

Israel suffers 8 casualties in Lebanon operation

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



Israel's ground incursion into Lebanon to combat Hezbollah resulted in the deaths of eight Israeli soldiers, with seven killed in two separate attacks and one earlier death of a 22-year-old captain. This incursion follows Iran's ballistic missile attack on Israel, which prompted Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to vow retaliation. Iran declared its attack over unless provoked further, while Israel and the U.S. promised to respond strongly. The situation has heightened tensions in the region, especially on the eve of Rosh Hashana, the Jewish New Year.

Three bases targeted

Iran targeted three Israeli military bases with missiles. Israel intercepted most of these missiles with the help of a U.S.-led defensive coalition. U.S. President Joe Biden announced more sanctions on Iran but opposed any Israeli strike on Iran's nuclear sites, urging proportional response. Hezbollah in Lebanon claimed to have repelled an Israeli infiltration, destroying three Israeli tanks. The Israeli army conducted two brief incursions into Lebanon, advising residents to evacuate over 20 areas.

Nearly 1,900 people have been killed and more than 9,000 wounded in Lebanon in almost a year of cross-border fighting, with the most in the past two weeks, according to Lebanese government statistics. More than a million people have been forced to flee their homes.

2 women Navy officers begin voyage around the world

PERSONALITY IN NEWS



Lieutenant Commanders Dilna K. and Roopa A. of the Indian Navy began a global circumnavigation expedition from Goa. The journey, part of the second Navika Sagar Parikrama, was flagged off by Navy chief Admiral Dinesh K. Tripathi. They will sail on the INSV Tarini, covering 23,000 nautical miles over 240 days. The voyage will take them across four continents, three oceans, and three challenging capes.

Both officers with a sailing experience of 38,000 nautical miles (70,376km) have trained vigorously for this epic voyage for more than three years. They have been trained on ocean sailing aspects of seamanship, meteorology, navigation, survival techniques and

medicare at sea.

The second Navika Sagar Parikrama will unfold in five legs with stopovers at four ports for replenishment and maintenance. The five legs are Goa to Fremantle, Australia; Fremantle to Lyttleton; New Zealand to Port Stanley, Falkland; Port Stanley to Cape Town, South Africa; and from Cape Town to Goa.

INSV Tarini, a 56-foot sailing vessel built by Aquarius Shipyard Ltd. inducted in the Indian Navy on February 18, 2017 has clocked more than 66,000 nautical miles (1,22,223 km) and participated in the first edition of Navika Sagar Parikrama in 2017, trans-oceanic expedition from Goa to Rio, Goa to Port Louis, and other significant expeditions. The boat is equipped with advanced navigation, safety and communication equipment and has undergone necessary maintenance and equipment upgrade recently.

Inflection point

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

A serious escalation in the West Asian conflict following Iran's ballistic missile attack on Israel on October 1 was a response to repeated Israeli provocations, beginning with Israel's April 1 attack on the Iranian embassy in Damascus. Iran's first direct retaliation occurred 14 days later, followed by Israel's symbolic, unclaimed strike on a radar system in Isfahan. Tensions further escalated in July when Israel killed Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran, and later, Hezbollah's chief Hassan Nasrallah was killed in Israeli attacks on Lebanon. The conflict is now poised to enter a more dangerous phase as Israel threatens retaliation for Iran's recent attack.

The failure of deterrence in the ongoing conflict between Israel and its rivals. Israel's superior firepower has not prevented attacks from Hamas, Hezbollah, or the Houthis, nor has Iran's missile power deterred Israel from expanding its war efforts. The U.S., under President Joe Biden, has given Israel unchecked freedom in Gaza while trying to prevent a regional conflict, but has failed to stop Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu from crossing critical boundaries. The conflict in Gaza is unresolved, and the risk of a broader war, potentially involving the U.S., is growing. Major world powers, especially the U.S. and China, are urged to take urgent diplomatic steps to prevent further escalation. The situation in West Asia is at a critical point, needing immediate international intervention.

A case of nothing but patent censorship

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

On September 20, 2024, Justice A.S. Chandurkar of the Bombay High Court ruled against an amendment to the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 (IT Rules), which would have allowed the Union Government to control how news about its operations is presented online. This decision, following a previously split verdict, was made to protect the right to free speech.

The provision, Rule 3(1) (b) (v), placed a heavy burden on intermediaries like internet service providers and social media platforms. It required them to prevent the hosting or sharing of content deemed fake or misleading by the Union Government's Fact Check Unit (FCU). Ignoring this directive could result in losing their "safe harbour" immunity from liability, which is crucial for protecting both businesses and the public's right to free expression under the IT Act, 2000. The spread of fake and misleading information on the Internet is a significant issue that warrants public concern. While the state has a legitimate interest in addressing this problem, any measures taken must comply with constitutional boundaries.

Petition and response

The petitioners argued that Rule 3(1)(b)(v) violated constitutional protections by giving the state undue power to label information as fake or misleading without considering less intrusive measures. The Union government countered that the rule was not coercive, as intermediaries could contest the loss of safe harbour, and that there is no constitutional protection for spreading false information, thus justifying the rule within the government's regulatory powers.

In January, a Division Bench of the High Court had differing opinions on a Rule's validity. Justice G.S. Patel found the Rule vague, overbroad, and disproportionate, causing a chilling effect on intermediaries that impacted citizens' rights to equal treatment and free speech. Justice Neela Gokhale disagreed, stating that losing safe harbour did not threaten freedom of expression. The tie-breaking opinion sided with Justice Patel, rejecting the Union government's defence and emphasizing the importance of safe harbour and the chilling effect on

intermediaries.

Intermediaries and safe harbour

Section 79 of the IT Act provides intermediaries with an exemption from liability for third-party information they host, as long as they exercise due diligence in their duties. However, this safe harbour is lost if the intermediary has “actual knowledge” or receives a communication, such as from a government agency, indicating their resource is being used for unlawful activities.

Platforms like Facebook, X, and WhatsApp are exempt from the responsibilities of traditional publishers because they only host and transmit content, not create it. If they were liable for user-posted content, it would severely hinder the Internet’s functionality. This safe harbour immunity also supports free speech, as intermediaries typically have no direct interest in user content. If they succumb to external pressures, it jeopardizes users’ rights to free expression.

Rule 3(1)(b)(v) of the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, where an intermediary must choose between removing flagged content about the central government or defending free speech and losing safe harbour. Justice Patel noted that intermediaries would likely remove content to protect their business. The government’s second argument, based on the marketplace of ideas, was dismissed. True free speech depends on various factors, including access to resources and social conditions, which can hinder its exercise.

Free speech and restrictions

But insofar as our jurisprudence on free speech has been built on any doctrine it is this: it is not up to anyone, least of all the state, to determine what kinds of expression ought to be tolerated. The only restrictions available are those explicitly contained in Article 19(2) of the Constitution, which includes matters such as defamation, public order, friendly relations with foreign states and the security and integrity of India. Our guarantee of free speech, contained in Article 19(1)(a), can be traced to both instrumental and intrinsic values. The first, for example, because an uninhibited discussion of ideas, is likely to lead to better politics. The second because free speech matters not only for the results it produces but also for the recognition it accords to citizens as equal moral beings. That is, that our dignity and our autonomy as human beings depends on our ability to exercise a right to free conscience and free thought. Neither of these justifications advocate absolutism. There are legitimate grounds on which free speech can be reasonably constrained. Those grounds, in our case, are contained in Article 19(2).

There is here no clause sanctioning a limitation on speech that is false, misleading, or untrue. Yet, through the Rule, the government seized a power to act as the ultimate arbiter on what manner of information about its own actions ought to be seen as constituting the truth. In doing so, it failed to locate itself within any of the permissible categories expressly stipulated under the Constitution. Therefore, the law, as the Bombay High Court has correctly recognised, is nothing but patent censorship. Condoning it would undermine principles that are ingrained in the cornerstone of our democracy.





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POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

One of the salubrious stories of Indian democracy has always been the regular and uninterrupted conduct of general and Assembly elections across provinces. Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) was an aberration with no Assembly elections which should have been held five years ago. Recently, after three phases of elections, 63.5 % of the electorate turned out to vote in J&K, slightly lower than the 65.7 % turnout in 2014. The marginal drop is explained by significant changes over the past decade, including the dissolution of J&K's Assembly, loss of its special status and statehood, and a delimitation exercise. Despite these changes, the current turnout is encouraging, especially compared to the 58.5 % turnout in the 2024 general election.

There is a distinct patterns in voter turnout in Jammu and Kashmir, with increased participation in areas like Shopian, Kulgam, Pulwama, and Baramulla. This rise is attributed to independent candidates, including those backed by the banned Jamaat-e-Islami and the Awami Ittehad Party, leading to more competitive elections. Despite the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led government's efforts to reshape the political landscape in the Valley, the electorate used the elections to express grievances about President's Rule and the securitised environment. Regional parties not only focused on everyday issues but also demanded the restoration of special status and a resolution to the ongoing conflict. While the election results will reveal whether these demands resonated with voters, the elections signal a potential return to normal democratic politics in J&K.

The escalating Israel-Hezbollah conflict

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Israel's attacks on southern Lebanon, targeted at the Iran-supported Hezbollah marked a dramatic escalation of the conflict that began last year following the attacks by Hamas inside the Jewish state. Prior to the missile and rocket attacks, Israeli covert agencies had targeted Hezbollah operatives by detonating pagers and walkie-talkies. Hezbollah had also used rocket attacks on Israel following the latter's offensive in Gaza, which went on to kill over 41,000 Palestinians and displace almost the entire 2.3 million people of Gaza.

Map 1 shows all strikes in Lebanon by Israel and missile attacks by Hezbollah in Israel from October 8, 2023, till September 26, 2024. It can be seen that the conflict occurred largely in the regions around the border, which are the South and Nabatieh Governorates of Lebanon, and HaZafron and Golan, occupied by Israel.

The Israeli strikes on September 23 were the deadliest in recent years. The single-day death toll of more than 500 is much higher than the monthly death tolls reported since 2018 in Lebanon (Chart 2). The UN authorities in Lebanon said that over 90,000 people have been newly displaced (Chart 3). The attacks have triggered a new wave of displacement in Lebanon's southern districts. Between September 24 and 25, thousands of people were displaced from districts along the border to the capital, Beirut, and surrounding areas. (Map 4).

Five of the 12 UN refugee camps for Palestinians are in southern Lebanon (Map 5). The closest camp is roughly 16 km away from the border. More than 4,80,000 people were registered with the UN, as of March 2023. In northern Israel, too, the war with Hezbollah has forced around 70,000 people out of their homes since last year.



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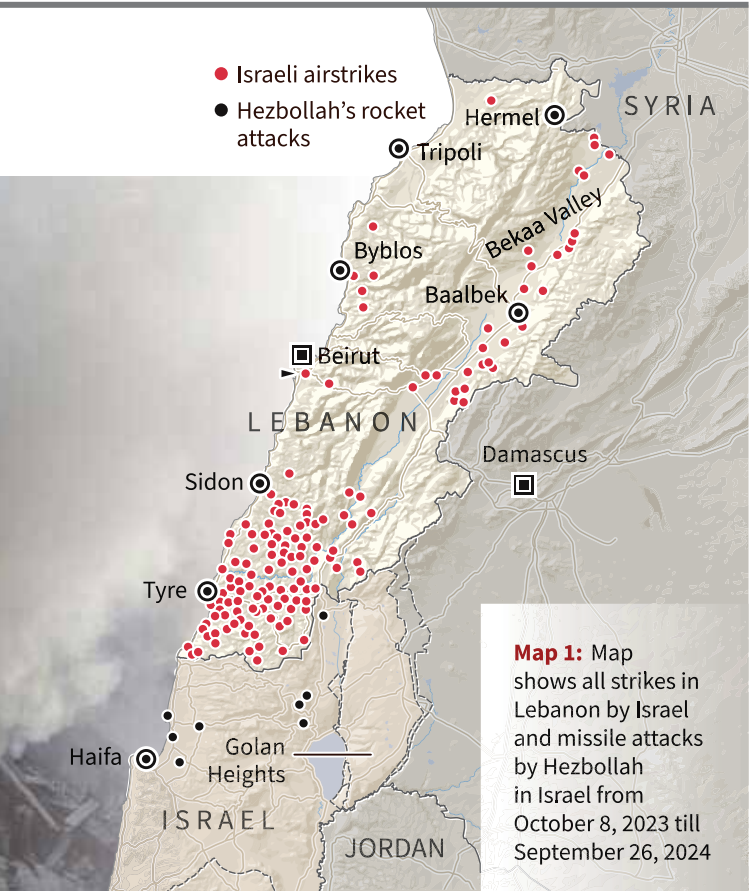
INDIA'S TOP MOST CIVIL SERVANTS FOR COACHING

Missiles and mayhem

The charts were sourced from the ACLED database, IOM UN Migration, and UNRWA



Heavy damage: Smoke rises from the site of an Israeli airstrike in Dahiyeh, Beirut, Lebanon, October 2, 2024. AP



Map 1: Map shows all strikes in Lebanon by Israel and missile attacks by Hezbollah in Israel from October 8, 2023 till September 26, 2024

Chart 2: Monthly death tolls reported in Lebanon (2018-2024)

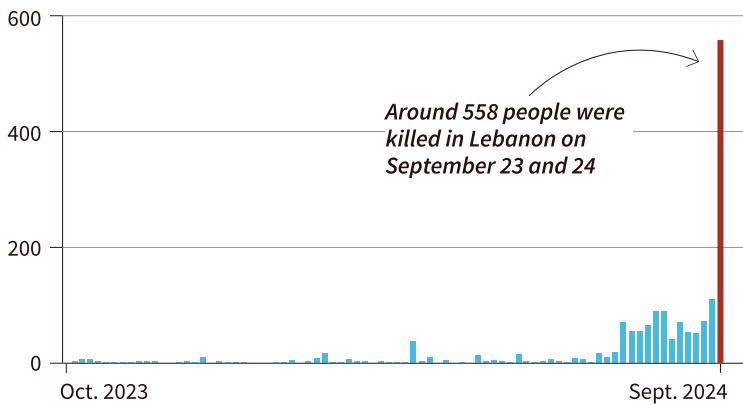
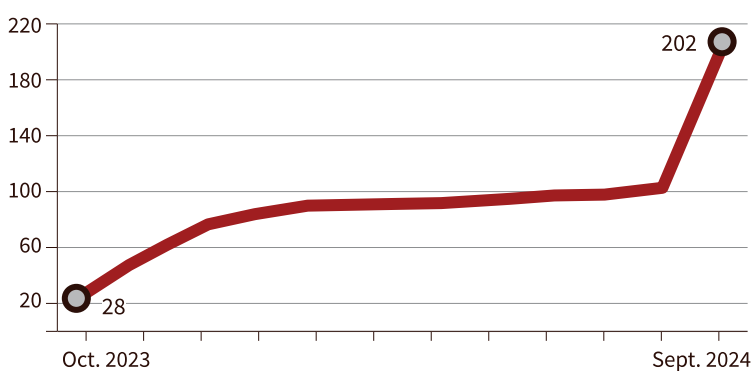
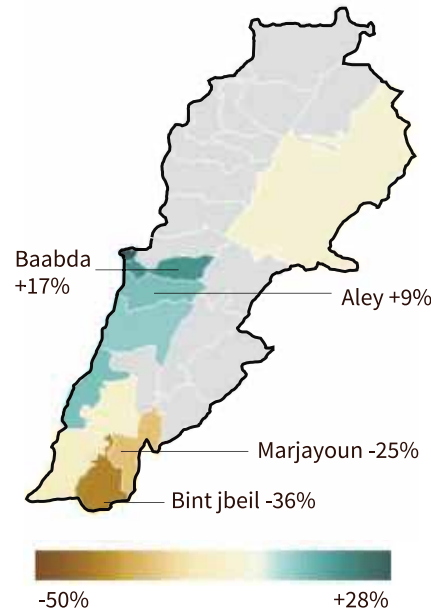


Chart 3: Internally displaced persons in Lebanon in thousands

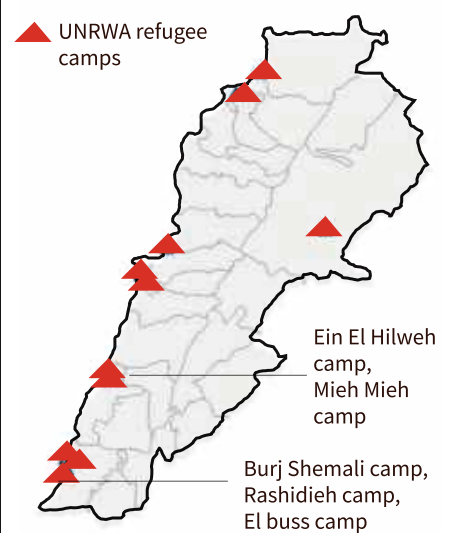


Map 4: The map shows the top five districts in Lebanon by departure and arrival



■ Values are in percentages of internally displaced persons. Data depicted only for September 24 and 25. Top departure districts are coloured brown. Top arrival districts are coloured blue

Map 5: The map shows the UNRWA refugee camps in Lebanon



■ Poverty rates among Palestine refugees are high with 80% reported to be living below the national poverty line (adjusted for inflation) as of March 2023

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What special status is Ladakh seeking?

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE



Climate activist Sonam Wangchuk was detained on the Delhi border on Monday night as he led a group of protesters to petition the Central government for the inclusion of Ladakh in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution among other demands for autonomy to the region. Similar demands have been raised in Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur. These discussions relate to special provisions for various ethnic groups in the Constitution.

What is asymmetrical federalism?

The Indian Constitution follows 'asymmetrical' federalism. Asymmetrical federalism is where some States and areas have more autonomy than others. A classical federation like the U.S. or Australia is a symmetrical federation as all States enjoy the same set of powers and autonomy. In India, there are a few States/areas that enjoy more autonomy or have special provisions under the Constitution than others.

What is the history of the Fifth and Sixth Schedules?

Before British rule, tribal populations in India maintained their autonomy and traditional lifestyles, as earlier Muslim rulers did not interfere with their customs or lands. However, British forest policies disrupted this way of life by restricting their movement and ignoring their traditional rights over forest lands. This led to significant discontent and resulted in several tribal rebellions, including the Kol rebellion (1831-32), Santhal revolt (1885), Munda Rebellion (1899-1900), and Bastar rebellion (1911).

The tribal rebellions led the British to adopt a policy of 'isolation' towards tribals, resulting in the creation of 'excluded' and 'partially excluded' areas under the Government of India Act, 1935. 'Excluded' areas, primarily in the north-eastern hills, were governed directly by the Governor. 'Partially excluded' areas, located in present-day Bihar, Bengal, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Maharashtra, were subject to central and provincial laws, but with modifications or exceptions determined by the Governors.

The Fifth and Sixth Schedules of the Indian Constitution are based on provisions from the Government of India Act, 1935, which created 'partially excluded' and 'excluded' areas. The Fifth Schedule applies to 'scheduled areas' declared by the President, based on criteria like tribal population, area compactness, administrative viability, and economic backwardness. Currently, 10 states have such areas. Tribes Advisory Councils (TAC) in these states, composed mostly of tribal MLAs, advise on tribal welfare. The Governor, with Central government approval, regulates land allotment and transfer among Scheduled Tribes (STs), oversees money-lending businesses, and can modify the application of laws in these areas.

The Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution applies to tribal areas in Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Tripura. It establishes Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) in these areas, each consisting of 30 members, with up to four nominated by the Governor and the rest elected by the people. These councils have the authority to make laws on land management, shifting cultivation, inheritance, marriage, divorce, and social customs, subject to the Governor's approval. State laws do not apply in these areas unless extended by the ADCs. ADCs can manage primary schools, dispensaries, roads, and waterways, assess and collect land revenue, impose taxes, grant licenses for mineral extraction, and establish courts for tribal disputes.

Thus, the 'tribal areas' included within the Sixth Schedule enjoy greater autonomy through the ADC with

more executive, legislative, judicial and financial powers than the 'scheduled areas' of the Fifth Schedule. However, both these areas are aimed at protecting the indigenous culture and interests of STs, while integrating them with the mainstream through various developmental policies.

What are special provisions for north-eastern States?

Part XXI of the Indian Constitution includes special provisions for several north-eastern states, detailed in Articles 371A to 371H. These provisions protect local customary laws in Nagaland and Mizoram, mandate committees of MLAs from tribal and hill areas in Assam and Manipur, and assign special responsibilities to the Governors of Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh for development and law and order.

Are further reforms needed?

There is a need for further reforms in areas governed by the Fifth and Sixth Schedules of the Indian Constitution. First, the autonomy of these areas is largely symbolic, as regulations in Fifth Schedule areas require Central government approval, and laws in Sixth Schedule areas need approval from the State Governor, often leading to political interference. Clear guidelines are necessary to maintain the original intent of these provisions. Second, many Scheduled Tribe (ST) habitations, both within and outside the 10 states under the Fifth Schedule, lack constitutional protection because they are not notified as 'scheduled areas.' These areas should be properly notified. Thirdly, the 125th Constitutional Amendment Bill (2019), pending in the Rajya Sabha, aims to grant more powers to the 10 existing Autonomous District Councils (ADCs).

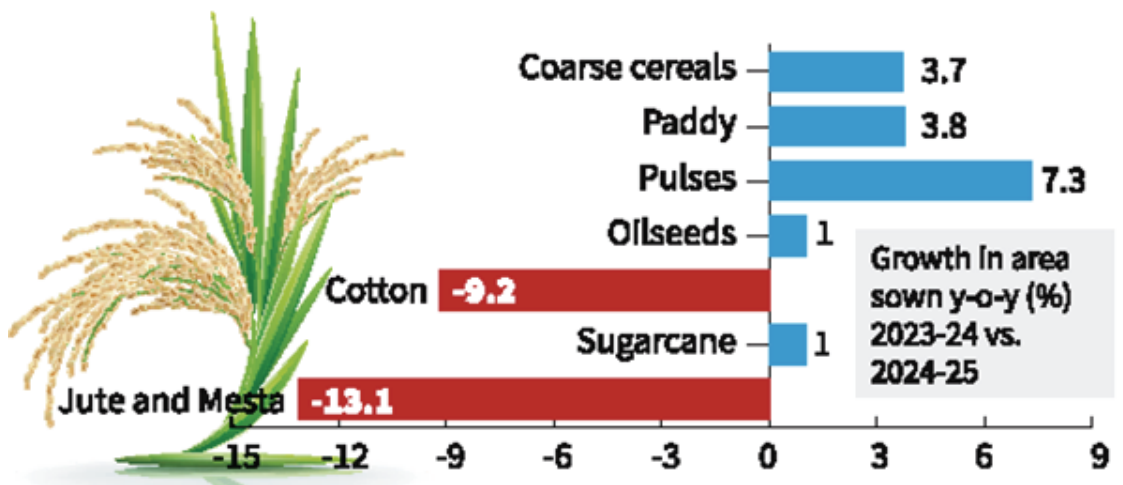
The Union government has agreed to form a committee, led by the Minister of State for Home Affairs, to expedite the passage of the 125th Constitutional Amendment Bill and resolve related concerns. There is also a growing demand for the inclusion of Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur's Hill areas, and Ladakh in the Sixth Schedule, which requires prompt examination and action to protect tribal interests. Additionally, the implementation of the Forest Rights Act, 2006, particularly in Fifth and Sixth Schedule areas, should be ensured nationwide to safeguard tribal rights.

'Surplus rains to help reduce food inflation, raise demand'

ECONOMICS AND DEVELOPMENT

Kharif hopes

With sowing up 1.5% over September 2023 levels and a healthy Southwest monsoon, food inflation is likely to recede in H2 FY25



Source: PIB, Bank of Baroda Research; As on September 23

The Kharif crop sowing increased by 1.5% by late September, aided by a strong Southwest monsoon that improved reservoir levels and boosted prospects for the Rabi crop. As a result, food inflation is expected to decrease, and rural demand is projected to steadily rebound in the second half of 2024-25.

By September 30, the monsoon delivered an 8% surplus over the long-period average, with reservoir levels at 87% capacity as of September 26. Except for the northern region, where reservoirs are at 68% capacity compared to 86%

last year, all other regions have more water stored than both last year and their normal levels.

The above-normal monsoon enabled farmers to increase crop sowing and diversify crops during the Kharif

season. This is expected to boost the farm sector's gross value addition (GVA), stimulate rural demand, and help ease food inflation, according to experts.

Safe-haven U.S. dollar gains strength as war widens in West Asia



The U.S. dollar saw its biggest gains in a week due to an Iranian missile attack on Israel, which led investors to seek safe assets amid concerns about escalating conflict in West Asia. In Asia, currency movements were minor, with most trying to recover from previous sharp declines. The euro slightly decreased by 0.06 % to \$ 1.1060 after experiencing its largest drop in nearly four months on Tuesday.

Iran fired more than 180 ballistic missiles on Israel, its biggest military assault on the Jewish state in retaliation for Israeli killings of militant leaders and aggression in Lebanon against the Iran-backed armed movement Hezbollah. Israel and the United States

promised to retaliate against Tehran as fears of a wider war intensified.

Markets' response to the West Asia tensions thus far has largely centred on oil prices and ANZ analysts noted further moves will likely be determined by Israel's response and whether it attacks Iran's military or oil industry. The dollar index rose about 0.5 % in the previous session, its largest rise since Sept. 25, which was also helped by a stronger-than-expected reading on U.S. job openings.

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