

CATMOCK DAILY CAPSULE

April 22, 2026

KAKURO

Kakuro puzzles are similar with crosswords, but instead of letters board filled with digits (from 1 to 9).

The board's squares need to be filled in with these digits in order to sum up to the specified numbers.

You are not allowed to use the same digit more than once to obtain a given sum.

Each Kakuro puzzle has a unique solution. Good luck!

SUDOKU

Every sudoku grid always contains some partially completed grids with digits. The objective of the game is to fill the missing digits into the grid. With 4x4 grids you need to use and fill digits from 1 to 4; with 6x6 -grids digits 1 to 6 and 9x9-grids contain digits from 1 to 9 respectively. In each column, row and block you can use each digit only once.

	21	22		39	12		
12			5			19	
15			21				4
24					12		
	12	16			3		
	9			11			
4			13			7	22
12			23				
		11					
	21				6		
		3			11		

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

Strategic Autonomy and Economic Coercion: Rethinking India's Response to Unilateral Sanctions - Hindu

The evolving geopolitical landscape has brought into sharp focus the economic consequences of unilateral sanctions regimes, particularly those imposed by dominant global powers. For India, the cumulative impact of such measures is no longer abstract or indirect. It is increasingly visible in the form of rising energy costs, disrupted trade flows, currency pressures, and constrained policy flexibility. The convergence of these pressures reflects not merely episodic disruptions but a structural vulnerability embedded within the global economic order.

India's exposure arises in part from its integration into international markets for energy, fertilizers, and critical commodities. Disruptions in these supply chains, whether through conflict or sanctions, transmit quickly into domestic inflation and fiscal strain. The situation is exacerbated when key maritime routes become contested or restricted, amplifying logistical costs and delaying shipments. These dynamics reveal how external geopolitical decisions can generate cascading effects within domestic economic systems, even in the absence of direct participation in the underlying conflict.



A critical dimension of this vulnerability lies in India's historical alignment, whether explicit or implicit, with sanctions imposed by external powers. Over the past decade, India has, at various junctures, adjusted its trade practices in response to such pressures, particularly in relation to energy imports. While these adjustments have often been framed as pragmatic responses to global realities, their cumulative effect has been to constrain India's strategic options and reinforce external leverage over its economic decisions.

The logic of compliance, however, warrants closer scrutiny. Empirical observation suggests that yielding to unilateral sanctions does not necessarily insulate a country from further demands. On the contrary, compliance may signal acquiescence, inviting additional layers of conditionality. This dynamic transforms sanctions from discrete policy instruments into evolving frameworks of economic coercion, where initial concessions become precedents for subsequent expectations.

Conversely, instances of selective non compliance illustrate the potential for alternative outcomes. When countries pursue independent economic strategies, including diversified sourcing and bilateral arrangements outside dominant financial systems, they can mitigate the immediate impact of sanctions. Such strategies, however, are not without cost. They require the development of parallel financial infrastructures, increased transaction complexity, and the willingness to absorb short term disruptions in pursuit of long term autonomy.

For India, the challenge is to reconcile the imperatives of economic integration with the necessity of preserving policy independence. This requires a reassessment of the mechanisms through which international transactions are conducted. Reliance on dominant currencies and financial intermediaries exposes trade flows to external oversight and potential restriction. Expanding the use of alternative payment systems, including bilateral currency arrangements and digital settlement platforms, can reduce this exposure, though such transitions must be carefully managed to maintain financial stability.

Energy policy constitutes another critical arena. Diversification of supply sources, investment in domestic production, and acceleration of renewable energy adoption can collectively reduce dependence on geopolitically sensitive imports. However, such transitions are inherently gradual and must be supported by coherent long term planning and institutional capacity.

Historical experience offers instructive parallels. Periods of external constraint have often catalysed domestic innovation and self reliance. Yet these outcomes are contingent upon deliberate policy choices rather than automatic responses. The presence of external pressure alone does not guarantee structural transformation; it merely creates the conditions under which such transformation becomes necessary.

The broader question, therefore, is not whether India should engage with the global economic system, but how it should do so in a manner that safeguards its strategic interests. This involves recognising that economic interdependence, while beneficial, is not neutral. It is shaped by power asymmetries that can be leveraged to influence national policy.

In this context, the articulation of clear boundaries becomes essential. Establishing limits to compliance with unilateral sanctions is not a rejection of international norms but an assertion of sovereign decision making. Such an approach must be accompanied by the development of institutional mechanisms capable of supporting alternative pathways, including resilient supply chains, diversified trade partnerships, and autonomous financial systems.

Ultimately, the issue extends beyond immediate economic calculations to encompass the broader principle of strategic autonomy. The capacity to make independent policy choices, particularly in areas as critical as energy and trade, is a defining attribute of economic sovereignty. As global uncertainties intensify, the ability to maintain this autonomy will increasingly determine the resilience and stability of national economies.

CIVIL SERVICES DAY
SALE 50% OFF
21st - 23rd April

On All Online,
Pendrive Courses &
Test Series

Drishti IAS
Connect Now to Avail the Discount
87501 87501

Download Drishti Learning App



U.S. violated truce, says Iran as uncertainty clouds talks

U.S. blockade of ports and seizure of tanker amounts to ceasefire violation, says Iran. U.S. VP's trip to Islamabad put on hold; Tehran remains non-committal on talks as ceasefire set to expire today

Stanly Johny

With the two-week truce in the U.S.-Israel war on Iran due to expire on Wednesday, Iran said on Tuesday the U.S. blockade of its ports and the seizure of a tanker in the Gulf of Oman amounted to violation of ceasefire. Iran added that it has yet to decide whether to join a new round of talks with Washington in Islamabad, even as U.S. President Donald Trump claimed that his team would "soon" hold negotiations with Tehran.

13 killed in blast at fireworks unit set up for Thrissur Pooram

Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, Iran's Parliament Speaker, said Mr. Trump was seeking Iran's surrender which his country would not accept. "Trump, by violating the ceasefire, seeks to turn this negotiating table... into a table of surrender or to justify renewed warmongering," he wrote in a social media post.

With the two-week truce in the U.S.-Israel war on Iran due to expire on Wednesday, Iran said on Tuesday the U.S. blockade of its ports and the seizure of a tanker in the Gulf of Oman amounted to violation of ceasefire. Iran added that it has yet to decide whether to join a new round of talks with Washington in Islamabad, even as U.S. President Donald Trump claimed that his team would "soon" hold negotiations with Tehran.

Pakistan said it has made all arrangements for the talks, but has yet to receive formal confirmation from Iran about its participation, as of Tuesday evening.

"Blockading Iranian ports is an act of war and thus a violation of the ceasefire. Striking a commercial vessel... is an even greater violation," Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said in a social media post on Tuesday. "Iran knows how to neutralise restrictions and how to resist bullying."

Mr. Trump had said on Monday that Vice-President J.D. Vance, Special Envoy Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, the President's son-in-law, had already left for Islamabad. But U.S. media reported on Tuesday, citing White House officials, that Mr. Vance's planned trip was put on hold.

Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, Iran's Parliament Speaker, said Mr. Trump was seeking Iran's surrender which his country would not accept. "Trump, by violating the ceasefire, seeks to turn this negotiating table... into a table of surrender or to justify renewed warmongering," he wrote in a social media post.

Earlier in the day, Mr. Trump also said Iran had violated the ceasefire “numerous times”. In an interview with CNBC, he said the U.S. was “going to end up with a great deal” with Iran as “they have no choice”. He added that the U.S. “is loaded up” to respond if Iran failed to make a deal.

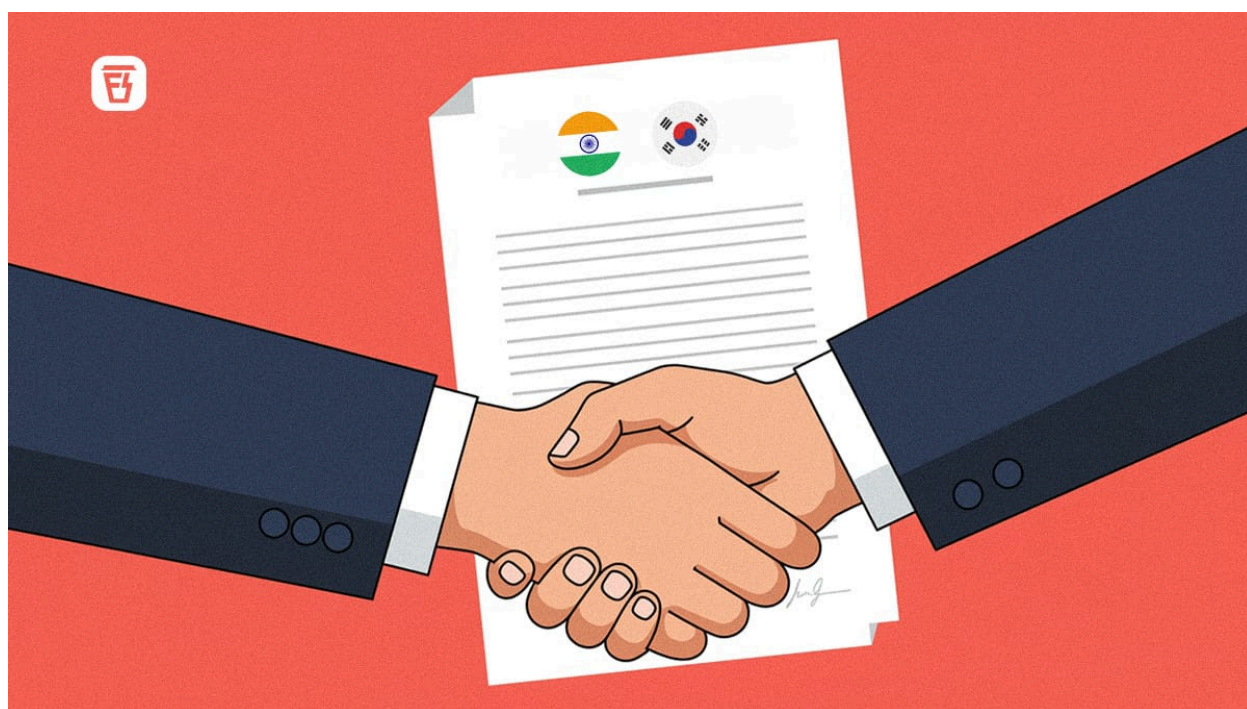
Pakistan’s Information Minister Attaullah Tarar said on Tuesday that Islamabad continued its efforts to hold the talks between the two sides.

Mr. Trump announced the two-week ceasefire on April 8. On April 11, Vice President Vance held direct talks with an Iranian delegation led by Mr. Ghalibaf in Islamabad but they failed to reach a breakthrough. The next day, Mr. Trump enforced a blockade on ships going to and coming from Iranian ports. On Sunday, the U.S. military seized an Iran-flagged vessel in the Gulf of Oman.

Last week, Iran announced that it would reopen the Strait of Hormuz for commercial traffic but reversed its decision after Mr. Trump said the U.S. blockade would remain in place until there is a deal between the two countries.

The India-South Korea Partnership Explained

- Finshots



When heads of state visit another country, headlines usually focus on ceremonial handshakes and diplomatic symbolism. But when South Korean President Lee Jae-myung’s visit to India concluded yesterday, we can say that it was far more consequential than that. This state visit was less a ceremonial trip and more a strategic business meeting between two countries that increasingly see each other as useful long-term partners.

Because both nations announced an ambitious plan to raise bilateral trade from roughly \$27 billion today to \$50 billion by 2030. But trade targets, by themselves, rarely tell the full story.

What matters more is where that trade comes from and what kind of economic relationship sits underneath it. And in this case, the partnership is being expanded across 15 industries, such as technology & semiconductors, shipbuilding & maritime trade, cross-border payments, energy security, and even cultural industries.

That's what makes this partnership worth paying attention to.

It reflects a broader shift in the global economy where countries no longer want trade partners only for exports and imports. They now want trusted partners who can help strengthen supply chains and build domestic industrial capability. And in that new world, India and South Korea increasingly appear useful to each other.

You see, for India, the opportunity begins with industrial capability.

India wants to become a more serious manufacturing power. It wants to move beyond "assembly" and deepen domestic capacity in advanced sectors. It wants alternatives to overdependence on China in critical supply chains. And it wants foreign partners who can bring technology, production expertise, and world-class operating standards. South Korea fits that requirement better than most.

Because South Korea is a country that has built globally competitive industrial champions across multiple sectors. Samsung is a leader in electronics and semiconductors. Hyundai Motor Company and Kia Corporation became major global auto brands. POSCO became one of the most efficient steelmakers in the world. And SK Group developed strengths across energy, batteries, telecom, and advanced materials.

In other words, South Korea has repeatedly shown how industrial policy can be translated into globally competitive companies. That matters because India now wants to replicate parts of that success.

Take semiconductors, for instance. Building a chip ecosystem is not as simple as constructing one plant. It requires talent, advanced packaging facilities, specific chemicals, testing systems, and, more importantly, years of manufacturing discipline. South Korea already understands that ecosystem deeply. That is why both countries have announced the India-Korea Digital Bridge, which is meant to deepen cooperation in semiconductors, AI, and information technology. For India, this could eventually mean more than capital inflows. It could mean access to supplier ecosystems, knowledge transfer, and a faster route into high-value manufacturing.

The same logic applies to electronics and batteries. India wants to become a world-class producer of electronics and an EV hub. Korean firms already possess expertise in battery chemistry, displays, precision manufacturing, and consumer electronics at scale. If that capability is increasingly embedded in India, the country can move from simply assembling imported components to producing more of the value chain domestically.

Then there is shipbuilding, a sector that receives less attention than chips but is strategically vital. Ships move global trade, support naval capability, and shape maritime competitiveness. South Korea has the world's second-largest shipbuilding industry and decades of expertise in efficient large-scale shipyards.

India, meanwhile, wants to scale domestic shipbuilding capacity. If Korean know-how flows into Indian yards, this could become one of the most important underappreciated parts of the relationship.

However, building ships requires massive amounts of steel. So if a country wants to become a shipbuilding hub, it needs to have easy access to high tensile steel. And who better than POSCO? They are one of the primary steel suppliers for the Korean shipbuilding industry. Naturally, they plan to invest roughly \$1.09 billion in a 50:50 joint venture with JSW Steel to build a 6-million-ton integrated steel plant in Odisha.

This matters more because apart from shipbuilding, the railways, defence equipment, renewable infrastructure, urban construction, and machinery all depend on it. If India wants to manufacture more, it needs large volumes of efficient steel production.

Then, let's talk about Energy security. Both India and South Korea understand the vulnerability that comes with dependence on unstable global supply chains. That is why the partnership now includes cooperation in nuclear energy, clean energy, critical minerals, and industrial raw materials. Critical minerals matter because pretty much everything from semiconductors to defence equipment requires them. Countries that secure these inputs early will hold an advantage later.

Now let's flip the lens. Why is South Korea investing so much in India?

Well, it's because India solves 4 strategic problems for South Korea at once.

The first is growth.

South Korea is a mature, high-income economy with slower population growth and a domestic market that cannot expand endlessly. Many of its traditional export markets are also experiencing slower growth. Earlier, China, which was a major export destination for the RoK, was a growth engine. However, it is no longer the case. Europe has also battled with high inflation, which has dampened discretionary spending. The United States, too, is politically unpredictable when it comes to trade.

India, by contrast, is one of the fastest-growing large economies in the world. It offers a rising middle class that desires consumer durables such as cars, televisions, and smartphones. That is why Korean giants such as Samsung, Hyundai Motor Company, Kia Corporation, and LG Electronics have all built meaningful positions here. India is no longer just an export destination. It is becoming a market that global firms cannot ignore.

The second is trade economics.

South Korea already enjoys a sizable trade surplus with India. Last year, it exported around \$19.2 billion in goods and services while importing roughly \$6.4 billion, leaving a surplus of about \$12.8 billion. So when both sides talk about lifting total trade to \$50 billion, South Korea understandably sees room to deepen an already profitable relationship.

The third is energy and raw material security.

South Korea imports around 94% of its energy, making it highly sensitive to disruptions in West Asia or shipping bottlenecks such as those around the Strait of Hormuz. That is one reason it has been increasing imports of naphtha from India. India already supplied roughly 8% of South Korea's naphtha imports last year. So, India is already an energy supply partner, apart from being a major market.

The fourth is easier corporate expansion.

Both countries have discussed initiatives such as the India-Korea Financial Forum and Korean industrial townships designed to streamline investments and help Korean companies establish manufacturing operations in India.

There is also a softer but meaningful cultural layer to the story. K-pop and K-dramas have become highly popular in India, while Indian cinema and culture are increasingly visible abroad. The two countries have also spoken of cooperation in sports, environmental projects, talent exchanges, and creative industries. While this may seem secondary, over time, it often helps tourism, brand acceptance, and, at the end of the day, trust.

Of course, none of this becomes transformational automatically.

India still has areas where regulatory complexity and execution bottlenecks can frustrate investors. South Korea, meanwhile, has multiple countries competing for its capital and industrial partnerships. So, both sides will need sustained follow-through rather than headline announcements.

That said, the logic is compelling. India has labour, demand, digital infrastructure, and geopolitical relevance. South Korea has capital, advanced technology, and globally competitive industrial firms. Each side has what the other increasingly needs.

That is why this relationship matters.

It is not merely about increasing trade from \$28 billion to \$50 billion. It is about two "middle powers" trying to reduce vulnerabilities, diversify supply chains, and strengthen themselves in a fragmented world economy.

For India, the larger prize is not trade alone. It is the chance to use Korean partnerships to build domestic strength in semiconductors, batteries, shipbuilding, steel, electronics, and advanced manufacturing. For South Korea, the prize is securing a long-term position inside the next major growth market while reducing strategic dependence elsewhere.

If executed well, this could become one of Asia's most important economic alignments outside the China-centric model.

Tier II and III cities power India's D2C, driving 66% of new orders in FY26 - YourStory



India's smaller cities are rapidly emerging as the growth engine for direct-to-consumer (D2C) brands, accounting for nearly two-thirds of new online orders in the last financial year, according to a new analysis by Unicommerce.

The report found that 66% of new D2C orders in FY2026 originated from Tier II and Tier III cities, a significant shift away from metro-led ecommerce demand. These markets also contributed 60% of incremental gross merchandise value (GMV) compared to the previous year, reflecting both rising consumption and deeper market penetration beyond urban hubs.

Overall, India's D2C sector maintained strong momentum, with order volumes increasing by 33% and GMV growing by 32% year-on-year, based on an analysis of over 400 million order items processed through Unicommerce's Uniware platform between April 2024 and February 2026.

The findings, drawn from over 6,000 digitally native brands, highlight how ecommerce growth is becoming more geographically distributed. As demand expands, companies are also improving logistics and fulfillment systems to keep pace.

Data from Shipway, Unicommerce’s logistics arm, showed an improvement in delivery efficiency. Return-to-origin (RTO) rates dropped from nearly 39% during the November 2025 festive season to about 21% by February 2026, indicating better order verification and execution despite challenges like cash-on-delivery transactions and first-time buyers.

India’s D2C market, currently valued at \$10–12 billion, is projected to expand to \$60 billion by 2030, as brands focus on operational efficiency, customer retention, and consistent service quality in an increasingly competitive landscape.

The analysis signals a maturing ecommerce ecosystem, where growth will increasingly depend on how well companies adapt to a broader, more diverse customer base across the country.

SOLUTIONS:

KAKURO

	21	22		39	12		
12	5	7	5	2	3	19	
15	9	6	21	4	9	8	4
24	7	9	5	3	12	9	3
	12	16	7	9	11	3	2
4	3	1	13	8	5	7	22
12	9	3	23	5	6	4	8
	21	5	9	7	6	1	5
		3	2	1	11	2	9

SUDOKU

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