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TRUMP BLASTS ALLIES, TELLS THEM 'GO GET YOUR OWN OIL'



Amid rising oil prices and disruptions linked to tensions around the Strait of Hormuz, Donald Trump has urged U.S. allies to secure their own energy supplies, signalling a shift in Washington's approach to burden-sharing in the ongoing conflict with Iran. The remarks come alongside warnings of potential strikes on Iranian energy infrastructure and follow reports of security incidents near key shipping routes. European countries, including the United Kingdom, have maintained a limited, defensive posture, with additional troop and air defence deployments but no participation in offensive operations. The divergence in responses highlights immediate concerns over coordination among Western partners, while raising the risk of further escalation and continued volatility in global energy markets and supply chains.

Most parts of India to see more heatwave days: IMD

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast a cooler-than-normal summer over North India for the April–June period, while several other regions are expected to experience above-normal temperatures. Eastern and northeastern India, parts of central India, and adjoining peninsular areas are likely to witness higher-than-usual maximum temperatures, whereas the remaining regions may see normal to below-normal conditions.

Rising Heatwave Incidence Across Regions

Despite relatively cooler conditions in the north, the IMD has warned of an increased number of heatwave days across east, central, and northwest India, as well as parts of the southeast peninsula. In April, coastal regions such as Odisha, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, and Andhra Pradesh, along with parts of Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Karnataka, are likely to face heatwave conditions.

Understanding Heatwaves

Heatwaves refer to periods of unusually high temperatures compared to the normal climate of a region. The thresholds vary geographically. Based on deviation from normal temperatures, a heatwave is declared when temperatures rise by 4.5°C to 6.4°C above normal, while a severe heatwave involves a departure exceeding 6.4°C. In absolute terms, a heatwave is declared when temperatures reach at least 45°C (47°C for severe cases). Additionally, a minimum threshold of 40°C for plains and 30°C for hilly regions must be met. Factors such as humidity, wind speed, and duration can intensify their impact.

Rainfall Trends and Emerging El Niño Concerns

India is expected to receive about 12% above-normal rainfall in April, continuing the trend seen in March, which also recorded excess rainfall due to multiple western disturbances. However, forecasts indicate the possible emergence of an El Niño event by July, characterised by warming in the central Pacific Ocean. This phenomenon is often associated with weaker monsoon rainfall in India.



Implications for Monsoon and Agriculture

Climatologists note that cooler summer temperatures may reduce land heating, which typically helps draw moisture-laden winds essential for the monsoon. This could potentially affect the onset and early progress of the southwest monsoon over Kerala in June. Given that India has experienced normal or surplus monsoons in most years since 2020 (except 2023), any weakening could have implications for agriculture, particularly kharif sowing. Additional concerns arise from potential disruptions in fertilizer output linked to global geopolitical developments.

Forensic and Investigative Applications

Historical data suggest that cooler summers in northwestern India, such as in 2004 and 2014, were followed by weaker monsoons. However, experts emphasise that the relationship between summer temperatures and monsoon rainfall is complex and influenced by multiple meteorological factors. The IMD is expected to release its initial forecast for the 2026 monsoon on April 15, with clearer trends likely to emerge by late May.

Outlook and Policy Considerations

While current projections indicate mixed climatic conditions, authorities are advised to closely monitor evolving weather patterns, particularly the development of a potential “super” El Niño. If such signals persist, proactive measures such as drought preparedness and water management may become necessary. Overall, the IMD’s forecast highlights the increasing variability in India’s climate and the need for adaptive planning across sectors.

SC wants practical SOP to combat human trafficking

The Supreme Court of India has called for the formulation of a practical, time-sensitive, and uniform Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to effectively combat human trafficking cases. The directive emphasises the need for an actionable framework that can be implemented immediately at the local police station level, ensuring prompt and coordinated responses.

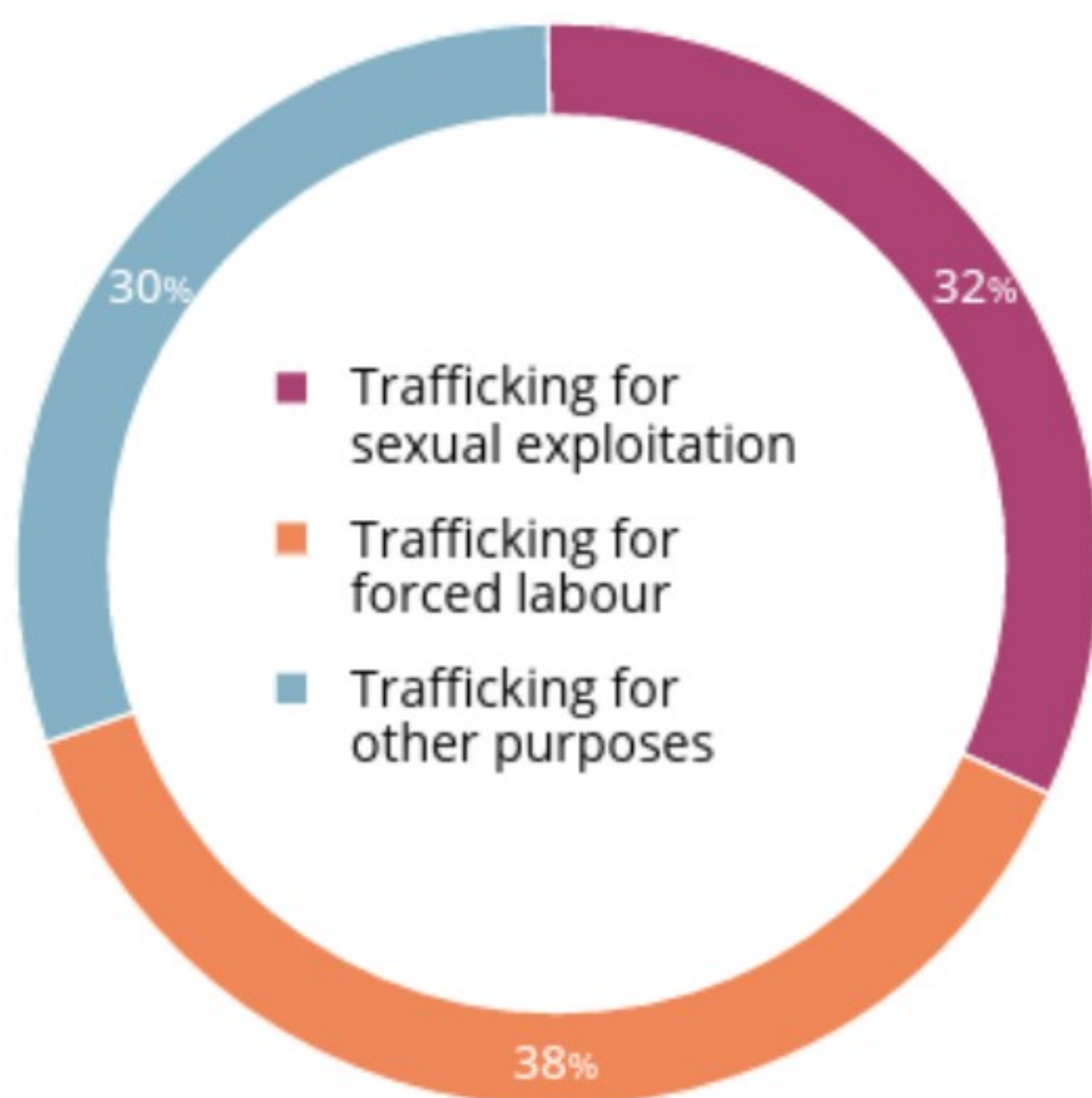
Focus on Practical Implementation

A Bench headed by Justice Ahsanuddin Amanullah clarified that the objective is not to create a theoretical or academic model, but a functional strategy that law enforcement agencies can adopt without delay. The Court stressed that the SOP must be grounded in real-world applicability and operational efficiency.

Time Sensitivity in Missing Persons Cases

Highlighting the urgency involved, the Court noted that time is of the “greatest importance” from the moment a missing person complaint is filed. Immediate action is critical, as delays can significantly reduce the chances of tracing victims and preventing trafficking networks from operating further.

Fig. 150 Share of victims detected in East Asia and the Pacific, by forms of exploitation, 2022 (or most recent)*



Source: UNODC elaboration of national data.

* Extrapolation based on data on sex and age of 2,891 victims detected in 19 countries and territories in East Asia and the Pacific.

Need for a Structured Procedural Framework

The proposed SOP is expected to establish a clear procedural framework for police authorities, ensuring that investigations are initiated swiftly and pursued rigorously. The Court reiterated that cases must remain actively investigated on the ground until the missing individual is located, rather than being treated as routine or inactive records.

Stakeholder Consultation Across Jurisdictions

To develop comprehensive guidelines, the Court has directed the Union Home Secretary, along with Home Secretaries and Directors-General of Police of all States and Union Territories, to engage in consultations with relevant stakeholders working on human trafficking issues. These discussions are intended to generate specific and actionable proposals.

31% increase in child trafficking victims.



Source: UN Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2024

Constitution of Expert Committee

To assist in this process, the Court has constituted a committee comprising P. M. Nair, Veerendra Kumar Mishra, and S. D. Sanjay. Additionally, senior advocate H. S. Phoolka has been consulted, given his prior role in assisting the Delhi High Court in framing SOPs on trafficking cases.

Stakeholder Consultation Across Jurisdictions

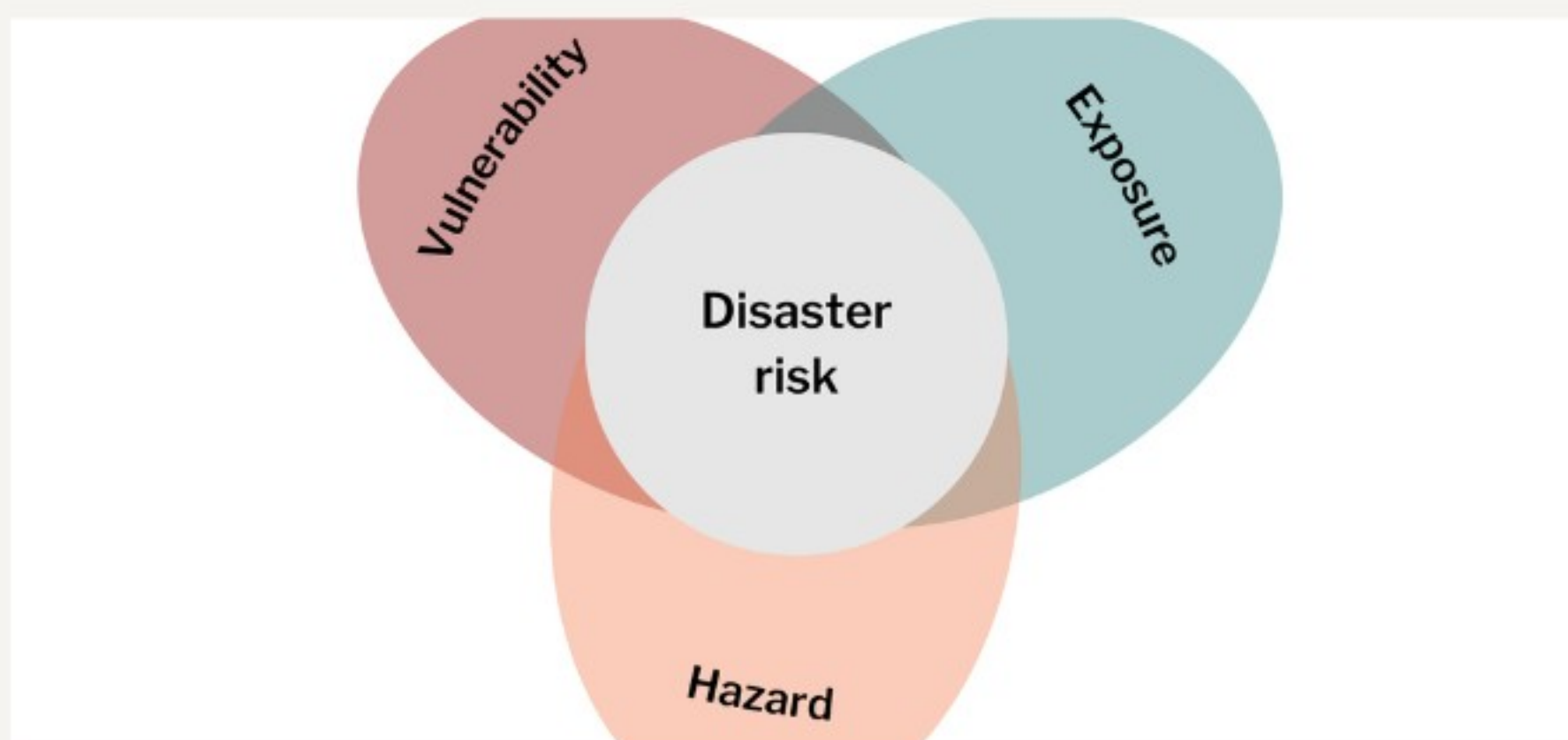
The Court has signalled at a time-bound approach to finalising the SOP. This initiative reflects a broader judicial effort to strengthen institutional mechanisms and ensure a more responsive and coordinated approach to tackling human trafficking in India.

Counting people is not counting disaster risk

Odisha, one of India's most disaster-prone States with a 574.7-km coastline, has historically faced severe cyclones but significantly reduced mortality through investments in early warning systems, shelters, and evacuation mechanisms. Despite this, the 16th Finance Commission of India has reduced Odisha's disaster funding share by 1.57 percentage points compared to the 15th Finance Commission of India, raising concerns about the allocation framework.

Shift in Allocation Formula

The 16th Finance Commission allocated ₹2,04,401 crore to State Disaster Response Funds (SDRF), marking a 59.5% increase. It adopted a multiplicative Disaster Risk Index (DRI = Hazard × Exposure × Vulnerability), replacing the earlier additive model. While conceptually sound, this approach links disaster risk to the interaction of hazard, population exposure, and vulnerability.

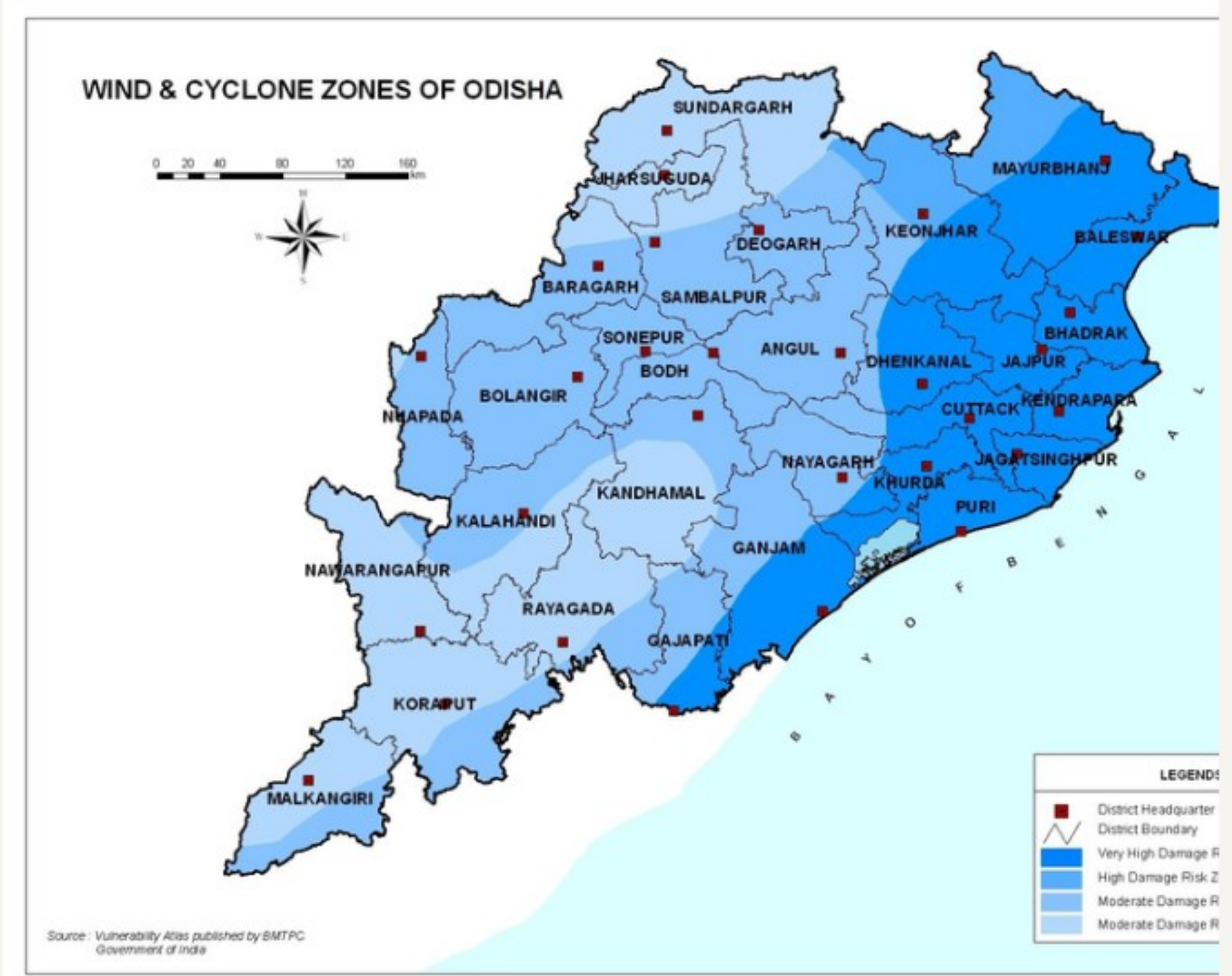


Flaws in Measuring Exposure

A key issue lies in how "exposure" is calculated. The Commission uses total State population, scaled from 1 to 25, rather than population residing in hazard-prone areas. This contradicts the definition of exposure by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which emphasises populations at risk rather than total population.

Distorted Risk Outcomes

This methodology produces skewed outcomes. Odisha, despite having the highest hazard score (12), receives a lower DRI (79.8) due to its smaller population score (5), compared to Uttar Pradesh (413.2) and Bihar (224.2), which face comparatively lower hazards but larger populations. Thus, demographic size disproportionately influences funding.



Limitations of Vulnerability Metrics

Vulnerability is assessed using per capita Net State Domestic Product (NSDP), assuming poorer States are more vulnerable. However, this overlooks multidimensional factors such as housing quality, health infrastructure, and disaster preparedness. For instance, Kerala, despite suffering ₹31,000 crore flood damages in 2018, receives a low vulnerability score (1.073) due to higher income levels.

Broader Implications

The current framework has led to 20 States losing relative funding share, particularly those that are smaller or relatively wealthier. This indicates that the formula may not accurately reflect real disaster risks but instead favours population-heavy States, undermining the intent of risk-based allocation.

Suggested Reforms and Way Forward

A more accurate approach would measure exposure as population within hazard zones using tools like the Building Materials and Technology Promotion Council Vulnerability Atlas. Vulnerability should be a composite index incorporating housing conditions, health infrastructure, agricultural dependence, and early warning systems, drawing on datasets such as NFHS-5, PMFBY, NHM, and India Meteorological Department records. Institutionalising such metrics through the National Disaster Management Authority could ensure more accurate and equitable disaster funding in the face of increasing climate risks.

The Indian EXPRESS

A task still lies ahead in former Red Corridor

The Maoist insurgency has significantly weakened due to sustained security operations alongside expanded development initiatives. The decline reflects both the military setbacks faced by insurgents and a growing disillusionment with violent methods, with increasing acceptance of democratic processes. Improved state presence through infrastructure, welfare delivery, financial inclusion, and targeted interventions has played a key role. However, the underlying structural issues—uneven development, weak institutional reach, land acquisition concerns, and environmental stress—remain inadequately addressed. While the combined approach of force and development has proven effective in curbing insurgency, long-term stability depends on strengthening governance, ensuring equitable development, and building trust among marginalised communities.

Editorial to Exam - Most probable question from this editorial

“Despite the recent decline of Left-Wing Extremism in India, structural challenges continue to persist.”

Discuss the factors behind the weakening of the Maoist insurgency and examine the extent to which development and governance deficits still pose a threat to long-term internal security.



Unexpected surge

India's industrial output recorded an unexpected acceleration in February 2026, with growth rising to 5.2% despite a slowdown in the eight core sectors, indicating strong performance in non-core areas, particularly manufacturing. The sector expanded at 6%, while capital goods growth surged to a 28-month high, signalling improving investment activity and potential gains for employment and capacity creation. However, the divergence between the Index of Industrial Production and the core industries index raises concerns about data consistency and underlying sectoral imbalances. The forthcoming revision in IIP data is expected to offer a more accurate assessment of economic conditions, highlighting both strengths and vulnerabilities.

Editorial to Exam - Most probable question from this editorial

“India's recent industrial growth reflects both resilience and emerging vulnerabilities.”

Examine the factors behind the recent acceleration in industrial output and analyse the challenges posed by weak consumer demand and sectoral imbalances.

thehindu**businessline.**

TUESDAY - MARCH 31, 2026

Existential crisis

The recent WTO Ministerial highlights concerns over the organisation's declining relevance. India's stance on key issues reflects an effort to safeguard policy autonomy, particularly in opposing the extension of the e-commerce tariff moratorium to retain the ability to tax a growing digital economy. Its resistance to the Investment Facilitation for Development proposal underscores apprehensions about plurilateral agreements undermining consensus-based multilateralism and constraining domestic policy space. At the same time, unresolved issues such as the TRIPS-related moratorium remain significant for ensuring access to affordable medicines.

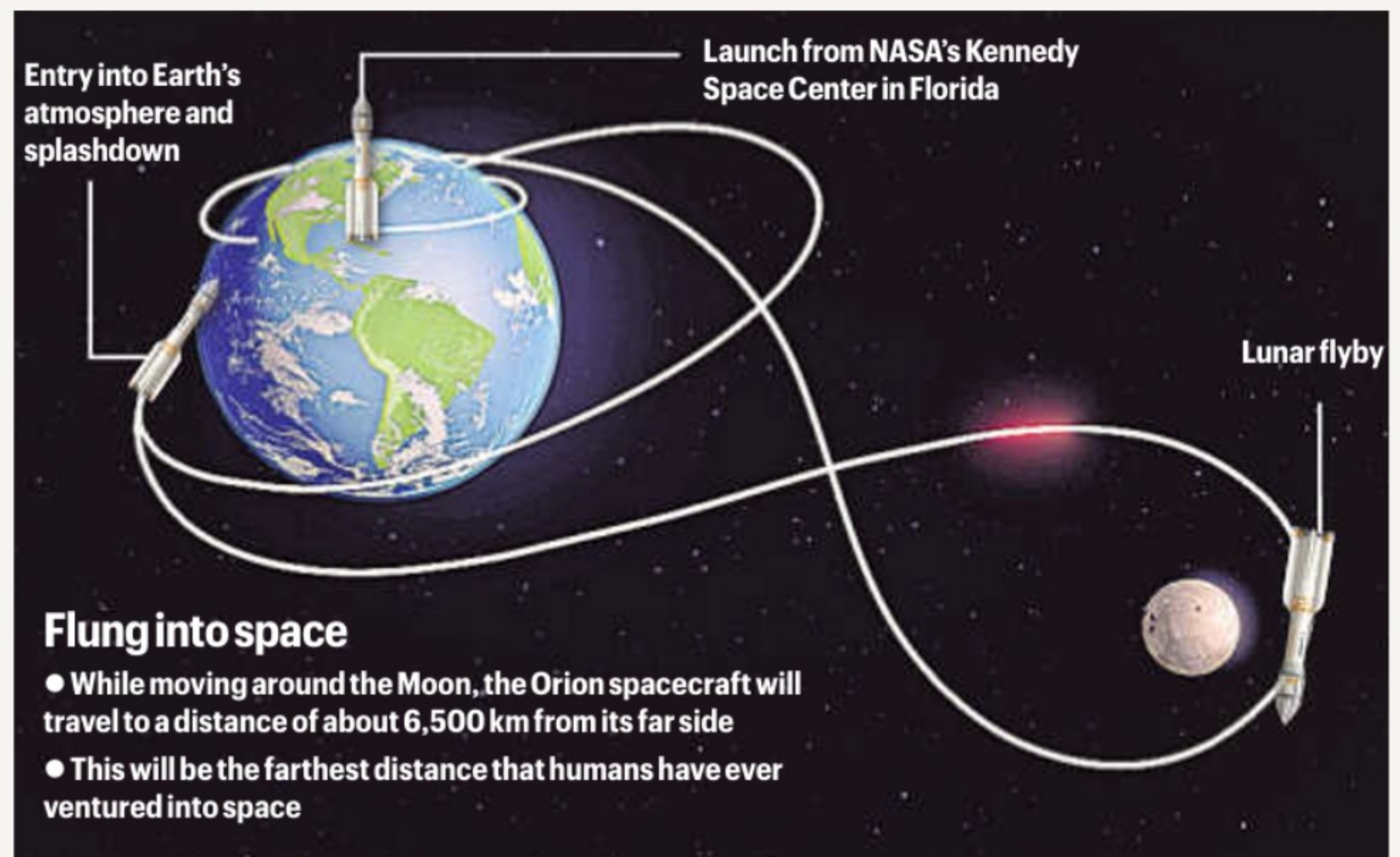
The broader challenge lies in the erosion of foundational WTO principles, including equitable consensus and the focus on trade as a tool for development. Major economies have increasingly bypassed or weakened these norms through unilateral tariffs, selective agreements, and strategic trade practices, reducing the institution's effectiveness.

Editorial to Exam - Most probable question from this editorial

“WTO's relevance is increasingly questioned in the evolving global trade order.”
Discuss.

How NASA will fly astronauts to the Moon and back for Artemis II

The NASA is set to launch the Artemis II mission, marking the first human journey to the Moon's vicinity since the Apollo program ended in 1972. The mission will carry four astronauts on a 10-day flyby around the Moon without landing, serving as a critical step toward future lunar exploration.



Mission Objectives and Timeline

Artemis II is designed as a test mission to validate systems required for human spaceflight beyond Earth's orbit. The spacecraft will orbit the Moon and return to Earth, laying the groundwork for a planned follow-up mission in 2028, which aims to land astronauts on the lunar surface.



Vulnerability of U.S. Assets in the Region

The mission will begin with two orbits around Earth before heading toward the Moon. Upon reaching lunar proximity, the spacecraft will circle the Moon and then initiate its return journey. During this phase, the Orion spacecraft is expected to travel approximately 6,500 km beyond the far side of the Moon—making it the farthest distance humans have ever travelled in space. In comparison, Apollo missions orbited at about 110 km above the lunar surface.

Travel Time and Route Efficiency

Artemis II will take about three to four days to reach the Moon's vicinity, similar to the timeline of Apollo missions. In contrast, recent uncrewed missions such as Chandrayaan-3 have taken several weeks to months, using more fuel-efficient but longer trajectories. Faster routes like Artemis II require significantly more powerful launch systems.

Launch Systems and Technology

The mission will utilise NASA's Space Launch System (SLS), currently the most powerful operational rocket, along with the Orion spacecraft. Both systems were previously tested during Artemis I in 2022, an uncrewed mission that followed a similar trajectory but remained in space for about 25 days. Artemis II marks their first use for carrying astronauts.

Comparison with Earlier Missions

While the Apollo missions used the Saturn V—still considered the most powerful rocket ever built—Artemis represents a new generation of lunar exploration technology. The current mission prioritises system validation and safety before attempting a crewed lunar landing in future missions.

The Artemis II launch had been postponed earlier, but current forecasts indicate an approximately 80% chance of favourable weather conditions for liftoff. As a preparatory mission, its success will be crucial in shaping the next phase of human exploration of the Moon and beyond.

What happens when CAD rises

The recent escalation of conflict in West Asia has driven global oil prices upward, placing pressure on India's external sector. Despite strong economic growth and relatively stable inflation, the rupee has weakened and financial markets have turned volatile. This reflects the dominance of short-term external shocks—particularly rising oil prices and a stronger dollar—over domestic macroeconomic fundamentals.

The Disconnect Between Fundamentals and Currency Movement

India's macroeconomic indicators remain robust: growth is projected at 7.4%, inflation is contained, foreign exchange reserves stand at about \$701.4 billion, and the current account deficit (CAD) is around 0.8% of GDP. However, the rupee depreciated by over 5% last year and continues to remain weak. As a major oil importer, higher crude prices increase dollar demand, widen the trade deficit, and strain corporate margins. Simultaneously, tighter global financial conditions and reduced capital inflows have amplified pressure on the currency.

Role of Capital Flows and Risk Perception

In 2025, foreign portfolio investment declined, and net foreign direct investment weakened due to profit repatriation and rising outbound investments. This reduced the availability of "patient capital," making the rupee more sensitive to global risk sentiment. As oil importers required more dollars and investors shifted towards safer assets, the currency faced a dual pressure from both trade and financial channels.

Rupee Dynamics and Purchasing Power Parity

In the long run, currency valuation tends to align with fundamentals such as purchasing power parity (PPP), which estimates equilibrium exchange rates. Pre-shock estimates suggest that the rupee was about 18% undervalued relative to its PPP level. However, the adjustment process is slow, with a half-life of over five years. Only about 13% of misalignment corrects within one year, 25% in three years, and 44% in five years, indicating that short-term shocks can significantly disrupt the path to equilibrium.

Transmission of Oil Price Shocks

Higher oil prices directly increase India's import bill, widening the CAD before demand adjusts. While service exports and remittances provide some cushioning, sustained oil price increases exert cumulative pressure. According to global estimates, a 1% real increase in oil prices can worsen the current account balance by up to 0.08 percentage points of GDP over five years. For India, a sustained 10% increase in oil prices could deteriorate the current account by about 0.8 percentage points, while a 20% increase could push it to 1.6 percentage points.



Short-Term and Medium-Term Policy Responses

To manage immediate pressures, policymakers can use calibrated fuel tax adjustments, deploy foreign exchange reserves to stabilise volatility, and enhance risk management in oil imports through diversification and hedging. Over the medium term, strengthening capital inflows—especially stable, long-term investments like greenfield FDI—will be essential. Improving domestic financial markets and maintaining policy predictability can also reduce risk premiums.

Long-Term Structural Measures

Sustainable currency stability depends on improving India's external resilience. This includes enhancing export competitiveness, particularly in manufacturing, and accelerating energy security through diversification of crude sources, expansion of strategic reserves, and a faster transition to renewable energy. Strengthening energy efficiency and reducing dependence on imports will be critical. Overall, the episode highlights the need to address structural vulnerabilities in both energy dependence and capital flow composition to ensure long-term currency stability.

PRELIMS CORNER :

1) Consider the following dynasties (2023) :

1. Hoysala
2. Gahadavala
3. Kakatiya
4. Yadava

How many of the above dynasties established their kingdoms in early eighth century AD?

- a) Only one
- b) Only two
- c) Only three
- d) None

2) Consider the following pairs: (2015)

Medieval Indian State	Present Region
1. Champaka	Central India
2. Durgara	Jammu
3. Kuluta	Malabar

Which of the above pairs is/are correctly matched?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 3 only

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HERITAGE

Advaita : Understanding the Philosophy of Non-Duality



Adi Shankaracharya developed Advaita Vedanta, a system that explains reality in a very simple but deep way. At its core, Advaita says that there is only one ultimate reality, called Brahman, which is infinite, formless, and beyond all distinctions. What we call the individual self (Atman) is not separate from this reality—both are actually the same.

However, in everyday life, we experience the world as divided into many people, objects, and events. Advaita explains this through the idea of Maya, or illusion. Because of ignorance (Avidya), we fail to see the underlying unity and instead perceive differences and separations. This does not mean the world does not exist, but that our understanding of it is incomplete.

A simple way to understand this is through the example of a dream. While dreaming, everything feels real—joy, fear, and events all seem true. But once we wake up, we realise it was only a projection of the mind. Similarly, Advaita suggests that our waking world appears separate and real only because we have not yet “awakened” to the deeper truth of oneness. Understanding this unity is not immediate. It requires reflection, learning, and inner discipline. Over time, as one gains clarity, the sense of separation reduces, and one begins to see the essential oneness of existence.

Prelims Corner: Explanations

1) The correct answer is (d)

The Hoysala Empire was a Kannadiga power originating from the Indian subcontinent that ruled most of what is now Karnataka between the 10th and the 14th centuries.

The Kakatiya dynasty was a Telugu dynasty that ruled most of the eastern Deccan region in present-day India between the 12th and 14th centuries.

The Seuna, Sevuna, or Yadavas of Devagiri was a Medieval Indian dynasty, (12th and 13th century) which at its peak ruled a kingdom stretching from the Narmada river in the north to the Tungabhadra river in the south. The Yadava kingdom reached its peak under Simhana II, and flourished until the early 14th century, when it was annexed by the Khalji dynasty of the Delhi Sultanate in 1308 CE. The Gahadavala dynasty was a Rajput dynasty that ruled parts of the present day Indian state of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, during 11th and 12th centuries.

2) The correct answer is (b)

1. Champaka - Central India: This is Incorrect. Champaka was an ancient kingdom, but it is typically associated with the region of modern-day Tamil Nadu and Kerala, not Central India. There is no historical evidence to suggest that Champaka was located in Central India.

2. Durgara - Jammu: Correct. Durgara was a medieval Indian state that corresponds to the region of Jammu in present-day Jammu and Kashmir. Durgara was an important political entity in the region during medieval times.

3. Kuluta - Malabar: This is Incorrect. Kuluta was a historical region located in the Himachal Pradesh and Punjab area, not in Malabar (which is in the southwestern part of India, primarily in Kerala). Kuluta was known for its unique geographical and cultural aspects, situated to the north of the Malabar region.



Hoysala Sculptures



Gahadavala Coinage



Kakatiya Architecture



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