

PEACE ON PAPER,
WAR IN MOTION

The war in West Asia has now been raging for more than three weeks, yet no side is willing to budge from its position. What was supposed to last a few days has stretched for almost a month, and Iran has defied all logic in retaliating against the joint US-Israeli attack. With Iran mastering asymmetric warfare with drones and draining the resources of the US, combined with bleeding the oil market through its siege of the Strait of Hormuz, Washington is quietly contemplating a respectable retreat. Even Iran is in bad shape, with a large part of its war machinery destroyed, its top leaders killed, and high casualties among its citizens. Yet the war rages on. Wars have their queer logic; after a point they are fought just for the sake of fighting, as both sides believe they cannot retreat ignominiously and look defeated. But logistics do not run on emotions.

The US is spending a billion dollars a day and has suffered losses in terms of its reputation and war paraphernalia. This is perhaps the reason the US proposed a 15-point peace plan that has been rejected by Tehran, which has offered its own counter peace plan. The American plan reportedly offering sanctions relief, nuclear cooperation, and de-escalation frameworks-reflects a classic carrot-and-stick approach. It seeks to cap Iran's nuclear ambitions, ensure maritime stability in the Strait of Hormuz, and restore a semblance of regional order. Iran's response, however, is not merely a rejection; it is a reframing of the conflict. Its five demands — ranging from guaranteed war reparations to international recognition of sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz — signal that Tehran sees itself not as a party to be restrained, but as one to be compensated and legitimised. Iran is now seeking reparations for the losses incurred, and that itself shows that Iran is not negotiating from a weak position but knows that its strikes in Israel have created panic. With Israel's Iron Dome weakened and its interceptors rendered ineffective against the Fattah-2 ballistic missiles, both Iran and Israel stand on the same ground; both are vulnerable to air attacks, whether ballistic missiles or fighter jets. This is where Iran's confidence comes from. Iran also knows that a choked Strait of Hormuz will bleed the world economy, and there is immense pressure on the US to end the war or at least ensure oil flows freely through the strait. The proposals must be seen in this context. The US proposal is rooted in containment; Iran's counter is rooted in recognition. Washington wants behavioural change; Tehran wants strategic acknowledgement. For Iran, the Strait of Hormuz is a lever that promises sovereignty and deterrence. Tehran's insistence on formal recognition of control over the strait is unlikely to be accepted internationally, making this a near-insurmountable sticking point in negotiations. No major power willingly sets a precedent of paying for military action it deems justified. This alone makes Iran's proposal less a negotiating document and more a declaration of position. Yet reports of backchannel diplomacy via Pakistan and the possibility of talks in Turkey suggest that neither side is entirely closed to dialogue. Meanwhile, the war rages on, deepening human suffering and compounding damage to the environment, the economy and peace.

India must put farmers first in US deal

Subodh Kumar Mehta

Modern India envisions its freedom as a victory not only of a nation but of foundational truths. Our founding fathers of the Constitution equated national interest with fairness. While conducting bilateral trade agreements, the fundamental principles should be national interest and the well-being of the people. The vision must be based on advantage for the masses and not merely on international goodwill.

The ongoing US-India Bilateral Trade Agreement is said to be mutually beneficial and aims to double bilateral trade to USD 500 billion by 2030, from the current USD 191 billion. Donald Trump announced an interim trade agreement with India on his social media platform, "Truth Social." However, the actual text of this trade agreement remains veiled in secrecy. Washington has unilaterally made announcements regarding the agreement. On the other hand, the Government of India has not categorically rejected these claims. Officials, during interactions with the Parliamentary Committee, have stated that India is working on finalising the interim agreement with the USA and will issue a joint statement in due course.

Meanwhile, the Supreme Court of the United States pronounced a judgment stating that it is Congress that has the power, and not the President, to impose tariffs "unbounded in scope, amount, and duration" on any product from any country. In light of this judgment, both countries have decided to postpone the interim bilateral trade meeting until further notice. However, following the Supreme Court judgment, President Donald Trump confirmed that there would be no change to the US-India trade deal.

The main apprehensions and contentions about the interim deal concern the procedure and path being followed to review and relax restrictions on agricultural imports at the behest of Washington. Capitol Hill seeks access for agricultural products such as maize, wheat, soybeans, pulses, almonds, dairy products and other



commodities. The interim agreement indicates that India may accept commitments in sectors such as defence, clean energy, crude oil, LNG, ethanol and civil aviation. On the other hand, India wants the USA to reduce tariffs further so that Indian goods can gain better access to the American market. Moreover, India is hesitant to negotiate on agricultural products and maintains silence on this contentious issue.

If India opens its market to US agricultural products, it will have cascading effects on Indian farmers in particular and the domestic market in general. India is also cautious regarding subsidies, as the WTO has been pressurising India to reduce subsidies and restrict the Minimum Support Price system. India is further cautious about the dairy sector because the American animal husbandry system allows non-vegetarian feed for cattle, whereas Indian cattle are fed vegetarian feed. This difference may have cascading effects on cultural and religious sentiments.

Through the US-India Bilateral Trade Agreement, the USA seeks to utilise the Indian market as a dumping ground for genetically modified (GM) grains, which may ultimately aggravate farmers' distress. Indian farmers cannot compete with highly subsidised American farmers and powerful corporate lobbies. Hence, it is of

utmost importance to protect the interests of Indian farmers. One of the important reasons for the USA to seal the deal is that India currently imports nearly 18 per cent of its agricultural products. Due to high subsidies provided to American farmers, their produce enjoys cost advantages. In contrast, Indian farmers receive comparatively minimal subsidies, resulting in higher production costs. Thus, Indian farmers may face severe distress if India agrees to the proposed terms. US and Indian farmers do not operate on the same platform; therefore, any policy must be framed after analysing this structural difference. The WTO must also adopt a more just approach, as the Agriculture Agreement of 1995 is widely perceived as inequitable due to differences in farm inputs and government subsidies between India and the USA. The main bone of contention in the tariff tussle between India and the USA appears to be shifting towards the energy and agriculture sectors. This may put pressure on jewellery, textiles, leather and engineering goods, which employ millions of citizens. Moreover, as per Executive Order 14257 of the USA, there is a complete ban on certain Indian food items entering the US market. To resolve this, a monitoring committee may be constituted by the USA. At this juncture, the USA may reduce tariffs further if India agrees to open its agricultural market, as the USA is eager to

sell soybean, maize and corn for ethanol production. However, such imports may adversely affect Indian producers. India already has surplus stocks of animal feed. Ethanol producers argue that such imports would disrupt the domestic ethanol supply chain because India's production capacity could exceed consumption levels.

Five major aspects of the bilateral trade agreement merit attention. First, while India may not formally open its agricultural sector, the interim agreement suggests that the USA may derive significant benefits, particularly through increased agricultural exports to India and improved prices for American farmers. Second, India does not permit genetically modified food products such as maize, soybean and certain dry fruits due to concerns about potential impacts on human health. Allowing imports of GM animal feed products must be assessed in terms of long-term toxicity, allergies, inter-generational effects and broader public health concerns. Third, the issue of dairy products derived from cattle fed non-vegetarian feed may disturb cultural and religious sensitivities in India. Fourth, the ramifications of this deal may distort India's approach to pursuing national interest in an era of multilateralism and a multipolar world. Fifth, the disparity in farm subsidies between the USA and India remains significant, and the WTO Agreement of the Uruguay Round (1995) is often viewed as favouring developed countries like the USA.

Both nations must balance domestic economic concerns, commercial interests and cultural sensitivities. At present, bilateral negotiations appear tilted towards US farm products and biofuels, without sufficient clarity on improved market access for Indian exports.

The Government of India must exercise extreme caution before granting any concessions on genetically modified products or opening the agricultural sector to external pressures.

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IN TIMES OF GLOBAL CONFLICT, TURN TO FAITH NOT FEAR

Ajit Kumar Bishnoi

People all over the world are getting quite disturbed. Lives are being lost, precious resources are being squandered and supply lines are getting disrupted. There is chaos and lots of speculation is going on about the future. There is fear about personal safety and well-being.

Let me first clarify that whatever is happening is destined. How else did famous soothsayers like Nostradamus and Baba Vanga foresee events centuries later? Why? Because what we do today results in fruit later. Nothing happens by chance. There is group destiny; people of a country contribute to a future happening.

Let me restrict this article to how these wars are affecting us and what we can do about it. There are two classes of people. One is the common man — a non-devotee. The other is a devotee of God. Let me take up the common man first. Throughout his life, he will continue to get what he deserves, that is: "What you sow is what you reap." All rewards and punishments are destined. Others can only be mediums for helping or harming, as ordained. No one can harm un-



less some suffering is due. Therefore, the thought that anything can happen at any time must be dismissed.

The other class of devotees is well placed. God is involved in their lives. Only God has the power to change or give relief from what is destined. He becomes 'karta' (doer) in the lives of devotees. To understand this

phenomenon, we must know how something gets done or happens. Lord Krishna has explained in the Bhagavad-Gita: "The place of action and the doer and many different kinds of instruments and many different efforts and the fifth in this connection is providence only." (18.14) The place of action or circumstances is where and how we

are presently placed. The second is karta in our life, whether God or material nature (the Divine Authority), which works under the superintendence of God (9.10). They only reward or punish as destined. We, souls, make this choice; devotees choose or qualify for God being the doer in their lives.

The third is the different instruments possessed by us, like our abilities. The fourth is the different efforts made by us. And the last is what is destined. Left with only two out of five choices, we should make our best efforts in any circumstances and take shelter of God in right earnest. Then God will begin to guide and help; no one is excluded. Wars will go on, as they always do, this world being dukhalaya (place of misery) (8.15). But we will be under the protection of the Almighty. He will help us to overcome whatever challenges these wars throw at us (18.58); God has promised this to entire humanity. Therefore, let us not fear or panic about these wars; just focus on what best we can do to help ourselves, and remain in the shelter of God. We will do fine. This is God's creation; He is in control.

Justice for CAPFs, stability for the nation

Ashok Kumar

At a time when India faces increasingly complex internal and border security challenges, the country cannot afford a debate that confuses genuine service grievances with structural injustice, or institutional reform with institutional weakening. The discussion around the CAPF (General Administration) Bill, 2026 has, in some quarters, been framed as if India must choose between the dignity of CAPF officers and the relevance of IPS leadership. That is a false and dangerous binary.

Having served for over 34 years in uniform, including tenures in the CRPF and BSF, in Naxal-affected areas and along the Pakistan and Bangladesh borders, I say with full responsibility that this Bill is not an attack on anyone. It is a balanced reform. It addresses the legitimate concerns of CAPF officers while preserving the institutional structure that has served India's national security interests for decades. In my view, it deserves clear support.

To understand why this Bill matters, one must look beyond promotions, postings, and cadre sensitivities. The issue is larger than administrative preference. It goes to the heart of how India has re-

mained governable, secure, and united despite its diversity, regional complexity, and federal structure.

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel did not create the All India Services as a bureaucratic convenience. He envisioned them as the steel frame of a unified India. He understood that a country as vast and varied as ours could not be held together through fragmented loyalties, isolated administrative cultures, or region-bound thinking. Without a disciplined and nationally oriented service structure, India risked administrative fragmentation and weak central coordination. In the security domain, such a danger can be disastrous.

It is because of this vision that the IPS has, for decades, functioned not merely as a cadre service but as an institutional bridge between the Union and the states, between intelligence and enforcement, and between state police and CAPFs. This steel frame has helped hold India together.

Those who reduce this debate to a simple question of cadre advancement overlook a basic operational truth: internal security in India cannot be managed as a patchwork of disconnected forces. A threat in one district can affect another state. An intelligence input from one

agency may require immediate action from another. In such a system, speed, trust, and coordination are essential.

An Intelligence Bureau assessment may need to be translated into field action by a CRPF company in Chhattisgarh, a BSF formation in Jammu, or a state police unit in a sensitive district. Such coordination cannot depend on ad hoc communication or institutional ego. It requires a command ecosystem where officers understand the operational cultures of multiple agencies and can work across them seamlessly.

That is where IPS officers play a vital role. Their professional journey often takes them through state police, CAPFs, and central police organisations such as the CRPF, BSF, IB, and CBI. Coordination between IPS officers of equivalent batches commanding state police and CAPFs is often quicker and more natural because they are institutionally connected. This wider exposure gives them a broader operational perspective and strengthens inter-agency synergy. In a federal democracy like India, that is not an administrative luxury. It is a national security necessity.

I write this not from theory, but from personal experience. I have served in both the CRPF and BSF. I have seen the

harsh realities of Naxal-affected terrain, the sensitivity of the Pakistan border, and the complexity of the Bangladesh border. In each of these theatres, one lesson became repeatedly clear: operations succeed when institutions work together, and falter when services function in compartments.

This is why extreme positions on either side are unhelpful. Neither are 100 per cent IPS officers best suited for every role, nor are 100 per cent CAPF officers. Like every institution, every service has highly capable officers and a few black sheep. The mature way forward is not to indulge in absolutist claims, but to build a structure that uses the strengths of both while reducing friction. That is exactly what this Bill seeks to do.

The strongest argument in favour of the CAPF (General Administration) Bill, 2026 is that it does not force the country to choose between fairness and functionality. It seeks to provide both. It codifies essential service rules, creates greater transparency in promotions, provides for fixed tenures, institutionalises grievance redressal, and creates additional senior posts to address long-standing career stagnation.

This is not a token gesture. Career progression has been a real concern for many

officers within the CAPFs, and any honest observer must acknowledge that. The Bill responds meaningfully. It creates hundreds of new senior posts at the levels of DIG, IG, and Additional DG. It also implements the Supreme Court's OGAS ruling on orderly gradation and seniority. This is structural reform.

In my own career, I have seen a significant evolution in the service conditions of CAPF personnel. There was a time when many of their institutional concerns remained inadequately addressed. Over the years, however, the system has improved. Facilities, recognition, promotional avenues, and welfare measures have all progressed. This Bill carries that process forward in a codified and transparent manner. It addresses long-standing concerns not through slogans, but through law.

At the same time, the Bill wisely preserves IPS leadership at the top level within the larger internal security architecture. This has become the most politically and emotionally charged aspect of the debate, but it should not be. Preserving IPS leadership in key senior roles is not a slight to CAPF officers. It is a recognition of how India's federal security system actually works.

The CAPFs do not function in isolation.

In many situations, they assist state police and operate within local and district-level command environments deeply rooted in the state policing framework. Officers who have experience in both state police and central forces are naturally better positioned to sustain that bridge.

This is exactly what the Bill protects. By preserving IPS leadership in senior roles while simultaneously expanding opportunities and correcting stagnation for CAPF cadre officers, it balances service justice with national institutional coherence. That is statesmanship, not discrimination.

Unfortunately, some of the public discourse around this issue has been shaped less by institutional seriousness and more by grievance-driven rhetoric. Reform is legitimate and necessary, but reform cannot become a pretext for attacking institutions that have long been central to national security and federal coordination.

India today faces a far more complicated threat environment than it did even a decade ago. Border infiltration, radicalisation, terrorism, left-wing extremism, organised crime, cyber-enabled networks, and communal volatility all demand a high degree of institutional integration.