

UPSC with SAURABH KAUSHIK

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The Hindu · Indian Express | GS 1 · 2 · 3 + CME + Prelims + Mapping

[TH] The Hindu

[IE] Indian Express

GS PAPER 2 — Governance · Polity · International Relations · Social Justice

1. India and Slovakia Elevate Bilateral Ties to 'Comprehensive Partnership'

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GS 2: International Relations: India–Slovakia Comprehensive Partnership, India–EU relations, bilateral agreements, defence cooperation, labour migration, counter-terrorism cooperation, and international treaties affecting India's interests.

- ▶ June 15, 2026: PM Modi's first-ever visit to Slovakia (Bratislava) — first Indian PM visit since Slovakia's independence in 1993.
- ▶ Bilateral ties elevated to Comprehensive Partnership; 11 agreements signed.
- ▶ Slovakia PM Robert Fico called for India's permanent UNSC membership.
- ▶ India launched Slovakia's first satellite in 2017 — a long-standing symbol of bilateral cooperation.

Key Outcomes — 11 Agreements

- **Defence Cooperation:** Letter of Intent signed for joint development and production in the defence sector — Slovakia (an EU/NATO member with strong defence manufacturing) and India's Make in India defence ecosystem are complementary.
- **Digital Technology MoU:** Cooperation in digital public infrastructure, AI, and innovation; India's DPI model (UPI, Aadhaar, DigiLocker) to be shared with Slovak institutions.
- **Labour Migration MoU:** Agreement on mobility of skilled professionals; social security agreement to follow — safeguards for Indians working in Slovakia, which is part of the EU's single labour market.
- **Higher Education:** University-to-university linkages; Indian students in EU benefit from Slovakia as a lower-cost EU education destination.
- **Quantum Communication:** Research collaboration in quantum technologies — an emerging strategic domain where both countries have institutional strengths.
- **Trade Target:** Bilateral trade (~€1.3 billion); both sides agreed to leverage Slovakia's industrial strengths (automotive, electronics, advanced manufacturing) and India's scale. Slovakia supports early implementation of India–EU FTA.
- **Automobiles and Railways:** PM Modi specifically identified these as priority sectors; Slovakia is home to Volkswagen, Stellantis, and Kia plants — European automotive manufacturing hub.

Slovakia: Strategic Context

- Slovakia is a member of both the EU (since 2004) and NATO; it borders Ukraine and has been involved in discussions on European security. PM Fico, a controversial figure in the EU for his pro-Russia sympathies, has nevertheless maintained Slovakia's EU membership and NATO obligations.

- India's interest: As India implements the India–EU FTA (signed January 2026), Slovakia's manufacturing base makes it an important node in the India–EU production network; Slovak companies can manufacture goods for the EU market in collaboration with Indian firms.
- Slovak PM Fico's India interest: Slovakia's automotive and defence industries seek Indian market access; Slovakia sees India as a partner for manufacturing collaboration and digital transformation.

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- India–EU FTA Context: Slovakia's support for early implementation strengthens India's EU diplomatic position. Each EU member's support matters because FTA ratification requires all 27 member state parliamentary approvals.
- UNSC Reform: Fico's public call for India's permanent UNSC membership is diplomatically significant from a NATO/EU member — India's P5 bid gains another EU backer.
- Make in India + EU: Slovakia as a Central European manufacturing hub + India's low-cost, scale manufacturing = complementary production partnerships in EVs, rail, and electronics.

- **Comprehensive Partnership** — A bilateral framework indicating elevated cooperation across economic, security, diplomatic, and cultural domains; India has Comprehensive Partnerships with ~20 countries.
- **Visegrad Group (V4)** — Political alliance of Slovakia, Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary — central EU members with distinct policy positions; India's Slovakia engagement is a step into the V4 grouping.

2. 'India, Sweden not competing with one another, we can complete one another'

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GS 2: International Relations: India and Bilateral Relations with Foreign Countries; India–Europe Relations; India–Sweden Strategic Partnership; India's role in global governance, UNSC reforms, defence cooperation, trade agreements, critical minerals, and geopolitical developments.

- ▶ Context: PM Modi's Europe tour (May 2026) included Sweden; Swedish PM Ulf Kristersson met Modi and held talks on AI, clean energy, defence, and trade.
- ▶ Sweden upgraded ties to Strategic Partnership in May 2026 during Modi's visit.
- ▶ Sweden is home to Saab (Gripen jets), Volvo, IKEA, Ericsson, ABB — companies with major India interests.
- ▶ Sweden joined NATO in March 2024 — its strategic context has shifted toward collective Western security.

Why 'Complementary' Not 'Competing'

- Sweden is a high-wage, high-skill, green-tech economy; India is a high-growth, large-population economy with manufacturing ambitions. They do not compete in the same product categories — Sweden makes precision engineering, pharma APIs, green steel; India makes labour-intensive manufacturing, IT services, and generic pharmaceuticals.
- AI + Ethics: Sweden (and Scandinavia generally) is known for responsible AI governance — GDPR, ethical AI frameworks. India's MANAV AI framework aligns with Swedish values. Both countries can co-develop AI governance standards.
- Defence: Saab's Gripen C/D is in competition for India's future trainer jet requirements; Sweden has been flexible on ToT (technology transfer) — a key Indian condition. India's HAL could co-manufacture Gripen components under Make in India.
- Critical Minerals: Sweden has significant deposits of rare earth elements (including a large REE deposit discovered in Kiruna, northern Sweden in 2022). India's critical minerals strategy includes diversifying REE supply beyond China. Sweden–India REE cooperation is a natural fit.
- **Ericsson in India:** Ericsson (Swedish telecom equipment giant) is a major vendor for India's 5G rollout (Bharti Airtel's 5G runs largely on Ericsson hardware); Swedish tech is already deeply embedded in India's digital infrastructure.
- **Volvo and IKEA:** Volvo Trucks is the largest supplier of heavy commercial trucks in India; IKEA has 5 stores in India and is expanding; these companies represent Sweden's commercial integration with India.

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- Critical Minerals Diplomacy: Sweden's Kiruna REE deposit (potentially Europe's largest) aligns with India–US Mineral Security Partnership framework; trilateral critical minerals cooperation is a possibility.
 - NATO Context: Sweden's NATO membership changes India–Sweden defence relationship calculus — India cannot be seen as undermining NATO cohesion while deepening defence ties with Sweden.
 - Scan-India: Nordic countries (Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, Iceland) collectively offer India clean energy tech, maritime expertise, and Arctic engagement — the 3rd India–Nordic Summit format is the vehicle.
- ✦ **Kiruna REE Deposit** — A large rare earth element deposit in Kiruna, northern Sweden; discovered 2022; among the largest in Europe; LKAB (state mining company) is developing it; could reduce EU and India's REE dependence on China.
 - ✦ **Strategic Partnership (India–Sweden)** — Framework for elevated bilateral cooperation; covers defence, technology, trade, and diplomatic coordination; agreed during PM Modi's May 2026 Sweden visit.

3. US-Iran MoU: The Elusive Quest for a 'New Middle East'

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GS 2 / GS 3: International Relations: India and its interests in bilateral, regional and global groupings; effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests; international institutions, agencies and fora; developments in West Asia (Middle East).

- ▶ June 14, 2026: US-Iran MoU announced; to be formally signed June 19, 2026.
- ▶ Phase 1: Hormuz reopened + US naval blockade lifted + partial sanctions suspension + \$5–7 billion frozen assets released.
- ▶ Phase 2: 60-day nuclear negotiations window — Iran did NOT agree to dismantle its programme upfront.
- ▶ LNG tanker Disha (SCI/Petronet) became the first Indian vessel to cross Hormuz in ~2 months (June 15).

The MoU Deal Architecture

- **Immediate (Phase 1):** Both US naval blockade of Iranian ports and Iran's Hormuz restrictions lifted simultaneously; suspension of some US sanctions on Iranian oil/petrochemicals; release of \$5–7 billion frozen assets staged against compliance.
- **60-day nuclear window (Phase 2):** Iran reaffirmed NPT commitment but did not agree to zero enrichment; a 'JCPOA-plus' framework will be negotiated — Iran may agree to 15–20 year enrichment halt and enhanced IAEA inspections in exchange for comprehensive sanctions relief.
- **Lebanon ceasefire:** The MoU includes a ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah — a key Iranian demand; Israeli PM Netanyahu was not party to the deal and expressed objections.
- **Pakistan's role:** Pakistan served as a key mediator throughout the ceasefire negotiations — a diplomatic achievement that boosts Pakistan's regional standing and may affect India–Pakistan dynamics.

Why 'New Middle East' Is Elusive

- The phrase 'New Middle East' (borrowed from Secretary of State Rice's 2006 term) implies a fundamental reorganisation of regional power — Israeli-Arab normalisation, a non-threatening Iran, and an end to sectarian proxy wars. The MoU achieves a ceasefire, not structural change.
- Iran's internal divisions: IRGC hardliners opposed any deal; the Foreign Ministry (pragmatists) pushed for it. Even if signed, Iran's compliance with nuclear provisions depends on Khamenei's final authority — which is uncertain.
- Israel's objection: Israel considers any deal that allows Iran to retain enrichment capability existentially dangerous; it has reserved the right to act unilaterally. A Netanyahu-IRGC spoiler scenario could collapse the deal within weeks.
- Saudi Arabia's condition: Saudi Arabia's Abraham Accords membership (and broader normalisation) remains contingent on a credible pathway to Palestinian statehood — which the MoU does not address.

India's Specific Stakes

- The LNG tanker Disha (managed by SCI consortium, chartered by Petronet LNG) carried 62,370 MT of Qatari LNG and crossed Hormuz on June 15 — the first Indian vessel after nearly 2 months. Expected arrival: Dahej, Gujarat, June 18.
- 15 vessels (10 Indian-flagged, 5 foreign-flagged) crossed Hormuz in the 24 hours post-MoU announcement; ~100+ vessels are awaiting transit at both ends of the Strait.
- Oil price impact: Brent crude fell from \$115+ to \$92/barrel in 24 hours after MoU announcement — the largest single-day crude price fall since COVID. Every \$10 fall = \$12–14 billion reduction in India's annual oil import bill.
- Rupee impact: INR strengthened from Rs 96.8 to Rs 93.2 per USD in 48 hours — driven by oil import bill expectations and returning FPI sentiment.
- Chabahar: Partial sanctions suspension means India's Chabahar Port Agreement (10-year, 2024) can now operate without secondary sanctions threat — a major strategic win for India's Central Asia connectivity.

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- India as beneficiary: India did not participate in the war or the ceasefire negotiations; it was a net beneficiary of the MoU — Hormuz opening, oil price fall, rupee recovery, and Chabahar activation all serve India's interests simultaneously.
- Pakistan's diplomatic dividend: Pakistan's mediation role may soften India's position on Pak's bilateral standing — India must assess carefully. PM Modi's first in-person meeting with Trump is expected at G7 — Pakistan-mediation context will be discussed.
- 60-Day Window Risk: If nuclear talks fail by August 19 (60 days from MoU signing), war could resume. India's energy security planning must account for this scenario.

- 🗝️ **Disha LNG Tanker** — Indian LNG carrier managed by SCI-led consortium and chartered by Petronet LNG; carrying 62,370 MT of Qatari LNG; first Indian vessel to cross Hormuz after ~75 days; arriving Dahej, Gujarat, June 18.
- 🗝️ **Petronet LNG** — India's largest LNG import company; imports from Qatar (Ras Laffan), USA, and others; critical for India's gas-based fertiliser production and city gas distribution.
- 🗝️ **'New Middle East' (concept)** — Term originally used by US Sec. of State Condoleezza Rice in 2006 to describe a post-Hezbollah-conflict regional order; now used to describe aspirations for Arab-Israeli normalisation and a non-threatening Iran.

4. In West Asia Pause, Questions for India — Especially About Its Place at the Table

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GS 2: International Relations: India and its interests in bilateral, regional and global groupings; effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests; India and its neighbourhood; important international institutions, agencies and fora; India-West Asia relations and strategic autonomy.

- ▶ India was NOT a party to the US-Iran MoU negotiations — despite being among the world's most economically exposed nations to the Hormuz conflict.
- ▶ India is being invited to join the Hormuz Security Initiative (UK-France led) but has not committed military assets.
- ▶ The MoU's 'New Middle East' architecture is being shaped by the US, Iran, Israel (partially), Pakistan (mediator), and Gulf states — India is at the table only tangentially.
- ▶ Key question: Does India's 'strategic autonomy' mean effective absence from critical negotiations that directly determine its energy security?

India's Role — or Lack of It — in the MoU

- India was not a co-mediator, a guarantor state, or a formal party to the US-Iran MoU process. Pakistan — India's rival — played the role of mediator. Oman also played a key facilitation role.
- India's foreign policy response: India has participated in diplomatic forums (calling for ceasefire, attending the 40-nation Hormuz Security Initiative virtual meetings), issued statements (calling attacks on ships

'unacceptable'), and maintained back-channel communication with both Iran (Chabahar) and the US (Jaishankar-Rubio meeting May 26).

- But India has not led, organised, or shaped the outcome — despite being among the countries most materially affected by the Hormuz closure.

Structural Reasons for India's Limited Role

- **Non-aligned tradition vs. stakes-based diplomacy:** India's strategic autonomy doctrine historically means staying out of others' wars. But when a conflict directly determines India's energy security, food prices, and currency, 'staying out' has real economic costs.
- **Pakistan's mediation advantage:** Pakistan leveraged its US relationship (military supply chain, CENTCOM access) and Islamic world standing (OIC membership, Iran border) to position itself as indispensable. India does not have these tools in West Asia.
- **No West Asia military presence:** India has naval assets (Operation Urja Suraksha) but no military bases in the Gulf region. The US, UK, France, and even Russia have regional military infrastructure. India's 'presence' is commercial and diplomatic, not security-providing.
- **Gulf states' posture:** Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Kuwait — India's energy partners — are not confronting the US directly over the blockade. India cannot be more hawkish on the US than its energy suppliers are.

What India Must Learn From This

- Active diplomatic positioning in crisis regions is essential — even if India is not a belligerent. The next Gulf crisis will come; India needs a pre-positioned diplomatic framework that gives it a seat at the mediation table.
- India–Oman + India–Qatar + India–UAE triangulation: India's bilateral relationships with all three non-belligerent Gulf states are strong; a trilateral consultation mechanism could amplify India's influence in future crises.
- India's Hormuz 'doctrine': India should articulate, explicitly, its stake in Hormuz as a vital national interest — analogous to the US's 'Freedom of Navigation' doctrine. A public articulation of this would give India standing in any future Hormuz negotiations.

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- Strategic Autonomy critique: India's non-alignment has been valuable in avoiding military entanglements; but it costs India diplomatic capital when it most needs a 'seat at the table' in conflicts directly affecting its interests.
- Neighbourhood First → Region First: India's policy focuses on South Asia; West Asia demands equal policy attention given energy, diaspora, and trade dependencies.
- Pakistan's diplomatic revival: Pakistan's mediation role rehabilitates it internationally — a concern for India as Pakistan faces its own economic and political crisis. A successful Pakistan-mediated deal could change its international standing.

5. SC's Message: Campus Distress Has Social Causes

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GS 2: Governance & Social Justice: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Education; Welfare of Vulnerable Sections; Mechanisms, Laws, Institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of vulnerable sections.

- ▶ The National Task Force (NTF) on student welfare, constituted by the Supreme Court, submitted its report rejecting 'mental health' as the sole frame for student suicides.
- ▶ SC's observation: 'Campus distress is not just a mental health issue — it is a social, institutional, and systemic issue requiring structural solutions.'
- ▶ 5 structural causes identified: single-exam gatekeeping, coaching industry exploitation, parental/social pressure, absence of alternative pathways, poor institutional infrastructure.
- ▶ 13,000+ student suicides annually in India (NCRB data); Kota averages 25+ deaths per year.

SC NTF's Structural Framework

- The NTF's central intellectual move is to shift the discourse from 'mental health services needed' (an individualised, clinical framing) to 'why are students in such acute distress' — an institutional and social framing.
- Just as the SC in the homemakers' compensation judgment used economic theory to revalue domestic work, the NTF uses sociological and systemic analysis to reframe campus suicide from a personal tragedy to a systemic failure.

The Five Structural Causes

- **1. Single-exam gatekeeping:** NEET/JEE function as life-determining examinations; 23 students compete for every MBBS seat. The stakes + the odds + the single-shot format = extreme psychological pressure.
- **2. Coaching industry exploitation:** Rs 65,000+ crore industry; unregulated; promotes 12–16 hour study days; uses fear and comparison as motivational tools; produces 'failure as disgrace' narrative.
- **3. Parental and social pressure:** Families invest life savings; first-generation aspirants bear double burden of family expectation; 'not clearing JEE/NEET = family shame' narrative in many communities.
- **4. No alternative pathways:** No dignified career alternative exists for NEET/JEE 'failures' — the credential/degree-gatekeeping system offers no graceful exit from failure.
- **5. Poor institutional infrastructure:** Unregulated hostels, poor diet, sleep disruption, social isolation in coaching hubs; physical environment is not designed for human flourishing.

SC Recommendations (via NTF)

- Mandatory coaching institute registration and minimum welfare standards (diet, hostel conditions, counsellor-to-student ratios).
- Ban on fear-based and comparison-based marketing by coaching institutes.
- National peer support programme: trained peer counsellors (not just professional counsellors, which carry stigma) in every coaching institution.
- Diversified examination pathways: multiple-attempt NEET, board-score inclusion, credit-based admission alternatives — reducing the 'one shot' catastrophe risk.
- Fast-track intervention system: national registry of student welfare concerns; proactive institutional response when withdrawal, sleep disorder, academic anxiety are reported.

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- NTF on Student Suicides: This is now a landmark SC-directed policy document; expect UPSC questions on its key recommendations and the systemic vs. individual framing.
- Compare: NEET crisis (2024, 2026 paper leaks) + student suicides = interconnected failure of India's examination governance ecosystem.
- Right to Life (Article 21): SC's consistent expansion of Article 21 now extends to the right to a dignified education environment — an emerging jurisprudential trend.
- WHO Socio-Ecological Model: NTF aligns with WHO's framework that suicide prevention requires addressing individual, relationship, community, and societal risk factors simultaneously.

- 📞 **iCall** — TISS-run mental health helpline (9152987821); recommended by NTF as the primary first-response mental health support for students; toll-free and confidential.
- 📞 **NTF (National Task Force on Student Welfare)** — SC-constituted expert committee chaired by K.S. Radhakrishnan (former ISRO chief); submitted report June 2026; covers causes and remedies for student suicides in competitive exam ecosystems.

6. Only Fraternity Can Bridge Communal Divide, Douse Flames of Hate

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GS 2: Polity & Governance: Indian Constitution: Preamble (Liberty, Equality, Fraternity), Constituent Assembly Debates, Rights of Minorities, Social Justice, Communal Harmony, and Role of Civil Society in Strengthening Democracy.

- ▶ The article argues that constitutional fraternity — not just legal rights or police action — is the essential instrument to combat communal division and hate speech.

- Context: India has witnessed a rise in hate speech incidents, communal tensions, and mob violence in 2025–26; the AI-171 crash, Pahalgam attack, and Operation Sindoor created heightened community tensions.
- Constituent Assembly: Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's vision of fraternity as the 'wholeness of life' — the most difficult and most neglected of the constitutional ideals.
- Civil society, educational institutions, and local governance as the primary sites of fraternity-building.

The Constitutional Basis

- The Preamble to the Constitution of India resolves to secure Fraternity — assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation. Fraternity is listed after Justice, Liberty, and Equality — not because it is less important, but because it is the synthesis of the other three.
- Ambedkar's vision: In his speech to the Constituent Assembly (November 25, 1949), Ambedkar emphasised that 'without fraternity, liberty and equality could not become a natural course of things' — fraternity is not just a sentiment but an institutional and social practice.
- The three pillars: Justice (structural) + Liberty (individual) + Equality (distributional) are meaningless without Fraternity (relational) — fraternity is the inter-personal glue that holds the constitutional project together.

Why Fraternity Is Being Eroded

- **Social media and algorithmic polarisation:** Platform algorithms reward outrage and tribal identity confirmation; this accelerates communal information silos where people only encounter views reinforcing existing prejudices.
- **Political instrumentalisation:** Electoral politics increasingly mobilises religious and caste identity as vote-mobilisation tools; this incentivises division and makes fraternity-building politically unrewarding in the short term.
- **Economic anxiety:** Income stagnation, job scarcity, and inequalities breed resentment; communal scapegoating channels economic anxiety into ethnic hostility.
- **Institutional failure:** When police, judiciary, and local administration fail to promptly and impartially address communal incidents, impunity emboldens hate actors.

How Fraternity Can Be Rebuilt

- Education: Constitutional values education from primary level; inter-community learning environments; historical education that emphasises shared heritage over communal difference.
- Local governance: Gram sabhas, mohalla committees, and peace committees as fraternity-building institutions; community leaders across communities as first responders to communal tension.
- Civil society: Interfaith platforms, sports clubs, cultural exchanges — civil institutions that create shared experiences and loyalties cutting across community lines.
- Media responsibility: Responsible journalism and platform accountability; ASCI (Advertising Standards Council) and Press Council mechanisms for hate speech; stronger Digital India guidelines.

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- Preamble Analysis: 'Fraternity assuring dignity of the individual' — UPSC frequently asks about Preamble values; fraternity is least discussed but most profound.
- Article 51A(e): Fundamental Duty to promote harmony and spirit of common brotherhood — the constitutional anchor for fraternity as a citizen obligation.
- Hate Speech Law: India lacks a specific hate speech law; IPC Sections 153A and 295A are the primary tools; their inadequacy in the social media age is a governance challenge.

- ✂ **Constitutional Fraternity** — The Preamble value of Brotherhood — assuring dignity of the individual and national unity; Dr. Ambedkar's foundational concept; the relational dimension of constitutionalism.
- ✂ **Article 51A(e)** — Fundamental Duty: to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India transcending religious, linguistic, regional or sectional diversities; enacted by 42nd Amendment 1976.

7. Finance Minister: More Measures to Attract Capital Inflows on the Anvil

GS 3: Indian Economy: Investment Models; Balance of Payments (BoP), Foreign Capital Flows (FDI/FPI), and External Sector; mobilisation of resources, growth, development and employment.

- ▶ Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman (June 15, 2026) announced that additional policy measures to attract foreign capital are in the pipeline, following the oil price fall and Hormuz MoU.
- ▶ The Hormuz MoU announcement triggered: Brent crude fell from \$115+ to \$92/barrel; INR strengthened from Rs 96.8 to Rs 93.2 per USD; Sensex rose 1,850 points (largest single-day gain in 2026).
- ▶ FM's measures expected: Relaxation of FPI investment limits in G-Secs; fast-track NRI remittance incentives; easing of ECB (External Commercial Borrowings) norms.
- ▶ Context: India's FPI outflows in FY26 were Rs 1.78 lakh crore — the largest in history; net FDI was only \$7.65 billion despite record \$94.53 billion gross inflows.

Measures Under Consideration

- **Enhanced FPI access to G-Secs:** Raising the FPI investment limit in Government Securities (currently under Fully Accessible Route — FAR bonds are unlimited; but overall FPI G-Sec investment is under separate limits); this would attract more foreign institutional money into India's bond market.
- **India's JPMorgan EM Bond Index inclusion:** India was included in JPMorgan's GBI-EM Global Diversified Index from June 2024; this has brought \$25+ billion in passive bond inflows; full-weight inclusion and Bloomberg/FTSE inclusion would bring more. FM is expected to facilitate this.
- **FCNR(B) expansion:** Building on RBI's June 5 scheme (FCNR(B) rates up to 8–9.5%; forward swap facility); FM is expected to complement this with broader NRI investment facilitation.
- **ECB liberalisation:** Easing rules for Indian companies to borrow from international markets — reducing cost of capital for infrastructure and manufacturing; important for PLI-linked manufacturing expansion.
- **FDI simplification:** Streamlining the government approval route for FDI in sensitive sectors; reducing compliance burden for foreign investors; single-window clearance expansion.

The Macro Context Post-Hormuz MoU

- The Hormuz MoU has provided a structural tailwind for India's external sector. Oil price normalisation reduces the CAD; rupee strengthening reduces imported inflation; improved sentiment attracts FPI and FDI.
- But the relief is fragile: The 60-day nuclear window means the deal could collapse; Israel could take unilateral action; IRGC hardliners could undermine Iranian compliance. The FM's measures are designed to lock in capital flows while the window is open.
- Fiscal dimension: Lower oil prices reduce subsidy burden, potentially saving Rs 30,000–40,000 crore annually. Combined with the RBI's record Rs 2.86 lakh crore dividend, fiscal space for FY27 has improved materially.

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- BoP Analysis: India's Balance of Payments position directly affected by: (1) CAD narrowing from lower oil prices; (2) capital account improving from FPI return; (3) forex reserves rebuilding from RBI's reduced intervention need.
- FPI vs FDI: FPI is sentiment-driven and volatile; FDI is durable. FM's measures targeting both; UPSC often asks about the distinction and policy implications.
- G-Sec Market Depth: India's government securities market needs more foreign participation for price discovery and liquidity; however, excessive foreign ownership of G-Secs creates vulnerability (foreign selling in a crisis = rupee pressure).
- **FAR (Fully Accessible Route)** — RBI's scheme allowing unrestricted FPI investment in specified government securities; designed to facilitate India's inclusion in global bond indices.
- **GBI-EM Index** — JPMorgan's Government Bond Index — Emerging Markets; India included June 2024; \$240 billion in assets track this index; full weight = \$25+ billion passive inflow for India.
- **ECB (External Commercial Borrowings)** — Loans raised by Indian entities from overseas lenders; cheaper than domestic borrowing when rupee is strong; regulated by RBI under ECB framework.

8. Art of the Deal: Strait, but with Twists — The US-Iran MoU Analysis

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GS 2: International Relations: India and the World; bilateral, regional and global groupings; international treaties and agreements; effects of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests; issues related to energy security and nuclear proliferation.

- ▶ The Trump-branded 'Art of the Deal' approach to Iran: Maximum pressure (war, blockade) → partial relief (MoU) → 60-day nuclear talks → comprehensive deal (aspirational).
- ▶ The 'twists': Iran retained enrichment capability; Israel not party; Lebanon ceasefire is contingent on Hezbollah compliance; frozen assets release is staged.
- ▶ Trump's Truth Social: 'Ships of the World, start your engines!' — moment of announcement was June 14, 2026.
- ▶ Iran's 10-point counter-proposal remains partially unaddressed — the 60-day window is Iran's chance to negotiate the remaining demands.

The 'Art of the Deal' Framework Applied to Diplomacy

- Trump's negotiating philosophy (from his 1987 book of the same name): Open with maximum pressure → create urgency and leverage → negotiate from strength → accept a 'win' even if imperfect → claim total victory and move on.
- Applied to Iran: Trump escalated to war (maximum pressure); imposed naval blockade (economic stranglehold); then offered the MoU (partial deal) while claiming it as a 'total victory'. The 60-day nuclear talks are the 'Phase 2' of the deal.
- The 'Twists': The deal is NOT what Trump claimed — Iran enriches; Israel objects; Lebanon ceasefire is fragile; Pakistan's mediation role elevates Islamabad diplomatically; and the nuclear question is deferred, not resolved.

Six Key Issues in the Deal

- **Nuclear enrichment:** Iran retained its enrichment programme; the 60-day window must resolve whether Iran agrees to cap enrichment at 3.67% + enhanced IAEA verification. Iran's 440+ kg of 60% enriched uranium must be accounted for.
- **Sanctions architecture:** US sanctions relief is partial and conditional; OFAC (US Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control) must issue specific licences for each sector; Iran wants broad relief, US is offering targeted relief.
- **Frozen assets:** \$5–7 billion released initially; Iran has \$150+ billion in frozen assets globally (primarily in South Korea, Japan, Iraq). Full release requires long-term compliance.
- **Lebanon / Hezbollah:** Israel's operations in Lebanon are not covered by the MoU; Iran's ability to deliver a Hezbollah ceasefire is limited; IRGC and Hezbollah have operational autonomy from Tehran's diplomatic decisions.
- **Ballistic missiles:** Not addressed in the MoU; a separate track is expected; Iran has refused to negotiate over its missile programme (calls it a 'sovereign defence necessity'); US wants missile programme limits.
- **Regional proxies:** Houthis in Yemen (backed by Iran) continue attacking Red Sea shipping; Hamas in Gaza (backed by Iran) is under continuing Israeli military operations; these are not covered by the MoU.

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- Trump's foreign policy pattern: US has now reached 'deals' (MoUs, frameworks) with China (trade truce), North Korea (Singapore 2018 legacy), and now Iran — all involve maximum pressure + partial deal claims; all lack binding verification.
- Multilateral vs. bilateral: The MoU is essentially a bilateral US-Iran deal with Pakistan as messenger; multilateral frameworks (JCPOA with P5+1) had stronger verification architecture. A bilateral deal is harder to sustain.
- India's lesson: India's energy security cannot depend on the durability of a US-Iran bilateral MoU. Diversification (Oman, Russia, US LNG, renewables) must accelerate regardless of Hormuz's reopening.

- **OFAC (Office of Foreign Assets Control)** — US Treasury Department arm that administers and enforces economic and trade sanctions; its licences determine which specific Iranian transactions are permitted under sanctions waivers.

- 🗝️ **'Art of the Deal' (diplomacy)** — Trump's negotiating approach applied to foreign policy: use maximum pressure to gain leverage, then claim a 'win' on a partial deal; associated with high-profile bilateral confrontations followed by opaque agreements.

9. LNG Tanker Disha Crosses Hormuz — 1st Indian Ship to Exit Persian Gulf in 2 Months

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GS 2: International Relations: Strategic importance of the Strait of Hormuz, India's energy security, and India's relations with West Asian countries affecting national interests.

- ▶ June 15, 2026: LNG tanker Disha (62,370 MT of Qatari LNG) cleared Hormuz — the first Indian vessel to transit in ~75 days.
- ▶ Vessel managed by SCI (Shipping Corporation of India)-led consortium; chartered by Petronet LNG Ltd.
- ▶ Loaded at Qatar's Ras Laffan LNG facility in early March (trapped since the war-related Hormuz disruption).
- ▶ Expected to arrive at Dahej LNG terminal, Gujarat, on June 18.

Why Disha's Transit Is Symbolically and Materially Significant

- It is the first concrete proof that the US-Iran MoU (announced June 14) is operational at sea — ships can now transit.
- Qatar's Ras Laffan LNG facility had partially halted production when the war began (amid fears of Iranian retaliation against Gulf LNG infrastructure); the resumption of exports signals normalisation.
- The 62,370 MT cargo represents approximately 4–5 days of India's LNG import needs; its arrival will provide relief to gas-starved industrial and domestic consumers who faced rationing since March 2026.

India's LNG Supply Chain

- Petronet LNG: India's primary LNG import company; operates Dahej (10 MMTPA capacity, Gujarat) and Kochi (5 MMTPA, Kerala) terminals; Qatar under long-term contract (7.5 MMTPA from RasGas).
- India's LNG use: Power generation (gas-based plants in Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh); fertiliser plants (urea uses LNG as feedstock); city gas distribution (CNG for vehicles, PNG for homes); industrial fuel.
- LNG shortage impact during Hormuz closure: Urea plants at Vijaipur, Hazira, and Kakinada reduced output by 20–30%; city gas prices in Mumbai and Delhi rose 15–20%; industrial LNG users switched to diesel (adding to fuel demand).
- Dahej terminal status: As of June 16, only 2.1 days of LNG inventory held at Dahej; Disha's arrival will be a lifeline.

Other Hormuz Traffic Developments

- 15 vessels (10 Indian-flagged, 5 foreign-flagged) crossed Hormuz in the 24 hours after the MoU announcement.
- 100+ vessels are anchored at both ends of Hormuz waiting to transit — the tanker queue will take several days to clear.
- Tanker owners remain cautious: Hafnia (major tanker operator) said situation remains 'fluid' — the MoU must be supported by verified security guarantees before full traffic resumes.

★ UPSC ANGLE

- Energy Security Metrics: India was running ~10 days of crude oil SPR cover + 2 days of LNG terminal stock — below the recommended minimums. Hormuz reopening restores buffer; but the crisis exposed India's strategic stock inadequacy.
- Petronet LNG strategic importance: India's LNG import infrastructure (Dahej, Kochi, Mundra — under construction, Dhamra, Ennore) is national infrastructure; disruption = industrial recession.
- Ras Laffan Industrial City (Qatar): World's largest LNG and petrochemical complex; Qatar's ability to export is critical for India; Qatar's own internal stability during the Iran war was a secondary risk.

- **Petronet LNG** — India's largest LNG import company (joint venture of government oil companies); owns Dahej and Kochi terminals; Qatar long-term supply contract; key for India's gas-based energy security.
- **MMTPA** — Million Metric Tonnes Per Annum — standard unit for LNG terminal and trade capacity measurement.
- **Dahej LNG Terminal** — India's largest LNG regasification terminal (10 MMTPA), located in Gujarat; operated by Petronet LNG; receives Qatar, US, and Australia LNG.

GS PAPER 1 — Society · Geography · Art & Culture · History

1. Horizon Year for Delhi Master Plan May Change from 2041 to 2047

[IE] Page 4

GS 1 / GS 3: Urbanisation & Urban Planning: Master Plans, sustainable urban development, transit-oriented development, slum rehabilitation, and environmental concerns in urban floodplains (GS 3: Infrastructure & Environment).

- Delhi Development Authority (DDA) is considering extending the planning horizon of the Delhi Master Plan from 2041 to 2047 — to align with India's **Viksit Bharat@2047** vision.
- The current Delhi Master Plan 2041 was notified in September 2021 after over a decade of consultation.
- Extending the horizon to 2047 would align Delhi's spatial planning with the national development vision for India's centenary of independence.
- DDA is also considering incorporating climate resilience, transit-oriented development (TOD), and green infrastructure mandates into the revised plan.

What Is a Master Plan?

- A Master Plan (or Statutory Development Plan) is a long-range, statutory planning document that guides the physical development of a city or metropolitan area — specifying land use zones (residential, commercial, industrial, green, public utilities), densities, floor area ratios (FAR), transport networks, and infrastructure.
- Delhi's MPD history: MPD-1962 (first; guided Delhi's post-partition growth) → MPD-2001 → MPD-2021 → MPD-2041 (current). Each plan reflects the city's evolving needs, population, and national policy priorities.

Why 2047 Matters

- **Viksit Bharat@2047:** The Central Government's overarching development vision for India's centenary of independence (2047) — 'Developed India'; aligning Delhi's Master Plan to this horizon ensures spatial planning supports national economic ambitions.
- **Population projections:** Delhi's population is expected to reach 35–38 million by 2047 (from ~32 million today); planning for housing, transport, water, and waste for this population requires a longer horizon.
- **Climate change:** Delhi faces: rising temperature (UHI, climate change); reduced groundwater; increased flooding risk (Yamuna floodplain encroachment); air quality degradation. A 2047 plan can embed long-term climate resilience.
- **Infrastructure cycles:** Major infrastructure (Metro Phase V, Regional Rapid Transit System, ring roads, sewage treatment) has 10–20 year planning and implementation cycles; a 2047 plan gives infrastructure agencies longer certainty.

Key Urban Planning Concepts in the Revised Plan

- **TOD (Transit-Oriented Development):** High-density, mixed-use development within 500–1,000 metres of metro stations and RRTS nodes; reduces car dependence; improves housing affordability near transit hubs.
- **Night-time economy zoning:** MPD-2041 introduced mixed-use zoning to allow restaurants, retail, and entertainment to operate 24 hours — MPD-2047 may extend this.

- **Yamuna floodplain:** DDA has been removing encroachments from Yamuna's floodplain (the O-Zone); MPD-2047 may formally designate and protect a wider floodplain buffer.
- **Urban agriculture zones:** Integrating urban farming into city planning — Delhi has significant rooftop farming potential that can contribute to food security and microclimate cooling.

★ UPSC ANGLE

- Urban Planning and UPSC: Master plans, urban governance (74th Amendment, ULBs), metropolitan planning committees — frequently examined in GS2 and GS3.
- Climate + Urbanisation intersection: Delhi's dual challenge of extreme heat (48°C+ days in 2026) and flooding (Yamuna flooding 2023) requires integrated spatial planning — MPD-2047 is the vehicle.
- Yamuna Riverfront: SC has been involved in protecting Yamuna's floodplain; any Master Plan revision must comply with SC orders on floodplain management.

- ✂ **DDA (Delhi Development Authority)** — India's largest public urban developer; created under the Delhi Development Act, 1957; responsible for land acquisition, housing, and the Master Plan; reports to MoHUA.
- ✂ **FAR (Floor Area Ratio)** — The ratio of a building's total floor area to the size of the plot; a FAR of 3.5 means the total built floor area is 3.5 times the land area; higher FAR = denser development.
- ✂ **MPD (Master Plan for Delhi)** — Delhi's statutory spatial development plan; currently MPD-2041; notified under the DD Act 1957; guides all land use, construction, and development in Delhi.

2. Who Can Act When a Tree Becomes Dangerous? Forest Dept Puts Out Order for Agencies

[IE] Page 4

GS 3: Environment & Ecology: Conservation of Environment, Environmental Governance, Forest and Tree Conservation Laws, Environmental Impact of Development Projects, and Biodiversity-related Legislation.

- The Delhi Forest Department issued an order clarifying which agencies have the authority to fell or trim trees that are 'dangerous' to life or infrastructure.
- Context: Multiple accidents involving tree falls in Delhi's pre-monsoon storms (May–June 2026) raised the question of who is responsible for identifying and removing dangerous trees.
- Three categories: Trees on forest land (Forest Dept jurisdiction); trees in reserved/protected land (DDA/Forest Dept); trees on roads/parks (MCD/NDMC/PWD depending on location).
- Central issue: The Delhi Preservation of Trees Act (DPTA), 1994, requires a tree officer's permission to fell any tree — even dangerous ones — creating delays in emergency situations.

The Legal Framework

- Delhi Preservation of Trees Act (DPTA), 1994: This legislation prohibits cutting, trimming, or transplanting any tree in Delhi without the written permission of a Tree Officer. Penalty: Imprisonment up to 1 year and fine up to Rs 1 lakh for unauthorized felling.
- Exception for emergency: The DPTA has a provision for emergency situations but the procedure (tree officers to certify danger → permission to be obtained urgently) is not clearly operationalized; in practice, it takes days even in emergencies.
- The new Forest Department order: Classifies trees as: 'Emergency hazardous' (immediate threat; agencies can act and inform tree officer within 24 hours); 'Planned removal' (formal application process); 'Maintenance trimming' (permitted by agencies without full tree officer approval).

Tree Census and Urban Forest Management

- Delhi has ~3.35 crore trees (latest tree census); approximately 1.8 lakh trees are listed as 'condition-unverified' — meaning they have not been assessed for structural integrity or disease.
- The monsoon risk: Pre-monsoon storms (dust storms, thunderstorms) and monsoon rains weaken root systems and branches. Delhi typically sees 50–100 tree-related deaths annually in the June–September period.
- Drone-based tree health mapping is being piloted by the Forest Department using photogrammetric analysis of canopy health — an early warning system for structurally compromised trees.

★ UPSC ANGLE

- Urban Forests and Climate: Delhi's tree canopy is critical for UHI reduction, air quality improvement, and storm water management; tree felling policy must balance safety with canopy conservation.
- Environmental Governance: The confusion over jurisdiction (Forest Dept vs. MCD vs. DDA) illustrates India's fragmented urban environmental governance — a recurring UPSC theme.
- Forest Rights and Urban Trees: DPTA 1994 is Delhi-specific; national-level urban forestry is governed by National Forest Policy 1988 and the Forest Conservation Act 1980 (which now has 2023 amendments).

- ✂ **DPTA (Delhi Preservation of Trees Act), 1994** — Delhi-specific legislation protecting all trees; requires tree officer permission for any felling or trimming; penalty up to 1 year imprisonment; Tree Officers at district level enforce it.
- ✂ **Tree Officer** — An official designated under DPTA to grant or refuse permissions for tree felling, trimming, and transplantation; typically a Forest Range Officer or DDA representative at district level.

CONTENT FOR MAINS ENRICHMENT (CME)

Planetary Climate Vital Signs Report 2026

GS 3 CME: Environment & Climate Change: Climate science, planetary boundaries, global warming indicators, extreme weather events, and India's climate vulnerability.

- Published June 2026 by a consortium of 14 climate institutions (including NASA, NOAA, Copernicus Climate Change Service, and India's IITM Pune); released with 35 indicators of Earth's climate health.
- Key findings: (1) 2025 was the hottest year on record (global mean surface temperature 1.62°C above pre-industrial baseline — exceeding the 1.5°C Paris Agreement threshold for the 2nd consecutive year). (2) Antarctic sea ice at record low for June 2026. (3) Global ocean heat content hit a new record — oceans absorbed 90%+ of excess heat trapped by greenhouse gases. (4) Greenland ice sheet melt rate accelerated — 267 Gt/year average (2015–2025). (5) Extreme weather events in 2025 caused \$380 billion in global economic losses.
- India-specific signals: (a) Monsoon variability increasing — 2026 forecast of 90% LPA fits a trend of more frequent below-normal monsoon years. (b) Average temperature over India rose 0.63°C since 1900 (less than global average but significant for a tropical country already near heat stress thresholds). (c) Himalayan glaciers — India's 'water towers' — continuing 5–6% volume loss per decade. (d) Sea level rise along India's coasts: 1.7–2.1 mm/year average, with higher rates in Bay of Bengal.
- Policy implication for India: India's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to the Paris Agreement commits India to: (a) 45% reduction in emissions intensity of GDP by 2030 vs 2005; (b) 50% of cumulative installed electric power from non-fossil sources by 2030; (c) net-zero by 2070. India is broadly on track for the first two; 2070 net-zero remains aspirational without a clear roadmap.
- ✂ **Planetary Boundaries Framework** — A scientific framework identifying 9 Earth system processes with boundaries within which humanity can safely operate; 6 of the 9 have been crossed as of 2026 (including climate change, biosphere integrity, and land-system change).
- ✂ **NDC (Nationally Determined Contribution)** — A country's climate action plan submitted to the UNFCCC under the Paris Agreement; updated every 5 years; India's current NDC (2022 update) is among the most ambitious from large emerging economies.

PRELIMS IN FOCUS

Order of the
White Double
Cross, 1st
Class

Slovakia's highest state honour; awarded by President Peter Pellegrini to PM Narendra Modi on June 15, 2026, during his historic first visit by an Indian PM to Slovakia. Named after the double cross (dagger cross) in Slovakia's coat of arms and national flag. Slovakia's national symbol: a white cross on a blue hill with three peaks on red.

<p>Great Indian Bustard (GIB)</p>	<p><i>Ardeotis nigriceps</i> — India's heaviest flying bird; critically endangered (~150 individuals surviving in the wild, primarily in Rajasthan's Desert National Park and Gujarat's Kutch). Major threats: (1) power lines causing collision deaths; (2) habitat destruction; (3) wind/solar energy infrastructure in GIB habitat. SC-ordered Emergency Recovery Plan includes underground power lines in GIB areas; Population viability programme (breeding) at NCBS Bengaluru. IUCN Status: Critically Endangered. State bird of Rajasthan.</p>
<p>52nd G7 Summit (Évian-les-Bains)</p>	<p>Hosted by France; June 15–17, 2026; at the lakeside resort of Évian-les-Bains (Lake Geneva, Haute-Savoie). Members: USA, UK, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Canada + EU. India invited as 'partner' (not member). Agenda: AI governance, debt relief (Global Sovereign Debt Roundtable), food and energy security (West Asia crisis), climate finance. PM Modi attended; held bilateral meetings with Trump, Starmer, Merz, Carney. India presented MANAV AI framework.</p>
<p>Wind Turbine Supply Chain Management Portal (WT-MARUT)</p>	<p>Launched by Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) in June 2026. 'MARUT' = Sanskrit for wind. Purpose: Real-time tracking of wind turbine components (nacelles, blades, towers, transformers) supply chain from manufacturing to installation; helps address supply chain bottlenecks in India's wind energy expansion. India's wind energy target: 140 GW by 2032. Current installed capacity: ~50 GW. Supply chain issues (particularly for offshore wind) have been a key bottleneck.</p>
<p>The 'Dancing Girl' of Mohenjo-daro</p>	<p>A bronze figurine (~4,500 years old) from the Indus Valley Civilisation; discovered at Mohenjo-daro (now in Pakistan) in 1926 by archaeologist Ernest Mackay; currently housed at the National Museum of India, New Delhi. Famous for: tribhanga pose (three-bend posture common in Indian classical dance and sculpture); naturalistic form; sophisticated lost-wax casting technique. Made using the <i>cire perdue</i> (lost-wax) method. The 'Dancing Girl' is frequently in news regarding repatriation demands from Pakistan; India asserts legitimate possession through pre-Partition excavation protocols.</p>
<p>Dengue Vaccine Update (Prelims Context)</p>	<p>Two single-dose, live-attenuated, tetravalent dengue vaccines are in advanced stages globally: (1) Butantan-DV (Brazil; approved Nov 2025; suspended June 2026 pending safety review after 2 deaths in Phase 4 rollout; ages 12–59). (2) DengiAll (India; Panacea Biotech; Phase 3 complete; CDSCO approval pending; same NIH-origin strain as Butantan-DV — raising safety concerns). (3) Qdenga (Takeda; approved EU, Brazil; 2 doses; WHO-recommended for high-seroprevalence areas). (4) Dengvaxia (Sanofi; withdrawn from Philippines over adverse events in seronegative children). India's dengue burden: ~300,000 reported annually (15–20 million estimated).</p>
<p>Multi-Layered Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) System</p>	<p>India's indigenous, multi-tiered BMD system developed by DRDO: (1) PAD (Prithvi Air Defence) — exo-atmospheric (above 50 km altitude); intercepts incoming missiles in space. (2) AAD (Advanced Air Defence) — endo-atmospheric (below 30 km); terminal-phase intercept. (3) S-400 Triumf — acquired from Russia; medium-to-long range; also functions as BMD. Tested successfully multiple times including Feb 2024 (Hyderabad, long-range BMD against simulated ICBM). Operational deployment covers Delhi NCR and select strategic installations. Context in 2026: Operation Sindoor and India–Pakistan tensions have highlighted the urgency of BMD completion.</p>

MAPPING — PLACES IN NEWS

Place / Site	Why in News / Location / Key Facts
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Shree Jagannath Temple, Puri	Annual Rath Yatra (June 2026); World Heritage Site (UNESCO, 2023). Located in Puri, Odisha on the Bay of Bengal. Presiding deity: Lord Jagannath (form of Vishnu/Krishna) with Balabhadra and Subhadra. Built by Ganga dynasty ruler Anantavarman Chodaganga Deva (12th century). Famous for the three massive wooden chariots (Nandighosh, Taladhwaaja, Darpadalana) — the origin of the English word 'Juggernaut'.
Ras Laffan, Qatar	World's largest LNG and petrochemical industrial complex; location of Qatar's LNG production facilities. LNG tanker Disha loaded here (early March); first LNG cargo to head to India after Hormuz reopening. Qatar produces ~77 MTPA of LNG — ~22% of global LNG trade.
Dahej LNG Terminal, Gujarat	India's largest LNG regasification terminal (10 MTPA); operated by Petronet LNG; Disha tanker expected to arrive June 18. Located on the Gulf of Khambhat, Bharuch district.
Évian-les-Bains, France	G7 Summit venue (June 15–17, 2026); lakeside resort town on the southern shore of Lake Geneva, Haute-Savoie département, France. Famous for Évian mineral water brand (sourced from Cachat Spring in the town).
Bratislava, Slovakia	Capital of Slovakia; PM Modi's visit June 14–15, 2026. Situated on the Danube River; largest city in Slovakia. Slovakia: Central European EU/NATO member; former part of Czechoslovakia (split 1993); shares borders with Austria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Ukraine.
Nice, France	PM Modi–Macron bilateral talks venue (June 13–14); Mediterranean city in the Alpes-Maritimes département; the French Riviera (Côte d'Azur). 13 bilateral agreements signed here.
Beaufort Castle (Qal'at al-Shaqif), Lebanon	12th century Crusader fortress captured by IDF on June 1, 2026. Located in Nabatieh Governorate, southern Lebanon, ~700m above sea level. Historically strategic — commanding view over Galilee (Israel) and Litani River valley.
Oman (Gulf of Oman)	Indian sailing vessel sank ~120 nautical miles SE of Muscat; rescued by Omani Coast Guard and Indian Navy. Oman is uniquely positioned outside Hormuz — its ports (Sohar, Salalah, Duqm) are on the Arabian Sea, not the Persian Gulf; provide Hormuz bypass route.