Saudi & Qatar, expands gulf drone cooperation

Iran claims strike on Ukraine-linked drone site in Dubai

Reuters  
Kyiv, Cairo, March 28

UKRAINIAN PRESIDENT Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Saturday made unannounced visits to the United Arab Emirates and Qatar, as Ukraine seeks to use its drone expertise to help Gulf Arab states blunt Iran's attacks during the war in the Middle East.

Zelenskyy said that Ukraine has already signed 10-year security agreements with Saudi Arabia and Qatar, and expects to shortly finalize a similar agreement with the UAE.

Ukraine has quickly grown into one of the world's leading producers of cutting-edge, battle-tested drone interceptors that are cheap and effective. They are playing a key part in its defense against Russia's full-scale invasion, which began on Feb. 24, 2022.

In return for its aid to Gulf countries, Ukraine is seeking more high-end air-defense missiles that they possess and that Kyiv needs to counter Russia's attacks. On Thursday, Zelenskyy visited Saudi Arabia, and last week, he said that Ukraine is looking into whether it can play a role in restoring security in the Strait of Hormuz.

On Saturday, Zelenskyy and Emirati state media reported on a meeting between the



The Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Doha, Qatar, on Saturday. REUTERS

Ukrainian president and his Emirati counterpart, Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, to discuss regional security amid the Iran war.

Later that day, Zelenskyy posted on X to say he had arrived in Qatar.

"Real security is built on partnership, we value everyone and remain open to supporting all those who are ready to work together for this goal," he wrote alongside a video of himself disembarking a plane and shaking hands with Qatari officials.

Zelenskyy told reporters that Ukraine seeks to build long-term strategic ties with Middle Eastern countries, including joint production, investment, energy cooperation and the sharing of battlefield experience.

"Simple sales do not interest

us," he said at a live briefing held on Zoom. Last week, Zelenskyy revealed that Kyiv is helping five countries — the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait and Jordan — counter Tehran's drone strikes on their territory.

Also on Saturday, Iran claimed it had struck Ukraine-related drone warehouse in Dubai. Iran's military joint command made the claim in a statement run by state media. The Khatam al-Anbiya Headquarters said over 20 Ukrainians were in the warehouse in the United Arab Emirates and their fate was unknown.

In a news briefing, Ukraine's Foreign Ministry spokesman Heorhii Tykhiy, however, called the Iranian allegations a "lie," according to Ukraine's public broadcaster.

## A month into Iran war, Trump faces tough calls

Reuters  
Washington, March 28

WITH GLOBAL energy prices up and his job approval ratings down, Donald Trump faces stark choices after a month of war against Iran: cut a potentially flawed deal and get out, or escalate militarily and risk a prolonged conflict that could consume his presidency.

Despite a flurry of diplomatic activity, Trump ends another week of the joint US-Israeli campaign struggling to contain a widening Middle East crisis as a defiant Iran maintains a chokehold on Gulf oil and gas shipments and continues missile and drone strikes across the region.

The central question now, say analysts, is whether Trump is ready to wind down or ramp up what critics have called a war of choice, one that has ignited the worst global energy supply shock in history and spread far beyond the region.

Trump has told aides he wants to avoid a "forever war" and find a negotiated exit, urging them to stress the four-to-six-week duration of hostilities he has outlined publicly, a senior White House official said, adding that such a timeline appears "shaky."

At the same time, Trump

has threatened a major military escalation if talks fail.

Trump's diplomatic overtures to Iran, including a 15-point peace proposal sent via a backchannel with Pakistan, appeared to demonstrate an increasingly urgent search for an off-ramp. But it remains unclear whether there are currently any realistic prospects for fruitful negotiations.

"President Trump has poor options all around to end the war," said Jonathan Panikoff,

former US deputy national intelligence officer for the Middle East. "Part of the challenge is the lack of clarity related to what a satisfactory outcome would be."

A White House official insisted that the Iran campaign "will conclude when the commander-in-chief determines that our objectives are met" and that Trump had laid out explicit goals.

Apparently hedging his bets, Trump is deploying thousands more US troops to the region and warning Iran of an intensified onslaught, possibly including the use of ground troops, if it does not yield to his demands.

Analysts say such a show of force could be aimed at creating leverage for concessions from Tehran but risks drawing the US into a more protracted conflict.

## US carrier Ford arrives in Croatia for repairs

Split: The US aircraft carrier Gerald R. Ford, which had been deployed in US-Israeli operations against Iran, anchored in Adriatic port of Split on Saturday for repairs and maintenance.

The Ford, America's newest and the world's largest carrier, was operating in the Red Sea in support of Operation Epic Fury when a non-combat fire broke out in a laundry room on March 12, injuring three sailors. Nearly 200 sailors were also treated for smoke-related issues, a US official said at the time. REUTERS

# GS 3: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

## INDIAN EXPRESS PAGE : 6

THIS TIME, THE ASTRONAUTS WILL NOT LAND ON THE MOON OR EVEN ENTER LUNAR ORBIT. THE OUT-AND-BACK JOURNEY IS EXPECTED TO TAKE THEM FARTHER INTO SPACE THAN ANY APOLLO MISSION

### Inside NASA's Artemis crew for its first manned moon mission in over 50 years

Marcia Dunnop  
Cape Canaveral, March 28

The four astronauts preparing for NASA's next lunar mission bear little resemblance to the Apollo-era crews that first carried humans to the moon more than half a century ago.

Those early missions were led by white men chosen largely for their military test-pilot experience.

By contrast, the first Artemis crew includes a woman, a person of colour and a Canadian, reflecting a more diverse astronaut corps.

None of them were alive during NASA's Apollo programme, which sent 24 astro-

nauts to the moon, including 12 who walked on its surface.

This time, the astronauts will not land on the moon or even enter lunar orbit. But the out-and-back journey is expected to take them farther into space than any Apollo mission, offering rare views of the moon's far side and helping pave the way for future landings later in the decade.

Commander Reid Wiseman will lead the nearly 10-day mission. The 50-year-old retired Navy captain from Baltimore was serving as NASA's chief astronaut when he was asked three years ago to head humanity's first lunar mission since 1972.

His wife, Carroll, died of cancer in 2020, and he said the decision to return to space gave him pause because of his two teenage daughters. "We talked about it," he said, recalling how he told them he could not turn down such a rare opportunity.

The next day, they surprised him with homemade moon cupcakes and their support. "The toughest part isn't leaving them," he said. "It's the stress that I'm putting on them." He said he remains open with them about the risks, even discussing where he keeps his will.

Pilot Victor Glover, 49, one of NASA's few Black astronauts, said his presence on the mission is "a force for good."



NASA astronauts Reid Wiseman, Christina Koch and Victor Glover with CSA astronaut Jeremy Hansen, at Kennedy Space Centre Florida. REUTERS

A Navy captain and former combat pilot from Pomona, California, he said he listens to

music from the Apollo era for perspective on what space exploration achieved—and what

it missed. Despite having one spaceflight behind him, he said this mission feels different.

His four daughters, now in their late teens and early 20s, are part of his preparation.

"I spend as much time preparing them as NASA does preparing me," he said. Glover sees Artemis as a relay effort, with this mission laying groundwork for a planned docking exercise in Earth orbit in 2027 and a moon landing expected in 2028.

Mission specialist Christina Koch brings extensive experience, having spent 328 days in space—the longest single spaceflight by a woman.

The 47-year-old electrical engineer from Jacksonville, North

Carolina, also took part in the first all-female spacewalk in 2019. She said the mission represents a broader milestone, marking a point in history where women are part of lunar exploration. Having previously spent nearly a year away from Earth, including time at a South Pole research station, she said she is well prepared for the shorter trip. Her family, she added, has taken the news calmly, with only minor nerves—even from her rescue dog, Sadie Lou.

Canadian Space Agency astronaut Jeremy Hansen will be making his first spaceflight while also serving as his country's first representative on a lunar mission. The 50-year-old

fighter pilot and physicist grew up on a farm near London, Ontario, and was selected as an astronaut in 2009 before being named to the crew in 2023.

He said he feels limited personal pressure but has come to better understand the scale of the challenge. "When I look at the moon now, it feels a little farther than it used to," he said.

He has spoken openly with his son and twin daughters about the risks, while emphasising that a safe return remains the most likely outcome.

The Artemis mission is intended to lay groundwork for future lunar landings, marking a significant step in NASA's return to deep space exploration. AP