CURRENT AFFAIRS — 29 SEPTEMBER 2026

Tuesday, 29 September 2026 • Asia/Kolkata (IST) • Prelims + Mains GS-wise digest

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DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS FOR UPSC CSE

TODAY AT A GLANCE — 10 THINGS TO REMEMBER

- **Brent** crossed **$107/bbl**; rupee slid to about **96 per US dollar**.
- RBI completed a **₹1,00,000 crore OMO sale** in three tranches (17, 21, 28 Sept).
- SC refused to stay **UPI MDR** on P2M payments above **₹2,000** (effective **15 Oct 2026**).
- J&K Assembly passed a resolution for **restoration of statehood** by voice vote.
- India's first **port-based e-methanol plant** at **Kandla**: **150 tonnes/day**, **₹2,300 crore**.
- **Tarang Shakti 2026** (2nd edition) at **Jodhpur**: 7 foreign air forces, **US F-35** debut.
- Delhi winter plan: **50% WFH**, **No PUCC, No Fuel** at **500** ANPR fuel stations.
- NHAI: **80% ROW plantation** + **90% sapling survival** before completion certificate.
- CJI opened India's **first Victim Rights Centre** at **Patna** (BSLSA).
- Aarogya Manthan 2026: **8 years of AB PM-JAY**, **5 years of ABDM**.

SECTION A | GS-III: SCIENCE-TECH • ECONOMY • ENVIRONMENT • SECURITY

Brent Crosses $107 as Hormuz Disruption Persists; Rupee Near 96/$

[ECONOMY] COMMON: Prelims + Mains GS3

Syllabus Linkage	**GS3** – Indian economy, external sector, energy security. Prelims: **BoP, CAD, OMCs, Strait of Hormuz**.
Context	**Brent** futures jumped over **3%** to about **$107.35/bbl** on **28 Sept** after the US rejected Iran's plan to reopen the **Strait of Hormuz**; the **rupee** weakened to about **96/$**.
Key Facts	■ India imports about **89%** of its crude needs – every **$10/bbl** rise widens the import bill. ■ Hormuz carried about **one-fifth of global oil** before the conflict began in **late February**; transits fell to **132 in a week** vs about **130 per day** earlier. ■ OMCs (**IOC, BPCL, HPCL**) are absorbing losses; annual under-recoveries estimated at **₹64,000 crore**. ■ FPIs pulled out **₹5,353 crore** in one session; **US 10-year yield** at about **5.24%**. ■ Q1 FY27 **CAD** widened to **$4.2 bn (0.5% of GDP)** from **$3.4 bn**; oil imports rose to **$60.6 bn**.
Way Fwd	Diversify crude sources, fill **Strategic Petroleum Reserves** on dips, speed up **EVs, green hydrogen and biofuels**, and deepen rupee trade settlement.
Concept	**Current Account Deficit** = shortfall of exports of goods, services and transfers over imports. **Strait of Hormuz** links the **Persian Gulf** with the **Gulf of Oman**; it lies between **Iran** and **Oman**.

India's First Port-Based E-Methanol Plant at Kandla

[SCI-TECH] COMMON: Prelims + Mains GS3

Syllabus Linkage	**GS3** – Energy, infrastructure (ports), environment. Prelims: **e-fuels, green hydrogen, green shipping**.
Context	Foundation stone laid at **Deendayal Port (Kandla), Gujarat** by Union Ports Minister **Sarbananda Sonowal** with the CMs of **Gujarat** and **Assam** for a green marine-fuel plant.
Key Facts	■ Capacity **150 tonnes/day**; investment **₹2,300 crore** – **Phase I** (50 t/day) by **Jan 2027**, **Phase II** (100 t/day) by **Mar 2027**. ■ JV: **Deendayal Port Authority (76%)** + **Assam Petro-Chemicals Ltd (24%)**. ■ Feedstock: **renewable power + water + biogenic CO_2** via **green hydrogen**. ■ Cost about **$750/tonne** vs global rate of about **$1,300/tonne**; to bunker ships on the **Asia–Europe corridor**. ■ Expected to create **3,500+** direct and indirect jobs.
Way Fwd	Build **green bunkering** standards at major ports, link with the **National Green Hydrogen Mission** and secure long-term offtake with shipping lines.
Concept	**E-methanol** = methanol made from **green H_2 + captured CO_2**; a near **carbon-neutral** marine fuel supporting the **IMO** goal of **net-zero shipping around 2050**.

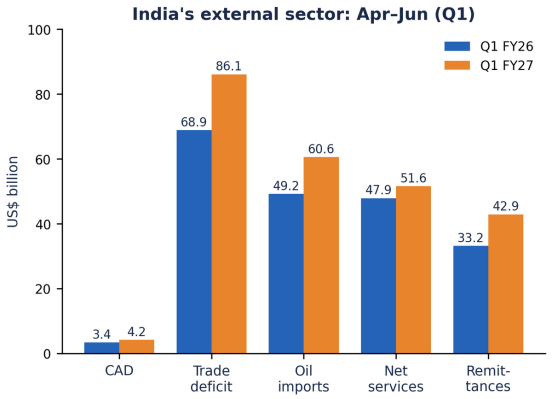


Figure: Brent Crosses $107 as Hormuz Disruption Persists; Rupee Near 96/$

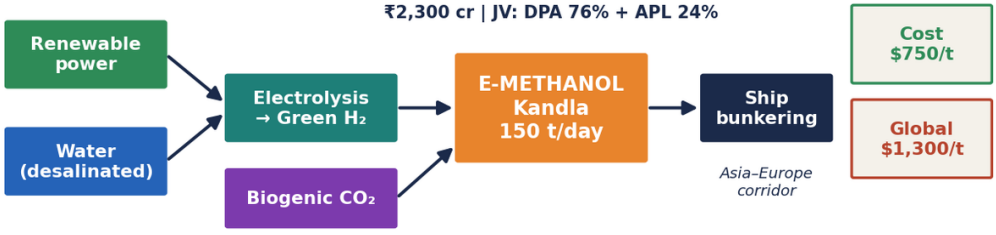


Figure: India's First Port-Based E-Methanol Plant at Kandla

Tarang Shakti 2026: US F-35 Debuts in an Indian Exercise

[DEFENCE] COMMON: Prelims + Mains GS3

Syllabus Linkage	**GS3** – Security; **GS2** – defence diplomacy. Prelims: **military exercises, aircraft**.
Context	The **IAF** began the operational phase of the **2nd edition** of its multinational air exercise **Tarang Shakti** at **Air Force Station Jodhpur**, running **26 Sept – 12 Oct 2026**.
Key Facts	■ **7 foreign air forces**: **USA, France, Australia, UAE, Germany, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka**; **32 observer nations** (40+ countries overall). ■ **US F-35A** stealth fighter's **first-ever** appearance in an Indian military exercise. ■ IAF fields **Rafale, Su-30MKI, Tejas, Mirage-2000, Jaguar, MiG-29**, AWACS and tankers. ■ Focus: **interoperability**, network-centric operations and showcasing **Make in India** platforms.
Way Fwd	Use such exercises to build **Indo-Pacific** partnerships and market indigenous platforms like **Tejas** to friendly nations.
Concept	**Tarang Shakti** = IAF's largest multinational air exercise; **1st edition in 2024**. Other IAF exercises: **Garuda** (France), **Cope India** (USA), **Red Flag** (USA-hosted).

Delhi's Winter Pollution Action Plan: 50% WFH, No PUCC No Fuel

[ENVIRONMENT] COMMON: Prelims + Mains GS3

Syllabus Linkage	**GS3** – Environmental pollution & degradation. Prelims: **CAQM, GRAP, BS-VI, PUCC**.
Context	Delhi Government unveiled its winter plan on **28 Sept** (valid **1 Nov 2026 – 31 Jan 2027**) with the Union Environment Ministry and **CAQM**.
Key Facts	■ **No PUCC, No Fuel** extended to all **500 ANPR-equipped** fuel stations from **1 Oct**. ■ **Non-BS-VI** vehicles from outside Delhi barred from **1 Nov**; **50% work-from-home** for offices. ■ Ban on **demolition and outdoor construction**; **parking fees doubled** (except Metro sites). ■ **150 new e-buses** take the fleet to **700+**; weekly hotspot checks and daily AQI bulletins.
Way Fwd	Pair local curbs with an **airshed approach** across NCR, crop-residue alternatives in Punjab–Haryana and year-round dust control.
Concept	**CAQM** – statutory body under the **CAQM in NCR and Adjoining Areas Act, 2021**; enforces **GRAP** (Graded Response Action Plan) in **4 stages** by AQI level.

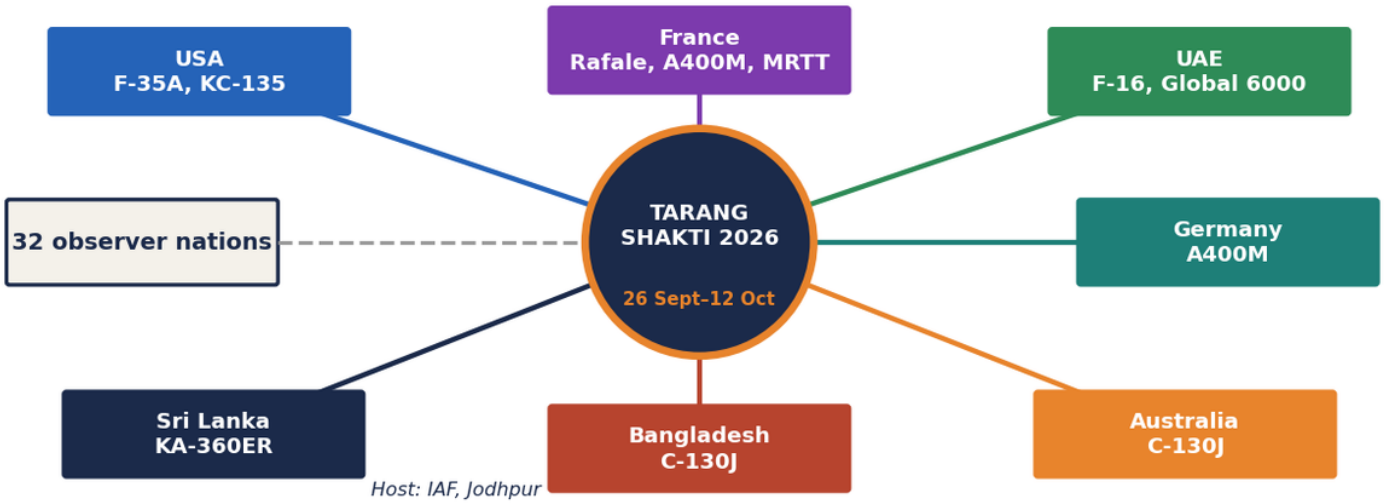


Figure: Tarang Shakti 2026: US F-35 Debuts in an Indian Exercise

NHAI Makes Greenery a Condition for Highway Completion

[ENVIRONMENT] COMMON: Prelims + Mains GS3

Syllabus Linkage	**GS3** – Infrastructure (roads), conservation. Prelims: **Green Highways Policy 2015, Miyawaki method**.
Context	New NHAI norms tie the **Provisional Completion Certificate (PCC)** of highway projects to plantation targets, backed by **financial withholdings** for shortfalls.
Key Facts	■ **≥80%** plantation of available **Right of Way (ROW)** and **≥90% sapling survival** at inspection. ■ Dead plants must be replaced with saplings of **similar age and growth**. ■ NH network grew from **91,287 km (2014)** to **1,46,572 km (Mar 2026)** – about **61%** rise. ■ **3.61 crore** saplings planted along **1.32 lakh km** of highways (as of July 2026).
Way Fwd	Geo-tag every sapling, prefer **native species** and **pollinator corridors** ("Trees for Bees"), and audit survival through third parties.
Concept	**Green Highways (Plantation, Transplantation, Beautification & Maintenance) Policy, 2015** – earmarks **1% of project cost** for plantation. **Miyawaki** = dense native planting (**3–5 saplings/m²**).

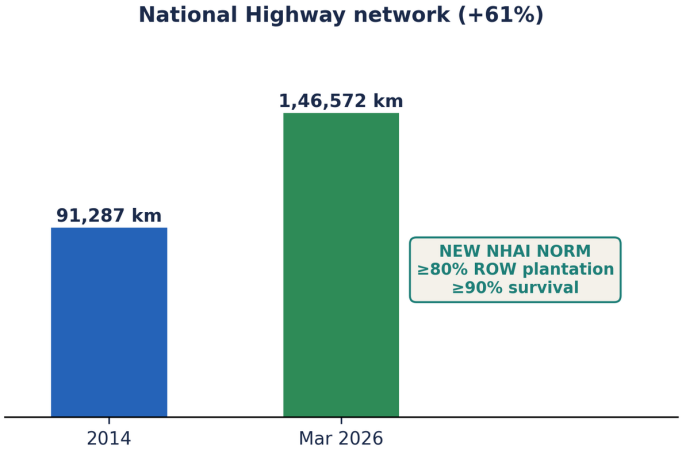


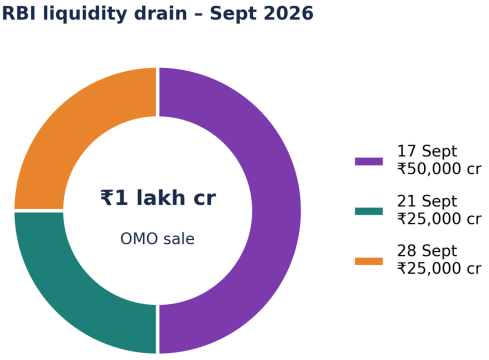
Figure: NHAI Makes Greenery a Condition for Highway Completion

SECTION B | ECONOMY DATA POINT OF THE DAY

RBI OMO SALE COMPLETED (SEPT 2026)

₹1,00,000 crore

Three tranches – **₹50,000 cr (17 Sept)**, **₹25,000 cr (21 Sept)**, **₹25,000 cr (28 Sept)** – to drain surplus liquidity after **FCNR(B) inflows above $132 bn**; the last auction (G-secs maturing **2029–2032**) was covered over **2.7 times**. **OMO sale** = RBI sells G-secs to absorb rupee liquidity (a quantitative tool).



SECTION C | GS-II: GOVERNANCE • POLITY • INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Aarogya Manthan 2026: 8 Years of PM-JAY, 5 Years of ABDM

[HEALTH] COMMON: Prelims + Mains GS2

Syllabus Linkage	**GS2** – Health, welfare schemes, e-governance. Prelims: **AB PM-JAY, ABHA, NHA, NHCX**.
Context	Health Minister **J.P. Nadda** inaugurated the **National Health Authority's** flagship event at **Vigyan Bhawan**, New Delhi (**25 Sept**).
Key Facts	■ PM-JAY: **13 crore+** hospital admissions worth **₹2 lakh crore+**; about **49 crore Ayushman Cards**; all seniors **70+** covered. ■ ABDM: **97.8 crore ABHAs**, **121 crore+** linked records, **5.6 lakh** facilities registered. ■ Launched **NHPR Mobile App**, **NHCX** payer guide, **Secure Data Environment** app and auto-adjudication framework.
Way Fwd	Curb **fraud via AI claim audits**, raise private-hospital empanelment in tier-2/3 towns and strengthen **data-privacy safeguards**.
Concept	**AB PM-JAY** (Sept **2018**) – **₹5 lakh/family/year** cover for secondary & tertiary care. **ABDM** (Sept **2021**) – digital health backbone; **ABHA** = 14-digit health ID.

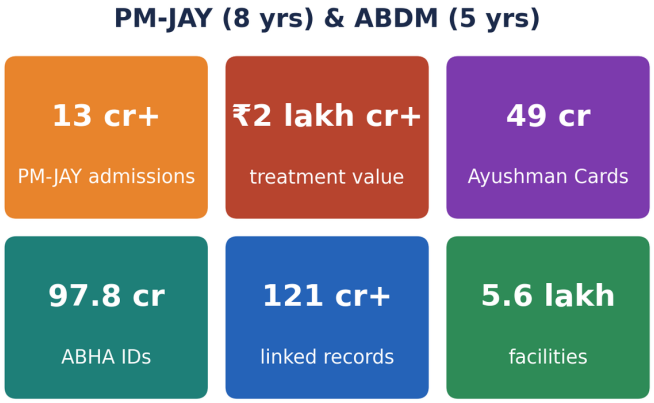


Figure: Aarogya Manthan 2026: 8 Years of PM-JAY, 5 Years of ABDM

SC Refuses to Stay MDR on UPI Merchant Payments Above ₹2,000

[POLITY] COMMON: Prelims + Mains GS2/GS3

Syllabus Linkage	**GS2** – Judiciary; **GS3** – digital payments, banking. Prelims: **MDR, NPCI, UPI, P2M**.
Context	On **28 Sept**, a bench of **CJI Surya Kant**, **Justice Joymalya Bagchi** and **Justice V. Mohana** declined an interim stay on Finance Ministry notifications of **14–15 Sept** and issued notice to the **Centre, RBI and NPCI**.
Key Facts	■ MDR applies to specified **person-to-merchant (P2M)** UPI payments **above ₹2,000** from **15 Oct 2026**. ■ Standard rate **0.4%** (capped at **₹300**); essential services (railways, fuel, insurance, farm inputs) flat **₹5**; capital-market payments **0.02%**. ■ Government says about **96%** of merchant transactions are unaffected. ■ Court asked whether the charge is a **tax or a fee**; counter-affidavits due in **4 weeks**.
Way Fwd	Balance **ecosystem sustainability** (bank/PSP costs) with **financial inclusion**; keep small merchants and P2P transfers free.
Concept	**MDR (Merchant Discount Rate)** = fee a merchant pays to banks/payment providers per digital payment. **NPCI** (2008) runs **UPI**; it is a **Section 8** not-for-profit company promoted by **RBI and IBA**.

J&K Assembly Passes Resolution Seeking Restoration of Statehood

[POLITY] COMMON: Prelims + Mains GS2

Syllabus Linkage	**GS2** – Federalism, UTs, Parliament's powers. Prelims: **Articles 3–4, J&K Reorganisation Act 2019**.
Context	On **28 Sept**, CM **Omar Abdullah** moved a resolution for the **immediate and urgent restoration of full statehood**; it passed by **voice vote** amid a BJP walkout.
Key Facts	■ Resolution recalls earlier House resolutions of **June 2000** and **November 2024**. ■ CM flagged UT-status limits: restricted departmental powers and pending **business rules**. ■ Members were urged to withdraw **eight amendments** seeking restoration of **Article 370**. ■ A state-level resolution is **not binding**; only **Parliament** can restore statehood.
Way Fwd	A **time-bound roadmap** for statehood, as assured before the Supreme Court, with continued security gains and elected-government autonomy.
Concept	**Article 3** lets **Parliament** form/alter States by simple law; **Article 4** – such laws are **not amendments under Article 368**. J&K became a **UT with legislature** on **31 Oct 2019**.

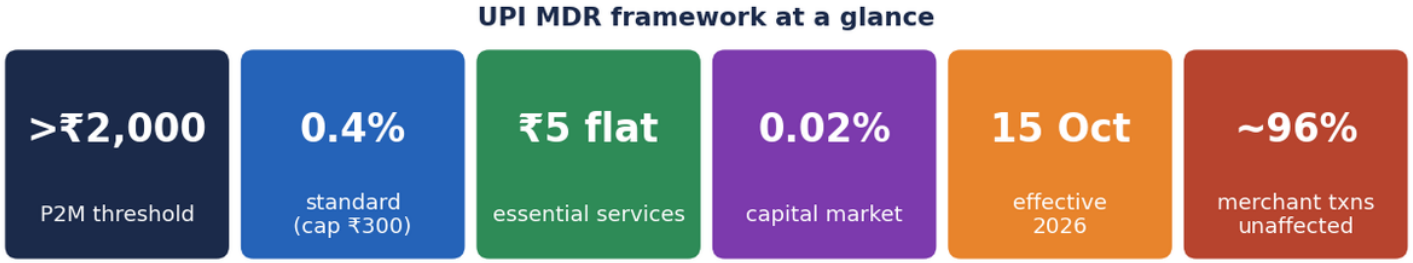


Figure: SC Refuses to Stay MDR on UPI Merchant Payments Above ₹2,000

CJI Opens India's First Victim Rights Centre in Patna

[SOCIETY] COMMON: Prelims + Mains GS2

Syllabus Linkage	**GS2** – Justice delivery, vulnerable sections. Prelims: **Article 39A, NALSA, victim compensation**.
Context	**CJI Surya Kant** inaugurated the centre at the **Bihar State Legal Services Authority (BSLSA)** on **26 Sept**, saying "the justice system must find its way to the citizen".
Key Facts	■ **Single-window** case management: **compensation, legal aid, medical help, counselling, rehabilitation**. ■ Also launched: a **Transgender Helpline**, a VRC booklet and **multi-utility vehicles** for remote villages. ■ Aims to end the process becoming a **"second injury"** for victims. ■ Recalled **NALSA v. Union of India (2014)** – recognition of the **third gender**.
Way Fwd	Replicate VRCs in every district, fix **timelines for compensation** and integrate police, hospitals and **One Stop Centres**.
Concept	**Article 39A** (DPSP) – equal justice & **free legal aid**; **Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987** created NALSA/SLSAs. Victim compensation: **Section 396 BNSS** (earlier **357A CrPC**).

At UNGA, India Warns 'Everything Is Being Weaponised'

[IR] COMMON: Prelims + Mains GS2

Syllabus Linkage	**GS2** – India & global groupings, UN reforms. Prelims: **UNGA, Global South**.
Context	EAM **S. Jaishankar** addressed the **UN General Assembly** general debate on **26 Sept**, saying nations far from conflict are paying for wars not their own.
Key Facts	■ Flagged **weaponisation** of finance, trade and technology hurting the **Global South**. ■ **Zero tolerance** for **state-sponsored terrorism**; called for accountability. ■ Backed a **two-state solution** in West Asia; concern over the **Ukraine** war in its **5th year** and Gulf shipping attacks. ■ India supports about **600 projects** in **78 countries**; called the **1945 order** outdated – ended with **"Peace is the path"**.
Way Fwd	Push **reformed multilateralism** (UNSC expansion), use the **BRICS chairship** for Global South agendas and diversify supply chains.
Concept	**UNGA** – one of **6 principal UN organs**; **one nation, one vote**; recommendations are **non-binding**. India seeks a **permanent UNSC seat** with the **G4** (Brazil, Germany, Japan).

SECTION D | PRELIMS RAPID-FIRE

1. **29 Sept** – **World Heart Day** and **World Rabies Day** (death anniversary of **Louis Pasteur**).	2. **Bio-bitumen via pyrolysis** of rice straw – developed by **CSIR-CRRI** and **CSIR-IIP**; bio-oil blended at **20–30%** with bitumen; trial on **NH-40 (Jorabat–Shillong)**.
3. **National Rabi Conference** (**28–29 Sept**, New Delhi): push for **pulses & oilseeds** in **rice-fallow** lands; water-based crop planning.	4. **PM-AJAY** (FY **2021–22**) merged **3 schemes**; Adarsh Gram villages need **≥40% SC population**; **47,243** villages covered.
5. **ADMM-Plus** maritime drill at **Subic Bay, Philippines** – **INS Sahyadri** and **INS Kulish** took part.	6. **PM E-DRIVE**: **₹221.13 crore** for testing upgrades at **GARC, Chennai** (scheme outlay **₹10,900 crore**, till **31 Mar 2028**).

SECTION E | PRACTICE CORNER

Q1. With reference to the Merchant Discount Rate (MDR) on UPI notified in September 2026, consider the following statements:
1. It applies to all person-to-person (P2P) UPI transfers above ₹2,000.
2. The standard rate is 0.4%, capped at ₹300.
3. Payments for essential services such as railways and fuel attract a flat charge of ₹5.
How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) All three
(d) None

Answer: (b) — Statement 1 is wrong – MDR applies only to specified **person-to-merchant (P2M)** payments above **₹2,000**, not P2P. Statements 2 (**0.4%, cap ₹300**) and 3 (**flat ₹5** for essential services) are correct.

Q2. Consider the following pairs regarding recent developments:
1. Tarang Shakti 2026 – Multinational air exercise hosted at Jodhpur.
2. E-methanol – Produced from green hydrogen and captured carbon dioxide.
3. Strait of Hormuz – Connects the Red Sea with the Gulf of Aden.
How many of the pairs given above are correctly matched?

(a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) All three
(d) None

Answer: (b) — Pairs 1 and 2 are correct. The **Strait of Hormuz** links the **Persian Gulf** with the **Gulf of Oman**; the Red Sea–Gulf of Aden link is the **Bab-el-Mandeb**.

MAINS PRACTICE: Repeated disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz expose the vulnerability of India's energy security and external sector. Examine, and suggest short- and long-term measures. (GS3, 15 marks, 250 words)

Hint: Intro: **89% import dependence**, Brent above **$107**. Body: impact on **CAD, rupee, inflation, OMC under-recoveries, FPI outflows**; short term – **SPR drawdown, source diversification, rupee trade**; long term – **EVs, green hydrogen/e-methanol, biofuels, domestic E&P**. Conclude with energy **Atmanirbharta**.

ONE-LINE REVISION: **$107 Brent + ₹96/$** = CAD pressure | **₹1 lakh cr OMO** = liquidity drain | **UPI MDR >₹2,000** from **15 Oct** | **Art 3** = statehood with Parliament | **Tarang Shakti-2**: F-35 debut.

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