

Constitution Amendment Bill, part of delimitation package, defeated

The Bill falls short of the two-thirds mark of 352 votes, with 298 in favour and 230 against in the House where 528 members were present at the time of voting; Home Minister Amit Shah warns Opposition that it will face the 'wrath of women' voters

Sobhana K. Nair
Sreeparna Chakrabarty
NEW DELHI

A united Opposition on Friday defeated the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026, which sought to redistribute Lok Sabha seats on the basis of the 2011 Census to expedite the implementation of women's reservation.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah accused the Opposition of playing "ruthless politics" and warned that it would face the "wrath of women" voters.

A total of 298 members voted in favour of the Bill and 230 against it, with the House strength at the time of voting being 528. It failed to meet the two-thirds majority mark of 352 required for a Constitution Amend-

Opposition joins hands

Opposition parties defeated a Constitution Amendment Bill which sought to implement delimitation and increase Lok Sabha seats based on the 2011 Census

Category	Number of MPs	Share
In favour	298	56.4%
Against	230	43.6%
Abstentions	0	0%
Total present and voting	528	100%
Required (2/3 rd majority)	352	66.7%



House vote: Members of Parliament vote on the Constitution Amendment Bill, which was part of a delimitation legislative package, during a special session in New Delhi on Friday. PTI

ment Bill to pass.

Following the defeat, the government withdrew two allied legislations – the Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026, and the Delimitation Bill, 2026 – which were linked to the constitutional amendment.

The government extended the Budget Session after

a short interlude for deliberating on these Bills.

Mr. Shah said that the legislative package of three Bills was aimed at fulfilling two objectives – time-bound implementation of the women's reservation Bill for the 2029 general election and to apply the "foundational" democratic principle of "one person,

one vote and one value".

Maintaining that the government remained committed to women's reservation, Mr. Shah said this was the "fifth time" that parties of the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance had stalled the legislation.

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, in a post

on X, described the government's move to link women's reservation with delimitation based on the 2011 Census as a "hollow attempt" by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to project himself as the "messiah of women".

Responding to a key Opposition objection that the Bill lacked an explicit guarantee that representation of all States in the Lok Sabha would rise uniformly by 50%, Mr. Shah offered to move an amendment incorporating this assurance if the House agreed to suspend proceedings for an hour.

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Bill part of delimitation package defeated

Senior Congress leader and Kerala MP K.C. Venugopal countered this offer with two conditions: that not only should the provision be written into the Bill, but the government should also introduce a separate amendment delinking the implementation of women's reservation from delimitation. Mr. Shah categorically rejected the second demand, calling it a "trap". Both he and Prime Minister Narendra Modi had earlier given verbal assurances that all States would see a uniform 50% increase in Lok Sabha seats as the House expands from the current cap of 550 to about 850 members.

Mr. Shah accused the Opposition of manufacturing a north-south divide by propagating what he called a false narrative that southern States would lose Parliamentary representation. "Southern States have equal rights in this House as northern States. In fact, Lakshadweep has the same rights as Uttar Pradesh or Bihar," he said. Lakshadweep has fewer than 50,000 voters.

Making a strong pitch for delimitation, Mr. Shah argued that the principle of "one person, one vote, one value" has been violated due to the freeze based on the 1971 Census. He pointed out that India's population has grown from about 54.79 crore then to nearly 140 crore in 2026, leading to stark disparities in constituency sizes. Citing Malkajgiri in Telangana, which has about 48 lakh voters, he asked how a single MP could represent such a large electorate. Mr. Shah also argued that opposition to delimitation effectively meant opposition to increasing the number of seats reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

In his more than 70-minute-long speech, the Home Minister also addressed Opposition allegations that the government was trying to sidestep the ongoing caste count while implementing women's reservation. Citing the Congress's historical approach to reservations, from the Indira Gandhi government ignoring the Mandal Commission report to the stand taken against its implementation by Rajiv Gandhi, who was then in Opposition, Mr. Shah accused the party of championing the Other Backward Class cause only after its loss in the 2014 Lok Sabha election. "I say to these people, especially to the Congress, that just by raising slogans in speeches, the backward class of this country will not consider you their well-wishers," he said. Mr. Shah also hit out at claims that Muslim women should be included in the reservation framework. "The Constitution does not provide for reservation on the basis of religion and BJP will never allow this," he asserted.

On mission to 'restore trust', Manipur CM pushes for dialogue between Kuki, Naga communities

The Hindu Bureau

GUWAHATI

Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh on Friday visited several villages in Ukhrul district as part of a mission to restore trust between the Kuki and Tangkhul Naga communities. "Why should we not live in harmony?" he said, advising the area MLA to initiate a dialogue among the villagers of the two communities.

Tensions since Feb. 7

Members of the two communities have clashed intermittently in the Litan



CM Yumnam Khemchand Singh on Friday visited Ukhrul, where tensions flared up in February this year. FILE PHOTO

area of the district since February 7 this year. Trouble in the area began after a Kuki group allegedly assaulted a Tangkhul man.

Interacting with Kuki villagers on the way to Ukhrul town, Mr. Singh said every community has good and bad elements. Without mentioning the Kuki-Meitei conflict, he said that the community elders have a responsibility to think of the future generations despite the prevailing sorrow and regret.

The conflict between the tribal Kuki-Zo and the non-tribal Meitei broke out in May 2023, leaving at least 260 people dead and displacing about 62,000 others.

"There is no option left other than dialogue for the restoration of peace," he

said. The Chief Minister assured the affected villagers that drinking water would be provided and that normal classes in schools would be resumed.

'Moving forward'

At Tangkhul Naga villages, he underscored the need to forget the past and move forward.

Deputy Chief Minister Losii Dikho, Tourism Minister Khuraijam Loken Singh, Chief Secretary P.K. Goel, and several MLAs accompanied the Chief Minister to Ukhrul, where they inspected the preparations for the upcoming Shirui Lily Festival.

FIR can be registered against Rahul over British citizenship charge: HC

Ishita Mishra

NEW DELHI

The Lucknow Bench of the Allahabad High Court on Friday directed the registration of an FIR and further investigation in the matter of alleged British citizenship of Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi.

Bench of Justice Subhash Vidyarthi, allowed the petition filed by S. Vignesh Shishir. The petitioner had demanded registration of an FIR against Mr. Gandhi under provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, the Passport Act, the Foreigners Act, and the Official Secrets Act stating

Petition points to documents related to a firm said to have been incorporated in the U.K. in 2003

that the LoP has British citizenship.

Mr. Shishir, whose social media profile says he is a BJP member from Karnataka, had first approached the Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate (ACJM) court in Lucknow, which had declined to direct the registration of the FIR in the matter.

Before the High Court, the petitioner alleged that Mr. Gandhi had declared

himself a British national in documents related to a company, M/s Backops Ltd., reportedly incorporated in the United Kingdom in 2003. It was contended that filings associated with the company, including annual returns submitted in 2005 and 2006, listed his nationality as British and included addresses in London and Hampshire. The petitioner submitted that the company was dissolved in 2009 and argued that disclosures made by Mr. Gandhi during the 2004 Lok Sabha election, including details of the company and a bank account in the U.K. warranted a probe.

SC/ST Act added to rape FIR that triggered TCS Nashik arrests

**Zeeshan Shaikh
& Mohamed Thaver**
Mumbai, April 17

The Nashik Police have added another charge to the first FIR that triggered arrests in the TCS Nashik case. FIR 156, which was filed against Danish Sheikh on charges of rape, sexual harassment and hurting religious sentiments on March 26, was expanded on March 31 to include sections of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989.

Police said this is because the complainant woman is a member of the SC community.

On Friday, speaking to the media in Kolkata, Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said, "The Nashik TCS incident that came to light was a serious matter. It is a module that is being strictly probed to ascertain its deep-rooted links. Help is also being sought from central agencies, where necessary, to get to the root of the case. TCS has taken serious cognisance and strongly condemned the incident. They are cooperating and taking necessary measures."

All the accused, except TCS employee Nida Khan, have been arrested. Her lawyer, Baba

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TCS Nashik: SC/ST Act added to rape FIR

Sayyad, told *The Indian Express* that he would soon file an anticipatory bail application on her behalf, adding that she was "a victim of media trial". He claimed Khan is pregnant and her family is concerned about the impact of the case on her health.

On her alleged role, Nashik Police Commissioner Sandeep Karnik said, "So far, her role has not emerged in any other FIR. She was an associate and not in HR at the company. In our probe, no link has been found to the accused (Nida) in any case registered across the country." He also said police have written to central agencies to check claims that some of the accused are linked to banned groups.

An analysis of all nine FIRs in the case shows that eight carry charges of sexual harassment, five include charges of hurting religious sentiments, and at least three document instances where complainants claim they raised concerns internally before approaching the police.

Of the eight accused named across the nine FIRs, five – Danish Sheikh, Nida Khan, Shafi Shaikh, Shahrukh Qureshi and Asif Ansari – were associates at the TCS Nashik branch, while Raza Memon and Tausif Attar have been named as team leaders by the complainants. Ashwini Chainani, the only senior employee named, was the operations manager based in Pune and has been booked on charges of abetment. It is alleged that Chainani failed to act despite

receiving complaints regarding the accused, which further emboldened them.

Among the eight, Attar is named in six FIRs and Memon in five. The complaints were registered across two police stations, Deolali Camp and Mumbai Naka, within three days of each other in late March and early April 2026.

Lawyer Baba Sayyad, who represents some of the accused, said that certain things said in jest had been taken out of context and that actions taken by individuals of their own accord had been criminalised by the police.

THE FIRST FIR: The complainant in FIR 156 states that she met Danish Sheikh in January 2022 and developed a friendly relationship. Sheikh told her he was a TCS employee and offered to help her secure a job there. In July 2022, she alleged, he sought to establish physical relations with her at a tourist destination in Nashik and promised to marry her.

After completing her degree, she applied to TCS on Sheikh's advice and was selected. She alleged that after joining, she, Sheikh, Tausif Attar and Nida Khan formed a group that socialised together and that it was during these interactions that the three made offensive remarks about Hindu deities and spoke about Islam being a superior religion.

She alleged that in August 2024, Sheikh took her to a resort on Trimbak Road and forced her to have physical relations.

When Attar learned of this, she alleged, he blackmailed her, threatening to inform her family unless she fulfilled his sexual demands, and began harassing her in the office lobby and pantry. In February 2026, she was contacted by Sheikh's wife, who informed her that they have two children. She subsequently approached the police.

SHEKH'S ALLEGED ROLE: Apart from FIR 156, Sheikh is named as an accused in one other FIR. In it, he is booked alongside Attar, Shahrukh Qureshi and Raza Memon for allegedly targeting a male colleague by questioning the existence of Hindu gods, forcing him to recite an Islamic prayer at his work desk, and using threats to make him consume non-vegetarian food despite knowing he was a strict vegetarian. The complainant alleges that when he mentioned he had no children, Sheikh and Attar suggested he send his wife to them.

ON NIDA KHAN'S ALLEGED ROLE: She is named in one of the nine FIRs – number 156. She is accused of demeaning a Hindu deity and is alleged to have been part of the group that made offensive remarks about Hindu deities.

TAUSIF ATTAR, NAMED IN 6 FIRS: He faces allegations ranging from sexual harassment and physical assault to religious intimidation and workplace sabotage. He is accused of using a professional teaching opportunity to get physically close to

a female associate, making obscene gestures, staring at women inappropriately, and making humiliating remarks to a colleague who had suffered a miscarriage. He is also accused of insulting Hindu deities, telling complainants their lives would improve if they converted to Islam, forcibly making a male colleague wear a religious cap and offer namaz at his home, and forcing him to recite an Islamic prayer at his work desk. Despite knowing a colleague was a vegetarian, Tausif allegedly used threats of harm to force him to consume non-vegetarian food.

RAZA MEMON, NAMED IN 5 FIRS: A team leader at the TCS Nashik branch, he is accused of pulling a complainant's saree pallu in the office lobby on Gudi Padwa, touching female subordinates inappropriately, and asking intrusive questions about their honeymoons and personal lives. He is accused of repeatedly addressing a married subordinate by the nickname "Player" and making derogatory remarks about the physical appearance of female colleagues. He is also booked under Section 299, along with other accused, for allegedly forcing a male colleague to recite an Islamic prayer at his work desk and, during a family crisis, advising him to convert to Islam, claiming his father's paralysis would only be cured through conversion.

KEY ALLEGATIONS: Eight of the nine FIRs carry sexual harassment charges under Section

75 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, with complaints alleging unwanted touching, obscene comments, staring, personal questions and inappropriate behaviour in office spaces. Charges of hurting religious sentiments under Section 299 appear in five FIRs. Section 69, which pertains to sexual intercourse by deceitful means, is invoked in the first FIR, number 156, in which Danish Sheikh is the accused.

The FIRs also document four alleged instances where complainants reported harassment internally before approaching the police. In one FIR, it is claimed that the complainant raised concerns with a training manager and team leader, and repeatedly complained to operational head Ashwini Chainani, who allegedly responded: "Why do you want to be in the spotlight? Drop it."

In another FIR, it is alleged that a formal email complaint led to the transfer of one of the accused, Shafi Shaikh, to another section. In a separate FIR, it is claimed that a male employee reported to Chainani that Tausif Attar had thrown a fan at him, with no meaningful response. In one FIR, it is claimed that a complainant flagged Shafi Sheikh's behaviour to team leader Raza Memon, himself an accused, who called both parties to a cabin and took no further action.

In several cases, complainants claimed they did not report the incidents internally due to various fears. In one FIR, it is claimed that the victim did not complain because the seniors did not take any action against the accused in other

cases, leading her to believe her report would be ignored. In another FIR, it is claimed that the complainant did not report the harassment for fear of losing her job. In a separate FIR, it is claimed that an employee felt she could not complain to anyone because of the perceived dominance of the accused held within the company.

TCS had earlier said they had a POSH committee as mandated by law, and no written complaints were received regarding this issue. The company has also launched its own investigation into the matter.

A statement issued Friday by K Krithivasan, the CEO and MD of TCS, said, "We have engaged the services of expert teams from Deloitte and a prominent law firm, Trilegal, as independent counsel to the internal investigation led by Ms Aarthi Subramanian, president and COO, TCS."

"We have constituted an oversight committee chaired by Mr Kekki Mistry, independent director of TCS. The findings of the internal investigation will be presented to the oversight committee for review and implementation of any recommendations," it said. "We would also like to put certain facts on record that Nida Khan, who is being repeatedly mentioned in the press as HR manager of TCS, is neither an HR manager nor responsible for recruitment. She served as a process associate and did not hold any leadership responsibilities. Our unit in Nashik continues to operate and serve our clients. Reports in the press about the unit being shut down are absolutely untrue."

Kin demand return of Navy veteran stuck in Qatar jail; he's detained in separate case: Govt

Divya A

New Delhi, April 17

OF THE eight naval veterans who were detained in Qatar in 2022, while seven returned in 2024, the eighth one — Commander Purnendu Tiwari — continues to remain incarcerated in Doha.

Even as the Ministry of External Affairs maintains that the officer has been detained in a separate case, his family claims the cases are “stitched together” and the Indian authorities should have been able to secure his release by now.

“The eighth naval veteran, he has a particular case against him. He was detained in that (case). It has nothing to do with the earlier case,” MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said at his weekly media briefing when asked about the case. “The court there has given a ruling under which he has been given a sentence. We are in touch with him, with his family and lawyers. So, that is where this particular issue is.”

Earlier in the day, Tiwari's sister Meetu Bhargava had said in a post on X: “The MEA and the Government of India have failed to secure his return. The Prime Minister had publicly stated that all 8 Navy veterans had returned to India from Doha. Yet, Commander Tiwari was left behind, while his 7 peers were brought back on 12 February 2024.”

“The explanation of ‘paper formalities’ is no longer tenable. More than two years have passed, and the consequences of this lapse have been grave,” she said, adding that Tiwari has endured nearly four years of extreme hardship in Doha and has now been languishing in jail for almost five months.

“He is suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

(PTSD) along with other serious medical conditions. His health is deteriorating,” she said about her brother, 65, a decorated naval officer.

Talking to *The Indian Express* from Gwalior in the wake of the MEA statement that Tiwari was detained in a separate case, Bhargava said, “There was no separate case against Cdr Tiwari when all 8 navy veterans were kept in solitary confinement, and when all 8 came out in February 2024 also, there was no case. He should have returned with all.”

Reports indicate that Tiwari was accused of financial irregularities related to his former employer, Dahra Global Technologies and Consultancy Services.

However, Bhargava said that while the company owner allegedly tried to shift blame to him, the Qatari court — in a judgment on March 12, 2026 — accepted that he was not responsible for the financial liabilities of the company. She claimed that he was dragged into this case in December 2024 although he has no role in the firm's finances. She said the family was in touch with the Indian Mission in Doha since his acquittal in March and the Indian authorities haven't played a proactive role in securing his release and bringing him back.

A navigation specialist from the executive branch of the Navy, Tiwari commanded INS Magar and was the fleet navigating officer of the Navy's Eastern Fleet. After retirement, he trained Singapore naval personnel before moving to Qatar. He was the first Armed Forces veteran to receive the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman award. He was presented the honour in 2019 by then President Ramnath Kovind.

Iran declares Strait of Hormuz open; U.S. blockade to continue

Stanly Johny

A day after U.S. President Donald Trump announced a 10-day ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon, Iran said on Friday the Strait of Hormuz is “completely open” for commercial vessels for the remainder of the two-week U.S.-Iran truce.

Mr. Trump “thanked” Iran for reopening the waterway but said the U.S. blockade of Iranian ports would continue until there is a deal between Tehran and Washington. Oil prices fell on Friday after the strait was declared open.

“In line with the ceasefire in Lebanon, the passage for all commercial vessels through the Strait of Hormuz is declared completely open for the remaining period of the ceasefire, on the coordinated route as already announced by Ports and Maritime Organisation of Iran,”



A cargo ship in the Gulf, near the Strait of Hormuz. FILE PHOTO

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi wrote in a social media post on Friday.

About 20% of the world’s crude oil supply passed through the strait, which links the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea, before the U.S. and Israel launched their war on Iran. The waterway also carries a significant share of global LNG exports, mainly from Qatar.

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Iran declares Strait of Hormuz open

After the war broke out, Iran took control of the waterway. Daily ship traffic through the Strait fell sharply, dropping from more than 100 vessels a day to single digits. Mr. Trump welcomed Iran's decision. "Iran has just announced that the Strait of Hormuz is fully open and ready for full passage. Thank you," he said in a post in capital letters. He also said Iran, "with the help of the US, has removed or is removing all sea mines" in the waterway. "Iran has agreed to never close the Strait of Hormuz again. It will no longer be used as a weapon against the world," he added.

Mr. Trump, however, said the U.S. blockade of Iranian ports, which he announced on April 12, "will remain in full force and effect..., until such time as our transaction with Iran is 100% complete. This process should go very quickly in that most of the points are already negotiated."

The U.S. Central Command has said it has enforced a complete blockade of ships going to and coming from Iranian ports, though shipping data suggest some Iran-linked ships have crossed the U.S. blockade. The war in Lebanon was a key sticking point in the U.S.-Iran ceasefire that was announced on April 8. Iran said Lebanon was covered under the ceasefire agreement, but Israel initially rejected it and said its war against Hezbollah would continue.

Israel said on Thursday it would halt attacks on Lebanon but its troops would stay in the seized territory in southern Lebanon.

Mr. Trump said the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz was not linked to the Lebanon truce. "The deal is not tied, in any way, to Lebanon, but we will make Lebanon great again," said Mr. Trump, who also thanked Pakistan and its "great Prime Minister and Field Marshal, two fantastic people".

"The ceasefire was nothing but a result of Hezbollah's steadfastness and the unity of the Axis of Resistance; and we will deal with this ceasefire with caution, and we will remain together until the full realisation of victory," Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said on Thursday.

Brent crude futures were down roughly 10% on Friday, extending earlier losses, at below \$90 a barrel. The U.S. benchmark WTI was also down 10% at around \$82 a barrel.

India on Friday expressed formal support for the Israel-Lebanon ceasefire. Speaking at the weekly press briefing, Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said India favours "any step" that will end hostilities in the West Asian region.

France and Britain said on Friday they will lead a multinational mission to ensure freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz, while emphasising the force would be entirely defensive and only deployed once lasting peace in the region was agreed.

(With inputs from Kallol Bhattacharjee)

Truce in effect as Trump says Israel 'prohibited' from bombing Lebanon

'Israel will not be bombing Lebanon any longer; enough is enough,' says U.S. leader; he adds that Washington would work with Beirut to 'deal with Hezbollah'; displaced residents stream towards southern Lebanon after the truce came into force

Agence France-Presse

LAS VEGAS

President Donald Trump said on Friday the United States had "prohibited" Israel from bombing Lebanon following a ceasefire deal, adding that Washington would work with Lebanon to "deal with" Hezbollah.

"Israel will not be bombing Lebanon any longer. They are PROHIBITED from doing so by the U.S.A. Enough is enough!!!" Mr. Trump said on his Truth

Social network, a day after announcing the 10-day truce. The ceasefire took effect on Friday, sending displaced residents streaming south towards their homes, even as the Lebanese Army warned of "a number of violations" in the area.



Homebound: Children gesture from a vehicle as displaced people drive back to their neighbourhoods near Tyre in Lebanon. REUTERS

Shortly after the truce went into effect at midnight local time, the Army told residents of the south – many of whom had to flee their homes following sweeping Israeli evacuation warnings – not to return, citing "several Israeli acts of aggression".

Nonetheless, packed cars headed southwards before dawn, and crossed

at sunrise what was left of a bridge bombed by Israel during the war.

In his first speech to the nation since the truce, Lebanese President Joseph Aoun said his country was no longer an "arena" for anyone's wars and that it was on the verge of a "new phase" of "permanent agreements".

The ceasefire represents

a key step in Washington's efforts to reach a deal to end its war with Iran, with Tehran insisting a Lebanon truce must be part of any agreement.

Mediator Islamabad has been leading the international push to restart face-to-face talks between Tehran and Washington with Mr. Trump signalling he might fly to Pakistan to sign any agreement.

The fighting in Lebanon broke out on March 2 when Tehran-backed Hezbollah fired rockets at Israel just a few days after the start of the war in retribution for the death of Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei in the opening waves of U.S.-Israeli strikes.

Traffic accumulated kilometres away from the only bridge connecting the coastal region south of Le-

banon's Litani River to the rest of the country, as people lined up for hours waiting for a chance to return home.

As the ceasefire came into effect, Israel's military said it had struck over 380 Hezbollah targets in southern Lebanon and was on "high alert" to resume strikes.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the ceasefire offered an opportunity for a "historic peace agreement" with Beirut – but insisted that the disarmament of Hezbollah remained a precondition.

Mr. Trump said Hezbollah was included in the ceasefire, but according to the U.S. State Department, the truce committed Lebanon itself to dismantle the Iran-backed militant group.

Temporary truce

The U.S.-Israel ceasefire with Iran must hold across all fronts

The 10-day ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon, announced by U.S. President Donald Trump on Thursday, could strengthen the fragile two-week truce between the U.S. and Iran and improve the prospects for a broader diplomatic settlement. The war in Lebanon, launched on March 2, on the third day of the U.S.-Israel war on Iran, has been a key sticking point in U.S.-Iran talks. When Mr. Trump announced the ceasefire with Tehran on April 8, both Iran and Pakistan, which mediated the truce, said the agreement also covered Lebanon. A ceasefire on all fronts was one of the 10 points Iran submitted to the U.S. as a framework for ending the war. But Israel, apparently dissatisfied with the U.S.-Iran deal, rejected a ceasefire with Lebanon and stepped up attacks, killing at least 200 people within 24 hours of the U.S.-Iran truce taking effect. Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, who travelled to Islamabad to hold direct talks with a U.S. delegation headed by Vice President J.D. Vance, insisted that a ceasefire in Lebanon was a precondition for advancing diplomacy. The Islamabad talks failed to produce a breakthrough, but both sides remained engaged, communicating through Pakistan.

Yet, despite the truce, a fundamental problem remains. The war in Lebanon is not between Israel and the Lebanese army, but between Israel and Hezbollah. Hezbollah has not been part of the talks. Some Hezbollah leaders have said the party would halt attacking Israel if Israeli strikes stop. The Shia militant group has been weakened but is far from defeated. Israel has also said it would not withdraw troops from the territory it has seized in southern Lebanon, while Hezbollah insists on a return to pre-March 2 positions. Mr. Netanyahu says there is a 'historic opportunity' for a peace deal with Lebanon, but any such agreement is unlikely to include Hezbollah, which remains stronger than the Lebanese army and retains an extensive political and social network. While the ceasefire is now in effect, peace remains elusive. The wars on Iran and Lebanon should serve as a reminder to Israel of its own limitations. Mr. Netanyahu sought regime change in Iran and the disarmament of Hezbollah in Lebanon. As the U.S.-Israeli push for regime change in Iran faltered, prompting Mr. Trump to seek a negotiated exit from the Iran mess, Israel's war with Hezbollah has also run into a wall. The ceasefire reflects this ground reality. If Mr. Trump wants a durable negotiated settlement with Iran based on a give-and-take formula, he must ensure that the ceasefire is sustained across all fronts.

China is the real winner in the Iran conflict



MANOJ PANT

CALL IT an “uneasy truce” if you must. That is the preferred cliché for the current two-week ceasefire in the US–Iran war. Yes, loose ends remain: Israel–Lebanon negotiations over Hezbollah, and the mechanics of Iran’s promise to curb uranium enrichment, the economics of the Straits of Hormuz. But let’s be clear — the war is effectively over.

It will not return to the brink of April 7, when Trump threatened to end a “civilisation” and Iran mobilised human shields to protect critical infrastructure. That moment was the high-water mark of panic. We are not going back there. When both sides loudly claim victory, it is usually because neither can afford to keep fighting.

What ended the war was not diplomacy, but economics. Two decisions mattered: The cessation of US bombardment and, above all, the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz. The markets delivered their verdict instantly. Oil prices fell to around \$96 per barrel by April 10. Global equities rebounded. The apocalypse was postponed — not by statesmen, but by price signals. So who won?

Not Donald Trump. His brinkmanship has likely backfired, leaving him and the Republican Party staring at a potential electoral drubbing in November. Democrats can barely believe their luck. As domestic inflation breaches 3 per cent, dissatisfaction is at its peak in terms of electoral disapproval.

Not Iran. Its defiance may earn it rhetorical glory but the reality is harsher. Its military is battered, its infrastructure degraded, and the reconstruction bill will run into billions.

Not Israel. It is now being dragged, reluctantly, into negotiations. For Israel, Iran is not just a problem to be managed; it is the problem. That strategic objective remains unmet.

No — the real winner is China.

To see why, compare this war with Ukraine. The Ukraine conflict has dragged on for four years, quietly slipping out of global consciousness. The US–Iran war lasted little over a month. Why the difference?

Because the Ukraine war, for all its brutality, was economically containable. Russian oil continued to flow under price caps; Ukrainian grain exports were

shielded from embargoes. The global economic system absorbed the shock.

Iran, by contrast, held a chokehold on the world economy. The Strait of Hormuz is the artery of global trade. Disrupt it, and you threaten the system itself. When Iran tightened its grip, oil prices surged, even in the US. Inflation followed, crossing an unprecedented 3 per cent this month. And that, more than any missile strike, brought Washington to heel.

The lesson is stark: In today’s world, geoeconomics beats geopolitics.

This is not new, but is now undeniable. The 20th-century Cold War was ideological — democracy versus communism. Alliances were shaped as much by values as by interests. But that logic died with the USSR.

What has replaced it is colder, harder, and far less sentimental. Economics now dictates strategy. And this is where China excels.

Ignore, for a moment, the convenient fiction that Pakistan is the key intermediary in this conflict. It is not. Pakistan is a proxy — useful precisely because it allows the US and China to avoid direct engagement. The extension of negotiations to Lebanon, despite initial resistance from Israel and Washington, carries unmistakable Chinese fingerprints. To believe otherwise is to misunderstand how power now operates.

China did not fire a shot in this war. It did not need to.

As the dust settles, the real contest begins: Reconstruction. Iran and parts of the Gulf will require massive rebuilding. This is where Beijing steps in, just as Washington did in post-war Europe. For China’s slowing economy, this is a lifeline.

At the same time, Europe and the Gulf will rearm, spooked by recent events. That, too, benefits China’s vast industrial base, as well as America’s. War, it turns out, is still good business. Markets do not trade in ideology. They trade in stability, access, and supply chains. And that is why China has already won. Not on the battlefield. But in the only arena that now truly matters.

Can India’s foreign policy incorporate this fundamental change from the 20th-century cold war? Only time will tell.

The writer is visiting professor, Shiv Nadar University

The Cold War was ideological. Alliances were shaped as much by values as by interests. But that logic died with the USSR. What has replaced it is colder, harder, and far less sentimental

Indian refiners said to pay for Iran oil in yuan via ICICI Bank

Reuters

NEW DELHI/MUMBAI

Indian refiners are settling payments for rare cargoes of Iranian oil purchased under a temporary U.S. sanctions waiver using Chinese yuan through Mumbai-based ICICI Bank, four sources with knowledge of the matter said.

Last month, Washington unveiled 30-day waivers on U.S. sanctions for the purchase of Russian and Iranian oil at sea in an attempt to ease prices that were driven up by the U.S.-Israeli war on Iran. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent on Wednesday said the U.S. would not renew the waivers.

Difficulties over arranging payment for such cargoes given longstanding sanctions on Tehran have deterred some would-be buyers of Iranian crude under the waiver, traders have said.

Earlier this month, IOC bought 2 million barrels of Iranian oil onboard the very large crude carrier Jaya in the country's first purchase of Iranian crude in seven years, *Reuters* reported.