

# THE PALA CIVIL TIMES



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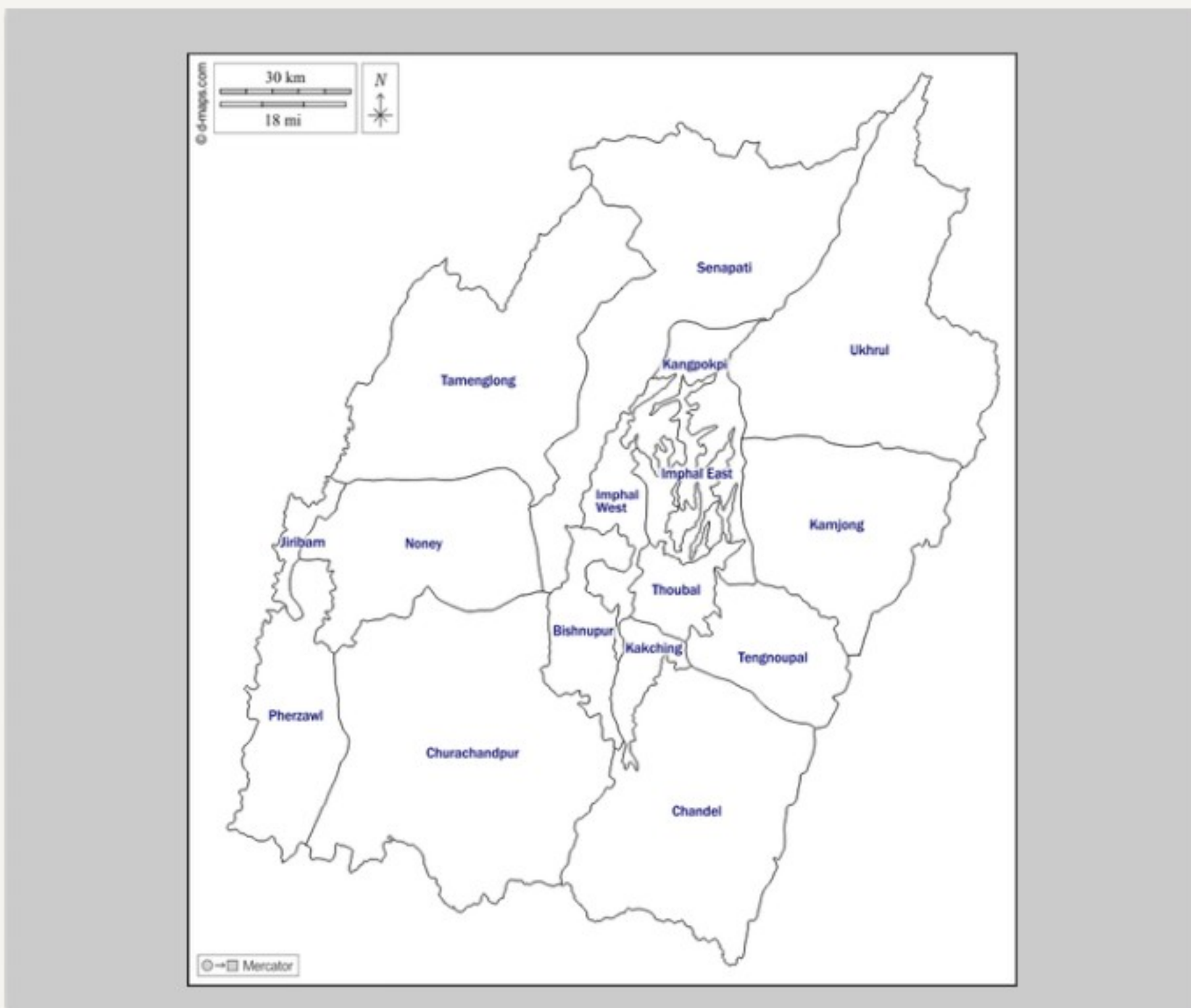
India has withdrawn its bid to host COP33 in 2028 after reviewing its commitments, despite earlier backing at COP28 and BRICS. The move shifts the spotlight to other contenders, with South Korea currently the only interested host. While stepping back from hosting, India continues to advance its climate commitments, including ambitious updated targets on non-fossil energy capacity, emissions intensity reduction, and carbon sink expansion.

# The long, fractured history of Manipur, and the road ahead

Fresh violence in Manipur in April 2026, triggered by the killing of two children in Bishnupur district, highlights the continuation of a prolonged ethnic conflict. Since May 2023, clashes between the **Meitei community in the valley** and **Kuki-Zo tribes in the hills** have resulted in over 260 deaths and displacement of more than 60,000 people.

## Historical Background of the Conflict

The roots of the conflict lie in long-standing divisions between valley and hill communities. Colonial policies reinforced this divide by separating administrative and social structures. Post-independence developments, including the 1949 merger and land laws restricting land ownership in hill areas, further contributed to tensions.



## Structural Causes: Land, Identity, and Demography

The conflict is driven by competing claims over land, identity, and political rights. Meiteis, largely confined to the valley, have demanded Scheduled Tribe status to access land and reservations, while tribal groups fear loss of protections and demographic imbalance. Additional factors include migration pressures and economic activities such as poppy cultivation.

The Manipur conflict reflects deep-rooted historical and structural issues. While violence has reduced, long-term peace will depend on addressing underlying causes through inclusive and balanced policy measures.

## Immediate Trigger and Spread of Violence

The crisis escalated after a High Court directive in **April 2023** to consider **Meitei inclusion in the Scheduled Tribe list**. Protests and counter-mobilisation led to widespread violence starting May 3, 2023, which rapidly spread across districts. The situation worsened due to destruction of property, displacement, and breakdown of law and order.



## Current Situation: Fragile Stability

While the intensity of violence has reduced over time, sporadic incidents continue. Political instability led to a period of central rule, followed by restoration of an elected government in 2026. However, displacement, economic disruption, and social division remain significant challenges.

## Governance and Security Concerns

The conflict has raised concerns about governance, including law enforcement challenges and the emergence of armed groups exercising local control. Continued deployment of central forces indicates that the situation remains sensitive and requires sustained monitoring.

## Way Forward: Key Measures

The path ahead requires disarmament, inclusive dialogue among communities, and addressing core issues such as land rights and development gaps. There is also a need for accountability, rehabilitation of displaced populations, and efforts to rebuild trust between communities.

## Top 10% rural households own 44% land in India: World Inequality Lab study findings

A recent working paper by the World Inequality Lab highlights the persistence of high land inequality in rural India. Based on data from the Socio-Economic Caste Census 2011, covering ~650 million individuals across 10 major states, the study provides a comprehensive picture of land ownership patterns and disparities.

### Key Facts and Data on Land Distribution

Land ownership is highly skewed, with the top 10% of rural households owning 44% of total land, while the top 5% and 1% hold 32% and 18%, respectively. At the same time, nearly 46% of rural households are landless. At the village level, the largest landholder controls about 12.4% of land on average, and in 3.8% of villages, a single landlord owns more than half the land, indicating extreme concentration.

### Inter-State Variations in Inequality

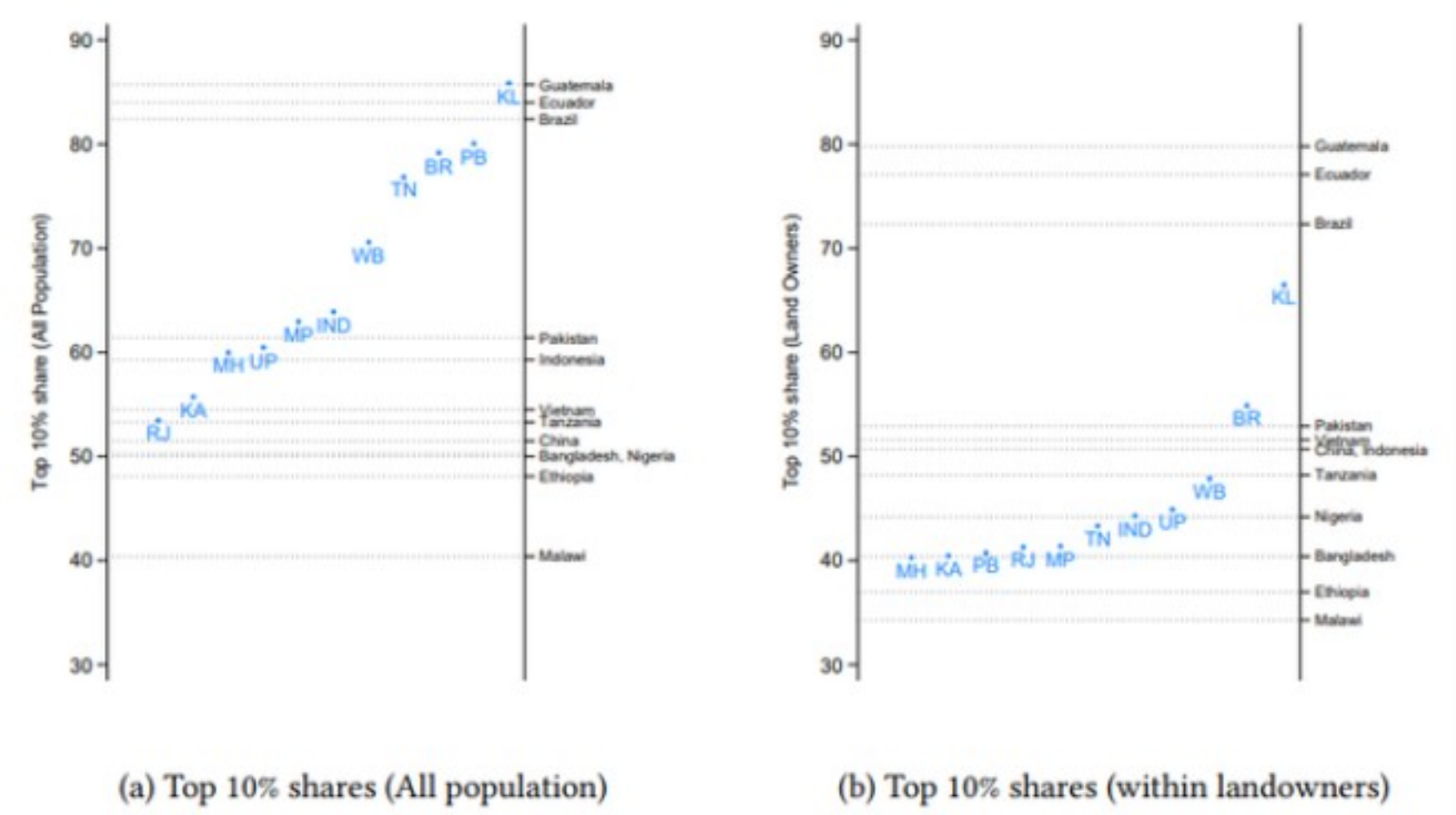
Significant regional disparities exist. Bihar shows the highest concentration, with the top household owning up to 20.1% of land, while Uttar Pradesh records a lower 7.3%. Punjab has the highest landlessness (73%) despite advanced agriculture. Using the Gini coefficient, Kerala ranks highest (~90), followed by Bihar, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal (~80), while Karnataka and Rajasthan show relatively lower inequality (<65).

### Landholding Patterns and Structural Features

Among landed households, the average holding size is 6.2 hectares. However, a large proportion of land is concentrated in small holdings: 28.9% with 0–1 hectare and 48.6% with 1–2 hectares. Despite this, overall inequality remains high due to widespread landlessness, which significantly inflates inequality measures.

Land inequality in rural India remains deeply entrenched, shaped by structural, social, and historical factors. Addressing it requires comprehensive land reforms, improved access to land records, targeted support for small and marginal farmers, and inclusive rural development policies to ensure equitable and sustainable growth.

Figure B1: Land Area Inequality in Comparison with Other Countries



(a) Top 10% shares (All population)

(b) Top 10% shares (within landowners)

Notes: The figure represents the average village-level land inequality (top 10% shares) among the total population and among landowners (excluding the landless) in ten large Indian states, compared with other countries (Bauluz et al., 2025). RJ—Rajasthan; KA—Karnataka; UP—Uttar Pradesh; MH—Maharashtra; MP—Madhya Pradesh; WB—West Bengal; TN—Tamil Nadu; BR—Bihar; PB—Punjab; KL—Kerala.

### Determinants of Land Inequality

Agricultural suitability and market access explain about 18.3% of variation in inequality. Regions with better agro-ecological conditions tend to have higher land concentration. Proximity to towns, roads, and markets has not reduced inequality; rather, such areas often show higher concentration. Social factors also matter—areas with higher Scheduled Caste populations exhibit greater inequality, primarily driven by landlessness.

### Historical and Institutional Factors

Historical land systems continue to shape present patterns. Areas under the Zamindari system show higher inequality due to dominance of large landlords and fewer small farmers. In contrast, former princely states exhibit relatively lower inequality, mainly due to a smaller proportion of landless households. This highlights the long-term persistence of institutional legacies.

### Implications for Governance and Economy

High land inequality has significant implications: it constrains agricultural productivity, limits equitable growth, and reinforces rural poverty and social exclusion. Landlessness, particularly among marginalized communities, exacerbates income inequality and reduces access to credit, markets, and welfare schemes. It also affects rural consumption patterns and overall economic development.

## US-Iran ceasefire, and what it means for India

A two-week ceasefire has been agreed between the United States and Iran following over a month of intense hostilities that disrupted regional stability. The conflict had escalated with Iran's blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, severely affecting global energy flows and triggering sharp increases in oil and gas prices.



### Key Features of the Ceasefire Agreement

A two-week ceasefire has been agreed between the United States and Iran following over a month of intense hostilities that disrupted regional stability. The conflict had escalated with Iran's blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, severely affecting global energy flows and triggering sharp increases in oil and gas prices.

### Competing Strategic Positions: Iran vs US

Iran has proposed a 10-point peace plan demanding recognition of its uranium enrichment programme, lifting of sanctions, release of frozen assets, and US military withdrawal from the region, along with continued control over the strait. In contrast, the US has insisted on the complete and safe reopening of the strait and has rejected uranium enrichment, while signalling that broader negotiations are progressing. This reflects a classic conflict between strategic sovereignty (Iran) and non-proliferation/security concerns (US).

The ceasefire provides temporary relief to global energy markets and countries like India but does not resolve underlying strategic tensions. The episode highlights the fragility of energy supply chains and the need for long-term strategies such as diversification, diplomatic engagement, and strengthening maritime security to mitigate future risks.

### Strait of Hormuz: Strategic and Economic Significance

The Strait of Hormuz remains one of the world's most critical energy chokepoints, handling a significant share of global oil and gas trade. The temporary blockade highlighted the vulnerability of global supply chains. Although shipping is resuming, Iran's imposition of supervision and transit fees introduces a new dimension of economic and strategic control over maritime trade routes.

### Impact on Global Energy Markets

The blockade caused immediate disruptions in oil and gas supplies, leading to price volatility and supply uncertainty. While the ceasefire has eased short-term pressures, normalization of supply chains is expected to take time. The episode underscores the sensitivity of global energy markets to geopolitical tensions and chokepoint disruptions.

### Implications for India

India faced significant energy security concerns due to its heavy dependence on the Strait of Hormuz—over 60% of LPG imports, 30% of crude oil, and 47% of natural gas transit through this route. The disruption led to domestic supply strain, price increases, and reliance on costlier alternative sources. The ceasefire offers immediate relief, though long-term vulnerabilities remain, highlighting the need for diversification of energy sources and supply routes.

### Broader Geopolitical and Diplomatic Implications

The ceasefire reflects the growing role of non-Western actors in conflict mediation, indicating a shift toward multipolar diplomacy. It also demonstrates how economic pressures and energy dependencies can drive de-escalation. The situation reinforces the importance of maritime security, strategic chokepoints, and the intersection of geopolitics with global economic stability.

**The Indian EXPRESS**

## Delhi, Dhaka must sidestep short-termism

India–Bangladesh relations, built over the past two decades on political stability and cooperation, are undergoing a phase of recalibration following political changes in Bangladesh and the ouster of the previous regime. While contentious issues such as demands for extradition reflect domestic political signalling, both sides appear willing to adopt a pragmatic approach to restore ties. Key areas of engagement include renewal of the Ganga Water Treaty, enhancement of energy cooperation, easing of visa processes, and continued collaboration on border management.

The evolving relationship highlights the need to balance political sensitivities with long-term strategic interests rooted in shared geography, history, and economic interdependence.

Strengthening cooperation through regional frameworks and connectivity initiatives will be essential for mutual benefit.

**Editorial to Exam - Most probable question from this editorial**

*“India–Bangladesh relations are shaped by both domestic political developments and shared strategic interests.” Discuss the challenges and opportunities in India–Bangladesh relations in the context of recent political changes in Bangladesh, and examine the measures needed to sustain a stable and mutually beneficial partnership.*



## Timely inaction

The RBI Monetary Policy Committee’s decision to hold interest rates reflects a cautious response to prevailing global and domestic uncertainties, particularly the dual challenge of inflationary pressures and slowing growth. With geopolitical tensions in West Asia, supply chain disruptions, and uncertainties in global trade and climate conditions, monetary policy faces limitations in addressing supply-driven inflation without adversely affecting growth. Raising rates could dampen economic activity without effectively controlling inflation, while lowering them risks exacerbating price pressures.

Growth projections remain uncertain, with potential slowdowns in industrial output and demand, even as inflation is expected to rise moderately. In this context, the “wait and watch” approach underscores the need for policy prudence amid evolving risks.

**Editorial to Exam - Most probable question from this editorial**

*“Monetary policy faces inherent trade-offs between controlling inflation and sustaining economic growth, especially under external shocks.” Discuss the rationale behind a cautious monetary policy stance in the current global context, and examine the limitations of monetary policy in addressing supply-side inflation in India.*

thehindu**businessline.**

TUESDAY - MARCH 31, 2026

## Cease and desist

The temporary ceasefire between the U.S. and Iran marks a pause in a conflict that triggered significant global economic and geopolitical disruptions, particularly through its impact on oil supply and trade routes such as the Strait of Hormuz. The easing of tensions has stabilised markets, but underlying uncertainties persist as negotiations unfold with competing demands from both sides, including issues of sanctions, nuclear policy, and control over strategic waterways. Iran’s ability to leverage asymmetric strategies and disrupt global oil flows highlights shifting power dynamics, while the U.S. faces economic and diplomatic pressures.

The situation underscores the broader implications of geopolitical conflicts on global stability, especially energy security and trade. While the ceasefire offers short-term relief, the durability of peace remains uncertain, with potential long-term consequences for international alignments. For countries like India, the evolving scenario presents both economic respite and strategic complexity, necessitating careful navigation of competing global interests.

**Editorial to Exam - Most probable question from this editorial**

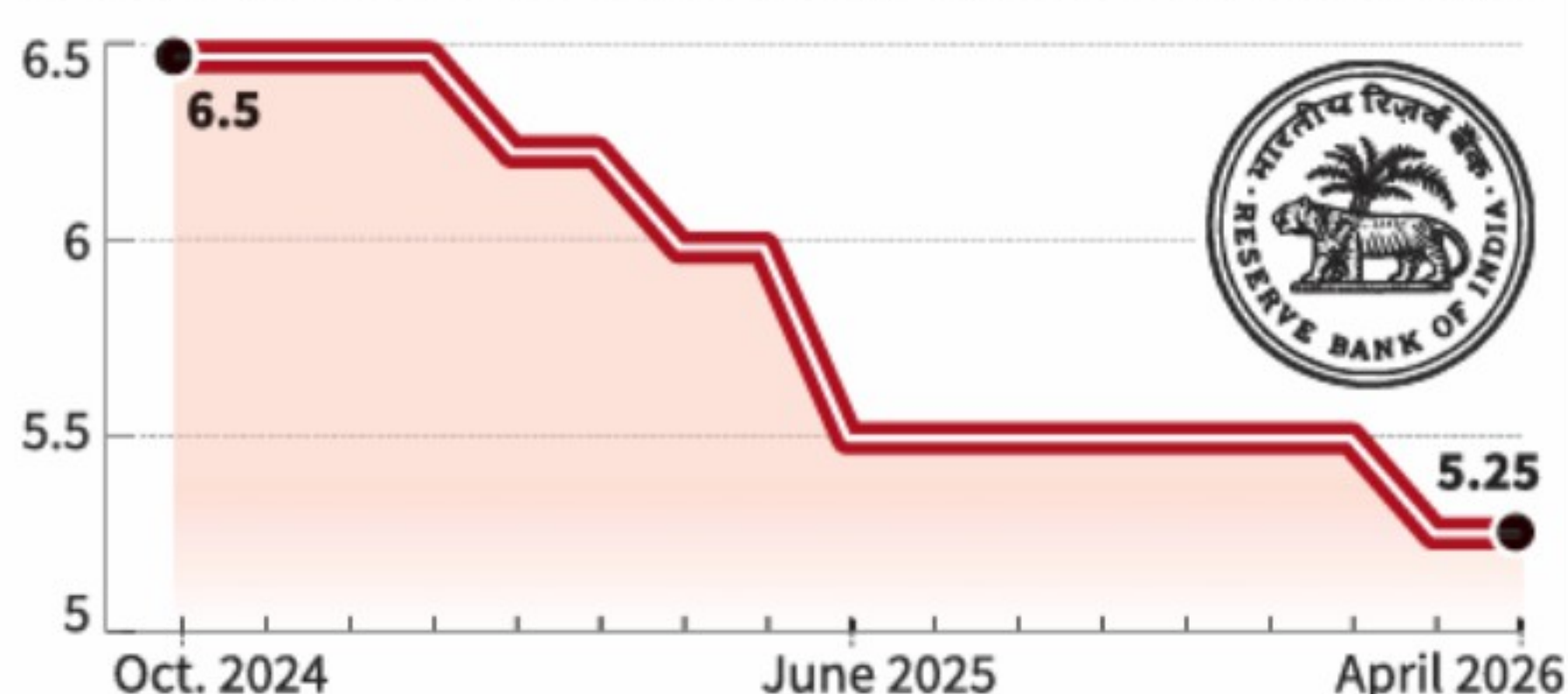
*“Geopolitical conflicts in West Asia have far-reaching implications for global energy security and economic stability.” Discuss the impact of the recent U.S.–Iran tensions on global markets and strategic alignments, and examine the challenges and opportunities they present for India’s foreign and economic policy.*

## MPC factors in cease re to keep repo rate unchanged

The Reserve Bank of India's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) adopted a cautious "wait and watch" approach in its first FY27 meeting, keeping the **repo rate unchanged** at 5.25% and maintaining a 'neutral' stance. The decision, taken unanimously, reflects concerns over global uncertainties, particularly the spillover effects of the West Asia conflict. Other key rates such as CRR (3%), SDF (5.0%), MSF (5.5%) and Bank Rate (5.5%) were also left in neutral stance.

### Rate pause

The Monetary Policy Committee unanimously decided to keep the repo rate under the liquidity adjustment facility unchanged



### Impact of Global Factors

The West Asia conflict has emerged as a major external shock, disrupting energy markets, fertilizer supplies, and trade flows. Elevated crude oil prices may increase imported inflation and widen the current account deficit. Additionally, weaker global growth prospects could reduce export demand and remittance inflows, while financial market volatility may tighten domestic liquidity conditions.

### Monetary Policy Constraints

The RBI faces a structural dilemma where policy tools like repo rate adjustments have limited effectiveness against supply-driven inflation. Tightening rates could dampen growth without easing inflation, while easing rates may worsen price pressures. The situation highlights the limitations of monetary policy in addressing external shocks and supply constraints.

### Regulatory and Financial Sector Measures

The RBI announced several supportive measures, including simplifying MSME onboarding in TReDS, allowing NBFCs and financial institutions to participate in the term money market, and revising norms related to capital adequacy and bank governance. These steps aim to improve liquidity, credit flow, and financial sector efficiency.

### War impact

Growth projection revised downwards			Inflation estimates increased			Repo rate remains unchanged	
Real GDP growth projections (in %)			CPI inflation projections (in %)			Repo rate (in %)	
	Feb MPC	April MPC*		Feb MPC	April MPC*		
2025-26	7.4	7.6	Q1 2026-27	4.0	4.0	April 2025	6
Q1 2026-27	6.9	6.8	Q2 2026-27	4.2	4.4	June 2025	5.5
Q2 2026-27	7.0	6.7	Q3 2026-27	-	5.2	Dec 2025	5.25
Q3 2026-27	-	7.0	Q4 2026-27	-	4.7	Feb 2026	5.25
Q4 2026-27	-	7.2	2026-27	-	4.6	Apr 2026	5.25
2026-27	-	6.9					

\*April MPC uses new GDP series (base year 2022-23)  
\*April MPC uses new CPI series (base 2024=100)

Source: RBI

### Growth Projections and Economic Outlook

The RBI projects India's real GDP growth at **6.9%** for FY27, **lower than the FY26 estimate** of 7.6%. Quarterly projections indicate a slight moderation in the first half of the year, followed by gradual recovery. The downgrade reflects concerns over **weakening global demand, supply disruptions, and domestic constraints** affecting industrial and overall economic activity.

### Inflation Trends and Risks

**Retail inflation** is projected at **4.6%** for FY27, with core inflation (projected for the first time) at **4.4%**. Quarterly trends show a rising trajectory, peaking in the third quarter. Inflation risks are tilted upwards due to rising global crude oil prices and supply-side disruptions, indicating that price pressures are largely driven by external factors rather than domestic demand.

The MPC's cautious stance underscores the need for policy prudence amid heightened global uncertainties. While short-term stability is prioritised, addressing supply-side constraints, strengthening domestic demand, and coordinating with fiscal policy will be crucial to sustain growth while keeping inflation in check.

## Indian scientists find new way to measure distances in deep space

Indian astronomers, including researchers from IIT-Kanpur, have developed a refined method to measure cosmic distances using pulsars. The study, published in the Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society, combines dispersion and scattering effects in pulsar signals to improve distance estimation, especially in complex regions like the Gum Nebula.

### Pulsars as Cosmic Tools

Pulsars are dense, rapidly rotating remnants of dead stars that emit highly regular radio pulses, functioning as precise cosmic clocks. Millisecond pulsars, which rotate hundreds of times per second, are particularly useful in astrophysical studies such as detecting gravitational waves through timing variations.

### Dispersion Measure (DM)

As pulsar signals travel through the interstellar medium, free electrons slow lower-frequency waves more than higher-frequency ones, causing delays. This delay, quantified as Dispersion Measure (DM), helps estimate electron density and thus distance. However, DM-based estimates depend on models of electron distribution, which are often unreliable in irregular regions like nebulae.

### Scattering and Scintillation Effects

Irregularities in ionised gas scatter radio waves, causing them to travel multiple paths and arrive at different times. This leads to brightness variations (scintillation) and signal stretching (scatter broadening). These effects provide additional information about turbulence, electron density, and the location of plasma along the signal path.

This development represents a significant scientific advancement by improving understanding of the interstellar medium and pulsar environments, while also enhancing the precision of astrophysical measurements such as gravitational wave detection. The ongoing analysis of nearly 300 pulsars could enable the creation of a more reliable, galaxy-wide model of electron distribution, strengthening observational astronomy. Beyond this, the method holds potential for studying extragalactic phenomena and refining cosmic distance measurements. Overall, by combining dispersion and scattering, the technique overcomes key limitations of earlier approaches in complex regions, and though it does not surpass parallax in accuracy, it meaningfully expands the scope and reliability of distance estimation in the universe.



### New Combined Method and Findings

The study integrates DM with scatter broadening to refine distance measurements. By modelling both effects together and introducing a parameter called the k-factor (capturing scattering variability), researchers achieved more accurate localisation of turbulent plasma regions. Application to 10 pulsars showed that much of the scattering originates from the Gum Nebula, and that the Vela Pulsar lies behind its front shell.

### Advantages and Limitations

The method improves reliability over DM-only estimates and has no strict distance limit, making it potentially useful for studying distant objects like fast radio bursts. However, it does not surpass parallax methods in accuracy and requires complex modelling, particularly in estimating the k-factor in heterogeneous regions.

## PRELIMS CORNER :

1) Who of the following was/were economic critic/critics of colonialism in India? (2015)

1. Dadabhai Naoroji
2. G. Subramania Iyer
3. R. C. Dutt

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

2) 1. The first woman President of the Indian National Congress was Sarojini Naidu.

2. The first Muslim President of the Indian National Congress was Badruddin Tyabji.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

**PRELIMS 2026  
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## HERITAGE Yashoda and Krishna



The painting by Raja Ravi Varma depicts a tender domestic moment where Yashoda is engaged in milking a cow as the infant Krishna approaches her, seeking attention and nourishment. The painting was documented in S. N. Joshi's 1911 publication under the title "Milching a Cow," and later popularised through a chromolithograph issued by the Ravi Varma Press as "Yashoda Krishna."



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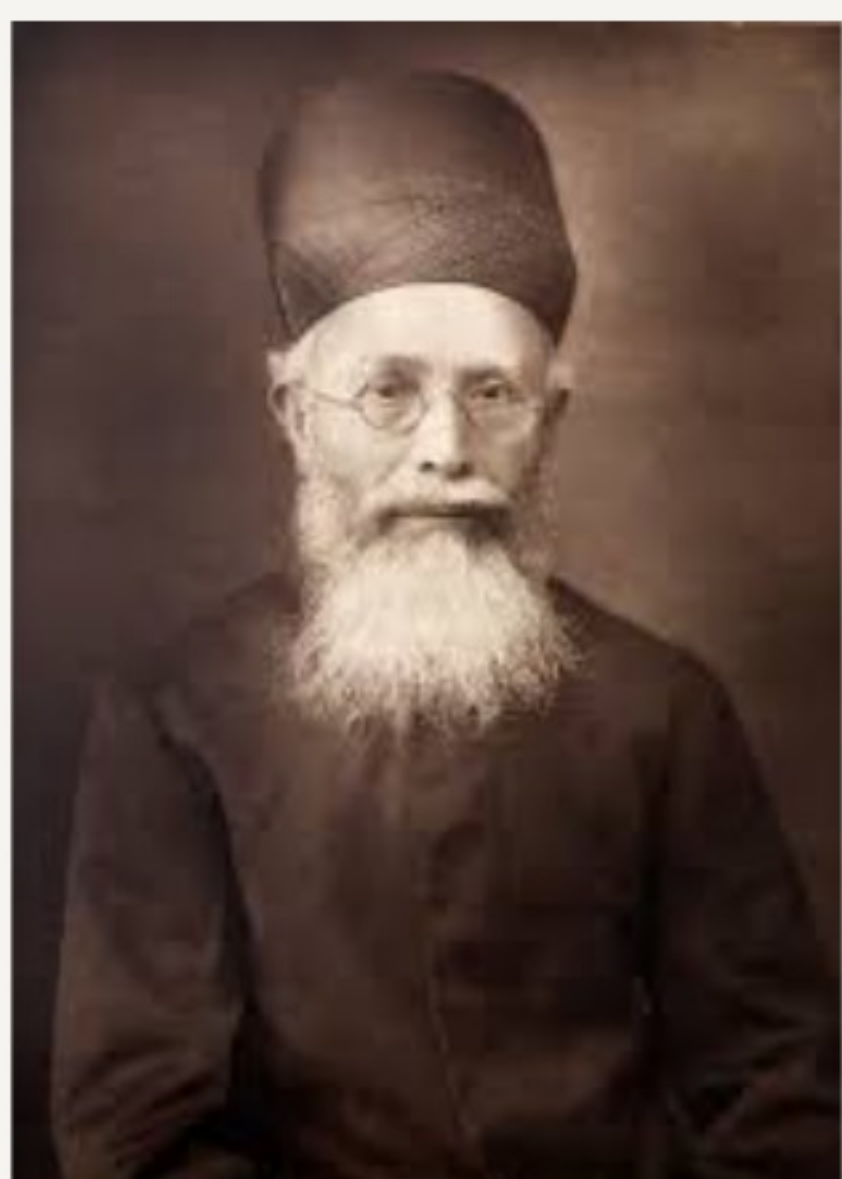
# Prelims Corner: Explanations

1) The correct answer is (D)

1. Statement: **Dadabhai Naoroji** was one of the earliest and most prominent economic critics of colonial rule in India. He propounded the Drain Theory in his book *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India*, demonstrating how Britain's colonial policies drained wealth and resources from India to Britain. He also highlighted issues like exploitation of Indian resources, unjust taxation, and the negative impact of British economic policies on Indian industries.

2. Statement: **G. Subramania Iyer** was a journalist and founder of *The Hindu* and *Swadesamitran*. He was vocal in criticizing the economic exploitation of India by the British, advocating for swadeshi (self-reliance) and economic self sufficiency to counter British exploitation. Through his writings, he exposed the injustices of colonial policies, particularly in agriculture and trade.

3. Statement: **R.C. Dutt (Romesh Chunder Dutt)** was another prominent critic of British economic policies in India. In his book *Economic History of India*, he analyzed how British policies led to the deindustrialization of India, famines, and the destruction of India's traditional economy. He highlighted the impact of land revenue systems, drain of wealth, and policies favoring British industries at the cost of Indian agriculture and handicrafts.



2) The correct answer is (b)

Statement 1: The first woman President of the Indian National Congress was Sarojini Naidu. This statement is incorrect. The first woman President of the Indian National Congress was Annie Besant in 1917, not Sarojini Naidu. Sarojini Naidu was the second woman and the first Indian woman to become the President of the Congress, presiding over the Kanpur session in 1925.

2. Statement 2: The first Muslim President of the Indian National Congress was Badruddin Tyabji. • This statement is correct. Badruddin Tyabji was the first Muslim President of the Indian National Congress, presiding over its third session in Madras (1887). The Indian National Congress played a pivotal role in India's freedom movement and saw leaders from diverse backgrounds. Annie Besant's presidency in 1917 marked a significant moment as the first woman to hold the position, and Badruddin Tyabji's presidency in 1887 highlighted the Congress's inclusive nature.



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