

● POLITY

● ECONOMICS

● TECHNOLOGY

● ECOLOGY

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Iranian standoff with cargo ship ends with crew release

CONTEXT: Tensions eased slightly this week after Iran announced the release of all crew members aboard the Portuguese-flagged cargo ship MSC Aries. This included 17 Indian sailors among the 25-member crew. The release follows weeks of detention after the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) captured the vessel in the Strait of Hormuz on April 13th.



India-Canada Ties: A Multifaceted Relationship with Room to Grow

Canada and India boast a long-standing relationship built on shared democratic values and a thriving diaspora connection. Here's a breakdown of the key pillars of this partnership:

Strong Political Foundations:

- Established diplomatic relations in 1947.
- Shared commitment to democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

Economic Powerhouse:

- Bilateral trade reaching \$6 billion annually.
- Canada ranks among the top 20 foreign investors in India.
- Ongoing negotiations for a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA).

Vibrant People-to-People Ties:

- Canada houses a large Indian diaspora, exceeding 1.6 million strong.
- Thousands of Indian students pursue education in Canada.
- Active collaboration on Intellectual Property Rights (IPR).

Strategic Importance:

- Canada views India as a crucial partner in its Indo-Pacific strategy due to its economic and demographic heft.

Scientific Collaboration:

- Joint research projects undertaken through the India-Canada Centre for Innovative Multidisciplinary Partnerships to Accelerate Community Transformation and Sustainability (IC-IMPACTS).
- Cooperation in space exploration with joint missions and satellite launches.

Challenges to Address:

- Cultural sensitivities surrounding the Khalistan movement have strained relations.
- Visa and immigration policies affecting Indian students in Canada.
- Differing stances on international issues and trade disputes require diplomatic solutions.

The Path Forward:

- Open dialogue on sensitive issues involving all stakeholders.
- Diversifying economic cooperation beyond traditional sectors.
- Fostering cultural understanding through exchange programs.
- Collaborating on environmental challenges like climate change.
- Regular high-level talks and security cooperation to strengthen ties.

By working together to address challenges and capitalize on opportunities, India and Canada can solidify their multifaceted relationship for a prosperous future.

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

Arrests Made in Connection with Hardeep Singh Nijjar's Killing: Canada-India Relations Strained

CONTEXT: Canadian authorities arrested three individuals believed to be part of a hit squad tasked by the Indian government with the killing of Khalistan separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar in Surrey last year, as reported by Canadian media. This incident has strained relations between India and Canada, escalating after Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's accusations of potential Indian involvement in Nijjar's killing. India has vehemently denied these allegations as baseless. The arrests and charges for first-degree murder and conspiracy to commit murder mark a significant development in the investigation into Nijjar's death.



INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Hamas to send a delegation to Egypt for ceasefire talks

CONTEXT: Hamas said it was sending a delegation to Egypt for further ceasefire talks, in a new sign of progress in attempts by international mediators to hammer out an agreement between Israel and the militant group to end the war in Gaza. Egyptian and American mediators report signs of compromise in recent days after months of negotiations.



empowering women and the most vulnerable.

- Strengthened Institutions:** Improve national and local capacity to deliver on the SDGs.
- International Support:** Developed nations must increase resources to assist developing countries.
- UN Reform:** Strengthen the UN development system for better support.

Limited Impact and the Need for Transformation

A study analyzing the SDGs' political impact found they have mainly influenced discussions and led to some policy changes. However, a transformative effect on national and local politics is lacking.

Recommendations for Transformation

The UN report "Future is Now" suggests a systemic approach that considers trade-offs and maximizes co-benefits (achievements that address multiple goals).

The report proposes four levers for action:

- Governance
- Economy and finance
- Individual and collective action
- Science and technology

By working together through these levers, stakeholders can design and implement integrated solutions tailored to specific needs.

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

Progress on sustainable development goals stalls, urgent action needed

CONTEXT: The UN Summit on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) revealed slow progress on achieving these critical targets. Despite commitment from all countries, the pace of change falls short, particularly concerning environmental goals. The COVID-19 pandemic further hampered progress.



To get back on track, the UN identified five key are

- Renewed Commitment:** Governments must commit to accelerated action for the next seven years.
- Integrated Policies:** Focus on policies that tackle poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation while

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Policy Mismatch

CONTEXT: The ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas, highlights the challenges faced by U.S. President Joe Biden in managing the situation. The perceived policy mismatch of supplying arms to Israel while advocating for a halt to Gaza strikes undermines American values and weakens both his moral stance and domestic political standing in an election year.

BACKGROUND: Amidst the Israel-Hamas conflict, President Biden faced mounting pressure to address the escalating violence. Despite initial attempts to prevent regional escalation, criticism grew over the U.S.'s support for Israel's actions in Gaza. Biden's response, including warnings to Israel and diplomatic efforts, was deemed insufficient, leading to concerns about moral consistency and America's role in the conflict. Calls for a shift in policy, including halting arms sales to Israel, intensified amid rising casualties and global condemnation.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Background: Israel-Hamas Conflict

- Conflict Initiation:**
 - War began on October 7, sparked by Hamas's attack.
 - Biden prioritized preventing regional escalation.
- Biden's Strategy:**
 - Initially Offered unconditional support to Israel's Gaza offensive.
 - Deployed diplomatic efforts to ease tensions.

- **Escalation and Consequences:**
- Conflict persisted for months with significant civilian casualties.
- Over 34,000 deaths, mostly women and children, in Gaza. With this US is finding it difficult to prevent escalation of conflict.
- Israel threatens to invade Rafah despite Biden's warnings.
- Conflict spills over with Houthi attacks and Israel-Iran tensions.

Biden's Response and Critique:

- **Ceasefire Efforts:**
- Biden administration works on ceasefire and hostage deal.
- Biden's warnings to Israel and Iran contribute to easing tensions.
- **Flaws in Approach:**
- U.S. support for Israel contradicts stated values on human rights.
- Continuous arms supply to Israel amid allegations of indiscriminate bombing.
- Biden signs \$17 billion defense aid bill despite frustrations with Netanyahu.

Policy Critique:

- Biden's words are not matched by strong actions to pressure Israel.
- Continuation of arms support undermines moral arguments on foreign policy.
- Weakness in reining in Israel damages U.S. standing in the region.

Call for Change:

- Pressure mounts on Biden to reconsider Israel policy.
- Urgent need for Biden to address flaws in Israel-Palestine policy.
- Past examples suggest hard pressure on Israel can lead to peace.

Recommendations:

- Biden urged to call for a permanent ceasefire and suspend arms sales to Israel.
- Crucial for Biden to demonstrate commitment to peace in the region.

ANALYSIS: The conflict erupted on October 7, initiated by Hamas's attack, prompting President Biden to prioritize preventing regional escalation. Initially, the U.S. extended unconditional support to Israel's offensive while concurrently engaging in diplomatic endeavours to alleviate tensions.

Despite attempts to contain the conflict, it persisted for months, resulting in significant civilian casualties, especially in Gaza, with over 34,000 deaths, predominantly women and children, highlighting the severity of the situation. Further complicating matters were Israel's threats to invade Rafah and escalating tensions with Iran, alongside Houthi attacks. While the Biden administration worked on ceasefire efforts and issued warnings to Israel and Iran, criticisms emerged over the inconsistency between U.S. support for Israel and its professed human rights values. The continuous supply of arms

to Israel, despite allegations of indiscriminate bombing, raised concerns about moral integrity. Biden's approval of a \$17 billion defense aid bill to Israel, despite frustrations with Netanyahu, further intensified policy critique. Mounting pressure on Biden to reassess the Israel policy underscored the need for a paradigm shift. Historical examples suggested that exerting significant pressure on Israel could pave the way for peace. Recommendations included advocating for a permanent ceasefire and halting arms sales to Israel, emphasizing the imperative of demonstrating unwavering commitment to peace in the region. Persisting and escalating conflict in the middle east has been exposing the limitations of President Biden's administration in reining in an ally. This does not show him as a strong President in control of the situation in an election year.

CONCLUSION: Given the persisting conflict and escalating tensions, President Biden faces increasing scrutiny over his handling of the Israel-Hamas crisis. The inability to effectively address the policy mismatch between supporting Israel and advocating for peace jeopardizes his credibility and leadership ahead of the elections.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The paradox of india's global rise, its regional decline

CONTEXT: India's ambitious rise on the world stage is strangely contrasted by a decline in its influence within its own region, South Asia.

BACKGROUND: India's global influence is on the rise, with a strong economy, military, and participation in important global groups. However, its power in its region, South Asia, is declining. China's growing influence and a shift in regional dynamics are challenging India's traditional dominance. Another major reason is the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, which has allowed China to entrench more closely to the region. This paradox creates difficulties for India's ambitions as a major world power.

INDIA'S PARADOX: GLOBAL RISE, REGIONAL DECLINE

The puzzling situation of India's growing global influence contrasting with its diminishing power in its own neighbourhood, South Asia.

● India's Global Rise:

- Absolute Power Growth: This includes a robust economy, a strong military, and a young population.
- Global Recognition: Participation in key institutions (G-20, Quad, etc.) highlights India's growing significance.
- Geopolitical Advantage: India's central location in the Indo-Pacific, a region of strategic importance, adds to its global prominence.

● India's Regional Decline (Compared to):

- Cold War Era: India wielded significant influence in South Asia during this period.
- China's Rise: China's growing power is the biggest factor behind India's decline in the region.
- Shifting Geopolitical Landscape: Changes within South

Asia itself have also contributed to India's diminishing influence.

- **Factors Contributing to Regional Decline:**

- The US Withdrawal: America's retreat from the region created a power vacuum that China filled, impacting India negatively. (Paradox here: This withdrawal also made the US more receptive to India's global interests, boosting its global standing.)
- Overstretched Focus: India's focus on the Indo-Pacific balance of power might have neglected its continental neighbourhood.
- Balancing Act by Smaller Nations: India's neighbours are strategically balancing their relationships with India and China.
- Obsolescence of South Asia as a Geopolitical Construct: The concept of South Asia as a unified region may be losing relevance.

- **Recommendations for India:**

- Acknowledge the Reality: India needs to accept the changing dynamics of the region.
 - Play to Strengths: Focus on India's unique strengths rather than simply trying to match China's power in every aspect.
 - Leverage Maritime Advantages: India should utilize its maritime space for trade and partnerships to compensate for continental challenges.
 - Include Neighbors in Indo-Pacific Strategy: Engaging smaller South Asian nations in the Indo-Pacific framework could benefit India.
 - Openness to External Partnerships: India's willingness to collaborate with external friendly powers can help address regional challenges.
 - Utilize Soft Power: Encouraging informal contacts and conflict resolution initiatives can enhance India's influence.
- **The Underlying Question:** Whether a nation struggling to maintain dominance in its region can truly be a pivotal power on the global stage?

ANALYSIS:

India's ascent on the world stage clashes with its declining influence in its own neighborhood, South Asia. Economic strength, military power, and participation in global forums like the G-20 highlight India's global rise. However, China's emergence and a shifting South Asian landscape challenge India's traditional dominance.

The US withdrawal from Afghanistan created a space China filled, weakening India regionally but strengthening its global standing as the US became more receptive to India's interests. India's focus on the Indo-Pacific balance of power might have neglected its immediate neighborhood, while smaller South Asian nations strategically balance relations with both India and China.

To navigate this paradox, India must accept the new reality and leverage its unique strengths. Utilizing its maritime space for partnerships can compensate for continental challenges. Engaging South Asian nations in the Indo-Pacific

framework and collaborating with friendly external powers are potential solutions. Additionally, India's soft power, cultural influence, and historical ties can be powerful tools.

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

Organ donation hit by poor identification of brain death cases 42 months

CONTEXT: The Union Health Ministry in India has expressed concern over low organ donation rates due to poor identification and certification of brain death cases. This has prompted the issuance of a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to facilitate organ donation in hospitals across the country.

LOW ORGAN DONATION RATES IN INDIA: CAUSES AND SOLUTIONS

Problem:

- India's organ donation rate is very low, with less than one donor per million population per year.
- This is despite the availability of many potential organ donors.

Cause:

- Poor identification and certification of brain stem death/brain death cases.

Solutions:

- **Improved Identification:**

- Health authorities in states/UTs are asked to identify each potential brain death case admitted in the ICU.

- **Family Awareness:**

- Hospitals should inquire if the potential donor had pledged for organ donation.
- If not, families should be informed about the option to donate organs before cardiac arrest.

- **Standard Operating Procedure (SOP):**

- The DGHS issued an SOP under the Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Act (THOTA Act) 1994.
- Doctors on duty, with transplant coordinators, will make inquiries after brain death certification.

- **Hospital Responsibilities:**

- Facilitate and monitor brain death case certification following THOTA Act and Rules.
- Install "Required Request Display Boards" in strategic locations.
 - Educate the public about organ donation after brain death or cardiac arrest.
 - List of donatable organs: kidney, liver, heart, pancreas, eyes, skin, and bones.

Additional Information:

- In 2022, a total of 16,041 organs (mostly kidneys) were donated.

- Delhi had the highest number of donations (3,818).

CONCLUSION: Addressing the issue of poor identification and certification of brain death cases is crucial for improving organ donation rates in India. The implementation of the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) and proactive measures by health authorities and hospitals are steps in the right direction to facilitate organ donation and save lives. However, sustained efforts and public awareness campaigns will be essential to further enhance organ donation rates across the country.

ECONOMY AND DEVELOPMENT

March mining output growth slows to 1.2% in signal for IIP

CONTEXT: India's mining sector experienced a slowdown in output growth in March, hitting a 19-month low at 1.2%, potentially signalling a deceleration in overall industrial production for the month.

Drag on pace

Mining output data from the Ministry of Mines hints at a likely slowing in IIP growth in March

■ March IIP data is due to be **released by the NSO on May 10**

■ In FY24, mining output rose

7.5%, **faster than 5.8% in 2022-23**

■ Iron ore, limestone and aluminium output hit new records last year, **rising 7.4%, 10.7% and 2.1%, respectively**



- BACKGROUND:** India's mining sector experienced a notable slowdown in output growth in March, reaching a

- 19-month low at 1.2%, following February's robust 8% expansion. This decline, coupled with a moderation in growth across the eight core sectors, suggests a potential deceleration in overall industrial output for the month.
- March Mining Output Growth:**
- Mining output growth slowed to 1.2% in March, marking a 19-month low.
- February saw a robust 8% growth in mining, lifting overall Index of Industrial Production (IIP) growth to a four-month peak of 5.7%.
- Mining's Contribution to IIP:**
- Mining constitutes 14.3% of the IIP.
- In February, mining and electricity growth contributed significantly to the IIP's 5.7% growth.
- Expectations for Overall Industrial Output:**
- Growth in the eight core sectors slowed to 5.2% in March from 7.1% in February.
- Economists anticipate a deceleration in industrial output growth, estimating a range of 3.5%-5%.

Mineral Production Index:

- The index of mineral production for March stood at 156.1, up 1.2% from March 2023.
- Positive growth was recorded in non-fuel minerals such as copper concentrate, gold, manganese ore, diamond, graphite, limestone, and magnesite.

Mining Output in FY24:

- In FY24, mining output increased by 7.5%, surpassing the 5.8% growth in 2022-23.
- Iron ore, limestone, and aluminium production achieved new records, rising by 7.4%, 10.7%, and 2.1% respectively.

CONCLUSION: The slowdown in India's mining sector in March, reflected by a 1.2% growth rate, suggests potential challenges for overall industrial production. Coupled with moderation across core sectors, this indicates a possible deceleration in industrial output. Addressing these issues will be crucial for sustaining economic growth and development.

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INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Tories suffer losses in U.K. local polls; labour calls for a general election

CONTEXT: The recent local election results in the UK, marked by heavy losses for the Conservative Party and significant gains for Labour, signal a potential shift in political power ahead of the upcoming general election, with implications for national governance and party leadership strategies.

Heavy Losses for Conservatives:

- Conservative Party faced significant losses in local elections, strengthening expectations of Labour Party's return to power after 14 years in the upcoming UK general election.
- Labour gained control of councils in England not held for decades, indicating a potential major defeat for Conservatives in the general election.

Mixed Results for Prime Minister Rishi Sunak:

- Despite Conservative losses, re-election of Conservative mayor of Tees Valley, Ben Houchen, provided some relief for Prime Minister Rishi Sunak.
- Houchen's victory may help cushion Sunak from potential revolt by Conservative lawmakers.

Stellar Performance by Labour Leader Keir Starmer:

- Labour Party leader Keir Starmer witnessed a generally positive outcome, marked by significant victories and

gains.

- However, some areas with large Muslim populations, like Blackburn and Oldham, saw negative outcomes possibly due to Labour's pro-Israel stance in Gaza conflict.

Significance of Blackpool South Seat:

- Labour reclaimed the parliamentary seat of Blackpool South in northwest England, previously held by Conservatives in 2019.
- Labour's Chris Webb secured a significant victory, with a 26% swing from Conservative to Labour, potentially impacting the outcome of the impending general election.

National Importance of Thursday's Elections:

- The elections in various parts of England were crucial, as voters decided on local governance, influencing their daily lives.
- With the general election on the horizon, these results are viewed through a national lens, shaping the political landscape of the UK.

CONCLUSION: The recent UK local election results mark a significant moment in the country's political landscape, with heavy losses for the Conservatives and notable gains for Labour. These outcomes foreshadow a potential shift in power dynamics ahead of the looming general election, prompting discussions about national governance and leadership strategies. As both parties assess their performance and recalibrate their approaches, the implications of these results resonate beyond local councils, shaping the trajectory of UK politics in the foreseeable future.



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