

Cauvery situation slightly better, says Karnataka CM

Releasing limited quantity of water to T.N. for drinking purposes, says Shivakumar after all-party meet; he reiterates need for Mekedatu project, appeals to protesters to withdraw Aug. 13 bandh

Sharath S. Srivatsa

Laiqah A. Khan

BENGALURU/MYSURU

Stating that the water situation in the Cauvery was “slightly better” in view of the rain, Karnataka Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar on Sunday reiterated his appeal to the Kannada organisations to withdraw their State-wide bandh plan for August 13.

However, Kannada Chaluvali leader Vatal Nagaraj, who is leading the protest, said the bandh would be held as planned.

At an all-party meeting, the Chief Minister said Karnataka was carefully assessing the Cauvery situation, including a petition filed in the Supreme Court by the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, the Opposition party in Tamil Nadu.



Karnataka CM D.K. Shivakumar with former CMs B.S. Yeddiyurappa and Siddaramaiah at an all-party meet. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

A limited quantity of water was being released from the reservoirs following rain, he said.

The meeting had been convened to address the concerns over the Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA)'s directive to the State to abide by the Cauvery Water Regulation Committee's order to re-

lease 3,500 cusecs daily to Tamil Nadu for 15 days. The order set off protests in parts of Karnataka.

The data shared by the Water Resources Department show that Karnataka was releasing water at the rate of 25,000 cusecs from the Kabini reservoir and 1,819 cusecs from the Krishnaraja Sagar on Sunday to

Tamil Nadu. “We are releasing a limited quantity of water through canals only to fill lakes and tanks meant for drinking water purposes, and not for irrigation,” he said.

Reiterating that the proposed Mekedatu project on the Cauvery was the long-term solution to the problems faced by both States, he said: “Karnataka will respect the law and orders of the Supreme Court while protecting the State's interest”. He said Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay had agreed to postpone his visit to Bengaluru to discuss the issue on the request of the Karnataka government.

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EDITORIAL

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Cauvery situation slightly better, says CM

“(Four) reservoirs in the Cauvery basin are cumulatively receiving about 68,000 cusecs of water. Our dams were not full since there was no rain. There has been some rain (now) and the situation has become slightly better. Kabini (reservoir) is full,” Mr. Shivakumar said.

Asked if he would be able to convince Mr. Vijay of the situation, Mr. Shivakumar said: “We will make him understand (the situation) and he will understand... Whatever our political differences may be, he wanted to come to Karnataka.”

He said he will speak to the protesting farmers, Kannada organisations, and Opposition leaders.

However, in Mysuru, former MLA Vatal Nagaraj said the bandh had not been called on one issue.

“More than 2,000 Kannada organisations have extended support to the bandh... Bandh is for various issues, including the Mahadayi river water dispute, employment for Kannadigas, and the development of Mysuru, Hyderabad-Karnataka region, North Karnataka, Belagavi, Hubballi-Dharwad and border areas. There is no question of withdrawing the bandh.”

Why are govt. schools shutting down?

Which States have witnessed the highest number of closures? How has school rationalisation affected children's access to education? Who bears the biggest burden of government school closures? Can the Centre step in to reverse the trend? Why has the Right to Education Act fallen short?

EXPLAINER

G. Ramakrishnan

The story so far:

A recent NITI Aayog report said some 94,000 government schools were closed over the past decade, an average of 25 a day, contributing to a 2.26 crore decline in government school enrolment. The government schools' share of total enrolment has fallen from 71% in 2005 to 49.24% in 2024-25.

Why are government schools shutting down?

School closures are happening across States on the grounds of rationalisation. The National Education Policy 2020 advocates such rationalisation but without endangering the concept of neighbourhood schools.

School closure numbers cannot be explained away as gradual demographic drift, urban migration and so on. Rather, it is a coordinated administrative decision taken in states where the poorest and most rural children have the least capacity to compensate for a school that has vanished.

Which States are among the worst affected?

Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir lead in this.

In December 2025, Madhya Pradesh's School Education Department found that 7.37 lakh children in the state have no school records. They are not enrolled in any school – private or government.

In Jharkhand and Shivpur, for instance, 29,000 children fall into the "Drop Box" category – the department's term for those at imminent risk of dropping out. Across the State's 55 districts, more than 3,500 government schools recorded zero new admissions this academic session. Another 6,500 schools saw fewer than 10 admissions.

The department's response was to



School closures are happening across States on the grounds of rationalisation. THULASI KAKKAT

instruct every district education officer to paste lists of unmapped children on school noticeboards, contact them directly, and upload their details to the State portal.

Statewide, 11.38 lakh children fall under the "Drop Box" category. Another 1.23 lakh are already recorded as dropouts. A further 1.55 lakh have left school because their families were displaced or migrated for work.

The department's flagship outreach programmes, School Chalan Hum and the Home Contact Campaign, were built to prevent exactly this. The State's own audit of its own scheme found three-quarters of a million children whom neither programme had reached.

Government data tabled in the Lok Sabha in February confirms the scale. UDISE+ figures show the national count of government schools falling from 11.07 lakh in 2014-15 to 10.17 lakh in 2023-24, a decline of roughly 89,000 that lines up almost exactly with NITI Aayog's own count. Private schools nationally grew from 2.88 lakh to 3.31 lakh over the same decade.

Madhya Pradesh's government schools fell from 1.22 lakh in 2018-19 to 99,411 the very next year – a drop of roughly 22,600

in twelve months. Uttar Pradesh's government schools fell from 1.63 lakh to 1.38 lakh in that identical year, a drop of over 25,000.

Reports on I&K's rationalisation programme documented children now travelling 4 to 6 km daily to reach a functioning school, violating neighbourhood school mandates of Right to Education Act (RTE).

More than 4,300 schools were closed or merged under a rationalisation scheme, with the Lok Sabha's own UDISE+ figures showing the state's school count falling from 23,167 in 2020-21 to 18,785 by 2022-23, alongside nearly 13,000 vacant teaching posts reported separately in the state assembly.

What is the impact of the shutdown of government schools?

Government schools in India are not a neutral public utility used evenly across classes. They are, disproportionately, the schools of the poor – of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and the poorer strata of backward-class communities. India is home to roughly 60% of the world's below-poverty-line population, and it is their children who fill government classrooms.

A 2019 National Sample Survey analysis found access to free education declining unevenly, with Muslim and Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe households disproportionately marginalised from the schools nearest to them.

The burden falls disproportionately on girls who are the first to be withdrawn when the nearest school stops being nearby. What consolidation looks like on the ground is often a single teacher covering five classes at once – unable to know an individual child's background or tailor instruction, technically in breach of the Right to Education Act's staffing and quality norms.

Who is responsible for this trend?

In Lok Sabha, the concerned minister said education is on the concurrent list, and the responsibility for this trend lies entirely with States. But the RTE is a Central Act and the mandates on neighbourhood schools are the Centre's responsibility.

Further, the Centre seeks to intervene in State school education by making Central fund allocation for schools conditional on NEP implementation and also imposes a language policy. There are avenues for the Centre to step in against this trend.

The RTE Act, in force since 2010, guarantees free and compulsory education from age six to 14. RTE says nothing binding about the quality of what is delivered once a child is inside the classroom. It creates entitlements that children, by definition, cannot assert on their own – and parents, particularly poor and rural parents, often lack the legal and institutional capacity to enforce either. RTE assumes a symmetry of power between the state, the school, and the family that does not exist on the ground. RTE is not justiciable, in practice. School Management Committees, the one mechanism written into the RTE to give parents and communities a formal voice, largely go unconvenced.

(The author is Chairman, Central Control Commission, CPI(M))

THE GIST

Nearly 94,000 government schools have closed over the past decade under State-led rationalisation drives, with Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir among the worst affected, leading to falling enrolment and rising dropout risks.

The closures have disproportionately affected poor, rural, Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe and girl students, while questions remain over the Centre's role in enforcing neighbourhood school norms under the Right to Education Act.

Petrol, diesel consumption surges in July; LPG use down despite rollback of curbs

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

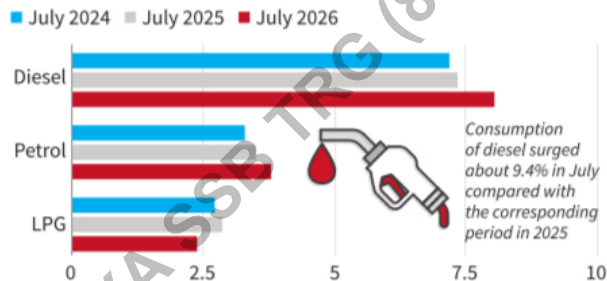
Consumption of diesel and petrol surged about 9.4% and 8.7% year-on-year respectively in July, primarily driven by a below-average monsoon that increased the demand for fuel among farmers to run irrigation machinery and tractors.

According to government data, diesel consumption in July touched about 8.05 million metric tonnes (MMT), higher than 7.356 MMT last July. Petrol consumption stood at 3.795 MMT as against 3.493 MMT in the comparable period last year.

Sale of diesel – which powers transport, agricul-

Surging volumes

The chart shows the consumption of diesel, petrol, and LPG for the month of July. Figures in MMT (million metric tonnes)



Note: Numbers are provisional. Propane and butane is included in LPG stream
Source: Petroleum Planning & Analysis Cell

tural equipment, and irrigation – is a key indicator of economic activity. Usually, fuel sales dip with the onset of monsoon amid reduced deployment

of agricultural pumps and vehicular movement. But this year, the rain arrived late, and was uneven, due to which farmers deployed diesel-powered pumps to

irrigate fields for the kharif season.

LPG use falls

Consumption of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) declined 17.4% during the reported period to 2.373 MMT. The fall came despite the government restoring the supply of industrial and commercial LPG to pre-West Asia crisis levels and withdrawing sector-specific allocation caps on June 25.

This also coincided with the increased adoption of piped natural gas by domestic and industrial consumers.

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Fuel consumption rises in July; LPG use down

Coal production soared 7.5% and dispatches surged 17.34% amid increased demand for power due to the uneven monsoon and increased temperatures.

Official data indicated that the country's power consumption grew by about 11% in June compared to the same period last year, reaching 170.7 billion units as demand for cooling appliances rose.

India produced 69.75 million tonnes (MT) of coal in July, higher than the 64.88 MT produced last July, according to provisional figures provided by the Coal Ministry.

Overall coal dispatches stood at 86.33 MT during the reported period – 17.34% higher than 73.57 MT dispatched last year.

In the reported period, Coal India accounted for 50.35 MT of production – 8.42% higher on a year-on-year basis – and its exclusive dispatch was 63.67 MT during the period. Production is the amount of coal mined and dispatch the volume sent to consumers.

Consumption of aviation turbine fuel, or jet fuel, marginally fell by 1.44% year-on-year to 0.699 MMT during the reported period.

With five gold medallists, Haryana town fuels India's best-ever CWG boxing haul

Ashok Kumar

GURUGRAM

For decades, the dusty town of Bhiwani, about 100 km from Delhi, has punched far above its weight in boxing rings around the world. On Saturday, its boxers scripted history for India at the Glasgow Commonwealth Games, powering the country to a haul of 10 medals, its best-ever performance in the sport at the Games. Of the seven gold medallists, five come from Bhiwani, which is often hailed as the "Mini Cuba" of India, a tribute to the Caribbean island nation that has produced a slew of famed boxers.



Priya Ghanghas, left, who won a gold medal, practising at a training centre in Bhiwani in April. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

India's first boxer to win an Olympic medal, Vijender Singh, shot the town into the global spotlight in 2008, winning a bronze at Beijing, and sparking a victorious streak for dozens of

other boxers from Bhiwani.

On Saturday, four Bhiwani women climbed the podium in Glasgow – Sakshi Chaudhary (51 kg), Preeti Pawar (54 kg), Jais-

mine Lamboria (57kg), and Priya Ghanghas (60 kg) – along with one man, Sachin Siwach (60 kg).

Jagdish Singh, who heads the Bhiwani Boxing Club that has played a major role in scripting the town's dominance in the sport, credited the record haul to changes in the selection process for the 2026 Games.

The current transparent and trial-based selection process would also help India in the upcoming Asian Games and 2028 Olympics, he told *The Hindu*.

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SATISFYING GLASGOW SHOW

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Haryana town fuels **India's CWG boxing haul**

“For the last two years, selections were done without trials, based on five to seven parameters decided by coaches. It was like a teacher giving marks in class. Coaches got influenced by whether someone greeted them or had a good rapport. But in the ring, only punches matter,” Mr. Singh told *The Hindu*.

Following backlash from players and intervention by the Sports Authority of India, the Boxing Federation of India (BFI) scrapped its controversial points-based “assessment” system and reverted to open, trial-based selections, said Mr. Singh, who also coached Glasgow gold medallist Sakshi Chaudhary. This time, he said, BFI officials conducted neutral trials in public view with neutral judges. “Earlier, results were withheld, or there were just informal bouts with no declared outcome,” he added.

In Dhanana village, it was a moment of pride for Ms. Priya Ghanghas’s family. Her father Mahendra told reporters that the entire village would welcome her home.

Speaking about her discipline, he said her diet of “churma, kheer, curd and milk” had played a big role. “Every parent should take a lesson from Priya: encourage your children to take up sports and work hard,” he said.

After terror attack, J&K plans to move migrant workers to clusters

Decision taken at meeting chaired by L-G Sinha

Bashaarat Masood
Srinagar, August 2

STEPPING UP surveillance, area domination exercises and night patrolling, and relocating migrants to specific clusters — these are among the measures that Jammu and Kashmir Police has decided to implement a day after two brick kiln workers from Chhattisgarh were shot dead by terrorists in



Security personnel keep vigil on the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway, in south Kashmir's Anantnag district, Sunday. PTI

South Kashmir's Kulgam district.

The decision, taken at a high-

level security review chaired by Lieutenant Governor

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Kashmir terror attack

Manoj Sinha, comes two days after two migrant workers were shot dead by terrorists in Kulgam. Almost immediately after the attack on Friday evening, a joint team of police, Army and paramilitary forces had cordoned off the village and launched massive search operations.

According to sources, Lt Governor Sinha took a serious view of the incident, saying the security establishment should have been more alert after the killing of a policeman in Anantnag 10 days ago, and calling for a “comprehensive review” of the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for the safety of non-local workers.

Following the meeting, police top brass is learnt to have asked field officers to strengthen security on the ground, especially to ensure the safety of non-local workers, tourists and Amarnath pilgrims. Police officers have been told to consolidate brick kiln workers in specific locations instead of allowing them to live in scattered accommodations, sources said.

There are hundreds of brick kilns in the Valley, most of them in Budgam district in central Kashmir and the three south Kashmir districts of Anantnag, Kulgam and Pulwama. In Budgam district alone, there are 199 registered brick kilns. The majority of the labourers working at these brick kilns hail from outside Jammu and Kashmir, especially from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

These workers live in huts at the brick kilns, most of which are in secluded areas.

A police officer admitted that it was a challenging task. “It’s almost impossible to provide security to every non-local worker, but we are taking measures to create a safe environment for them,” he said. “There are thousands of non-local labourers working at the brick kilns, and many of them

have come along with their families. These kilns are scattered across villages. What we plan to do is move them and their families to a single location in the same village for the night, so that it is easier to secure them. But our overall focus is to create an environment where everyone feels safe,” he said.

Field officers have also been asked to increase the security presence through surveillance, night patrolling and area domination in areas inhabited by non-local workers, sources said. As a precautionary measure, some police officers have also asked non-local workers to restrict their movements, especially during the night.

To ensure the safety of workers and tourists, police have set up checkpoints on roads that lead to major tourist destinations and intensified vehicle checks and passenger frisking.

On Friday evening, two brick kiln workers from Chhattisgarh were killed in a terror attack at Kilam village in South Kashmir’s Kulgam. Police sources say a man entered a brick kiln at Kilam, struck up a conversation with the labourers and shot them dead at point-blank range. They say around 250 non-local workers were present near the site at the time of the attack. The attack, the first on non-local workers since 2024 and the second terror attack in 10 days, has sent the security agencies into a tizzy.

The killing of the two migrant workers from Chhattisgarh was the first attack on seasonal migrant workers since October 2024. Police are yet to establish who carried out the attack, but are investigating the anonymous social media posts in which The Resistance Front (TRF), which police say is a shadow group of the Lashkar-e-Toiba, has claimed the attack.

Deal close, U.S., Israel to hold off on Iran strike, says Trump

Associated Press

WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump has said that he will order American forces to hold off on new strikes against Iran, claiming West Asia allies have reached the parameters of a deal to end the five-month war.

The emerging deal "would include the immediate, complete, and total" opening of the Strait of Hormuz and "an end to Iran's nuclear threat", Mr. Trump wrote in a social media post on Saturday evening. He said Israel is joining his commitment to end the war. Israel did not publicly comment on the announcement.

A regional official said the proposal calls for the U.S. and Iran to return to



Donald Trump

negotiations. The U.S., in exchange, will end its naval blockade on Iran, he said. No deal has been reached yet, but mediation efforts are under way, said the official, who is involved in mediation efforts and spoke on condition of anonymity.

The U.S. was prepared to go against Iran "at levels of military terror, strength, and power" not seen since the Second World War, Mr.

Trump said in his post, claiming that Iran asked the U.S. to hold off on any attack.

However, Iran's Mehr news agency denied Mr. Trump's claim that Tehran asked Washington to refrain from conducting new strikes, saying it was "nothing but a new lie".

Iran's Defence Ministry said that the country was "neither surprised nor passive" following the announcement, and added that Iran continued to remain alert in the face of concrete threats from the U.S.

Mr. Trump has announced halts to strikes in Iran on several occasions since the U.S. and Israel attacked Iran on February 28, only for things to unravel and fighting to resume.

IRAN DEVISED A PLAN TO RAISE WAR'S COSTS FOR TRUMP IF U.S. RENEWED ATTACKS

As ceasefire teetered, Tehran plotted wider war via proxies

Farnaz Fassihi
& Neil MacFarquhar

August 2

A DRONE attack sent smoke billowing from a giant Saudi oil facility, the largest such plant in the world. Two gas tankers burst into flames at an Egyptian port near Suez Canal, a crucial choke point in global trade.

War has enveloped a widening circle of targets across West Asia in recent days, as Iran and its phalanx of proxy militias have sought to strike at the US allies, rattle global markets and push United States to halt its campaign against Islamic Republic.

The attacks are part of what two senior Iranian officials depicted as a step-by-step plan, devised in secret during a fleeting cease-fire this spring, that would use Iran's allies to escalate attacks if the US intensified its assaults. The goal, the officials said, was to make the war as costly as possible for President Trump.

Mahdi Mohammadi, a sen-



Houthi supporters during an anti-Saudi rally in Sanaa, Yemen on Friday. REUTERS

ior adviser to Iran's chief negotiator, even crowed on social media about the strategy with the proxy forces, which are known in the region as the "Axis of Resistance."

"The rules of the conflict are changing and being rewritten, we are creating new conditions and platforms in the war," Mohammadi said. "The fronts are multiplying from different di-

rections in the region; they are of course coordinated but act independently. A new axis of resistance is emerging with new players."

Iran and its allies have taken powerful blows since 2023, when the militant group Hamas attacked Israel. Recent events, however, have shown their capacity to regroup, stir chaos and gain Iran leverage.

Still, analysts do not consider proxy forces, each with its own agenda, mere puppets of Tehran, though Iran's level of coordination and control varies.

The Houthis in Yemen, for instance, are seen as the most autonomous of the groups that make up the alliance. Hezbollah coordinates most closely with Iran, while Shiite militias in Iraq are somewhere in the middle in the degree of their willingness to act as a direct arm of Iran.

During the short-lived truce, Iranian generals covertly strategized with proxy militia commanders on how to expand the war and raise its cost for Washington, according to two officials speaking anonymously to discuss sensitive deliberations.

Iran mobilized its proxy forces for a variety of reasons, analysts said. First and foremost, it aims to limit oil exports from the region, driving up gas prices in US ahead of midterm elections and reducing revenue for Washington's Arab allies. NYT

Israeli strikes kill 13 in Gaza; Energy Minister says no deal to halt attacks

The strikes target Gaza City, Deir al-Balah, and Khan Younis, marking the deadliest day in weeks; while Israel says it would give Hamas a chance to disarm, the militant group says it would only hand over weapons after the former stops its attacks

Reuters

CAIRO/JERUSALEM

Israeli air strikes hit Gaza for a second straight day on Sunday, killing at least 13 Palestinians, medics said, despite U.S. President Donald Trump's announcement of a breakthrough in efforts to implement last year's Gaza ceasefire agreement.

From dawn, Israeli warplanes hit Gaza City in the north, the central city of Deir al-Balah and the southern area of Khan Younis, causing the biggest daily death toll in weeks, according to Palestinian health officials.

Mr. Trump's assertion



Grave loss: Palestinians inspect the site of an Israeli strike on a vehicle in Deir al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip on Sunday. REUTERS

on Thursday that Palestinian Hamas militants and other armed groups had agreed to disarm had raised hopes of a turning point in the conflict.

On Sunday, Israeli Energy Minister Eli Cohen – a member of Prime Minister Netanyahu's Security Cabinet – told Israel's Army Radio the government would

give Hamas the opportunity to disarm but said he was "very sceptical" that would happen.

Mr. Cohen added that there had been no deal to halt attacks on Gaza and that he saw a need for Israel – which already controls 70% of the enclave – to take full control of it if Hamas did not disarm.

"In the deal we signed with the United States, our stance is that Hamas must be dismantled. This is the first thing that must happen," he added.

Mr. Trump's Board of Peace, the U.S.-led body overseeing the ceasefire, published on Friday a 15-point roadmap setting out

the final steps for implementing the agreement.

Hamas has said Israel must stop its attacks in Gaza and pull its troops back, in accordance with other key terms of the ceasefire deal, before it will agree to hand over weapons to a new Palestinian body named to run Gaza.

A senior Hamas official said on Sunday the group had demonstrated "considerable flexibility", but accused Israel of wanting to impose a de-facto situation on the ground by intensifying its strikes.

He said that the success of the deal now depended on Israel fully ending its daily attacks on Gaza.

14 killed in suicide attack on peace rally in Pakistan

Associated Press

PESHAWAR

A suicide bomber targeted protesters at an anti-militant rally in northwestern Pakistan on Sunday, killing at least 14 people, including police officers, and wounding more than two dozen others, officials said.

The attack occurred in Kabal, a town in Swat Valley in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, where demonstrators had gathered near a police station, chanting anti-militant slogans and demanding peace, district police chief Omar Khan said. He added that at least five officers were among the dead.

Pakistan's Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi condemned the attack, issuing a statement extending condolences to the families of



People evacuate an injured victim following a suicide bombing during a protest in Pakistan's Swat district on Sunday. AFP

those killed and prayers for the speedy recovery of the wounded.

The Swat Valley was once a stronghold of Islamic militants who imposed a strict interpretation of Sharia, or Islamic law, before the Pakistani military launched a major operation in 2007 that drove them out and restored go-

vernment control.

No group immediately claimed responsibility for the bombing, but suspicion is likely to fall on the Pakistani Taliban, known as TTP. A military spokesperson said on Friday that militant attacks and ensuing operations had killed 819 security personnel and civilians this year.

Saudi nuclear deal bares Washington's double standards



HUSSEIN
BANAI

WHAT HAS emerged from the "123 Agreement" between the US and Saudi Arabia departs from the template Washington has used for decades in sharing nuclear technology with allies. The 2009 agreement with the UAE, still the gold standard, bound Abu Dhabi to forswear enrichment and reprocessing and to accept the IAEA's most rigorous inspection regime, the Additional Protocol; the UAE now gets roughly a quarter of its electricity from nuclear power.

The Saudi agreement contains no such renunciation. It leaves open, pending a two-year study, a black box enrichment facility on Saudi soil, run by American firms but built inside a kingdom whose crown prince has said he will pursue a weapon the moment Iran gets there first. In place of the Additional Protocol, the deal relies on a bilateral inspection framework devised by the two governments themselves, already a retreat from the standard Washington spent half a century asking the world to accept. Congress has 90 working days to review it and would need a veto-proof majority to block it, complicated by President Donald Trump's announcement, the morning after the signing, that the deal now hinges on Saudi accession to the Abraham Accords, a condition Riyadh has resisted.

The timing of this deal is not incidental. Since February, the US and Israel have waged a war against Iran that was supposed to leave the Arab monarchies of the Persian Gulf more secure than they had been in decades. Instead, the war exposed how little control these monarchies have over their own fate. The lesson has been unambiguous: American and Israeli calculations can diverge from their interests at any moment, and when they do, it is their security that bears the cost. Seen in that light, the nuclear deal looks less like strategy and more like compensation, an attempt to restore through reactors and enrichment options the confidence that the war itself has destroyed.

The deal also represents an unnecessary retreat from a nonproliferation order the US helped build and, for all its inconsistencies, took pride in upholding for decades. That order rested on the proposition that a great power bears particular responsibility not to seed the world with the means of building

a bomb, however lucrative the contracts. An agreement that preserves the enrichment option, in a state whose leadership has openly conditioned its ambitions on Iran's, cannot be reconciled with that inheritance. What is being dismantled is not merely technical safeguards but the credibility of a framework whose authority depended on Washington applying its own rules to its own friends.

In Iran, a regime that has spent two decades absorbing sanctions, sabotage, and war for a programme it insisted was purely civilian has just watched Washington hand its rival an enrichment pathway as reward for a signature. Whatever argument remained in Tehran for staying short of a weapon has been weakened by a deal that treats Saudi proliferation as a matter for cooperation rather than refusal. A Gulf and a Persian plateau both edging toward weapons capability carries its own consequence for Israel, whose military advantage has rested for half a century on precisely the nuclear monopoly this deal begins to erode. An Israel that senses that advantage narrowing has every incentive to reach for the preventive strike, much as it did in February, raising the possibility that the war meant to settle Iran's nuclear question becomes the opening skirmish in a longer campaign it can no longer confine to one country.

There is, finally, the question Washington has declined to ask Riyadh with anything like the rigour it applied to Tehran. The claim that this programme answers a genuine electricity shortfall sits uneasily with the fact that the country making it holds among the largest petroleum reserves on Earth and some of the finest solar resources anywhere — resources that could meet Saudi power needs for a generation without a gram of enrichment. These are the questions Washington put to Iran for 20 years. Applied to Riyadh, that scepticism collapses just as readily, yet nobody in this administration seems inclined to voice it. A nonproliferation policy that interrogates one capital's motives while waving another's through on a signing ceremony is a test of loyalty rather than of intent.

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It looks less like strategy and more like compensation, an attempt to restore through reactors and enrichment options the confidence that the war with Iran has destroyed