

### 1. US G20 Move - A Signal to ICJ, A Diplomatic Challenge for India

#### GS 2 (International Relations)

- US Secretary of State Marco Rubio announced he will **not** attend the G20 Foreign Ministers' meeting in Johannesburg, criticizing South Africa for using the summit to push "DEI and climate change" under the guise of solidarity and sustainability.

- US decision on G20: message for ICJ, diplomacy test for India

**US SECRETARY OF STATE Marco Rubio** said Thursday that he would not attend the 2017 J-1000 mission's meet in Johannesburg because South Africa has "longing, very bad history."

President Donald Trump has declared to "South Africa is confounding world," and saying "certain classes of people" will benefit.

Neither Trump nor Rubio have given details. So what has provoked the attack South Africa?

**IQ case against Israel**

Rubio's post on X can be understood in the context of South Africa's ongoing grade case against Israel at the International

Court of Justice (SC). An Irish national applied for asylum in the UK, claiming that he had been persecuted in South Africa and (as a result), had been subjected to torture and inhuman and degrading treatment. His father (a South African) was sought to be extradited to the UK to face charges of murder and rape. The SC ruled in favour of the refugee, finding that the father's extradition would be a violation of the European Convention on Human Rights.

**Targeting Hague courts**

The first Hague Arbitration (2007-21) exposed emerging tensions on the ECJ's jurisdiction to hear disputes between EU member states. The ECJ's jurisdiction was challenged by the UK, which argued that the ECJ's jurisdiction was limited to disputes between EU member states. The ECJ ruled that it had jurisdiction to hear the dispute, and that the UK's argument was unfounded.

**C20's uncertain future**

The C20's uncertain future is a result of the ECJ's current position on C20. The ECJ's current position is that the C20 is a "public law" dispute, and that the ECJ has jurisdiction to hear it. However, the ECJ's position is not clear, and the ECJ's jurisdiction is uncertain.

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pected to show a more conciliatory approach in reaching the American goal than it has, the negative implications – both for G20 and for India's interests at large – would remain serious. For India, the reversal of the one-sidedness of the Trump administration's ambivalence (if not reciprocity) toward the Global South would complicate India's G20 South-related diplomacy. India's leading power remains unclear when the U.S.-led G20 presumes such a role for itself. India's role in the G20 South's leadership and administration, India's role and value as a leader of the Global South may not necessarily be apparent to the White House.

India's challenge will be to make the right choices as the U.S. strategic partner, looking for ways to be traditional and non-traditional in the South – with various uncertainties, bargains and outcomes.

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**LONGER VERSION ON**  
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- Trump's ally Elon Musk has also claimed, without evidence, that South Africa follows an anti-white policy.

- Marco Rubio's decision to skip the G20 meeting is primarily linked to South Africa's genocide case against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), which has been gaining international backing.

- **ICJ (International Court of Justice):** A UN judicial body that handles disputes between states.
- Prominent Republicans leaders have condemned the ICJ, calling it biased against Israel.
- They even threatened sanctions against countries supporting potential ICC arrest warrants for Israeli leaders.
- **ICC (International Criminal Court):** Established in 2002 under the Rome Statute, it prosecutes individuals for genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity.
- **South Africa's Countermove**
  - In response, South Africa and Malaysia launched a campaign to protect ICJ and ICC rulings, forming the **nine-nation "Hague Group" to defend Palestinian rights and challenge US attempts to weaken international courts.**

- During his first term (2017–21), President Trump imposed sweeping sanctions on the International Criminal Court (ICC).

- The Biden administration later reversed these sanctions, backing ICC investigations into Russian war crimes in Ukraine.
- US support for the ICC weakened after the court sought arrest warrants for both Israeli and Hamas leaders.
- In response, the US House of Representatives passed a new ICC sanctions bill, now under Senate review.

- While Rubio's criticism appears directed at South Africa as G20 chair.
- However, it raises concerns about the new US administration's commitment to the multilateral platform if it chooses to disengage.

- **Upcoming G20 Meetings and US Participation**
  - The G20 Foreign Ministers’ meeting is set for February 20–21, with the Leaders’ Summit scheduled for November 22–23.
  - President Trump, along with other global leaders, is expected to attend.
  - **South Africa holds the G20 presidency until November 2025.**
- **Trump’s Approach to G20**
  - During his first term, Trump’s “America First” policies led to friction within G20 but also reshaped its agenda, shifting focus from free trade to “reciprocal trade” in line with his trade war against China.





- The benefits of emission reduction are only realized when the entire world cuts emissions significantly, and even then, the impact is not immediate.
- On the other hand, adaptation offers direct and local benefits. Strengthening infrastructure, improving water management, and enhancing disaster resilience can protect communities from climate change's immediate effects.
- Additionally, **economic prosperity plays a crucial role in resilience, reinforcing India's argument that development is the best shield against climate risks.**
- **The Economic Survey 2024-25: A Blueprint for Growth and Sustainability**
  - The Economic Survey 2024-25 strongly supports this approach. It advocates that **India must first reach the standards of a developed nation by 2047 before focusing aggressively on achieving net zero emissions by 2070.**
  - This recommendation aligns with India's efforts to balance rapid industrialization with long-term sustainability.
  - **Lessons from China:**
    - India appears to be following a trajectory similar to China's, which prioritized economic expansion and industrialization over emission concerns.
    - Since the mid-1990s, **China's emissions have quadrupled, yet it has simultaneously built the world's largest renewable energy infrastructure.**
    - Now, as its emissions approach their peak, China is in a position to transition to clean energy at an unprecedented pace.
    - India aims to replicate this model, ensuring that economic development is not compromised while also preparing for a future shift towards cleaner energy.
- **Reduced Global Pressure on India's Energy Choices:**
  - Another factor influencing India's climate stance is the **declining global focus on climate action.** Despite 2023 and 2024 setting new temperature records, international priorities have shifted due to geopolitical tensions, economic challenges, and technological conflicts.
  - Additionally, developing nations have grown increasingly frustrated with the international climate framework's shortcomings.
  - At the **COP29 summit in Baku, Azerbaijan**, the financial commitments made to assist developing nations in combating climate change were disappointingly low. This has further eroded trust in the global climate process, as developing countries feel their concerns are not being adequately addressed.
  - Moreover, the **decision of U.S. President Donald Trump to withdraw from the Paris Agreement in January 2025 and his push for increased fossil fuel production have significantly altered the global climate landscape.**
  - With major economies prioritizing their energy needs over climate commitments, India faces reduced pressure to phase out coal and other conventional energy sources.
- **A Unique Climate and Energy Pathway:**
  - Despite this shift, India is not abandoning its decarbonization efforts. The government recognizes that long-term economic growth must align with low-carbon development to remain competitive in the global clean energy market.
  - India asserts that its transition to cleaner energy should be determined by its own policies rather than external pressures.
  - However, achieving this goal requires significant advancements in domestic clean energy manufacturing and technology.
  - If India does not develop its own capabilities in renewable energy, nuclear power, and green hydrogen, it risks continued dependence on foreign supply chains, limiting its ability to make independent energy choices.
- **The Role of Nuclear Energy in India's Future:**
  - One of the key areas where India is looking to expand its energy portfolio is nuclear power.
  - The country has been relatively slow in scaling up nuclear energy capacity despite having the necessary international agreements in place, such as the India-U.S. civil nuclear deal and the Nuclear Suppliers Group waiver.

- To accelerate nuclear energy adoption, India is now focusing on **Small Modular Reactors (SMRs)**.
- Even with **ambitious targets of achieving 100 GW of nuclear power by 2047**, nuclear energy would still **constitute less than 10% of India's total electricity capacity**.
- Therefore, India must also scale up other renewable energy sources like solar, wind, and hydrogen to meet its clean energy goals.

● **Balancing Development and Climate Responsibility:**

- India's evolving climate stance is a strategic recalibration rather than a retreat from its commitments. By prioritizing adaptation and economic growth, the country aims to build resilience while maintaining flexibility in its approach to emission reduction.
- At the same time, **India recognizes that transitioning to clean energy is inevitable and must be integrated into its long-term development strategy**.
- In essence, India's climate policy shift is about exercising sovereignty over its developmental choices while ensuring that its long-term growth aligns with sustainability goals.
- The challenge ahead is to strike the right balance between economic prosperity and environmental responsibility, a task that will shape India's future in the global climate landscape.

### 3. Governor's Assent to Bills **GS 2 (Governance)**

- **Why in News:** The Supreme Court of India addressed the delay by **Tamil Nadu Governor R.N. Ravi** in assenting to **12 Bills** sent by the State government. These Bills, primarily related to higher education and the appointment process of Vice-Chancellors in State Universities, had been pending for over three years.
- **What is the process of granting assent?**
  - **Assent of the Governor or the President** is necessary for a Bill passed by the legislature to become law. After a Bill is passed by both Houses of the State Legislature, it is presented to the Governor for assent.
  - **Governor's Options (Article 200):** The Governor has the power to:
    - **Grant Assent:** The Bill becomes law.
    - **Withhold Assent:** The Governor can withhold assent, but it must be returned to the Legislative Assembly for reconsideration.
    - **Return for Reconsideration (except Money Bills):** If the Governor returns the Bill, the Legislature can amend it. If re-passed, the Governor must assent.
    - Money Bills are automatically deemed assented to by the Governor.
  - **Reserve for President's Consideration (Article 201):** If the Governor believes the Bill affects the Constitution or has national importance, it can be reserved for the President's consideration.
  - **Discretionary Powers:** The Governor can withhold assent if the Bill is against national interests, violates the Constitution, or conflicts with Union laws, though this power is not absolute.
  - **Article 167:** The Governor may require the Chief Minister to communicate decisions of the Council of Ministers, including Bills pending for assent.
  - **No Timeline for Decision:** There is no specified timeline within which the Governor must act, often leading to delays or a "**pocket veto**."
  - The **Sarkaria Commission (1988)** and the **National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution (2000)** recommended time limits for **granting assent (e.g., 6 months for assent, 3 months for President's decision)**. There are ongoing debates on enforcing such timelines.

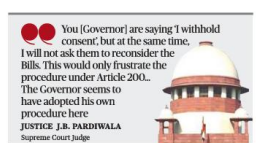
## What was 'gross' about the 12 Bills kept pending for 3 years: SC to T.N. Governor

Krishnasdas Rajagopal  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday asked what Tamil Nadu Governor R.N. Ravi found so "gross" about the 12 Bills the State government sent him for assent that they were kept pending for over three years.

A Bench of Justices J.B. Pardiwala and R. Mahadevan recapped the trajectory of 12 Bills, mostly to do with higher education and the appointment process of Vice-Chancellors in State universities, for the benefit of the Governor, whose office was represented by Attorney General of India R. Venkataramani.

Justice Pardiwala observed that these Bills were sent by the State Legislature for consent to the Governor under Article 200 of the Constitution between January 2020 and April 2023. The Governor had sat on them indefinitely. Ultimately, when the State government approached the court against the Governor's perceived inaction in November 2023, the latter had quickly referred two of the Bills to the President and proceeded to withhold consent on the remaining 10.



## SC to hear Kerala's plea on Governors in March

Krishnasdas Rajagopal  
NEW DELHI

The State of Kerala on Thursday pushed for an early hearing in the Supreme Court its writ petition arguing that Governors in Opposition-ruled States

The judge further observed that the Tamil Nadu Assembly had re-passed the 10 Bills in a Special Session and sent them again to the Governor for assent. This time, the Governor had proceeded to refer all 10 Bills to the President for consideration. The President had subsequently assented to one Bill, rejected seven and not considered

have triggered a tendency to delay assent or indefinitely sit on crucial Bills passed by the Legislative Assemblies. The matter is likely to be listed in March.

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the remaining two proposed laws. "We do not want to undermine the powers of the Governor... But, tell us, what is that something gross the Governor found that he kept these pending for over three years?" Justice Pardiwala asked.

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- **Judicial Review:** The Supreme Court has held that if the Governor's decision to withhold assent is found to be mala fide (in bad faith), it can be subject to judicial scrutiny and struck down. Courts can review such actions for constitutionality (Rameshwar Prasad, 2006).

#### 4. The saga of regulating India's thermal power emissions GS 2 (Governance)

- **Why in News:** India's Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has extended the deadline for thermal power plants to comply with **sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) emission** norms by three years. The revised deadline is now December 31, 2027, despite the original target of December 31, 2024, and the reasons for this extension have not been provided. This extension marks the latest development in a long-running saga regarding India's thermal power plants' compliance with air pollution norms.
- **Revised SO<sub>2</sub> Emission Norms and Debate on Compliance:**
  - **Initial Emission Norms:** In December 2015, MoEFCC introduced **stricter emission norms** for thermal plants, focusing on SO<sub>2</sub>, particulate matter, and other emissions. The deadline for compliance was initially set for December 2017, with the norms aligning closely with international standards.
  - **Debate Over Implementation:** The debate shifted from meeting emission norms to the feasibility of using **Flue Gas Desulphurisation (FGD) technology** for SO<sub>2</sub> reduction, with discussions focused on long gestation periods and high installation costs for FGDs, even though FGDs were not mandatory in the norms.
  - **Conflicting Views on SO<sub>2</sub> Emissions:** Various bodies, including the **Central Electricity Authority (CEA)** and NITI Aayog, questioned the relevance of strict SO<sub>2</sub> norms due to Indian coal's lower sulphur content. Some studies argued that SO<sub>2</sub> emissions might not significantly impact air quality and should not be prioritized over particulate emissions.
- **Delays and Financial Implications:**
  - **Repeated Extension of Deadlines:** The MoEFCC has repeatedly delayed the compliance deadlines, with the latest extension pushing the deadline for SO<sub>2</sub> norms to December 31, 2027. This marks the fourth revision of the deadlines, creating inconsistency in the enforcement of pollution control standards.
  - **Cost of Compliance Passed to Consumers:** To alleviate the financial burden on thermal plants, electricity regulators allowed the costs of FGD installation to be passed on to consumers, irrespective of whether the emission norms were met. This approach ensures that electricity consumers bear the cost of unutilized FGD equipment.
  - **Unused Equipment and Environmental Impact:** As a result of the delayed compliance timeline, many plants with FGDs may not operate them, leading to consumers paying for equipment that remains unused. This delay in using pollution control equipment will prevent local communities from experiencing the benefits of cleaner air in the near future.

#### The saga of regulating India's thermal power emissions

On December 31, 2024, India's Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) issued a notification extending the compliance deadline for thermal plants to comply with sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) emission norms by three years. The revised deadline is now December 31, 2027, despite the original target of December 31, 2024, and the reasons for this extension have not been provided. This extension marks the latest development in a long-running saga regarding India's thermal power plants' compliance with air pollution norms.

The MoEFCC revised the emission norms for Indian thermal plants in December 2015 after public consultation, and all thermal plants were expected to comply with them by December 2017 despite a long legal challenge.

This notification overturned the previous norms for particulate matter emissions and introduced stricter norms for sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) emissions, which were aligned with international standards. The new norms were intended to be implemented in a phased manner, with the first phase starting in 2017 and the second phase in 2024.

**The moratorium of a decade**

Indian coal generally has a lower sulphur content than other coal, which should have made it easier for Indian thermal plants to meet the SO<sub>2</sub> emission norms. But rather than focusing on the best ways to meet the norms – given India's rich coal reserves – the debate shifted into the challenges around implementing the flue gas desulphurisation (FGD) technology for the decarbonisation of high-sulphur coal. Despite the norms never mandating FGDs, the discussion became one about issues such as the scheduling of FGD installation given their long gestation periods and the likely costs of installing them.

In parallel, a different discourse questioned the SO<sub>2</sub> emission norms themselves also took shape, often driven by different arms of the government. The Central Electricity Authority (CEA) published papers in 2020 and 2021, questioning the need for uniform norms across the country and proposing that its country-wide implementation be phased out by 2025. The CEA also commissioned a study from IIT Delhi in 2022 which concluded that the installation of FGDs does provide air quality benefits but argued for extending its installation due to issues such as FGDs being expensive, their supply chain being inadequate, and their operating loadings increased cost of consumption and hence greenhouse gas emissions.

In 2024, NITI Aayog commissioned the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) National Environmental Engineering Research Institute to conduct a study on this. This study concluded that SO<sub>2</sub> emissions norms are not significant to achieve good ambient air quality in India, and instead the focus should be on particulate emissions. There was also a strand of debate about secondary aerosol formation from SO<sub>2</sub> emissions, which is the process by which SO<sub>2</sub> is converted into fine particles in the atmosphere. Thus, rather than shifting the focus and building a consensus before revisiting the first set of norms, it continues robustly nearly a decade after their notification.

**Electricity consumers are likely to pay for installed but unused equipment, even as citizens living around thermal plants do not get the benefit of cleaner air.**

**Different deadlines**

In the wake of these debates, the MoEFCC diluted some norms and also extended, multiple times, the deadline for compliance, with the notification of December 2024 being the fourth in the series. As a result, there are different deadlines for thermal plants at different locations and for different types of emissions, with SO<sub>2</sub> emission deadlines being well after the deadline for other emissions.

Indeed, the final deadline for compliance with air emissions, which include particulate matter emissions that are considered important by all government agencies, was December 31, 2024 with many plants having to comply from December 31 of 2022 and 2023. But it is not clear if various pollution control boards are verifying adherence to even these norms as there is no public source easily available that provides this information.

**Consumer pays**

Given the evolving deadlines in the various notifications by the MoEFCC, many thermal plants have already entered contracts to install FGDs – enough not at a price required to meet their deadlines before the latest notification. This was enabled by electricity regulators introducing regulations to pass on the cost of installing FGDs and other pollution control equipment to electricity consumers, irrespective of whether emission norms are met (so that it is not a burden on thermal plants).

As a result, the struggle to earlier deadline for meeting SO<sub>2</sub> emission norms is now December 31, 2027. 27 CEA of thermal plants have already installed FGDs. Additionally, 100 CEA (or only 50% of installed thermal capacity) is in advanced stages of setting up FGDs.

Given the new timeline for compliance, the chances are that plants with FGDs will not run them after that would increase the cost of generation and hence push them down the cost of electricity. Thus, electricity consumers are likely to be paying for installed but unused equipment, even as citizens living around thermal plants do not get the benefit of cleaner air for at least three more years, if not longer.

Perhaps this evades various of India's which will not be tackled one day, but the institutional, environmental, health and financial costs of doing so are likely to end up being high. And, unlike the original table, it is not even clear whether the right balance would be found from this saga.

#### 5. Ad-hoc Judges Appointment GS 2 (Governance)

- **Why in News:** The **Supreme Court of India** made a landmark decision allowing High Courts to appoint **retired judges** on an ad-hoc basis to address the mounting backlog of criminal cases. The decision came in the wake of a **growing pendency of cases**, particularly in criminal appeals, across the country's High Courts.
- **About Ad-hoc Judges Appointment**
  - Article **224-A** allows the appointment of retired judges to High Courts on an ad-hoc basis. This provision was introduced by the **Constitution (Fifteenth Amendment) Act, 1963**.

- The appointment requires the consent of the retired judge and the **President of India**. Such judges enjoy the same jurisdiction, powers, and privileges as sitting judges.

- **Appointment Procedure:**

- Once a retired judge consents to the appointment, the **Chief Justice of the High Court** submits the name and proposed tenure to the **Chief Minister**.
- The **Chief Minister** forwards the recommendation to the **Governor**, who then sends it to the **Union Minister of Law and Justice**.
- The **Union Law Minister** consults the **Chief Justice of India (CJI)**, after which the recommendation is sent to the **Prime Minister**.
- Finally, the **President of India** approves the appointment, and the **Chief Minister** issues the formal notification.

- **When Can Ad-hoc Judges be Appointed?** Ad-hoc judges are appointed under specific circumstances, particularly when:

- Judicial vacancies exceed **20%** of the sanctioned strength.
- Cases in a specific category have been pending for more than **five years**.
- More than **10%** of cases are pending for over five years.
- The **case disposal rate** is lower than the rate of incoming cases.

- **Conditions for Appointment in January 2025 Order:**

- The Supreme Court's **January 2025 order** allows High Courts to appoint retired judges on an ad-hoc basis, even when vacancies are **less than 20%** of the sanctioned strength.
- Ad-hoc judges will **only hear criminal appeals** and must be part of a Bench led by a sitting judge.
- The number of ad-hoc judges should not exceed **10%** of the High Court's sanctioned judicial strength.
- **Appointment Duration and Number:** Ad-hoc judges should typically be appointed for **2 to 3 years**. Each High Court can have **2 to 5 ad-hoc judges**.
- **Allowances and Benefits:**
  - Ad-hoc judges will receive the **same pay and allowances** as permanent judges, excluding pension.
  - They will either be provided with **rent-free accommodation** or a housing allowance.

## On the appointment of ad-hoc judges to High Courts

What did the Supreme Court order? Have such appointments been made previously? What did the rule set in the Lok Prasth judgment state? What does Article 224A mandate?

Anantika Thakur

The story we face with the growing backlog of criminal cases, the Supreme Court on January 20, ordered High Courts to appoint ad-hoc judges, provided they have only criminal appeals as part of a bench led by a sitting judge. A Bench of Chief Justice of India D. Sanjay Kumar and Justice B.R. Gavai, while hearing the writ petition filed by the Union Minister of Law and Justice, K. Venkatesh, ordered the High Courts to appoint ad-hoc judges to deal with the backlog of criminal cases.

Judges in High Courts on an ad-hoc basis, the order said, should be made in making recommendations for regular appointments. The order also directed the Court to ensure that ad-hoc judges can only be appointed when necessary to deal with the backlog of criminal cases, and that the number of such appointments should not exceed 10% of the sanctioned strength of the High Court.

The Supreme Court expressed concern that Article 224A could result in "multiple ad-hoc appointments" to High Courts, which would be detrimental to the quality of the judiciary. The Court clarified that ad-hoc judges can only be appointed when necessary to deal with the backlog of criminal cases, and that the number of such appointments should not exceed 10% of the sanctioned strength of the High Court.

from a panel of retired judges, along with some retired judges, for appointments.

THE GST

What does the latest order say?

The 12th Bench noted that, as of January 20, there are 10,147 pending cases across High Courts, according to data from the National Judicial Data Grid. Of these, over 18,200 are criminal cases, while more than 40,000 are civil cases. To tackle this growing backlog, the Court decided to set under the conditions and done in Lok Prasth, which permitted the appointment of ad-hoc judges only when the backlog of criminal cases exceeded 20% of the sanctioned strength.

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The number of ad-hoc judges cannot exceed 10% of a High Court's sanctioned judicial strength, meaning each High Court can have only 2 to 5 such appointments.

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Have there been prior instances?

There have been several documented instances of ad-hoc judicial appointments. In 2012, Justice B.R. Gavai was appointed to the Madhya Pradesh High Court shortly after his retirement to deal with the backlog of criminal cases. Justice P. Venkataswamy was similarly appointed to the Madhya Pradesh High Court in 2012. Justice V. Ramaswami was appointed to the Allahabad High Court in 2012 to provide cover for the sitting judge.

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## 6. Pinaka Multiple Rocket Launch System (MRLS) GS 3 (Science and Tech)

- **Why in News:** The Union Defence Ministry of India signed contracts worth Rs 10,147 crore for the procurement of advanced ammunition for the **Army's Pinaka Multiple Rocket Launch Systems (MRLS)**.

- **About Pinaka:**

- The **Pinaka Multiple Rocket Launch System (MRLS)** is a key long-range artillery weapon used by the Indian Army, designed to provide rapid, high-volume firepower.
- The system has been developed by the **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)**.
- It is named after **Pinaka**, the bow of the Hindu god Lord Shiva, symbolizing power and precision.
- **Key Features:**
  - **Range and Firepower:** The Pinaka MRLS is capable of firing multiple rockets in a single salvo. The upgraded system has an impressive range of 75 km, with plans to enhance it to 120 km and eventually 300 km. It

**₹10,147-crore worth contracts signed for Pinaka ammunition**

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

The Defence Ministry on Thursday signed contracts worth ₹10,147 crore for a variety of ammunition for the Army's Pinaka Multiple Rocket Launch Systems (MRLS). The ammunition also enhances the range of the Pinaka systems.

Contracts were inked with Economic Explosives Limited (EEL) and Munitions India Limited (MIL) for the procurement of Area Denial Munition (ADM) Type-1 and High Explosive Pre-Fragmented (HEPP) Mk-1 (enhanced) rockets respectively for Pinaka MRLS at a total cost of ₹10,147 crore, a Ministry statement said.

A contract for upgrades in Shakti software has also been signed with Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL).

**A contract for upgrades in Shakti software has also been signed with Bharat Electronics Limited**

chanised forces, vehicles and personnel, thereby denying specific areas to the enemy, the statement said.

The upgraded Pinaka is going to be the mainstay of the Army's long range rocket artillery. Last November, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) announced the successful completion of flight tests of guided Pinaka rockets of 75 km paving the way for its induction doubling the original range. Work is on to enhance the range to 120 km and further to 300 km.

The fully automated 214-mm Pinaka MRLS battery can deliver a salvo of 72 rockets on the target up to 75 km in 44 seconds.



can deliver a salvo of 72 rockets on target in just 44 seconds, allowing for a concentrated attack on enemy positions.

- **Ammunition Types:** The system uses various types of rockets, including high explosive, anti-tank, and area denial munitions. The new contracts aim to acquire **ADM Type-1** (designed to deny areas to enemy forces) and **HEPF-Mk-1 rockets** (enhanced versions of existing rockets for greater range and precision).
- **Fully Automated System:** The Pinaka system is fully automated, enabling fast and efficient rocket launches. This automated system helps the army deliver concentrated strikes on targets within a short time frame, providing a significant tactical advantage.

## 7. India's Chabahar Port Project GS 2 (International Relations)

- **Why in News:** The Trump administration has issued a directive that may potentially remove the **sanctions waiver** granted to India, which allowed the country to continue its work on **Iran's Chabahar port**. This move is part of the U.S.'s broader "**maximum pressure**" campaign against Iran.
- **About Chabahar Port**
  - Located in Iran, Chabahar port provides India access to **Afghanistan and Central Asia**, bypassing Pakistan.
  - India signed a **10-year deal in 2024**, investing USD 120 million in port development and a USD 250 million credit facility for related projects.
  - **India Ports Global Limited (IPGL)** has managed the port since 2018.
  - The deep water port is located on the **Makran Coast of Iran's Sistan-Baluchistan province**.
  - Moreover, Chabahar is the **only Iranian port** with direct access to the Indian Ocean.
  - Chabahar connects **Mumbai** to the **International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)**, reducing transport costs and improving trade.
  - The port has handled over 90,000 TEUs of container traffic and 8.4 million metric tons of cargo since 2018.
  - **Impact of removal on waiver on India**
    - **Development Work at Risk:** Revocation of the sanctions waiver could hinder India's development efforts at Chabahar.
    - **Trade Growth:** Chabahar saw a 43% increase in vessel traffic and 34% rise in container traffic in FY 2024, proving its growing significance for India's trade.
    - **Geopolitical Impact:** India's ties with Iran are key to its presence in Central Asia and Afghanistan. The sanctions could disrupt these strategic interests.

## No word from govt. on U.S. cancelling Chabahar waiver

Subasini Haidar  
NEW DELHI

A day after U.S. President Donald Trump signed an order that could impose sanctions on India for its investment in Iran's Chabahar port, the Union government on Thursday remained silent regarding the order and its implications.

The U.S. order, titled the 'National Security Presidential Memorandum', specifically named the port as it called for "maximum economic pressure" on the Iranian government, directing U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio and U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent to cut off Iran's recourse to all funds, including through oil exports, ports, and ancillary businesses.

Mr. Trump told reporters that he has left directions that in case of his assassination, Iran should be "totally obliterated" if it is found responsible.

### Sanctions waivers

"The Secretary of State shall modify or rescind sanctions waivers, particularly those that provide Iran any degree of economic or financial relief, including those related to Iran's Chabahar port project," says the order. India has developed the Shahid Beheshti Terminal at the Chabahar port under a 2016 trilateral agreement with Iran and Afghanistan.

"The Treasury Secretary will also issue guidance for all relevant business sectors - including shipping, insurance, and port operators - about the risks to any person that knowingly violates U.S. sanctions with respect to Iran or an Iranian terror proxy," added a fact-sheet



A view of the Shahid Beheshti Terminal in Chabahar port, Iran with cargo ships. GETTY IMAGES

on the order, also issued by the White House.

### New lobbying effort

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) declined to respond to requests for a comment on the U.S.'s latest threat, that came even as the U.S. deported a military plane-load of illegal Indian immigrants back to India. The Chabahar issue is expected to be discussed when Prime Minister Narendra Modi travels to Washington to meet with Mr. Trump between February 12 and 14. Officials said that the Trump order required a full study by New Delhi, as well as discussions on how best to lobby with the new U.S. administration for another waiver.

During his previous tenure, Mr. Trump had walked out of the Iran nuclear deal (officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action or JCPOA) and imposed a number of sanctions on Iran, but granted India a waiver from sanctions over the development of Chabahar in "support of Afghanistan's economic growth and development, as well as the (U.S.'s) close partnership with India".

India acceded to Mr. Trump's demand that it "zero out" all oil exports from Iran, causing a considerable loss to Indian refineries.