

1. PM Modi's Visit to Cyprus: Why It Matters

First PM Visit in Over 20 Years

- On June 15, 2025, Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Cyprus — the first by an Indian PM in over two decades.
- The visit is part of a three-nation tour (Cyprus, Canada for the G7 summit, and Croatia).
- He is meeting Cypriot President Nikos Christodoulides and will address business leaders in Limassol.

Why Is Cyprus Important to India?

1. Strong Diplomatic Support

- Cyprus is a trusted partner of India.
- It supports:
 - India's bid for a permanent seat at the UN Security Council.
 - India's civil nuclear deal with the US, including support at the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) and IAEA.
- These help India meet its energy and economic needs.

2. Role in IMEC (India-Middle East-Europe Corridor)

- Cyprus lies in a strategic location in the eastern Mediterranean.
- It is a potential transit hub for the IMEC, which aims to connect India to Europe via the Middle East.
- IMEC is expected to boost trade, connectivity, and economic partnerships.

3. EU Leadership Role

- Cyprus will hold the EU Council Presidency in early 2026.
- With India looking to deepen ties with the European Union, Cyprus can be a key ally in trade and security cooperation.

The Turkey Factor: A Strategic Signal

Turkey-Cyprus Conflict

- Cyprus has been divided since 1974, when Turkey invaded the island after a failed coup to merge Cyprus with Greece.
- The northern part of Cyprus is controlled by Turkish forces and has declared itself the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, recognized only by Turkey.
- This long-standing conflict has made Cyprus and Turkey political adversaries.

India's Stand



- India maintains strong ties with Cyprus, which aligns with India's diplomatic and strategic interests.
- Turkey, on the other hand:
 - Supports Pakistan on the Kashmir issue.
 - Was linked to Pakistani drones used in attacks on India during Operation Sindoor.
- PM Modi's visit is seen as a message to Turkey and a show of solidarity with Cyprus.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Relations

Source: Indian Express

2. War in the Middle East: What's Happening Between Israel and Iran

Overview of the Conflict

As of mid-June 2025, Israel and Iran have exchanged four waves of military strikes in what has become the most intense escalation between the two nations in decades. The conflict began with Israel's unprecedented airstrike on June 13, under "Operation Rising Lion", targeting Iran's nuclear and military facilities and assassinating senior Iranian leaders, including Ali Shamkhani and General Hossein Salami.

Why Did Israel Strike?

Israel's official reason is to eliminate what it calls the "Iranian nuclear threat." Despite past claims that Iran is close to acquiring nuclear weapons, these are not supported by U.S. intelligence or the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).



Israel's goals likely include:

- Weakening Iran's military leadership.
- Hindering Iran's nuclear progress.
- Forcing a hard bargain in U.S.-Iran nuclear talks.
- Signaling strength domestically and internationally.

However, critical nuclear sites like Fordow (deep underground) and Khondab remain untouched. Analysts suggest that Israel is preparing for a prolonged conflict rather than a swift resolution.

How Has Iran Responded?

Iran responded with over 100 drones and ballistic missiles, some of which were intercepted by Israel's Iron Dome defense system. It also struck strategic Israeli locations like the Bazan oil refinery in Haifa.

Iran's leadership, already under economic strain, now faces internal pressure from hardliners to retaliate more aggressively. However, Iran has not yet targeted U.S. bases or embassies, possibly indicating restraint or hope for resumed diplomacy.

The Bigger Picture: Historical and Political Context

- Historical animosity: Israel and Iran have had no formal ties since Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution.
- Iran supports groups like Hamas and Hezbollah, while Israel views Iran's regional influence as a threat.
- Iran insists its nuclear program is peaceful, but enriched uranium found at Natanz raises global concerns.

Global Reactions and Diplomacy

- United States: President Trump denied involvement but urged Iran to resume nuclear talks.
- Saudi Arabia: Strongly condemned Israel's "blatant aggression."
- India: Called for de-escalation and peace, with diplomatic outreach to both countries.
- China and the UK: Warned against further escalation; China emphasized Iran's sovereignty.

Economic Fallout: Global and Indian Impact

Oil Supply and Prices

- The Strait of Hormuz, through which 20–25% of global oil passes, is at risk of disruption.
- Oil prices are expected to rise, affecting major importers like India.
- Iran's crude exports could drop significantly, while Israel has already shut its Leviathan gas field.

Inflation Risk in India

- India's retail inflation had fallen to a 6-year low of 2.82%, helping prompt an RBI rate cut.
- However, renewed Middle East instability could push energy prices up, straining India's inflation outlook and trade balance.

Shipping and Freight

- The conflict revives fears of Red Sea disruptions, forcing cargo vessels back through the longer Cape of Good Hope route.
- This detour raises freight rates, insurance costs, and slows delivery, hurting global supply chains.

What Could Happen Next?

- Israel might continue targeting Iran's military and leadership but is unlikely to achieve its broader objectives without direct U.S. military involvement.
- Iran, while constrained, may still pursue nuclear capabilities more aggressively as a deterrent.
- Closing the Strait of Hormuz remains unlikely due to potential regional isolation and U.S. intervention.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Relations

Source: The Hindu & The Indian Express

3. Who Is Responsible When a Ship Sinks?

Recent Accidents off Kerala Coast



Two major maritime accidents occurred off Kerala recently:

- June 9: MV Wan Hai 503, a Singapore-flagged ship, caught fire 88 nautical miles off Bepore. It was carrying over 2,000 tonnes of fuel and hundreds of containers. Ecological concerns remain due to hazardous cargo.
- May 25: MSC ELSA 3, a Liberian ship, sank off Kochi. It had containers with harmful substances like calcium carbide.

Who Regulates Global Shipping?

Global shipping is regulated by the International Maritime Organization (IMO), a UN agency. It sets safety, pollution, and liability rules for international shipping.

- India follows IMO conventions through domestic rules via the Directorate General (DG) of Shipping.
- India has not signed some conventions like the 2010 Hazardous and Noxious Substances (HNS) Convention, which could be relevant in accidents involving toxic cargo.

Why Are Some Ships Registered in Other Countries?

- Ships are often registered in Flags of Convenience (FOC) countries (e.g., Liberia, Marshall Islands) that offer easier regulations.
- Though governed by IMO norms, these countries may offer less strict oversight.

Who Pays for Cargo Loss and Environmental Damage?

- The ship owner is responsible for cargo loss and environmental damage.
- Bill of Lading: A contract between the shipper and the receiver that establishes cargo ownership and shipment terms.
- Losses are covered by the Protection and Indemnity (P&I) Club—a group of insurers that share risks related to:
 - Cargo damage/loss
 - Environmental damage
 - Loss of life due to ship accidents

Important: There is a cap on compensation for cargo loss, but no cap on environmental damage claims (like oil spills).

Who Must Salvage a Sunken Ship?

- Under the Nairobi Convention on Wreck Removal (2007), the ship owner must salvage the wreck.
- Applies up to 200 nautical miles from India's coast.
- If salvaging isn't possible, the owner remains liable for damages.

Why Do Modern Ships Still Sink?

Despite advanced technology, ships still face:

- Unpredictable sea conditions
- Human error (e.g., overloading, poor route choices)
- Technical failures

Example:

- ELSA 3 likely sank after it began tilting (listing), which caused containers to fall, worsening the tilt until the ship capsized.
- In 2020, Wakashio, a ship near Mauritius, ran aground because the crew sailed too close to shore seeking mobile signals during COVID-19 isolation.

Lessons from History: SOLAS Convention

After the Titanic sank in 1912, the Safety of Life At Sea (SOLAS) Convention was introduced. It:

- Requires lifeboats on both sides of ships to be sufficient to carry all passengers, even if one side becomes inaccessible.
- Is regularly updated to improve safety standards worldwide.

Conclusion: A Complex but Evolving System

- Ship owners bear the main responsibility in accidents—legal, financial, and environmental.
- IMO conventions, although robust, still leave gaps (like HNS) that countries like India must consider ratifying.
- Human error remains a significant factor, highlighting the need for constant updates to global maritime safety norms.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Disaster Management

Source: Indian Express

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