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Iran-USA Conflict (2026)

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In the early hours of 28 February 2026, the US and Israel struck Iran. Iran's Supreme Leader was killed in the first attack. Pakistan later brokered a ceasefire, and a memorandum followed in June. It fell apart within weeks. Talks are still stuck.

Think of three questions as you read. How did the war start? Why did the memorandum fail? And why does it matter to India?

> **28 Feb.** War begins; Khamenei killed
> **8 Apr.** Pakistan-brokered ceasefire
> **13 Apr.** US naval blockade
> **17 Jun.** Islamabad Memorandum signed
> **8 Jul.** Ceasefire collapses
> **17 Aug.** 60-day window ends

Supreme Leader: Iran's top ruler. He is above the elected President.

Ceasefire: A pause in fighting. It is not a peace deal.

Memorandum of Understanding: A written deal weaker than a treaty.

Naval blockade: Warships stop other ships from reaching a coast.

1 How did the war begin?

On 28 February 2026, the US and Israel launched joint strikes on Iran. The US called it Operation Epic Fury, and Israel called its part Operation Roaring Lion. Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei was killed in the opening strikes. Iran hit back with missile and drone attacks on Israel and on US bases across the region.

The Assembly of Experts chose a new leader and announced the result on 9 March. It was Ali Khamenei's son, Mojtaba Khamenei. (Source: Al Jazeera)

Killing a leader did not end the war. It put a son in his place. The Supreme Leader controls the army, the Guards and the courts, so the change shaped every later talk.

- War began **28 Feb 2026**. Khamenei killed.
- **Mojtaba Khamenei** named on 9 March.

> **Quick check 1.** Mojtaba Khamenei became Iran's Supreme Leader after his father was killed. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

2 What happened at Hormuz, and why a blockade?

Iran blocked the Strait of Hormuz in late March. The strait links the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Oman. It is narrow, so one navy can threaten every ship. A large share of the world's oil goes through it, so a closure raises fuel prices far from Iran.

A two-week ceasefire began on 8 April, mediated by Pakistan. Talks in Islamabad on 11–12 April failed at first. The US then put a naval blockade on Iran from 13 April. It stops Iranian oil from reaching buyers and cuts Iran's income.

Pakistan shares a border with Iran and has ties with the US too. So it could carry messages between two sides that did not talk directly. Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Turkey also helped. (Source: Al Jazeera)

- Hormuz blocked: **late March**.
- Ceasefire: **8 April**, via Pakistan.

- US blockade: **13 April**.

Think it through: Why does a ceasefire not mean peace?

A ceasefire only stops the shooting for now. The causes of the fight stay. Here those were the nuclear programme and control of Hormuz. So both sides can restart fighting once the pause ends.

Quick check 2. The US naval blockade of Iran began before the war started. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

3 What was the Islamabad Memorandum, and why did it fail?

On 17 June 2026, Donald Trump signed at the Palace of Versailles in France. Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian signed remotely from Tehran. The deal had 14 points. Hormuz was to open to ships, and the US blockade was to be lifted within 30 days. It promised at least $300 billion for Iran's rebuilding. The nuclear programme was left for later talks.

It also opened a 60-day window to reach a final peace. (Source: Al Jazeera)

Then it fell apart. On 7–8 July, ships were attacked in the strait, the US struck back, and Trump called the truce "over". On 18 July Iran said it was suspending its commitments. The window ran out on 17 August with no final deal. (Source: Al Jazeera)

The big questions were never settled: missiles, Iran's allied groups and the nuclear programme. Each side blamed the other, so trust broke before anything solid was built.

- Signed **17 June 2026**; **14 points**; **60-day** window.
- Collapse: **7–8 July**. Window ended **17 Aug**.
- Nuclear issue **left for later**.

> **Quick check 3.** The Islamabad Memorandum was signed on 17 June 2026 and set a 60-day window for a final deal. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

4 Why does India care?

India buys most of its crude oil from abroad, so a shut strait can push up fuel prices. In June 2026, four cargo ships carrying urea, DAP and sulphur crossed the strait safely to Indian ports. (Source: PIB)

In June, the government put a limit on retail diesel sales, to stop hoarding. It withdrew the limit from 1 July after supplies became normal. (Source: PIB)

PM Modi spoke to President Pezeshkian on 30 June and welcomed the understanding reached. (Source: PIB)

Ships for Indian ports pass the strait or sit near its waters, so any attack puts Indian sailors and cargo at risk. Many Indians also work in Gulf states near the fighting.

- Oil, **fertiliser** and diesel supply are at stake.
- Modi–Pezeshkian call: **30 June**.
- Indians in the **Gulf** are exposed.

> **Quick check 4.** India was a direct party to the Islamabad Memorandum. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

5 What happened next, and where is it stuck?

On 17 August, Trump refused to extend the deadline and told Iran to surrender. (Source: Al Jazeera)

In late September, mediators shuttled between US and Iranian teams at the UN General Assembly in New York. Qatar helped. No deal came. (Source: Al Jazeera)

Iran wants Hormuz reopened first, in return for sanctions relief and a regional ceasefire. The US wants every issue, especially the nuclear one, settled together. Events are moving fast, so re-check the latest before an exam.

- Deadline not extended: **17 Aug**.
- Talks in **New York**, late September; no deal.
- Dispute: **Hormuz first** vs **everything together**.

Remember: War 28 Feb 2026. Ceasefire 8 April. Blockade 13 April. Memorandum 17 June. Collapse July. Window ended 17 Aug.

6 What are the exam traps?

- Ceasefire **8 April** and blockade **13 April** are different dates.
- The memorandum was signed **17 June**; the window ended **17 August**.
- Mediator in April: **Pakistan**.
- UPSC CSP 2026 GS-I Q30 asked which countries' ships must cross Hormuz: **Bahrain and Qatar**. Read the full 2026 paper.

Practice MCQs

1. Which country was the lead mediator of the ceasefire that ended the initial, most intense phase of the 2026 Iran-US war?

A. Qatar

B. Oman

C. Pakistan

D. Turkey

See answer ↓

2. Who was named Iran's new Supreme Leader after Ali Khamenei was killed in the February 2026 strikes?

A. Masoud Pezeshkian

B. Qasem Soleimani

C. Ali Larijani

D. Mojtaba Khamenei

See answer ↓

3. Ships from which of the following countries have to cross the Strait of Hormuz to reach out to the Indian Ocean?1. Bahrain2. Syria3. Qatar4. Egypt [UPSC CSP 2026, GS Paper I]

A. 1 and 2

B. 1 and 3

C. 2 and 3

D. 3 and 4

See answer ↓

4. According to EIA, oil flows through the strait in the first half of 2025 equalled about what share of world petroleum liquids use?

A. About 20%

B. About 5%

C. About 10%

D. About 40%

See answer ↓

5. According to the IEA, about how wide is each inbound and outbound shipping channel in the Strait of Hormuz?

A. About 35 miles

B. About 21 miles

C. About 12 miles

D. About 2 miles

See answer ↓

6. According to the IEA, which two countries have crude pipelines that could carry oil around the Strait of Hormuz?

A. Iran and Iraq

B. Oman and Bahrain

C. Saudi Arabia and the UAE

D. Kuwait and Qatar

See answer ↓

7. What share of India's crude imports crossed Hormuz before the crisis, per the Petroleum Minister's 12 March 2026 Lok Sabha statement?

A. About 25%

B. About 45%

C. About 65%

D. About 85%

See answer ↓

8. The US conditional sanctions waiver for India's Chabahar port project ended on which date?

A. 26 April 2026

B. 14 July 2026

C. 31 December 2025

D. 29 September 2025

See answer ↓

9. A PIB release of 14 July 2026 reports attacks on two merchant vessels in the Strait of Hormuz. Of the 46 crew on those two vessels, how many were Indian seafarers?

A. 12

B. 20

C. 30

D. 46

See answer ↓

10. The Strait of Hormuz separates the coast of Iran from the Musandam Peninsula, an exclave of which country?

A. Qatar

B. Oman

C. Yemen

D. Bahrain

See answer ↓

11. Which of the following pairs of countries reach the Indian Ocean WITHOUT crossing the Strait of Hormuz?

A. Iran and the UAE

B. Egypt and Syria

C. Bahrain and Qatar

D. Kuwait and Iraq

See answer ↓

12. The Strait of Hormuz connects [CAPF (ACs) 2026]

A. the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea

B. the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea

C. the Black Sea and the Mediterranean Sea

D. the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman

See answer ↓

13. At its narrowest point, roughly how wide is the Strait of Hormuz?

A. About 21 nautical miles

B. About 70 nautical miles

C. About 45 nautical miles

D. About 8 nautical miles

See answer ↓

Answer Key

1. **C.** The answer is **Pakistan**. It acted as go-between for the two-week US–Iran ceasefire of 7–8 April 2026. The US extended it on 21 April, at Pakistan's request, without saying how much longer it would last. Why the others fail: NPR names Pakistan as the facilitator, not Oman, Qatar or Turkey. Memory hook: Islamabad brokered it. ↑ Q1
2. **D.** Iran's Assembly of Experts named Ali Khamenei's son, Mojtaba Khamenei, as the new Supreme Leader on 9 March 2026. ↑ Q2
3. **B.** Britannica places Bahrain and Qatar on the Persian Gulf. The strait is the link from that gulf to the Gulf of Oman, so their ships must cross it. Syria's coast is on the Mediterranean Sea. Egypt's Suez Canal joins the Mediterranean to the Red Sea, and the Bab al-Mandeb connects the Red Sea to the Arabian Sea, so Egypt does not need Hormuz. The UPSC answer-keys page showed no key for this paper on 8 October 2026. The Indian Express quiz of 1 June 2026 also gives 1 and 3. ↑ Q3
4. **A.** EIA says total oil flows averaged 20.9 million barrels a day in the first half of 2025. It puts that at about 20% of global petroleum liquids consumption. EIA's June 2025 note gives the same share for 2024. India's Petroleum Minister also said on 12 March 2026 that 20% of the world's crude flows through the strait. ↑ Q4
5. **D.** The IEA says the strait has navigable channels 2 miles wide for inbound and outbound shipping, with a 2-mile buffer zone. Britannica gives the same lane width. USNI gives two nautical miles. The figure of 21 is the strait's width in nautical miles at its narrowest point. The figure of 35 is the low end of Britannica's range for the whole strait. ↑ Q5
6. **C.** The IEA says only Saudi Arabia and the UAE have operational crude pipelines that could bypass the strait. Saudi Arabia's East-West line runs from Abqaiq to Yanbu on the Red Sea. The UAE's line runs 400 km from Habshan to Fujairah. EIA also names the Saudi East-West and Abu Dhabi pipelines as the bypass routes. ↑ Q6

7. **B.** The Minister said approximately 45 per cent of India's crude imports transited the Hormuz route before the crisis. India Briefing gives the same split for the previous year, 55 per cent by other routes and 45 per cent through the strait. The Minister also said non-Hormuz sourcing had risen to about 70 per cent. ↑ Q7
8. **A.** Al Jazeera says India got the Chabahar exemption extended until 26 April 2026, and that the waiver expired on that Sunday. Press Trust of India, in Business Standard, says the waiver ended on 26 April. The Economic Times also gives 26 April 2026. The date 14 July 2026 is the date of PIB's Seafarer-First release, not a Chabahar date. ↑ Q8
9. **C.** PIB says the two vessels, MT Al Bahiyah and MT Mombasa, carried 30 Indian seafarers among a combined crew of 46. All India Radio and DD India give the same counts. One Indian seafarer died on MT Al Bahiyah, and nine Indians were injured on MT Mombasa. ↑ Q9
10. **B.** Answer: Oman. The Musandam Peninsula, on the strait's southern shore, is an Omani exclave separated from the rest of Oman by UAE territory. Iran forms the strait's northern shore. ↑ Q10
11. **B.** Answer: Egypt and Syria. Both are Mediterranean-facing states; Egypt also fronts the Red Sea and controls the Suez Canal itself. Their ships reach the Indian Ocean via Suez and Bab-el-Mandeb, never entering the Persian Gulf. The other three pairs are all Gulf-locked states that depend on Hormuz. ↑ Q11
12. **D.** The Strait of Hormuz links the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Oman. It is the only sea passage from the Gulf toward the Indian Ocean, and a major oil-shipping chokepoint.
↑ Q12
13. **A.** Answer: about 21 nautical miles (close to 39 km). The overall strait ranges from about 21 to 60 nautical miles wide, but commercial tankers use a much narrower IMO-recognised Traffic Separation Scheme within it — two 2-mile-wide lanes split by a 2-mile buffer. ↑ Q13

Quick-check answers

1. **True.** ↑ 1
2. **False.** ↑ 2
3. **True.** ↑ 3
4. **False.** ↑ 4

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