

CURRENTLY | 23 JUNE

1. End the Free Rein of Junk Food Advertising in India

Source: The Hindu (Monday Editorial) | Page 6 | GS-2: Health & Governance

2. China's Vision of the International Order

Source: The Hindu (Editorial) | Page 6 | GS-2: International Relations & Global Governance

3. Core Sector Growth Slows to 0.5% in May

Source: The Hindu | Page 1 | GS-3: Indian Economy → Industrial Growth, Index of Industrial Production (IIP) & Core Industries

4. ASI Transfers Rakhigarhi Skeletons to AnSI

Source: The Hindu | Page 12 | GS-1: Ancient History → Indus Valley Civilisation

5. Maritime Sector a Major Engine of Growth

Source: The Hindu (Monday) | Page 1 | GS-3: Infrastructure, Shipbuilding & Maritime Security

6. Iran Tightens Strait of Hormuz Transit Rules

Source: The Hindu (Sunday) | Page 12 | GS-2: International Relations → West Asia, Energy Security & Strategic Chokepoints

End the free rein of junk food advertising in India

Despite the Government of India's plans to amend advertising laws to curb the promotion of HFSS (high in fat, sugar and sodium) foods, such products continue to be advertised rampantly. As evidence of the health harms associated with industrially processed foods engineered to be highly palatable and potentially addictive continues to grow, restricting their advertising – particularly exposure to children and young people – may no longer be avoidable.

Try opening a YouTube video on politics, scrolling through Instagram reels, or scanning a newspaper, and you are likely to encounter advertisements for noodles, chips, biscuits, breakfast cereals, chocolates, sweetened beverages, or other ultra-processed food (UPF) products. Recently, there was a YouTube advertisement for a newly launched baked chips brand in India. The advertisement emphasised the product's cheese and tomato flavours and the "crunchiness" to appeal to consumers. What it did not disclose was that the product is a UPF with ingredients such as maltodextrin, nature-identical flavourings, flavouring substances, salt substitute (KCl/potassium chloride), acidity regulators (627, 631) and emulsifier (322). While prominently promoting selective attributes such as "baked", the advertisement omitted material health information, including the product's high salt and fat content and the presence of refined carbohydrates. Such marketing practices can create a misleading impression of healthfulness while obscuring the nutritional risks associated with these products.

While readers can recall their own experiences, there are a few other examples in the media. A female film celebrity is seen recommending a multigrain, "no maida choco cereal" for her son, despite it being a high sugar product. An entire family of actors promotes a "12-grain" breakfast cereal, while a popular film actor endorses a biscuit as a "good choice". Most of these products, however, are high in sugar, fat and/or salt, raising questions about the messages conveyed through such endorsements. Such selective disclosures create a false perception of healthfulness and deprives consumers, particularly children and adolescents, of the right to make an informed choice.

Review frameworks

The focus of this article is also to draw the attention of policymakers to the need for reviewing whether existing legal frameworks sufficiently serve the public interest. Clearer legal provisions may be required to effectively regulate the advertising of unhealthy food products.

Advertising is directly linked to increased consumption of UPFs, which is strongly associated with rising rates of obesity and diabetes. These advertisements often feature



Arun Gupta

Paediatrician,
convener of Nutrition
Advocacy in Public
Interest (NAPI)
and co-author
of the Lancet Series

child actors and use emotionally appealing messages aimed at both children and parents, creating a desire for such products. The fact that in 2024, three major transnational corporations spent \$13.2 billion on advertising underscores the volumes and the power of food product advertisements. Advertising does not merely reflect demand; it helps create it. In India alone, more than two lakh junk food advertisements in a month were backed by advertising expenditure of about ₹70 crore.

Evidence suggests that UPFs can encourage overconsumption through mechanisms that resemble those identified in addiction science. The health harms associated with UPFs appear closely linked to their industrial design and marketing strategies. But the food industry fails to disclose this fact to people. Recently, the City of San Francisco filed a lawsuit against 10 major UPF manufacturers, alleging child-targeted marketing, the development of highly compelling product formulations, and inadequate disclosure of health risks such as obesity and diabetes. Among other remedies, the lawsuit sought to prevent further deceptive marketing practices and pushed for corrective measures to address the effects of past false advertising.

A policy gap

The Government of India's National Multisectoral Action Plan (NMAP) for Prevention and Control of Common Non-Communicable Diseases (2017/2022) envisaged the prohibition/restrictions on the advertising of HFSS foods. Many pre-packaged foods are highly processed, containing additives such as colours, flavours, emulsifiers and sweeteners, and are often HFSS. The issue has gained policy attention. In February 2026, the Supreme Court of India, in response to a PIL on warning labels for packaged foods, observed that front-of-pack labelling is necessary to protect the right to health. The Economic Survey 2025-26 also highlighted concerns around unhealthy diets. Several Members of Parliament have called for stronger measures, including front-of-pack warning labels, advertising restrictions and taxation of UPFs. In 2024, the Court had noted that misleading advertisements can encourage the consumption of unhealthy foods by children, pregnant women and the elderly, with potentially serious health consequences. These developments point to a growing recognition that existing safeguards may be inadequate.

The Lancet Series on UPFs and Human Health, published three papers in November 2025 which presented scientific evidence linking UPF consumption to poorer diet quality, displacement of real foods, and a higher risk of obesity, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and other non-communicable diseases. Global and Indian data show that rising UPF consumption has coincided with increasing

obesity rates. The Lancet made a strong case for policies in the food environments to reduce UPF consumption, with many experts arguing that policymaking should not wait for further evidence.

The food environment needs a fix

Children and adolescents in India are exposed daily to advertisements for UPFs and HFSS foods on television, digital platforms, social media, sports broadcasts and through influencers. This sustained and sophisticated marketing is designed to build brand loyalty and shape lifelong consumption patterns. The aim of the UPF industry is clear: to encourage the displacement of real culinary or cultural foods for profits. What children or youth eat cannot be separated from what they are persuaded to desire at schools, work places, cinema halls, other public places or even at home.

Experts in The Lancet Series contend that nutrition education and behaviour-change programmes alone cannot succeed in an environment that is saturated with aggressive marketing of unhealthy food products.

This situation underscores an important constitutional principle: when harm is foreseeable and populations are vulnerable, the state has a duty to protect public health and regulate the marketing of unhealthy food products. India committed in 2017 to restrict such advertising, but that objective remains unfulfilled. Given the scale of the problem, neither market forces nor self-regulation are likely to be sufficient. Therefore, there is a strong case for the Government of India to introduce stricter controls on the advertising and promotion of UPFs and HFSS foods such as planned in 2017 by amending advertisement laws.

If schools are to be protected spaces free from UPFs, HFSS foods and misleading nutrition messages, it is inconsistent to ignore the commercial environment that shapes children's choices outside school. The school environment itself requires clear policy direction, not merely advisories (as Brazil did recently). The Economic Survey has called for stronger regulation of UPF advertising and marketing. International experience, from Chile to Mexico, suggests that voluntary self-regulation is often ineffective, whereas enforceable legal measures can be more effective. Given its influence on children's food choices, advertising warrants stronger regulation as part of the broader right to health.

Restricting the advertising of unhealthy food products need not be viewed as anti-industry or anti-profit. In fact it could reduce company expenditure on advertising and encourage companies to redirect resources towards minimally processed foods and healthier local markets. Such a shift could help shape more sustainable and health-oriented food systems in the future.

Restricting the advertising of ultra-processed food (UPF) products and foods high in fat, sugar and sodium (HFSS) is a public health imperative

18.

आधुनिक समाज में स्वास्थ्य संबंधी चिंताएं बढ़ने के बावजूद, फास्ट फूड उद्योग बढ़ रहे हैं - आप इसको कैसे देखते हैं ? भारतीय अनुभव से अपने उत्तर को उदाहरण देकर स्पष्ट कीजिए । (उत्तर 250 शब्दों में दीजिए)

How do you account for the growing fast food industries given that there are increased health concerns in modern society ? Illustrate your answer with the Indian experience. (Answer in 250 words)

2025

JUNK FOOD

MARKETING, NCDs & CHILD HEALTH

Protecting Children, Enabling Informed Choices, Securing the Right to Health



? PYQ (GS-2)

UPSC CSE 2024

"The West is fostering India's relations with the Indo-Pacific region to contain China's rise." Critically examine. (Related: health security, consumer protection and regulation in a globalising world.)

GS-1 INDIAN SOCIETY

- Salient features of Indian Society
- Social empowerment
- Role of women & women's organisations (child nutrition)
- Population & associated issues (nutrition transition, NCDs)

GS-2 GOVERNANCE

- Issues relating to development & management of Health Sector
- Government policies & interventions
- Welfare of vulnerable sections
- Statutory, regulatory & quasi-judicial bodies (FSSAI, CCPA, State Food Commissions)

GS-3 ECONOMY

- Human Resource Development
- Food processing industries
- Science & Technology (food additives, processing)
- Inclusive growth & its issues
- Economic burden of NCDs

GS-4 ETHICS

- Ethics in public & private relationships
- Corporate governance
- Probity in governance
- Accountability & ethical concerns in public administration
- Case studies: misleading ads, celebrity endorsements, consumer deception

1. CONTEXT

Aggressive marketing of Ultra-Processed Foods (UPFs) and High Fat, Sugar and Salt (HFSS) foods across TV, digital platforms, influencers, sports and celebrity endorsements is fuelling unhealthy diets, especially among children and adolescents—leading to a surge in obesity, Type 2 diabetes, Type 1 diabetes and other lifestyle diseases in India.

2. WHAT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?

ULTRA-PROCESSED FOODS (UPFs)

Industrially manufactured formulations containing additives, preservatives, flavour enhancers, emulsifiers, sweeteners and other substances with little or no whole food.

Examples:

- Instant noodles
- Packaged chips
- Sugary drinks
- Chocolates



HIGH FAT, SUGAR & SALT (HFSS) FOODS

Foods containing excessive amounts of fat, sugar and/or sodium beyond recommended dietary limits.

Examples:

- Biscuits & cookies
- Sweetened beverages
- Processed snacks



THE SCALE OF THE PROBLEM



MORE THAN **2 LAKH** junk food ads on TV & digital platforms every month



AROUND **₹170 CRORE+** spent by brands on these advertisements every month



Celebrities & influencers give junk food an aspirational appeal



Digital marketing algorithms amplify reach, especially among children

HEALTH HALO MARKETING – A BIG CONCERN

Brands use attractive "health halos" to create a false perception of healthfulness, while hiding unhealthy additives.

Examples:



Reality: May still contain maltodextrin, nature-identical flavouring substances, emulsifiers, high salt, sugar and refined carbohydrates.

3. WHY IS IT A CONCERN?

A. INDIA'S HEALTH BURDEN (DATA)

NFHS-6 (Chapter 6: Nutrition)

Indicator	Women (%)	Men (%)
Overweight (BMI ≥ 23)	32.8	36.9
Obesity (BMI ≥ 25)	24.0	22.9
Overweight/Obesity in children (5-9 years)	11.7	

ICMR-INDIAB Study (2023):

- Type-2 Diabetes: 101 million people
- Pre-diabetes: 136 million people

Type-1 Diabetes in India:

- ~11-12 lakh individuals (mostly children & adolescents)

NCDs account for nearly 66% of total deaths in India (MoHFW).

B. HEALTH IMPACT (EVIDENCE)

The Lancet Series on UPFs (2025) links higher UPF consumption with:

- Poor diet quality & displacement of real foods
- Obesity, Type 2 diabetes, Type 1 diabetes (in children), Hypertension
- Cardiovascular diseases
- Certain cancers and other NCDs
- Early dietary habits track into adulthood, creating a lifelong disease risk

C. SOCIAL & ECONOMIC IMPACT

- Displacement of traditional, nutritious diets
- Children highly vulnerable to persuasive advertising & digital marketing
- Higher healthcare expenditure and productivity losses
- Greater burden on public health systems and adverse impact on human capital

D. RIGHTS & ETHICS

- Misleading ads violate consumer choice and informed decision
- Children's right to health (Article 21) & State's duty under Article 47 to improve nutrition
- Corporates prioritising profit over public health
- Exploitation of information asymmetry and behavioural vulnerabilities

4. POLICY & REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

FSSAI (2020): Regulations restrict claims & advertisements on HFSS/UPFs.

CCPA Guidelines (2022): Endorsements must be truthful, not misleading, especially in case of children.

ASCI Guidelines: Voluntary self-regulation by advertising industry.

Challenge: Weak monitoring, self-regulation and lack of stringent penalties reduce effectiveness.

5. GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES

National Multisectoral Action Plan (2017-22) proposed restrictions on HFSS advertising, especially targeting children. Commitment remains largely unfulfilled.

Pervasive digital marketing, influencer ads and cross-border promotions are hard to regulate.

Children inadequately protected from persuasive advertising and digital marketing.

Weak enforcement, low penalties and fragmented institutional coordination.

6. WAY FORWARD

Mandatory Front-of-Pack Warning Labels (FOPL) for HFSS foods.

Restrict advertisements of HFSS/UPFs targeting children (time, placement, content, platforms).

Regulate influencer & celebrity endorsements; ensure disclosures and accountability.

Promote nutrition literacy & behaviour change campaigns; support school-based nutrition education.

Strengthen coordination across ministries – Health, Education, Women & Child Development, Information & Broadcasting, FSSAI, I&B.

Consider fiscal measures such as taxation of unhealthy foods and subsidies for healthy foods.

7. INTERNATIONAL LESSONS

CHILE

- Mandatory warning labels on packaged foods.
- Strict restrictions on child-targeted advertising.

Effective law with strong enforcement.

MEXICO

- Front-of-pack warning labels on foods high in fat, sugar, calories and sodium.
- Ban on child-targeted ads.

Clear labelling, better consumer choice.

BRAZIL

- School "advisories" alone are insufficient.
- Enforceable legal restrictions on unhealthy food marketing in schools work better.

Only enforceable laws create impact.

GLOBAL EVIDENCE

Strong front-of-pack labelling and marketing restrictions reduce unhealthy choices, especially among children (WHO, PAHO).

8. MAINS VALUE ADDITION (USE IN ANSWER WRITING)

- ✓ India faces a dual burden of malnutrition: undernutrition coexists with obesity, NCDs and micronutrient deficiencies.
- ✓ Food choices are shaped not only by consumers but also by the food environment created through aggressive marketing and easy availability.
- ✓ The Right to Health (Article 21) and Article 47 justify stronger regulation of misleading food advertisements.
- ✓ Strong regulation, truthful advertising and healthier food environments are essential to secure the right to health and build a healthier India.

9. KEY TAKEAWAY

Junk food advertising is not just a marketing issue—it is a public health, ethics and governance challenge. Stronger regulation, informed choices and a healthier food environment are key to protecting children and reducing the rising burden of NCDs.

The world that China desires and is shaping

The sheer destructiveness of American foreign policy under United States President Donald Trump is obscuring a quiet but consequential shift in global politics. Mr. Trump's Liberation Day tariffs, the disastrous war against Iran, and systematic alienation of allies and partners have dominated headlines and consumed diplomatic bandwidth. And rightly so. The U.S., architect of the post-war international order, is now taking a machete to the very frameworks it built. But the chaos emanating from Washington is drawing attention away from what China is doing with the space this creates.

The Chinese alternative

Last week, Beijing released a white paper on global governance, which offers a systematic articulation of how it is reshaping the world order. As expected, the paper presents China as a defender of the international system, warning that humanity must not be allowed to return to "the law of the jungle". Beijing argues that it has paid its United Nations dues ahead of schedule in 2025; it has backed the restoration of the WTO's Appellate Body; and its four global initiatives are a demonstration of its responsibility as a great power. This is not, however, the full picture. A close reading of China's diplomacy shows that it is not simply defending the post-war order. Rather, it is selectively revising it, largely preserving the institutional scaffolding while quietly rewriting the normative substance that gives it meaning.

Understanding this requires disaggregating the international order into two dimensions: the institutional and the normative. The institutional order comprises the UN system, the Bretton Woods institutions, and the multilateral architecture built in the years following the Second World War. The normative order encompasses the principles that animate these institutions, from Westphalian norms of sovereignty and non-interference to liberal norms



Manoj Kewalramani

Chairperson of the Geostategy Programme at the Takshashila Institution

China's recent white paper outlines a transformation of the norms beneath the international order

of human rights, democratic governance, free markets, and the rule of law. On the institutional front, Beijing is deeply invested. It is the second-largest contributor to the UN budget, having raised its share of the UN regular budget from under 1% in 2000 to over 20% in 2025, a proactive participant in WTO reform, and a builder of complementary institutions such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the New Development Bank, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. These are not designed to replace the existing system but to expand China's authority within it while creating parallel platforms that advance its agenda. This is institutional revisionism, not revolution.

Normative ambitions

The real action, however, is in the normative domain, where China's ambitions are far more transformative. Beijing's four global initiatives – on development, security, civilisation, and governance – collectively represent a sustained campaign of norm entrepreneurship. Individually, each sounds benign. The Global Development Initiative links itself to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The Global Civilization Initiative (GCI) calls for respecting civilisational diversity. The Global Security Initiative (GSI) emphasises sovereignty and non-interference. And the Global Governance Initiative explicitly says that reform "does not mean to overturn the existing international order".

But look closer. The GSI's emphasis on taking "legitimate security concerns of all countries seriously" has been operationalised to dilute Ukraine's sovereign right to choose its own alliances, a position that conveniently serves Beijing's broader interest in weakening the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The GCI's call for diverse interpretations of universal values is, in practice, an effort to recast human rights as culturally contingent rather than universal,

shielding authoritarian governance from scrutiny. And China's redefinition of democracy in explicitly outcome-based terms, where legitimacy derives from material delivery rather than political participation, institutional independence, or accountability, represents a fundamental departure from liberal norms.

Meanwhile, China's own behaviour reveals the limits of its professed commitment even to the Westphalian norms it champions. In the South China Sea, it rejected the 2016 Permanent Court of Arbitration ruling as "null and void". Along its borders with India and Bhutan, periodic standoffs persist. The Belt and Road Initiative, while framed as development cooperation, has often blurred the line between external partnership and internal influence in recipient states.

A different world

Seen in this light, what emerges is a picture not of a revolutionary power seeking to torch the existing system, but of a sophisticated selective revisionist – one that preserves the institutional architecture it finds useful while systematically hollowing out the normative foundations to align with its objectives. Beijing supports sovereignty when it suits its interests and dilutes it when it does not. It endorses multilateralism in trade while practising selective openness and securitisation at home.

This matters enormously at a moment when reckless American policies appear to be making Beijing's revisionism seem palatable to many. The risk is not that the institutional order collapses. Both Washington and Beijing, for different reasons, remain invested in its survival. The risk is that the principles animating that order are gradually redefined in a way that undermines the sovereign equality of states, weakens civil society and individual rights, and erodes the rule of law. This is a future that does not align with India's strategic interests.

CHINA'S VISION OF THE INTERNATIONAL ORDER



“ The contest in contemporary geopolitics is increasingly about shaping the norms, values and principles of the international order rather than merely controlling institutions. ”

1. CONTEXT

China's White Paper on Global Governance projects Beijing as a defender of the international system. However, China seeks to **preserve existing institutions** while gradually **reshaping the norms** that underpin them.

2. INSTITUTIONAL ORDER (What China Supports)

Existing Institutions

Evidence

- United Nations (UN)
- World Trade Organization (WTO)
- Bretton Woods Institutions (IMF & World Bank)

- ✓ 2nd largest contributor to UN budget.
- ✓ UN budget share increased from <1% (2000) to >20% (2025).
- ✓ Supports WTO reform and restoration of the Appellate Body.

Parallel / Complementary Institutions Established by China

Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (2016)
Focus on infrastructure financing in Asia and beyond.

New Development Bank (NDB) (2014)
Alternative to Bretton Woods institutions; focus on development financing.

Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) (2001)
Promotes regional security, connectivity and counter-terrorism cooperation.

3. NORMATIVE ORDER (What China Wants to Reshape)

Four Global Initiatives

- Global Development Initiative (GDI)**
Development-centred global cooperation linked with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- Global Security Initiative (GSI)**
Prioritises sovereignty, non-interference and indivisible security.
- Global Civilization Initiative (GCI)**
Promotes civilisational diversity and multiple paths to modernity.
- Global Governance Initiative (GGI)**
Advocates reform of global governance without replacing existing institutions.

Key Values Promoted

- Sovereignty over intervention**
- Non-interference over external scrutiny**
- Development outcomes over electoral democracy**
- Civilisational pluralism over universal values**
- State authority over individual rights**

→ **Core Message:** China is not replacing institutions; it is expanding influence through parallel platforms.

4. WHY IS IT A CONCERN?

- Rejected the 2016 Permanent Court of Arbitration ruling on the South China Sea.
- Promotes an outcome-based conception of democracy; legitimacy linked to performance, not political participation.
- Dilutes universality of human rights and accountability norms; prioritises state sovereignty.
- Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) extends strategic influence beyond economics; creates debt and dependency risks.
- Risks weakening rule of law, transparency and the rules-based international order.

5. INDIA'S PERSPECTIVE IN THE CHANGING WORLD ORDER

Challenges

- Border disputes and security concerns (Ladakh, Arunachal Pradesh).
- Expanding Chinese influence in India's neighbourhood (SAARC, IOR, BRI projects).
- Pressure on maritime order and global governance norms.

India's Response

- Support a multipolar but rules-based international order rooted in international law.
- Strengthen Indo-Pacific partnerships (QUAD, IPEF, etc.) and bilateral ties.
- Advocate reforms in UN (esp. UNSC), WTO and Bretton Woods institutions.
- Lead Global South engagement while preserving strategic autonomy.

Key Objective

To shape a global order that is multipolar, inclusive and just—upholding sovereignty, rule of law, peaceful dispute resolution and equitable development.

MAINS VALUE ADDITION: KEY CONCEPTS / KEYWORDS

- Selective Revisionism**
China supports existing institutions but seeks to alter the norms and principles guiding them.
- Multipolarity**
A world order where power is distributed among multiple major powers, not dominated by a single state.
- Global Governance Reform**
Efforts to reform international institutions to reflect contemporary geopolitical realities.
- Strategic Autonomy**
India's ability to make independent foreign policy choices without aligning permanently with any bloc.
- Rules-Based International Order**
An order governed by international law, treaties, multilateral institutions and peaceful dispute resolution.
- Sovereignty & Non-Interference**
Principle that states have authority over their internal affairs without external intervention.
- Civilisational Pluralism**
Acceptance of multiple civilisational, cultural and developmental pathways instead of a single universal model.

6. KEY TAKEAWAY

China's rise is not primarily an institutional challenge but a **normative** one. While supporting existing institutions, Beijing seeks to redefine the values and principles governing global politics—making the future contest one of ideas, norms and governance models rather than institutions alone.



Core sector growth slows to 0.5% in May; coal, refinery products down amid crisis

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan

NEW DELHI

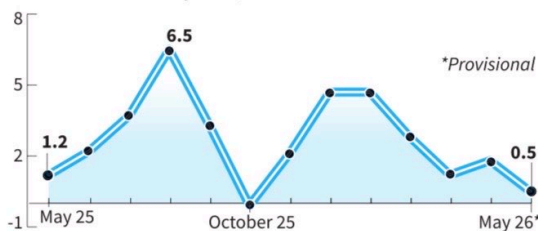
The growth in India's eight core industrial sectors slowed to 0.5% in May 2026, the second lowest in 21 months, official data showed. The data on the Index of Eight Core Industries released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry on Monday showed that five out of eight sectors contracted in May.

The only month in the past 21 months that saw a slower core sector growth was October 2025, when the index contracted 0.1%.

"Core sector growth in May was disappointing at 0.5% compared with 1.2% last year," Madan Sabnavis, chief economist at the Bank of Baroda, said. "The lower growth number on a low base can be attributed

Growth slump

After touching 6.5% in August 2025, core sector growth has slowed to 0.5% in May 2026, the second slowest in 21 months



SOURCE: MINISTRY OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY

more to the decline in production from the petroleum-based sector."

The crude oil sector contracted 4.6% in May, a worse performance than the contraction of 3.9% in April and of 1.8% in May last year. Similarly, the natural gas sector contracted 4.9% in May, its worst performance in three months.

The refinery products

sector contracted by 8.7% in May, its worst performance in three-and-half years. According to Rahul Agrawal, principal economist at ICRA, this "partly reflects the fallout of the West Asia crisis". The coal sector, too, contracted by 9.3% – the worst in 10 months. "Crude oil, natural gas, and refinery products – all registered a de-

cline in production," Mr. Sabnavis said. "This can be attributed more to the higher import of crude and softening of prices in the international market."

The fertilizer sector contracted for the third consecutive month in May, by 0.9%. This was, however, a stronger performance than the contraction of 8.6% in April and of 24.6% in March.

The steel, cement, and electricity sectors were the only ones that registered growth in May. Of these, the electricity sector saw growth accelerate to 8.7%, albeit on a low base since the sector contracted by 4.7% in May last year. The steel sector saw growth slowing to a 13-month low of 5%, while the cement sector quickened marginally to a growth of 8.4%.

In India, in the overall Index of Industrial Production, the Indices of **Eight Core Industries** have a combined weight of 37.90%. Which of the following are among those Eight Core Industries?

1. Cement
2. Fertilizers
3. Natural gas
4. Refinery products
5. Textiles

Select the correct answer using the codes given below :

- (a) 1 and 5 only
- (b) 2, 3 and 4 only
- (c) 1, 2, 3 and 4 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

In the 'Index of **Eight Core Industries**', which one of the following is given the highest weight?

- (a) Coal production
- (b) Electricity generation
- (c) Fertilizer production
- (d) Steel production

1. **Context:** India's Eight Core Industries growth slowed to 0.5% in May 2026 (second-lowest in 21 months). Five of the eight sectors contracted, led by Coal (-9.3%) and Refinery Products (-8.7%), reflecting weakness in energy-related sectors.

2. Basics

A. Index of Industrial Production (IIP)

- Measures overall industrial output in Mining, Manufacturing and Electricity sectors.
- Released by National Statistics Office (NSO), MoSPI.
- Base Year: 2022–23.
- Eight Core Industries together account for 40.27% of IIP.

B. Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI)

- Measures output of 8 core sectors; released by Office of Economic Adviser (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce & Industry.
- Base Year: 2011-12

Weights (Highest → Lowest): Refinery (28.04%) > Electricity (19.85%) > Steel (17.92%) > Coal (10.33%) > Crude Oil (8.98%) > Natural Gas (6.88%) > Cement (5.37%) > Fertilisers (2.63%)

ASI transfers Rakhigarhi skeletons to AnSI for a scientific investigation

Sreeparna Chakrabarty
NEW DELHI

Human skeletal remains excavated from the archaeological site of Rakhigarhi in Haryana have been formally handed over by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) to the Anthropological Survey of India (AnSI), a national research institute under the Union Culture Ministry, for a detailed scientific investigation.

The transfer, carried out under a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the two institutions, is expected to significantly advance multidisciplinary research into one of the most important urban centres of the Indus-Saraswati Civilisation, B.V. Sharma, Director of AnSI, said.

Rakhigarhi, spread across approximately 550 hectares in Haryana, is widely recognised as the largest known settlement



Ancient remains: The skeleton of a woman, excavated in a trench on Mound 7 at Rakhigarhi in Haryana, in April 2022. FILE PHOTO

of the Harappan Civilisation. Archaeological excavations have revealed evidence of continuous habitation, from the Early Harappan to the Mature Harappan periods.

Mound 7 at the excavation site has been identified as a burial plot where 56 skeletons were recovered, including that of a woman, roughly 4,600 years old, which created a buzz in the fields of history, anthropology, genomics, and even linguistics.

DNA analysis of the skeleton revealed that the Rakhigarhi woman did not possess the steppe pastoral gene, fanning the debate on Aryan migration to India. The word “Aryan” has been interchangeably used for the steppe pastoralists, though to avoid racial connotations, many scholars now prefer to use the term Indo-Aryan.

Three complete human skeletons among those recovered from Mound 7, along with skeletal frag-

ments recovered from other burials, have now been transferred to the AnSI’s ancient human skeletal repository and laboratory in Kolkata for a detailed examination. The remaining skeletal materials obtained at these sites are also expected to be transferred in a few days, the Culture Ministry said in a statement on Monday.

Researchers believe the remains present a rare opportunity to apply modern scientific techniques, including ancient DNA (aDNA) analysis, stable isotope studies, osteological assessments, palaeopathological investigations, and environmental reconstruction, the statement added.

The research will be conducted in collaboration with leading scientific institutions, including the Birbal Sahni Institute of Palaeosciences, University College London, and the Banaras Hindu University.

Which one of the following **ancient towns** is well-known for its elaborate system of water harvesting and management by building a series of dams and channelizing water into connected reservoirs?

- (a) Dholavira
- (b) Kalibangan
- (c) Rakhigarhi
- (d) Ropar

The famous female figurine known as 'Dancing Girl', found at Mohenjo-daro, is made of

(a) carnelian

(b) clay

(c) bronze

(d) gold

1. **Context:** ASI has transferred human skeletal remains excavated from Rakhigarhi (Haryana) to Anthropological Survey of India (AnSI) for advanced studies including ancient DNA (aDNA), isotope and palaeopathological analysis. The findings may provide fresh insights into the Harappan Civilisation and population history.

2. Indus Valley Civilisation: Important Sites

Pakistan: Harappa (Granary, Cemetery R-37) | Mohenjo-daro (Great Bath, Bronze Dancing Girl) | Chanhudaro (Bead-making centre) | Kot Diji (Pre-Harappan site) | Sutkagendor (Westernmost port)

India: Gujarat: Dholavira (Water management system, UNESCO WHS) | Lothal (Dockyard) | Surkotada (Horse bones) | Rangpur (Rice cultivation)

Haryana: Rakhigarhi (Largest Harappan site) | Bhirrana (Earliest Harappan evidence) | Banawali (Radial town planning)

Rajasthan: Kalibangan (Ploughed field, Fire altars)

Punjab: Ropar (Harappan–later cultural sequence)

J&K: Manda (Northernmost site)

Uttar Pradesh: Alamgirpur (Easternmost site)

3. Rakhigarhi: Why Important?

- Hisar, Haryana; spread over ~550 hectares.
- Widely regarded as the largest known Harappan settlement.
- Evidence of continuous habitation from Early to Mature Harappan phase.
- 56 skeletons recovered from Mound-7 burial site.
- Famous ~4,600-year-old female skeleton discovered here.
- Earlier aDNA study found no Steppe pastoralist ancestry in the sampled individual, making it significant in debates on population history.

Maritime sector a major engine of economic growth, says Modi

Shiv Sahay Singh

KOLKATA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said no nation could emerge as a major power without strong maritime capabilities.

He was speaking at an event here after commissioning three indigenously built naval ships – *INS Dunagiri*, an advanced stealth frigate; *INS Sanshodhak*, a survey vessel (large); and the *INS Agray*, an anti-submarine warfare shallow watercraft.

Describing the event as a milestone in the journey towards “an *Aatmanirbhar Bharat*, a secure India, and a developed India”, Mr. Modi said the government viewed the maritime sector not as an isolated in-



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Krishna Swaminathan at the ceremony in Kolkata on Sunday. PTI

dustry but as a major engine of employment and economic growth. “The country whose maritime strength is robust, its economic and strategic influence will be equally robust. India is preparing itself for this,” he said, asserting that India did not wish to be merely a buyer in the defence sector.

“The strength of the na-

tion’s military cannot be measured by its dependence on global markets but by its ability to become self-reliant. India seeks to become a producer and a manufacturer, because nations that manufacture become decisive players on the global stage,” he said.

CONTINUED ON

» **PAGE 12**

Fertilizers in focus as Iran tightens Strait transit rules

Josco Shunzhou, a Hong Kong-registered vessel carrying 50,000 tonnes of urea, crossed the Strait of Hormuz two days ago and is scheduled to reach Krishnapatnam in Andhra Pradesh on June 27

M. Kalyanaraman
CHENNAI

For India, which has now focused on evacuation of bulk fertilizer carriers from Persian Gulf, the peace deal and the subsequent announcement by Iran that it was closing the Strait on developments in Lebanon have come as a mixed bag.

Working with Iran, India had established a process for evacuating ships serving its needs and successfully brought back more than a dozen vessels, largely carrying energy supplies. The government has now earmarked 34 ships for repatriation, including 15 fertilizer-carrying bulk carriers and one ammonia carrier serving domestic fertilizer production, with possible naval escorts as before. Barring Jag Arnav, the remaining 15 bulk carriers are foreign-flagged.

Josco Shunzhou, a Hong Kong-registered vessel carrying 50,000 tonne of urea, crossed the Strait of Hormuz two days ago and is scheduled to reach Krishnapatnam in Andhra Pradesh on June 27, as per marinetraffic.com.

While some ships identified by the government are untraceable on vessel-tracking websites, many are anchored west of the Strait of Hormuz. Eight of them are urea carriers transporting a combined 3.3 lakh tonne, four are carrying 2.57 lakh tonne of



Crucial input: India's current stocks of fertilizers stand at about 196 lakh tonne with opening stock of over 200 lakh tonne. REUTERS

DAP, three are carrying 1.1 lakh tonne of sulphur, and one is carrying a tad over 25,000 tonne of ammonia.

The Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare assessed the fertilizer need for the kharif season at about 384 lakh tonne. Current stocks stand at about 196 lakh tonne while India began the season with an opening stock of more than 200 lakh tonne.

Buffer norm

The government says the standard buffer norm is 33%, but this year advance availability exceeded half of the total requirement aided by domestic production of more than 118 lakh tonne since the current crisis began.

Almost 40 lakh tonne of imports had reached India during the crisis period, mostly not from the Strait

of Hormuz, the government said. Urea imports had come from Oman, Malaysia, Vietnam, Georgia and Russia, among others, while DAP and NPK imports came from Russia, Morocco, Egypt, the United States and Jordan, among others. As per the government, a total of 25 lakh tonne imports are scheduled to come in June.

Iran strengthens grip

On Friday, Iran announced that the **Persian Gulf Strait Authority (PGSA)**, which it set up during the war to manage the transit of ships along its coast, would be the sole official channel for processing transit requests. Applications can be submitted via its website.

Even as some ships transited during the first two days after the signing of the peace deal, the Joint Mari-

time Information Center said a number of vessels "attempting to transit have been challenged by Sepah Navy and turned around midway".

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) has been informing ships that the PGSA is the only authority authorised to process and permit transit requests.

No fee

According to the PGSA, it will not levy any fee for "security, safety and environmental services as well as related Iranian insurances" for 60 days. However, a Lloyd's List report quoted PGSA as saying, "The PGSA reserves the right to introduce insurance fee in the future... Owners will then be required to purchase and renew coverage accordingly." The terms have been circulated across the industry and submitted to the International Maritime Organization.

Iran has insisted that, for now, only the passage close to its coast is permitted although ships following U.S. Navy guidance had also been transiting near the Oman coast. Indian ships have been using the Iranian route. Meanwhile, Disha, Petronet LNG's carrier, has reached Dahej.

It was among the first vessels to exit the Strait after the peace deal was announced.

(With inputs from Saptaparno Ghosh)

1. **Context:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi commissioned three indigenously built naval platforms—INS Dunagiri, INS Sanshodhak and INS Agray—highlighting maritime capability as a key pillar of Aatmanirbhar Bharat, economic growth and national security.

2. Basics

A. INS Dunagiri (Advanced Stealth Frigate)

Part of Project 17A; designed for surface, air and anti-submarine warfare.

Other Stealth Frigates: Nilgiri, Udaygiri, Himgiri, Taragiri, Mahendragiri, Dunagiri | Shivalik, Satpura, Sahyadri

B. INS Sanshodhak (Survey Vessel Large)

Used for hydrographic surveys, seabed mapping and nautical charting.

Other Survey Vessels: Sandhayak, Nirdeshak, Ikshak, Sanshodhak

C. INS Agray (ASW Shallow Water Craft)

Designed to detect and neutralise enemy submarines in coastal waters.

Other ASW-SWC: Arnala, Agray (more under construction)

3. Value Addition

Stealth Frigate → Fight | Survey Vessel → Map | ASW Craft → Hunt Submarines

Persian Gulf Strait Authority (PGSA)

A maritime authority designated by Iran to regulate and approve vessel transit through the Strait of Hormuz.

Who Constituted It?

Government of Iran / Iranian maritime authorities.

Why Was It Constituted?

- To act as the single-window authority for transit clearances.**
- To strengthen monitoring of ship movements amid rising West Asia tensions.**
- To enhance maritime security and surveillance in and around the Strait of Hormuz.**
- To ensure vessels follow designated routes and reporting procedures.**