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1. Taking sides– On Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s visit to Israel (TH)**General Studies 2– International Relation**

Topic– Bilateral, regional, and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India’s interests.

Sub Topic– India’s West Asia Policy; Israel–Palestine Conflict; Strategic Autonomy; Diaspora and Labour Mobility.

1. Introduction

PM Modi’s state visit (February 25–26, 2026) was the first by an Indian leader to address the Knesset. While ostensibly a bilateral outreach focused on technology and defense, the visit’s optics—marked by intense personal chemistry between Modi and Netanyahu—suggest a shift toward a more visible alliance. While India reaffirmed its support for a two-state solution, the absence of direct criticism regarding the humanitarian situation in Gaza has sparked a debate on whether India is finally "taking sides."

2. Key Outcomes– Beyond Traditional Diplomacy

The visit resulted in 17 agreements and over 15 MoUs, reflecting a diversification of ties—

Special Strategic Partnership– Elevation from a 'Strategic Partnership' (2017) to a 'Special' one, emphasizing peace and innovation.

Labor Mobility– A landmark agreement to facilitate the employment of 50,000 Indian workers over five years, filling the vacuum left by the suspension of Palestinian work permits.

Economic Integration– * Fast-tracking of the Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

1. Linking India’s UPI with Israel’s payment systems for seamless remittances.

Technological Frontiers– Collaboration on Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET), including AI, semiconductors, and quantum computing.

3. The "Palestine Dilemma" and Strategic Balance

India’s evolving stance is characterized by "principled pragmatism"—

Indirect References– In the Knesset, PM Modi supported the Gaza Peace Initiative and a two-state solution but refrained from naming specific civilian casualties in Gaza, focusing instead on a broader message that "humanity must not be a victim of conflict."

Terrorism Alignment– India maintained a firm stance against terrorism "in all forms," aligning closely with Israel’s security narrative following the October 2023 attacks.

The Balancing Act– Analysts suggest a follow-up visit to Ramallah or increased humanitarian aid to Palestine may be necessary to restore the "moral equilibrium" in India’s West Asia policy.

4. Geopolitical and Regional Implications

The visit reinforces India’s role as a major stakeholder in West Asian architecture—

Connectivity (IMEC & I2U2)– Reaffirmed commitment to the India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), positioning Israel as a key maritime and rail gateway for Indian goods to Europe.

Minilateralism– Bolstering the I2U2 framework to address regional food and energy security.

Tensions with Iran– India’s "visible" tilt toward Israel occurs amidst U.S.–Iran friction, potentially complicating India’s interests in the Chabahar Port and the INSTC.

5. Challenges and Risks

Majoritarian Perception- Critics argue the shift reflects ideological alignment rather than purely pragmatic statecraft, potentially alienating Arab partners.

Regional Polarization- As West Asia divides into pro- and anti-Israel blocs, India's "multi-alignment" strategy faces its toughest test.

Credibility in the Global South- As a leader of the Global South, India's perceived silence on Palestinian displacement could impact its soft power in Africa and Southeast Asia.

6. Conclusion

The Jerusalem visit underscores that for India, Israel is no longer just a defense supplier but a "partner in prosperity." However, the "inglorious retreat" from a balanced moral posture—if it persists—could turn India's West Asia policy into a zero-sum game. To preserve its strategic autonomy, India must ensure that its deepening security embrace of Israel does not come at the cost of its historical credibility as a neutral, peace-seeking power in the region.

Source- https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/taking-sides-on-prime-minister-narendra-modis-visit-to-israel/article70680503.ece#google_vignette

2. 'Rare earth shortages worsen in US despite trade truce' (IE)

General Studies 3- Internal Security

Topics- Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate; Effects of liberalization on the economy; Indigenization of technology.

Sub Topic- Defence Budgeting; Atmanirbhar Bharat in Defence; Strategic Deterrence; Two-Front War Contingency.

1. Introduction

The global shortage of Yttrium and Scandium—two niche but indispensable Rare Earth Elements (REEs)—has emerged as a major flashpoint ahead of the March 2026 U.S.-China Summit. With China controlling over 90% of the processing for these elements, their scarcity has directly impacted the manufacturing of 5G chips and high-temperature jet engine coatings, turning industrial materials into tools of diplomatic leverage.

2. Strategic Importance of Rare Earth Elements (REEs)

REEs are a group of 17 elements (15 Lanthanides + Scandium & Yttrium). They are not "rare" in the crust but are rarely found in concentrations high enough for economic extraction.

Element	Key Application	Strategic Criticality
Yttrium	Thermal Barrier Coatings (TBC) for turbines.	Allows jet engines to operate at 1,600°C+; essential for defence and aviation.
Scandium	5G semiconductors & aluminium alloys.	Reduces aerospace structural weight by 30%; critical for telecom hardware.
Neodymium	Permanent Magnets.	Vital for Electric Vehicle (EV) motors and wind turbines.
Dysprosium	High-temp magnets.	Maintains magnetic strength in heat-intensive environments (missile guidance).

3. China's Dominance and the "Processing Monopoly"

The Chokepoint- While mining occurs globally, China controls 85–90% of the refining and separation capacity.

Weaponization- Beijing's revised Export Control Law (2025/26) requires end-user declarations, allowing it to track and restrict minerals intended for specific U.S. defence or semiconductor firms.

Price Volatility- Yttrium prices have surged 60% since late 2025, reaching nearly 70 times their 2024 levels, leading to rationing by Western manufacturers.

4. Impact on Semiconductor and 5G Ecosystem

Production Halts- Major North American coating firms have temporarily paused production due to a lack of yttrium oxide.

5G Delays- Scandium shortages are risking the rollout of next-generation 5G base stations, as alternative materials often fail to meet the required electrical conductivity and heat tolerance.

Rationalization- Supply chains are currently prioritizing large engine makers (Boeing/Airbus) over smaller tech firms, creating a "tiered" access to technology.

5. India's Emerging Role- Opportunity Amidst Crisis

India is positioning itself as a resilient alternative through aggressive policy shifts in the Union Budget 2026-27-

Dedicated Rare Earth Corridors- Announced for Odisha, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu to streamline mining and processing of monazite sands.

Semiconductor Mission 2.0- A ₹40,000 crore outlay to expand beyond chip design into equipment and raw material (REE) processing.

REPM Scheme- Incentivizing the manufacturing of Rare Earth Permanent Magnets (REPM) to build an end-to-end ecosystem.

International Alliances- India's inclusion in "Pax Silica" (U.S.-led silicon supply chain) and the Minerals Security Partnership (MSP) aims to bridge the "skills-to-fab" gap.

6. Key Challenges and Way Forward

Environmental Barrier- REE processing generates radioactive thorium waste; sustainable extraction technologies are a prerequisite for social acceptance.

Technological Gap- India currently lacks the advanced high-purity separation technology mastered by China; R&D and technology transfer via the Quad are crucial.

Recycling (Circular Economy)- Building a secondary supply stream by recovering REEs from e-waste (magnets and screens) to reduce reliance on fresh mining.

7. Conclusion

The 2026 rare earth squeeze is a "watershed moment" for industrial sovereignty. For India, the crisis serves as a catalyst to move from a raw material exporter to a high-value processor. By integrating its Rare Earth Corridors with Semiconductor Mission 2.0, India can secure its technological future and offer a credible "China+" insurance policy to the global market.

Source- [https://www.pressreader.com/india/the-indian-](https://www.pressreader.com/india/the-indian-express/20260227/282235197139355?srsIid=AfmBOoohwEntoYQM9Vr06taFiQ4IsJTyaMbFovNRZV56PWNGaBn5lPn4)

[express/20260227/282235197139355?srsIid=AfmBOoohwEntoYQM9Vr06taFiQ4IsJTyaMbFovNRZV56PWNGaBn5lPn4](https://www.pressreader.com/india/the-indian-express/20260227/282235197139355?srsIid=AfmBOoohwEntoYQM9Vr06taFiQ4IsJTyaMbFovNRZV56PWNGaBn5lPn4)