

# PM launches US firm's chip unit in Gujarat: 'Part of global supply chain'

Gor: US-India partnership key to shared security and prosperity

Ritu Sharma

Ahmedabad, February 28

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi on Saturday inaugurated the country's first semiconductor plant at Sanand in Gujarat, and said a "loud and clear" message has gone out to the world that "India is capable, India is competitive and India is committed."

He said India's message for global investors was that "India



PM Narendra Modi with US envoy Sergio Gor at Micron Technology's semiconductor facility at Sanand in Gujarat, Saturday. X/@USANDINDIA

[PM LAUNCHES HPV VACCINATION DRIVE, PAGE 6](#)

is ready, India is reliable, and India delivers" and that both dynamic market and global op-

portunities await investors in the country. "India, long

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# Chip unit

known for its software strength, is now firmly establishing its identity in the hardware sector as well,” he said.

The PM said the US-based Micron Technology’s ATMP (Assembly, Testing, Marking and Packaging) plant also reflected a deep partnership between India and the United States. India is “becoming an integral part of the global semiconductor value chain” and securing this as well as the supply of critical minerals was a goal of both India and the US, he said.

Speaking at the event, US Ambassador to India Sergio Gor, who was on his first visit to Gujarat after taking over in January this year, said US-India partnership is seen as crucial for shared prosperity and security.

“American leadership isn't about doing it alone, it's about working with our partners who share common goals and our vision for a secure, prosperous future... I can tell everybody in this

room that our President has a dear friendship with your Prime Minister...,” Gor said.

Gor also hailed “India's entry into the global semiconductor supply chain as a manufacturing nation”, and said it was just the beginning. “That is a direct testament to your Prime Minister's leadership, to his vision and to his ability to secure the future for India and for our global partners.”

A government release said the Micron facility will manufacture SSD (Solid State Drive) storage devices as well as RAM type DRAM and NAND products, and that the company had invested Rs 22,516 crore for its Sanand plant.

The PM also spoke about the rise and rise of the Gujarat town, and said it all started with “a one-rupee SMS”. He referred to the text message he had sent to the late Ratan Tata, inviting the Tata Group to open its Nano plant, which was facing problems in West Bengal, at Sanand. “I wrote swagatam (Welcome),” the PM said, adding: “Look what a Gujju can do with a Re 1 investment.”

# AAIB releases its initial report on crash that killed Ajit Pawar

The probe body recommends tighter regulatory oversight of operations at smaller airfields, urgent upgrades to deficient landing and meteorological infrastructure; and a comprehensive review of the licensing of airstrips, including at Baramati

**Jagrati Chandra**

NEW DELHI

**T**he Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) has released its preliminary report into the crash that claimed the life of former Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar and four others, recommending tighter regulatory oversight of operations at smaller airfields, including Baramati; urgent upgrades to deficient landing and meteorological infrastructure; and a comprehensive review of the licensing of such airstrips.

The report comes exactly a month after the Learjet 45 aircraft owned by VSR Ventures Private Limited crashed at the Baramati airfield on January 28. Though both components of the aircraft's black box – the flight data recorder, and cockpit voice recorder – sustained heat damage after the crash, data from the flight data recorder has been successfully retrieved, while the cockpit



The report comes a month after the Learjet 45 aircraft carrying Ajit Pawar crashed at the Baramati airfield on January 28.

voice recorder data is yet to be downloaded.

On how the crash occurred, the report said the pilots were informed by the air traffic controller that visibility was 3 km, but the aircraft continued approach and then aborted landing. On its second approach, the aircraft reported sighting the airfield, and was given landing clearance.

“Later the aircraft was heard transmitting ‘Oh S\*\*t... Oh S\*\*t...’, before it crash landed on the left side of the runway,” the report said.

The Baramati airfield operates under visual flight rules, the report said. Such airfields depend primarily on external visual references, rather than instrument guidance, for take-offs and landings. The

Directorate General of Civil Aviation's regulations prescribe a minimum visibility of 5 km for such operations. While special dispensation can be sought in certain cases, the preliminary report makes no mention of such a request for this flight.

As per the footage from CCTVs installed in a nearby village, the aircraft was observed to have banked [tilted] towards right before impacting the terrain, the report said. Thereafter, the aircraft first hit trees and then the ground, after which it was engulfed in fire.

As reported by *The Hindu* earlier, the AAIB has said the airfield was being used primarily for training by two flying schools, where chartered flights also operated “regularly”. The airfield has two temporary air traffic control towers managed by the two schools.

The airfield “does not have any navigational aids other than wind socks”, the AAIB's preliminary re-

port said. But no wind sock was available on the side by which the aircraft approached the runway, it added.

The airport also does not have an in-house aircraft rescue and firefighting unit, which is arranged for charter flights on an *ad hoc* basis.

“The last runway re-carpeting was carried out in March 2016 and thereafter no runway re-carpeting was carried out which resulted in fading of all the runway markings and presence of loose gravels on the runway surface,” the report said.

The AAIB has recommended several interim safety measures for the DGCA to implement. All flights landing at airports that don't support instrument landing must follow relevant protocols, it said.

“It is recommended that DGCA may take necessary measures to enhance the landing aids along with basic MET (meteorological) facility at these airports...,” the report stated.



# U.S., Israel launch strikes on Iran

Tehran retaliates with drone attacks on Israel, U.S. air bases in West Asia

Many signs indicating Khamenei 'is no longer', says Netanyahu

Trump urges citizens to seize control during the escalation

**Associated Press**

**Reuters**

DUBAI

**T**he U.S. and Israel launched a major attack on Iran on Saturday, and U.S. President Donald Trump called upon the Iranian public to "seize control of your destiny" by rising up against the Islamic leadership that has ruled the West Asian nation since 1979. Iran retaliated by firing missiles and drones toward Israel and U.S. military bases in the region.

Some of the first strikes on Iran appeared to hit areas around the offices of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Smoke could be seen rising from the capital as part of strikes that Iranian media said occurred nationwide. Israeli

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that there were many signs indicating Mr. Khamenei "is no longer", without explicitly confirming his death.



Smoke billows from a site during air strikes by Israel and the U.S., in Tehran on Saturday. ANI

Iran's Defence Minister Amir Nasirzadeh and Revolutionary Guards commander Mohammed Pakpour were killed in Israeli attacks, three sources told *Reuters*.

In a video announcing the "major combat operations", Mr. Trump told Iranians that "when we are finished, take over your government. It will be yours

**to take.** This will be probably your only chance for generations". Mr. Netanyahu echoed that goal, saying, "Our joint operation will create the conditions for the brave Iranian people to take their fate into their own hands".

Iran responded to the strikes by launching missiles and drones targeting Israel and strikes targeting

U.S. military installations in Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar. "The time has come to defend the homeland and confront the enemy's military assault," Iran's Foreign Ministry said on X.

The Iranian Red Crescent reported on Saturday evening that at least 201 people were killed and 747 wounded in strikes by the U.S. and Israel against Iran.

## Flights cancelled or rerouted

**NEW DELHI**

Large swathes of airspace over West Asia became a no-go zone forcing global and Indian airlines to cancel flights to the region and reroute several others on Saturday. India's aviation safety regulator Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has issued an urgent safety advisory valid until Monday for all airlines to avoid 11 countries, including Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan and Lebanon. » **PAGE 7**

Iran's Revolutionary Guards radioed ships to say the Strait of Hormuz, a strategic waterway, was shut, according to the EU's naval mission.

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**'WAR OF SURVIVAL'**

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# U.S. and Israel launch strikes on Iran

The strikes during Ramzan opened a stunning new chapter in U.S. intervention in Iran and marked the second time in eight months that the Trump administration has used military force against the Islamic Republic.

The targets included members of Iran's leadership, according to a U.S. official and another person briefed on the attacks who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss an ongoing operation.

Democrats decried that Mr. Trump had taken action without congressional authorisation. Rep. Hakeem Jeffries, the top House Democrat, said that though Iran is a "bad actor," the President must nonetheless "seek authorisation for the pre-emptive use of military force that constitutes an act of war." At least 57 people were reportedly killed at a girls' school in southern Iran in the Israeli-U.S. strikes, and dozens of others were wounded, according to Iran's state-run IRNA news agency.

In an indication of the scope of the conflict, flights across West Asia were disrupted and air defence fire thudded over Dubai, the commercial capital of the United Arab Emirates.

Shrapnel from an Iranian missile attack on the capital of the UAE killed one person, state media said. The U.S. military has for weeks amassed forces in the region, even as U.S. and Iranian envoys held talks in Switzerland and Oman aimed at finding a diplomatic solution. Israel said the operation has been planned for months with the U.S.

Mr. Trump's statement listed grievances beyond the nuclear programme, stretching back to the beginning of the Islamic Republic following a revolution in 1979 that turned Iran from an American ally in West Asia into a fierce foe.

The U.S. president said he was aiming to "annihilate" the Iranian navy and destroy regional proxies supported by Tehran.

# West Asian airspace closed; Indian airlines cancel flights

DGCA issues advisory to avoid 11 countries until March 2; airports across India put on operational alert to manage potential flight diversions, unscheduled landings and passenger facilitation

**Jagriti Chandra**

NEW DELHI

**W**ith tensions escalating across West Asia on Saturday, large swathes of the airspace in the region became a no-go zone, forcing global and Indian airlines to cancel flights to the region and reroute several others to avoid the affected corridors on Saturday.

India's aviation safety regulator, Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), issued an urgent safety advisory valid until March 2 for all airlines to avoid 11 countries in the region – Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, Qatar and Oman.

The U.S. and Israel launched a major attack on Iran on Saturday, while it retaliated by firing missiles and drones toward Israel and U.S. military bases in the region.

The Air India Group, which also includes its low-cost subsidiary Air India Express, as well as IndiGo announced they were cancelling all their flights to West Asia until midnight on March 1.

Iran and Israel closed their airspace at the start of the day, with other coun-



**Go and touch:** An Abu Dhabi-bound Air Arabia flight that took off on Saturday afternoon landed back at the Thiruvananthapuram airport a while later. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

tries in the region, including Bahrain, Qatar, the UAE, Iraq, Oman and Syria, quickly following suit. A time-lapse from FlightRadar24 initially showed an empty corridor of airspace between Iran and Israel, which gradually expanded as more countries across the region imposed restrictions.

## Passengers stranded

Major international hub airports in the region, including Dubai and Doha, were also shut, leaving thousands of passengers stranded as flights turned back mid-air or were cancelled.

The Air India Group suspended flights to Damam, Sharjah, Riyadh, Do-

ha, Dubai, Jeddah, Muscat, Riyadh, Tel Aviv, Sharjah, Bahrain, and Kuwait City. Akasa Air said it was suspending all its flights to Abu Dhabi, Doha and Jeddah.

Air India's Delhi-Tel Aviv flight was forced to turn back early, while its Chicago-Delhi service took a longer routing to steer even farther clear of Iranian airspace, which it had already been avoiding.

Air India Express, which operates a large number of Gulf-bound services, cancelled around 110 flights to the region. Five of its aircraft remain stranded there, including one deployed on the Sharjah-Indore route.

Civil Aviation Minister K.

Rammohan Naidu and Civil Aviation Secretary S.K. Sinha held a review meeting to assess the impact on flight operations and passenger security.

“Airports across the country, particularly major international gateways, have been placed on operational alert to manage potential flight diversions, unscheduled landings and passenger facilitation requirements. The Airports

Authority of India and private airport operators have been advised to maintain enhanced coordination with airlines for ground handling, parking bays, passenger amenities, crew logistics and immigration support, as necessary,” a statement said.

# Iran condemns 'barbaric' attack on girls' school, killing at least 85

Foreign Minister Araghchi says he has been in contact with Gulf states and 'told them that there is no intention to attack them'; 'If Americans want to talk to us, they know how they can contact me. We are interested in de-escalation,' he adds

**Agence France-Presse**  
TEHRAN

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian on Saturday condemned what he described as a "barbaric" attack on a school in the country's south, after U.S. and Israeli strikes on the Islamic republic.

"This barbaric act is another black page in the record of countless crimes committed by the aggressors," said Mr. Pezeshkian in a statement on the attack, which Iranian state media has said killed at least 85 people and wounded dozens more.

"The number of mar-



**Missile salvo:** Smoke rises from a burning building hit by an Iranian drone strike in Seef district, Manama, Bahrain, on Saturday. REUTERS

tyrs at the girls' school in Minab has increased to 85," the judiciary's Mizan Online website quoted the area's prosecutor's office as saying.

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said he had been in contact with Gulf states and "explained for them that we have no intention to attack them but we are

actually attacking the American bases in the act of self defence". He added that while there was no communication with Washington now, "if Americans want to talk to us. They know how they can contact me. We are certainly interested in de-escalation".

Saudi Arabia "expressed its strongest condemnation of the blatant and cowardly Iranian attacks targeting the Riyadh and Eastern Province regions, which were repelled," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

A drone struck Kuwait's international airport and a base housing U.S. person-

nel was targeted. Three Kuwaiti soldiers and 12 other people were wounded, authorities said. Falling debris killed a Pakistani civilian in Abu Dhabi, they added.

The UN human rights chief Volker Turk condemned the U.S.-Israeli strikes and Iran's response, warning further attacks "would only result in death, destruction and human misery".

Russia slammed the U.S. and Israeli strikes, and argued they were "bringing the region to the brink of a humanitarian, economic, and – this cannot be ruled out – radiological catastrophe".

## ● Iran's Nuclear Programme: Key Dates

**1957:** Iran pursues a nuclear programme for the first time

**LATE 1980S:** During war with Iraq, Iran decides to develop nuclear weapons to ensure its security

**1990S** Iran pursues agreements with China and Russia to support nuclear research

**EARLY 2002:** National Council of Resistance of Iran exposes existence of two hidden Iranian nuclear sites

**2003:** Diplomats launch intensive effort to stop Iran's programme; Iran agrees to keep centrifuges only for energy

**2004:** IAEA rebukes Iran for failing to commit to transparent reporting

**2005:** IAEA finds Iran in non-compliance, paving way for UNSC referral

**2006:** UNSC adopts Resolution 1696, first legally bind-

ing call for Iran to suspend uranium enrichment

**2006–201:** UNSC adopts series of resolutions imposing crippling economic sanctions on Iran

**2011–2015:** International sanctions cause Iran's economy to contract by 20%; unemployment rises to 20%

**2013:** Hassan Rouhani wins presidency on promise to lift sanctions and restore economy

**2015:** Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action spearheaded by President Obama; UNSC approves Resolution 2231

**2018:** First Trump administration withdraws US from JCPOA, begins reimposing sanctions

**FEBRUARY 2026:** US and Iranian officials hold high-stakes nuclear talks in Geneva; progress reported on new concession.

EVERY \$1 JUMP IN OIL PRICES MAY PUSH INDIA'S HEFTY OIL IMPORT BILL BY AROUND \$2 BN ANNUALLY

# Israel, US strike Iran: Impact on oil, energy flow via Strait of Hormuz

Sukalp Sharma

New Delhi, February 28

WITH ISRAEL and the US launching military strikes in Iran on Saturday, and Tehran reportedly moving to block the Strait of Hormuz — even as there has been no formal announcement — the global oil market is expected to see significant volatility, much of which will be contingent on how the conflict shapes up.

On Friday, oil prices hit a seven-month high as indirect talks between the US and Iran dragged on without a breakthrough amid growing US military presence in the region. With Saturday morning's strikes across Iran marking a major escalation in the conflict, the war premium in oil prices could jump when markets open after the weekend break.

From softening in the event of a US-Iran deal to reaching triple digits in the worst-case scenario of a regional conflict and oil flow disruption, nothing seems off the table when it comes to oil prices in the current circumstances.

For India, one of the top oil importers globally, higher oil prices are never good news. Given India imports around 2 billion barrels of oil annually, every \$1 increase in oil prices could increase the country's hefty oil import bill by around \$2 billion on an annualised basis. The reason why oil markets appeared jittery was the apprehension that the row could choke oil supplies from the wider Gulf region, which accounts for the lion's share in



REUTERS FILE

global oil exports. And on late Saturday evening, the fears came true. Iran reportedly blocked the Strait of Hormuz — a narrow but vital waterway that is a critical chokepoint for global oil and gas flows.

The global oil market is well-supplied with enough surplus, which emboldened the Trump administration as it evidently expects minimal impact of strikes on Iran on oil prices. The situation, however, could turn on its head in case of an extended blockade of the Strait and the conflict spilling over to the wider region.

In addition to Iran, other major Gulf oil producers like Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and the UAE, are heavily dependent on the Strait to feed the global market. Therefore, despite their often-strained relationships with Tehran, some of the Gulf nations had been actively engaging with the US administration to prevent military intervention. As tensions between Washington and

Tehran refused to die down and the risk of possible US military strikes and regional conflict became increasingly credible, benchmark Brent crude prices ended the week well over \$72 per barrel, the highest since late July last year.

## Oil flows via the strait

Described by the US Energy Information Administration as the world's most important oil transit chokepoint, the Strait of Hormuz — the narrow waterway between Iran and Oman that connects the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea — handles approximately one-fifth of global liquid petroleum consumption and global LNG trade. Roughly 15 million barrels of crude and 20% of global LNG volumes pass through the Strait every day.

While some pipelines exist in the Gulf states to bypass the waterway, their capacity is restricted. Even at full utilisation, 9 million barrels per day

(bpd)—9% of global demand—would remain structurally at risk during a major escalation, according to industry experts. As per tanker data, over 40% of crude oil imported by India transits the Strait of Hormuz. The importance of the chokepoint for India's energy supply and security cannot be understated as the country is the world's third-largest consumer of crude oil and depends on imports to meet over 88% of its requirement. Iran has, time and again, threatened a blockade of the Strait and strikes against tankers transiting it. There is also the lurking threat of strikes by Iran's proxies in Yemen against tankers transiting the Bab el-Mandeb, another important maritime chokepoint that connects the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden and the Arabian Sea. It is a critical artery for global energy flows transiting the Suez Canal.

## What happens after the blockade

Analysts believe a full

blockade would be politically self-destructive for Tehran as the move could alienate key allies like China, which is the destination for most of Iran's own oil. A blockade would also infringe upon Oman's territorial waters, souring relations with a neighbour that serves as a vital back-channel for diplomacy with the US.

The US is interpreting previous confrontations — where military actions did not cause oil prices to spike — to reinforce its current assumptions that a conflict with Iran will be similarly low-risk.

Such views are also based on the US's own high oil production levels and Washington's belief that West Asian heavyweights like Saudi Arabia — the world's largest oil exporter — can quickly recover from any disruption to keep the global oil market well-supplied, according to experts.

"But I worry Washington is lulling itself into a false sense of security. The risk is that US officials might misread Tehran's risk tolerance to respond far more forcefully than it did in the past. If the Islamic Republic feels its survival is at stake, the regional energy industry could become a target. By interpreting past confrontations in ways that reinforce their own current assumptions, US officials risk missing important alternative scenarios," *Bloomberg Opinion* columnist Javier Blas wrote in a column on the issue.

FULL REPORT ON

WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

# Pak. fighter jet down amid cross-border strikes: Kabul

**Agence France-Presse**

KABUL

Afghanistan said it downed a Pakistan fighter jet and captured its pilot on Saturday, a claim denied by Islamabad a day after it declared an “open war” with its South Asian neighbour.

The Afghan military and police said the aircraft was shot down in the eastern city of Jalalabad, but Islamabad’s Foreign Ministry said that it was “a false claim” and “totally untrue”.

Pakistan launched air strikes in several cities and provinces on Friday including the capital Kabul and Kandahar, where Afghan Taliban Supreme Leader Hibatullah Akhundzada is based, in a flare-up of cross-border fighting.



A Taliban fighter operates a rocket launcher near the Torkham border. AFP

The pilot was “captured alive”, said Jalalabad’s police spokesperson Tayeb Hammad and the military spokesperson in eastern Afghanistan, Wahidullah Mohammadi.

The Defence Ministry in Kabul has also said it carried out air strikes on Pakistani territory over the past two days, which observers said could have been drones.

Meanwhile, Pakistan authorities said that about 331 Afghan Taliban personnel and their allied terrorist groups have been killed so far as the operation against them was going on, it emerged on Saturday.

Pakistan Information Minister Attaullah Tarar providing an early update about the losses of the Afghan Taliban said that so far 331 Taliban personnel have been killed and another 500 injured.

He said Pakistan forces completely destroyed 104 military posts, while they captured another 22 border posts during Operation Ghazab lil-Ha. Mr. Tarar said that 163 tanks, armoured vehicles have been destroyed, adding that Pakistan also hit 37 locations in the air strikes.