



NAMAN SHARMA
IAS ACADEMY

Daily

CURRENT AFFAIRS

 March 21st, 2026



 **Offline Centre Location:**
SCO 173-174, Sector 17C, Chandigarh



Index

- 1. Iran steps up attacks on Israel, Gulf energy sites**
- 2. CAPF Bill gives priority to IPS officers; govt. says the new law will curb unnecessary litigation**
- 3. Renewable Energy Ministry demands sweeping powers**
- 4. India's Iran stance does fuel a foreign policy debate**

1. Iran steps up attacks on Israel, Gulf energy sites

Why in the News?

The news is reporting a major escalation in the conflict between Iran and Israel, marked by a new wave of Iranian attacks targeting not only Israel but also critical energy infrastructure in neighbouring Gulf Arab states (Kuwait, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia). This marks a significant expansion of the conflict beyond Iran and Israel's borders, directly threatening global oil supplies and drawing in key U.S. allies in the region.



Background

- **The War:** The report references a conflict that has been ongoing for nearly three weeks, involving U.S.-Israeli strikes against Iran. These strikes have targeted and killed top Iranian leaders and damaged Iran's weapons and energy industries.
- **Iran's Position:** Iran has been defiant, stating its objective is to deny its enemies security and vowing to continue its missile development. The country is under immense pressure, with its leadership structure and the extent of damage to its infrastructure unclear.
- **Regional Context:** The conflict is not isolated to Iran and Israel. It involves Iranian-backed groups like Hezbollah in Lebanon, and now directly impacts Gulf Arab states, which have historically been rivals of Iran but are also home to key U.S. military installations.

Feature

- **Attacks on Gulf Energy Sites:**
 - Kuwait: Two waves of Iranian drones struck the Mina Al-Ahmadi refinery, one of West Asia's largest, causing a fire.
 - Bahrain: A warehouse caught fire due to shrapnel from an intercepted projectile.
 - Saudi Arabia: Drones targeting the oil-rich Eastern Province were intercepted and shot down.
- **Attacks on Israel:** Iran launched missiles at Israel, with explosions heard in Jerusalem following air raid warnings.
- **Broader Israeli Strikes:** Israel continued its strikes on Iran (with explosions heard in Tehran), Lebanon (targeting Hezbollah), and expanded operations to Syria, citing attacks on the Druze population.

- **Leadership Messaging and Casualties:**

- Iran's new Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei, issued a rare statement vowing to deny enemies their security.
- An IRGC spokesman claimed Iran was still producing missiles during wartime, but was later reported killed in an airstrike.
- Casualties are mounting, with over 1,300 killed in Iran, more than 1,000 in Lebanon, 15 in Israel, and 13 U.S. military members.

Challenge

- **Risk of Regional Conflagration:** The conflict is rapidly spreading beyond a direct Iran-Israel confrontation to include key Gulf Arab states, threatening to ignite a full-scale regional war.
- **Global Economic Disruption:** Attacks on major oil refineries and energy sites in the Gulf directly threaten global energy supplies, potentially causing a sharp spike in oil prices and destabilising the world economy.
- **Humanitarian Crisis:** The conflict is causing significant civilian casualties and displacement, particularly in Lebanon (over 1 million displaced) and Iran.
- **Escalation Spiral:** The back-and-forth nature of the attacks, Iran striking Gulf states and Israel striking Iran, Lebanon, and Syria, creates a dangerous cycle with a high potential for miscalculation and uncontrollable escalation.

Way Forward

- **De-escalation Efforts:** A critical need exists for urgent diplomatic intervention by international powers, including the U.S., to prevent the conflict from spiralling further. However, the report indicates Iran has "no intention of seeking a quick end to the war."
- **Protecting Energy Infrastructure:** Securing critical energy facilities in the Gulf region becomes a paramount priority for the affected nations and their allies (like the U.S.) to prevent further economic fallout.
- **Re-establishing Deterrence:** The involved parties are currently in a cycle of testing each other's red lines. Finding a new equilibrium of deterrence is essential to halt the current trajectory of intensifying strikes.

Conclusion

The conflict has entered a dangerous new phase where the traditional battle lines have dissolved. Iran is demonstrating its capability and willingness to strike the economic lifelines of U.S.-aligned Gulf states, while Israel and the U.S. continue to apply direct military pressure on Iran and its proxies. With significant casualties, a widening geography of conflict, and Iran showing no appetite for de-escalation, the region faces a severe and immediate threat of a full-blown regional war with profound global economic and security implications.

2. CAPF Bill gives priority to IPS officers; govt. says the new law will curb unnecessary litigation

Why in the News?

The Central Armed Police Forces (General Administration) Bill, 2026, is in the news because it seeks to codify a quota for Indian Police Service (IPS) officers in top leadership posts within the CAPFs (BSF, CRPF, ITBP, SSB, CISF). This move directly contradicts a Supreme Court judgment from May 2025, which directed the government to reduce such deputations. The Bill has sparked strong opposition from retired CAPF officers, who argue it perpetuates career stagnation for cadre officers who serve in the forces for their entire careers.

Background

- **The Supreme Court Judgment:** On May 23, 2025, the Supreme Court directed the Ministry of Home Affairs to "progressively reduce" the deputation of IPS officers in CAPFs up to the rank of Inspector General (IG) within two years.
- **The Litigation:** The judgment was the result of a decade-long legal battle by CAPF cadre officers (who join as Assistant Commandants) who argued that IPS officers occupying senior positions blocked their promotions.
- **Current System:** Currently, the reservation for IPS officers in senior CAPF posts is governed by executive orders (20% for DIG and 50% for IG). The new Bill seeks to replace these executive orders with a statutory law.



Feature

- **Statutory Quota for IPS: The Bill mandates that:**
 - 50% of posts in the rank of Inspector General (IG) shall be filled by IPS officers on deputation.
 - 67% of posts in the rank of Additional Director General (ADG) shall be filled by IPS officers.
 - 100% of posts in the ranks of Special Director General (SDG) and Director General (DG) shall be filled by IPS officers.

- **Rationale Provided:** The government argues that IPS officers are necessary for maintaining Centre-State coordination and that the Bill is needed to provide "legislative clarity" and harmonise judicial directions with administrative requirements.
- **Objective:** Home Minister Amit Shah stated that the Bill aims to create an "umbrella law" to regulate service conditions and avoid "unnecessary litigations."

Challenge

- **Career Stagnation for CAPF Cadre Officers:** Despite leading "frontline" operations and suffering combat casualties, CAPF officers face severe delays in promotions. It currently takes 15-18 years for an Assistant Commandant to receive their first promotion. The Bill is seen as a barrier to creating a clear promotion path for these officers.
- **Discrimination Claims:** Retired CAPF officials argue that the government is discriminating against cadre officers. They note that while the Supreme Court sought to reduce IPS presence to open up opportunities, the Bill increases IPS control at the highest levels.
- **Contradiction with Judicial Direction:** The Bill effectively seeks to negate the Supreme Court's directive to "progressively reduce" IPS deputation, setting up a potential constitutional conflict between the legislature and the judiciary.

Way Forward

- **Legislative Process:** The Bill is likely to be tabled in the Rajya Sabha next week. Its passage will depend on the government's ability to garner support in Parliament amid opposition from CAPF associations and retired officers.
- **Potential Litigation:** If passed, the Bill is almost certain to face legal challenges in the Supreme Court. The court will have to weigh the legislature's power to frame service rules against its own earlier judgment aimed at protecting the career prospects of CAPF officers.
- **Addressing Structural Issues:** The government may need to simultaneously address the massive 93,000 vacancies across CAPFs and restructure the promotion timeline for cadre officers to mitigate the resentment caused by this Bill.

Conclusion

The CAPF Bill represents a significant policy reversal by the government, prioritising the role of the All India Services (IPS) over specialised cadre officers in paramilitary leadership. While the government cites administrative efficiency and federal coordination to justify the move, it has alienated CAPF officers who view the Bill as a betrayal that condemns them to career stagnation. With its introduction in Parliament, the Bill is set to become a flashpoint for debate over the balance between bureaucratic integration and operational merit in India's internal security apparatus.

3. Renewable Energy Ministry demands sweeping powers

Why in the News?

The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) is in the news for demanding a significant expansion of its administrative authority. In a submission to a parliamentary committee, it has requested to be recognised as the "Central Government" for all matters about renewable energy

under the Electricity Act, 2003. This move challenges the long-standing authority of the Power Ministry and seeks to redraw institutional boundaries to give MNRE control over grid integration, tariff setting, and transmission planning for renewables.

Background

- **Current Framework:** The Electricity Act, 2003, is the primary legislation governing the power sector. Currently, the Power Ministry exercises primary authority over its provisions, including those related to grid-connected renewable energy. MNRE has historically been responsible for policy, manufacturing, and project implementation, but not for the regulatory and grid-management aspects.
- **Stakeholder Demand:** The demand comes in response to "stakeholder requests" for a standalone Renewable Energy Act. However, MNRE conceded that a separate Act is unnecessary since renewables are already integrated into the grid.
- **Current Capacity:** As of January 31, 2026, India has 271.96 GW of non-fossil fuel capacity (263.18 GW from renewables), accounting for over half of the total installed generation capacity (520.50 GW). However, the actual electricity generated from non-fossil sources remains at about 25%, highlighting grid integration and utilisation challenges.

Feature

- **Definition as "Central Government":** MNRE seeks to be recognised as the "Central Government" under the Electricity Act, specifically for renewable energy matters, giving it the authority to issue binding directions.
- **Market and Tariff Control:** It wants the power to design electricity markets for renewables, prepare and notify bidding guidelines, and frame tariff determination principles for the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC).
- **Oversight of Obligations:** It seeks oversight of the planning and monitoring of Renewable Purchase Obligations (RPOs), the mechanism that mandates distribution companies to buy a minimum share of clean energy.
- **Transmission Planning:** It has demanded that the Central Electricity Authority (CEA) coordinate with it on renewable regulations and that the National Committee on Transmission work under MNRE's guidance—a role traditionally held by the Power Ministry.



Challenge

- **Institutional Overlap and Turf Wars:** The primary challenge is the potential for conflict between the MNRE and the Power Ministry. Transmission, grid stability, and tariff regulation have traditionally been under the Power Ministry's purview. Shifting these to MNRE could lead to jurisdictional clashes and administrative fragmentation.
- **Regulatory Uncertainty:** The demand to guide CERC and override existing frameworks could create uncertainty for investors and developers who rely on a stable, unified regulatory environment.
- **State-Level Implementation:** While MNRE seeks central oversight of RPOs, enforcement of these obligations lies with State Electricity Regulatory Commissions (SERCs) and distribution companies (DISCOMs), many of which are lagging. Centralising authority may face resistance from states.

Way Forward

- **Parliamentary Committee Scrutiny:** The demand is currently before a parliamentary committee. The committee's recommendations will determine whether the government moves toward amending the Electricity Act or issuing new administrative orders.
- **Clarity on Roles:** A clear demarcation of responsibilities between the Power Ministry and MNRE is essential to avoid duplication. One model could be to give MNRE policy and target-setting authority while leaving grid operations, transmission, and tariff regulation with the Power Ministry.
- **Focus on Integration Challenges:** Regardless of which ministry holds authority, the core challenge remains integrating 263 GW of renewable capacity into the grid and addressing the gap between installed capacity (over 50% of total) and actual generation (only 25% of total electricity).

Conclusion

The MNRE's demand for sweeping powers under the Electricity Act reflects the growing importance of renewable energy in India's energy mix and the ministry's desire to have direct control over the levers that determine the sector's success. However, the move risks creating institutional friction with the Power Ministry at a time when seamless coordination between generation, transmission, and regulation is critical to meeting the 500 GW non-fossil capacity target by 2030. The parliamentary committee's handling of this demand will shape the future governance architecture of India's energy transition.

4. India's Iran stance does fuel a foreign policy debate

Why in the News?

The article is a response to a "civilised" but significant foreign policy debate emerging in India, provoked by the ongoing Israeli-American war on Iran (now in its third week) and the Indian government's response to it. The author critiques the government's approach, particularly its perceived tilt toward the U.S.-Israel coalition and its failure to offer customary diplomatic condolences to Iran following the assassination of its Supreme Leader.

Background

- **The Conflict:** The debate is set against the backdrop of a three-week-old war between Israel/the U.S. and Iran, a conflict with significant implications for global energy security and regional stability.
- **India's Stakes:** India has substantial interests on both sides:
 - With the U.S. and Gulf States: The U.S. is India's largest trading partner and a key source of defence technology. Gulf countries host nearly 10 million Indian workers who provide crucial remittances and are a primary source of India's energy needs.
 - With Iran: Iran is a "civilisational friend" and a key player in the Strait of Hormuz, a critical energy chokepoint. India has strategic interests in the Chabahar port and maintains a significant (9,000-strong) Indian community in Iran.

Feature

- **The Two Sides:** The debate is between those who support the government's "cold calculation" of prioritising ties with the U.S. and Gulf states, and those who criticise the stance as "weak-kneed," "surrendering to the Americans," or unnecessarily hostile to Iran.
- **Critique of Diplomatic Conduct:** The author criticises specific actions (or inactions) as lacking "strategic autonomy":
 - The deliberate decision not to condole the assassination of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.
 - Sending the Foreign Secretary instead of the External Affairs Minister to sign the condolence book.
 - The Prime Minister's failure to express condolences during a phone call with the Iranian President regarding the safety of Indian nationals.
- **The Visit to Israel:** The author highlights the timing of the Prime Minister's visit to Israel (February 25-26, 2026), which occurred just days before the war began. He suggests the visit demonstrated an "ideological affinity" and was "unfortunate" given that an attack on Iran was widely anticipated.

Challenge

- **Balancing Competing Interests:** The core challenge for India is reconciling its deep strategic and economic ties with the U.S. and Gulf states with its long-standing historical and civilizational ties with Iran.
- **Defining "Strategic Autonomy":** The author questions the government's interpretation of "strategic autonomy," arguing that true autonomy would have allowed for basic diplomatic courtesies (like expressing condolences) without harming broader interests. He suggests the government's actions reflect a decisive conclusion that the "Israeli-American coalition will come out the winner."
- **Ideology vs. National Interest:** The article raises the concern that foreign policy should not be "influenced by the ideological orientation of the ruling party." It implies that the government's affinity for Israel may be colouring its strategic calculus.

Way Forward

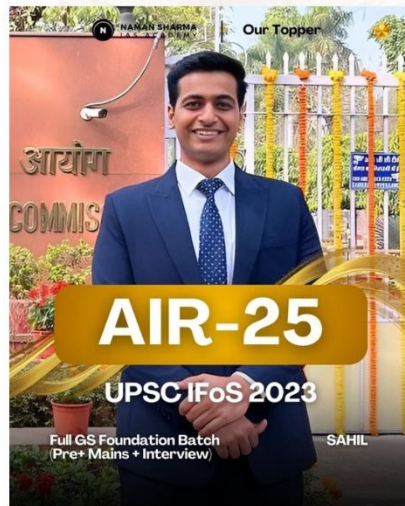
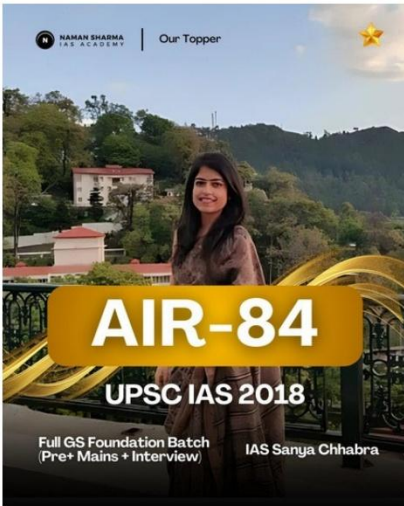
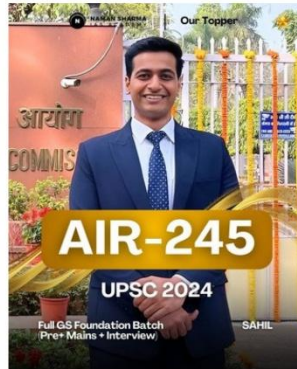
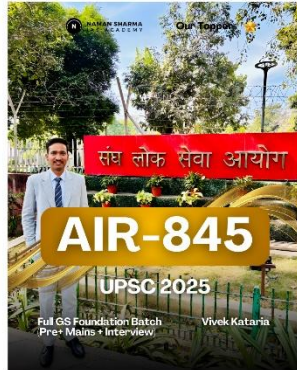
- **Continued Debate:** The author explicitly encourages the debate to continue, asserting that foreign policy is not the exclusive domain of "professional" diplomats and that the Indian public is capable of understanding and weighing these complex issues.
- **Greater Transparency:** He emphasises that the government has a duty to explain the rationale for its decisions to the people in a democracy, even if those decisions are unpopular.
- **Calibrated Approach:** Implicit in the critique is a suggestion for a more nuanced approach—one that maintains core strategic ties with the U.S. and Gulf states while preserving basic diplomatic dignity and historical goodwill with Iran.

Conclusion

Chinmaya R. Gharekhan frames India's current foreign policy dilemma as a choice between a pragmatic, "selfish" pursuit of national interest and the risk of compromising the country's cherished "independent" foreign policy for short-term strategic gains. While acknowledging the validity of India's significant stakes with the U.S. and Gulf states, he argues that the government's failure to extend even symbolic gestures of diplomatic courtesy to Iran represents a missed opportunity to demonstrate genuine "strategic autonomy." The debate, he concludes, underscores a fundamental question: whether India's foreign policy is a principled, independent exercise or one increasingly dictated by the dynamics of the U.S.-Israel partnership.



Our Recent Toppers



Vipin Kumar
AIR-4, HPAS 2022



Anshul Shandil
AIR-7, HPPCS 2019



Arshiya Sharma
AIR-3, HPPCS 2019



Kirti Sharma
AIR-35, PCS 2021



IPS Vineet Ahlawat
AIR-231, CSE 2020



SDM Himani Sharma
AIR-2, HPAS 2024



WhatsApp Now +91-843-768-6541



Offline Centre Location: SCO 173-174, Sector 17C, Chandigarh

Admissions Now Open!



**Saarthi for
UPSC 2027/28**

- ✓ 1/2/3 Years Course with Lifetime access
- ✓ Inclusive of Crash Course + Test Series
- ✓ Full Prelims + Mains
- ✓ Offline + Online + Hybrid Mode

Enroll Now

+91-8437686541
www.namaniasacademy.com

Enroll
in just **₹2000**

- Mode: Offline/Hybrid/Online
- Medium: Hinglish (Notes in English)
- Timings:

Morning: 9 AM - 1 PM

Evening: 4 PM - 8 PM

Enrollment Process:

- Visit Our Website: **Naman IAS Academy**
- Call us at **+91-843-768-6541**
for Free Seminar

Free UPSC seminar

Saturday, 4PM



Offline Centre Location: SCO 173-174, Sector 17C, Chandigarh