

CATMOCK DAILY CAPSULE

April 10, 2026

KAKURO

SUDOKU

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IN IRAN, TRUMP FACES THE LIMITS OF AMERICAN POWER

- Hindu



“There will be no deal with Iran except UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER!” U.S. President Donald Trump said on March 6, the seventh day of the war. “After that, and the selection of a GREAT &

ACCEPTABLE Leader(s)..., we will work tirelessly to bring Iran back from the brink of destruction,” he said. On April 8, on the 40th day of the war, Mr. Trump announced a two-week ceasefire, hours after he threatened to erase the Iranian civilisation if Tehran did not accept his deal.

Mr. Trump announced not only a pause on his threatened strikes on Iran’s civilian infrastructure but a full ceasefire, and agreed to treat the Iranian proposal as “a workable basis” for future talks. Iran said it would honour the ceasefire and ensure “safe passage” of vessels through the Strait of Hormuz “in coordination with its forces”.

While it is too early to conclude whether the ceasefire would hold or it would lead to a lasting peace agreement, one thing is clear – the U.S.-Israeli war on Iran has not just failed to achieve its declared objectives but also reinforced Iran’s standing as a major regional power in West Asia, particularly in the Persian Gulf. When he launched the war on February 28, Mr. Trump outlined five broad objectives: to “raze” Iran’s missile industry “to the ground”; to “annihilate” Iran’s Navy; to ensure that Iran’s “proxies” could no longer “destabilise” the region; to prevent Iran from ever obtaining a nuclear weapon; and to bring about regime change. None of this has been met. Forty days later, however, his biggest demand was one that was not part of his original set of objectives – reopen the Strait of Hormuz.

Iran got pounded over the past 40 days. It lost several top leaders, including Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, Defence Council chief Ali Shamkhani and Security Council chief Ali Larijani. Its manufacturing facilities, petrochemical complexes, gas fields, oil depots, rail tracks, universities and even bridges were bombed. The damage is a major setback for an economy already in crisis.

But Iran made three moves that allowed it to play what Trita Parsi, of the Quincy Institute, calls the “longer game”. First, it ensured that decapitation would not affect the coherence of the state or its ability to fight back – a strategy likely put in place after the June 2025 war when Israel killed multiple Iranian military leaders. Second, Iran immediately regionalised the conflict by attacking American bases in the Persian Gulf. The accuracy and lethality of these strikes suggest that Tehran had prepared for this moment. As Vali Nasr, of Johns Hopkins University, told The Hindu, Iran turned the entire Persian Gulf into a battlefield. Third, by taking control of the Strait of Hormuz, Iran dragged the global economy into the war launched by the U.S. and Israel.

Over the past few weeks, Mr. Trump repeatedly declared victory. But such declarations failed to convince even his allies, as the Strait of Hormuz remained under Iranian control. The U.S. had no easy options. Mr. Trump faced three possible ways out. First, he could declare victory and withdraw, effectively leaving the Strait in Iran’s hands – a move that would be seen as a huge strategic defeat for the world’s most powerful country.

Second, he could escalate further, hoping that heavier strikes would force Iran to flinch and make concessions. But this carried enormous risks as Iran could counter-escalate by attacking

energy facilities across the Gulf and militarily shutting the Strait of Hormuz. Such an outcome would multiply Mr. Trump's challenges and could draw the U.S. into a ground war. Mr. Trump did attempt limited escalation. He bombed Kharg Island, Iran's main export terminal, while Israel struck Iran's South Pars gas fields. Mr. Trump issued multiple ultimatums. But each time, Iran either ignored them or responded with counter-strikes. Last week, the loss of two aircraft over Iran punctured Mr. Trump's claims that Tehran's anti-defence capabilities were destroyed. Although the U.S. managed to extract the pilots of a downed F-15E, it lost more aircraft in the process – a reminder that any ground operation would be extremely costly.

Mr. Trump's third option was to seek a deal with Iran, whose unconditional surrender he had demanded. He chose diplomacy, with Pakistan, an ally with close ties with Tehran, mediating, even as he threatened to blow up Iran's civilian infrastructure. The plan was to use the threats to exact concessions from Tehran for an exit path.

He finally got an off-ramp, hours before his latest ultimatum was set to expire. But his admission that the framework for coming talks would be Iran's 10-point proposal, not America's 15-point proposal, shows how tables have turned during the war. Iran has demanded guarantees against future attacks, continued control over the Strait of Hormuz, right to continue enriching uranium, removal of all sanctions, withdrawal of U.S. troops in the region and payment of reparations. As a concession to Mr. Trump, Iran has agreed to allow "safe passage" of vessels through the Strait during the ceasefire "in coordination" with its forces. Note: 'safe passage' is not the same as 'free passage'.

There are wide gaps between the American and Iranian positions, which will be taken up at the Islamabad conference on April 10. But Iran will arrive with far greater leverage than it had in the pre-war talks in Muscat and Geneva. And in pre-war talks, the U.S. used the threat of an attack to demand concessions from Tehran. After 40 days of war, that threat is now a spent force



On 12 March 2026, China concluded its annual 'Two Sessions' – a large political meeting of delegates from China's legislative body, the National People's Congress, and its advisory body, the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. At this year's gathering, delegates approved China's 15th Five-Year Plan (FYP), which outlines the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) developmental objectives for 2026–30. This was President Xi Jinping's third FYP as leader, delivered at a time of slowing economic growth, internal instability following last year's widespread anti-corruption campaign and global uncertainty due to the ongoing war in Iran.

The 15th FYP highlights several points of continuity in the CCP's strategic ambitions – namely its aim to achieve technological supremacy and self-reliance. More importantly, however, the FYP also emphasises a growing concern regarding internal and external risks that may threaten these ambitions and outlines how the CCP plans to mitigate them. As the CCP faces an increasingly unpredictable external environment as well as continued challenges at home, it is investing in enhanced early-warning and risk-monitoring systems. To achieve these ambitions and coordinate risk assessments, improvements in centre–local party relations and information flows will be key.

Strategic economic ambitions

China's strategic ambitions remain unchanged in the 15th FYP, which outlines continuity in China's macroeconomic plans. Overall, the FYP sets an ambitious target for over 7% annual growth in research-and-development spending and reduces China's annual growth target from 5% of GDP to 4.5–5%. The latter likely reflects concerns over the slowing economy and represents an effort to provide officials with the flexibility to prioritise investment in advanced manufacturing and technology, which may not deliver immediate or high growth.

China seeks to advance new quality productive forces (NQPF) to become a world leader in science and technology (S&T) by accelerating innovation and, in particular, expanding its 2025

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Plus policy. Party strategists believe NQPF, which are produced through revolutionary breakthroughs in technology, will increase China's total factor productivity and help create an 'explosion of original and disruptive innovations'. The CCP will establish 'several new models for innovation in areas including multimodal intelligence, AI, quantum technology, biotechnology and new energy'.

The FYP outlines China's strengths and weaknesses in the technology sector, including the need to secure 'weak links of supply chains'. It also pays special attention to the necessity of improving technological self-reliance by 'coordinating personnel' around S&T innovation to increase 'the quality of independent talent'. The plan supports constructing 'several new-type research-orientated universities' and improving specialised curricula for emerging domain disciplines and the specialisations needed by AI. It contains proposals to establish a 'high-tech talent immigration system to cultivate world-class outstanding talents'.

While the language around consumption has changed since the 14th FYP, there are no signs of the CCP shifting to a consumerist growth model. Rather, the text supports raising domestic demand to increase China's self-reliance; phrases in the 14th FYP regarding 'maintaining the traditional consumption method' (提升传统消费) have been replaced with proposals to 'vigorously boost consumption' (大力提振消费). This reflects last December's Central Economic Work Conference plans to 'vigorously promote income growth' and 'employment', especially among younger people.

During the Two Sessions, the National Development and Reform Commission published the draft 2026 National Economic and Social Development Plan. The document expands on the FYP's priorities, stating that the CCP plans to 'invest in people, optimise the expenditure structure and ensure people's livelihood by improving the use of fiscal funds'. Regarding unemployment, the document states that the 'scale of the new-growth labour force will be expanded', with an unemployment target of around 5.5% and 12 million new jobs. Although this is consistent with previous plans, the draft emphasises that the 'pressure to stabilise jobs will be greater'.

Strengthening early warning and risk monitoring

Against the backdrop of these domestic goals, the 15th FYP conveys the CCP's focus on preventing and mitigating risks that may undermine its objectives. China is experiencing a period in which 'strategic opportunities coexist with risks and challenges, with increasing unpredictability'. These risks exist both internally (in 'real estate, local government debt, and small and medium financial institutions') and externally (in 'rising unilateralism and protectionism, great-power politics and geopolitical conflicts'). Crucially, the plan concludes that 'the momentum of world economic growth' is currently 'insufficient' to override the 'accumulating risks' faced by the country.

To mitigate these risks, the FYP suggests that the CCP will aim both to improve the speed and quality of information available to officials about vulnerable areas and to build up China's

capacity to respond when crises occur. The document references improving statistical monitoring systems in four areas, including population development and unemployment, as well as strengthening risk-monitoring and early-warning systems, such as by monitoring the ‘supply levels of strategic mineral resources’ and ‘establishing and improving an all-inclusive local debt monitoring and supervision system’. The FYP advocates for improvements in information flows and risk monitoring to avoid ‘involution’, ensure sufficient levels of strategic-mineral resources and mitigate supply-chain risks, as well as for greater oversight over foreign investments.

Category	14th FYP	15th FYP
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Establish a global supply-chain warning system for important resources and products ♦ Improve unemployment-monitoring and early-warning mechanisms ♦ Strengthen early warning of economic security risks ♦ Improve the statistical monitoring system of the digital economy ♦ Improve the risk-prevention and security system for the Belt and Road Initiative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Promote healthy and orderly development of industries: improve production-capacity monitoring and early-warning mechanisms and adopt capacity-regulation and price-control measures ♦ Improve the risk monitoring and early warning of supply levels for strategic-mineral resources ♦ Strengthen macroeconomic monitoring, forecasting and early warning, and grasp intensity and timing of policy introduction ♦ Improve statistical monitoring system for private economy and industry statistics ♦ Strengthen predictive early warning of risks in real estate ♦ Improve monitoring and early warning for cross-border capital flows ♦ Strengthen risk monitoring, prevention and control of overseas investment and promote enterprises to enhance risk prevention ♦ Improve employment and unemployment statistical monitoring and risk-warning system
Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Improve early-warning system for industrial damage ♦ Develop and strengthen the disaster-warning, forecasting and early-warning system for natural disasters ♦ Improve the environmental risk-management system for toxic and harmful chemical substances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Improve carbon-emission statistics system, dynamic monitoring and early-warning mechanism ♦ Optimise ocean-economy statistical monitoring and ocean-ecology early-warning system ♦ Strengthen monitoring and early-warning system for insect pests and animal diseases ♦ Strengthen natural-disaster monitoring and early-warning systems
Societal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Reform disease prevention and control system, and strengthen monitoring, early warning and risk assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Improve population-monitoring and early-warning systems for population-development forecasts ♦ Improve early-warning monitoring for disease
National Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Improve the national biosecurity risk-monitoring and early-warning system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Promote the establishment of artificial-intelligence full-lifecycle risk-management systems and improve risk prevention and control systems

As demonstrated in Table 1, the 15th FYP also indicates that the CCP will aim to establish and improve early-warning and risk-monitoring systems relating to environmental, societal and national-security issues. This is to enhance information sharing between various actors in China and help officials better time policy interventions. In June 2024, Xi warned of a 'systems trap', whereby the creation of numerous systems to address problems results in cumbersome actions and increased complexity. He instead called for integrating systems into an 'organic whole'. It remains unclear whether these proposals will achieve that goal.

Coupled with increasing information sharing, the FYP also reaffirms China's focus on stockpiling and self-reliance to help mitigate future risks. It establishes targets for grain-production capacity to reach a record 1.45 trillion jin (725m tonnes) by 2030 from current rates of approximately 1.39trn jin (695m tn) and for energy-production capacity to increase by 16–20%, driven mainly by growth in renewables. There is, however, an acceptance that China will still have to rely on foreign partners to some extent, with the plan advocating for 'strengthening international cooperation energy and resource development' to help 'maintain strategic channel security' and stating that China will begin to advance preparatory work on the Power of Siberia 2 pipeline. The plan also states that China aims to promote 'long-term initiatives to increase oil and gas reserves'. Notably, the annual oil target of 200m tn is lower than the record 216m tn produced in 2025 – possibly reflecting that consumer demand has peaked in part due to the growth in electric vehicles.

Limitations

Achieving the 15th FYP's objectives relies on the CCP being able to manage several long-standing economic and political structural conditions effectively. To direct resources towards strategic sectors in advanced manufacturing and technology, policymakers have continued aspects of China's prior economic model, which subsidised manufacturing and encouraged rapid investment-driven growth. However, this has come at the expense of increasing consumption. The CCP therefore needs to achieve growth from S&T innovation supremacy before the impacts of China's economic slowdown are felt even more strongly.

The current unpredictable external environment makes this an even greater challenge for the CCP. The strengthening of China's early-warning and risk-monitoring systems will require more timely and reliable information sharing across the party-state system and, in particular, better coordination between the central and local governments. It will also necessitate greater alignment between local government priorities and demands from the party centre, while also improving local officials' policy innovation and avoiding instinctive 'quick-fix' responses when issues arise.

Yet, while the CCP launched a new education campaign just before the Two Sessions that aims to ensure 'a correct view of political achievements' amongst officials, there remains a growing structural problem of paralysis at the local-government level as officials avoid innovation for fear of making mistakes. It remains to be seen whether the CCP's new education campaign and

approach to appointing officials will sufficiently resolve these issues to create a stronger party-state system, in an era of increased unpredictability.

RECORD TURNOUT IN PUDUCHERRY, ASSAM; KERALA NEAR ALL-TIME HIGH - Hindu



INSIDE

Families of CAPEF personnel protest approval of Bill

NEW DELHI
On a day when the families of Central Armed Police Force (CAPEF) personnel protested at the Rajghar against the passing of the CAPEF (General Administration) Bill, 2024, by Parliament on April 2, President Munshi gave it her moment. **» PAGE 4**

Huge turnout in Assam, Puducherry and Kerala

Incumbents in all the States express confidence that increased voter turnout indicates a victory | Election is key to Kerala's future and the CPW(M) will secure a bigger mandate, says the Kerala CM | Assam CM hails the 'historic' turnout, with many booths crossing 95%, as a vote to protect identity

PARLEY
Have elections in India become plutocratic?
The role of money in polls under scrutiny
OPINION » PAGE 8

END OF AN ERA
Former Test cricketer Gopinath passes away
SPORT » PAGE 16

The Hindu Special
NEW DELHI

There was record poll participation in the Assembly elections on Thursday, with the highest-ever voter turnout of 85.91% in Assam and 89.87% in Puducherry, crossing the previous highs of 84.67% for the State in 2016, and 86.19% for the Union Territory in 2011.

Kerala also saw a high voter turnout of 78.27%, with data still coming in and poll officials saying the final figure could even cross the record of 80.54% registered in 1987.

There were 200 Assembly constituencies at revision in Assam. Bypolls were also held in four seats in Karnataka, Nagaland, and Tripura. Counting of votes for all seats will take place on May 4. The bypolls held in Karnataka's Bagalkot and Chitradurga seats saw a voter turnout of 68.67% and 68.83% respectively. In Nagaland's Koridang seat, 82.28% of the electorate cast their ballot, while 80.04% of electors voted in Tripura's Dhammanagar constituency.

Confident sides
Describing the election as crucial for Kerala's future, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan expressed confidence, as voter participation crossed 95% in many polling booths.

U.T. V. Vaithilingam, said the turnout was because of a strong mood for change.

the ruling Left Democratic Front (LDF) looking for a hat trick in the State.

the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) is confident of winning a majority on its own.

In Assam, the bulk of the State's 2.5 crore voters have sealed the fate of 722 candidates, including 59 women, officials said. Voting was largely peaceful, despite reports of violence in a few constituencies, including Khowang and Tamrupur, and allegations of proxy voting at a booth in the Gwahati Central constituency.

"Assam has risen above language and caste. Our people have voted with one clear resolve - to protect our land, our identity, and our culture from illegal vote for change." It is now the responsibility of the Election Commission to ensure the security of the EVMs and to conduct an accurate counting of votes on May 4," he said.

According to an EC statement, over 2.5 lakh polling staff reached their polling stations on Wednesday night itself. Mock polls were completed before 7 a.m. in the presence of over 1.8 lakh polling agents appointed by 1,899 candidates and polling began peacefully at all 63,084 stations simultaneously.

Many new voter friendly initiatives were introduced, including easily identifiable colour photos

Making it count
Kerala, Assam, and Puducherry marked higher turnouts than in previous polls, this comes against the backdrop of the 58th special revision in Assam leading to abolition of names from voter rolls.

Kerala (140 seats)	
Voter turnout	78.27%
2021 turnout	81.00%
Puducherry (30 seats)	
Voter turnout	89.87%
2021 turnout	83.18%
Assam (128 seats)	
Voter turnout	85.91%
2021 turnout	82.04%

Wedding vote: A newly wed couple after voting at a polling booth in Thiruvananthapuram on Thursday. Women, women

PHOTO: SUPREETHA SRIKANTH/ISTOCK

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Kerala also saw a high voter turnout of 78.27%, with data still coming in and poll officials saying the final figure could even cross the record of 80.54% registered in 1987.

"There were 296 seats at stake in the key States of Assam, Kerala and Puducherry, with a total electorate of 5.31 crore, all vetted through the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls and the special revision in Assam. When voters cast their ballot in large numbers, it is always major news on our front page," says Suresh Nambath, Editor, The Hindu. "As voting begins, also check out our In Focus podcast on the increasing role of money in shaping electoral contests."

All major parties claimed that they would be the beneficiaries of the increased voter turnout, with ruling parties in Assam and Kerala both seeking a third straight term, and their opponents claiming that voters were seeking change. Counting of votes for all seats will take place on May 4.

Bypolls were also held for four seats in Karnataka, Nagaland, and Tripura. The bypolls held in Karnataka's Bagalkot and Davanagere-South saw a voter turnout of 68.67% and 68.43%, respectively. In Nagaland's Koridang seat, 82.21% of the electorate cast their ballot, while 80.04% of electors voted in Tripura's Dharmanagar constituency.

SOLUTIONS:

KAKURO

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SUDOKU

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5	1	9	6	3	2	4	8	7
6	4	8	7	9	1	3	2	5
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8	9	1	4	6	5	7	3	2
7	6	3	2	8	9	5	4	1