

## SAUDI-IRANIAN ‘NORMALISATION’, CHALLENGES IN WEST ASIA



*Talmiz Ahmad is a former Ambassador to Saudi Arabia*

On March 10, 2023, Saudi Arabia and Iran, represented by their national security advisers, signed an agreement in Beijing, China, to re-establish diplomatic ties, respect each other's sovereignty and maintain non-interference in the other's domestic affairs. The agreement also reinstates two previous accords: one on security cooperation signed in 2001 and the other, going back to 1998, dealing with economic, technical, scientific and cultural ties. This agreement ends seven years of diplomatic estrangement between the two Gulf neighbours. During this period, they have confronted each other in proxy wars in Syria and Yemen, carried out media campaigns of extraordinary mutual hostility, often on sectarian basis, and have on occasion come close to direct conflict, particularly in 2019 when suspected Iranian agents attacked Saudi oil facilities.

China's Foreign Affairs head, Wang Yi, who brokered the agreement, described it as a “victory for dialogue, a victory for peace”. The Saudi Foreign Minister said his country “favoured political solutions and dialogue”, while his Iranian counterpart affirmed that his country was pursuing “the preparation of more regional steps”. The accord has been welcomed across West Asia.

### Run-up to the deal

There had been meetings of Saudi and Iranian officials in Baghdad and Muscat in 2021 and 2022, but perhaps little progress had been made in addressing issues that divide the two countries — the wars in Syria and Yemen, and Saudi concerns relating to Iran's mobilisation of Shia communities in the region against the Arab states.

However, these interactions had confirmed that the Arab states were prepared to pursue their interests without United States involvement. This was largely the result of increasing regional disenchantment with the U.S. as a security-provider, alongside strong messages from Washington that it was less enthusiastic about being the regional security-guarantor. The U.S.'s military failures in Iraq and Afghanistan contributed to its loss of credibility among its regional allies.

What regional states are seeking is not to disengage from the U.S. but

to broaden their options and build alternative relationships to suit their interests. China is an attractive partner. It has substantial energy, trade, investment and technology-related ties with West Asia: it is the region's largest buyer of crude oil, a major trade and investment partner, and is also rapidly expanding its role as a technology-provider in most countries.

West Asia is also crucial for the realisation of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), with regional states being important for logistical connectivity, and investment, consultancy and contracting partnerships. China's interests obviously require a stable regional environment, but, till recently, China had been reluctant to engage itself with regional competitions and confrontations.

### China's new approach in West Asia

About two years ago, Chinese academics began to signal changes in this approach: they indicated that China was looking at greater political involvement with the region on the basis of “quasi-mediation diplomacy” to promote its broad commercial, diplomatic and political interests rather than its hard security concerns. It recognised that many of the ongoing rivalries would not admit of quick resolutions. China was prepared to be content with managing these differences through diplomacy so that they did not escalate into conflict.

This was the message that President Xi Jinping conveyed to his Arab interlocutors during his three summits (bilateral, Gulf and Arab League) in Riyadh in December last year: the Chinese Foreign Office described the visit as “consolidating consensus on global governance, development, security and other crucial issues”. The Saudi-Iran accord is the first manifestation of this new approach.

The agreement addresses the most serious regional confrontation — it reduces regional tensions and puts in place the bases for further dialogue on improving relations and engaging on contentious issues. Saudi-Iran differences will be difficult to resolve: they result from Saudi Arabia's deep sense of strategic vulnerability vis-à-vis its northern neighbour and concerns that might destabilise regional states through the use of Shia proxies. Iran will need to play a more pro-active role to assure its neighbour of its benign intentions, an effort that would gain credibility with China's active engagement with the two regional powers.

### Diplomatic challenges

Regional security also needs the revival of the nuclear agreement, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and linked with it, the management of Israel's aggressiveness. Soon after the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) had announced it had seen traces of uranium enrichment by Iran to 84%, just short of weapon's grade, the IAEA Director General, Rafael Grossi, visited Tehran in early March and obtained an Iranian agreement to allow verification and monitoring activities by IAEA's inspectors.

This has prepared the ground for renewed talks on the JCPOA, though doubts remain on whether the U.S.'s sharply polarised domestic scene will allow such an agreement which would dilute sanctions on Iran in the run-up to the American presidential elections. Israel's domestic politics, also deeply polarised and dominated by the extreme right wing, is also expected to obstruct the renewal of the JCPOA and maintain a hostile posture towards Iran.

Though serious problems remain with this accord, China has affirmed that its role in West Asian affairs is likely to get more active and substantial. This poses challenges for Indian diplomacy.

However, recognising that the management of its ties with China remains its diplomatic priority, India will need to engage with China in West Asia where they have a broad gamut of shared interests in energy security, free and open sea lanes, logistical connectivity, and, above all, regional stability. Here, they can work together to further mutual and regional interests.

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## CHINA SAYS AUKUS DEAL GOING DOWN THE ‘WRONG AND DANGEROUS PATH’

Expressing its “firm opposition” to Monday’s announcement on Australia’s purchase of nuclear-powered submarines, China’s government on Tuesday slammed the Australia, U.S. and U.K. (AUKUS) partnership as going “down the wrong and dangerous path” and undermining international nuclear non-proliferation.

“We’ve repeatedly said that the establishment of the so-called AUKUS security partnership between the U.S., the U.K. and Australia to promote cooperation on nuclear submarines and other cutting-edge military technologies is a typical Cold War mentality. It will only exacerbate arms race, undermine the international nuclear non-proliferation regime and hurt regional peace and stability,” Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said in Beijing.

“The latest joint statement issued by the U.S., the U.K. and Australia shows that the three countries, for their own geopolitical interests, have totally disregarded the concerns of the international community and gone further down the wrong and dangerous path. Nuclear submarine cooperation between the

U.S., the U.K. and Australia involves the transfer of large amounts of weapons-grade highly enriched uranium from nuclear weapon states to a non-nuclear weapon state, which poses a serious nuclear proliferation risk and violates the purpose and object of the NPT.”

On the three countries’ on Monday committing to follow the highest non-proliferation standards, Mr. Wang said it was “nothing but a high-sounding rhetoric to deceive the world.”

“In essence, it is a move to coerce the IAEA Secretariat into making safeguards exemption arrangements, which would seriously undermine the authority of the body. China is firmly opposed to this,” he added.

The deal, the spokesperson said, would damage the “integrity, efficacy and authority of the NPT”. “The safeguards issues related to AUKUS concern the interests of all member states of the IAEA and should be jointly discussed and decided by all member states through a transparent, open and inclusive intergovernmental process,” Mr. Wang said.

## AUSTRALIA TO BUY U.S. NUCLEAR SUBMARINES UNDER AUKUS



*Ship mates: (from left to right) Anthony Albanese, Joe Biden and Rishi Sunak at a San Diego naval base in the U.S. on Monday. AP*

Albanese calls it the biggest single investment in Australia’s defence capability in all of its history; UN nuclear watchdog wants to ensure that there are no proliferation risks from the deal

Australia has unveiled plans to buy up to five U.S. nuclear-powered submarines, then build a new model with U.S. and British technology under an ambitious plan to bulk up Western muscle across the Asia-Pacific in the face of a rising China.

The announcement came on Monday at an event at a San Diego, California, naval base where U.S. President Joe Biden hosted Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak.

With a U.S. Virginia-class nuclear submarine moored behind the trio’s podium, Mr. Biden said the U.S. had “safeguarded stability in the Indo-Pacific for decades” and that the submarine alliance would bolster “the prospect of peace for decades to come.”

### No nukes

As Mr. Biden stressed, Australia, which joined a newly formed alliance known as

AUKUS with Washington and London 18 months ago, will not be getting nuclear weapons.

However, acquiring stealthy submarines powered by nuclear reactors puts Australia in an elite club and at the forefront of U.S.-led efforts to push back against Chinese military expansion.

Mr. Albanese said the deal represents the biggest single investment in Australia’s defence capability “in all of our history.”

The submarines are expected to be equipped with cruise missiles that can strike foes from long distances, offering a potent deterrent to would-be attackers.

Mr. Albanese predicted that the wider economic impact at home would be akin to the introduction of the automobile industry in the country after World War II.

### IAEA's warning

Meanwhile, the UN nuclear watchdog on Tuesday said it has to ensure that “no proliferation risks” will come from the deal.

“Ultimately, the agency must ensure that no proliferation risks will emanate from this project,” International Atomic

Energy Agency chief Rafael Grossi said. “The legal obligations of the parties and the non-proliferation aspects are paramount,” Mr. Grossi added.

The U.K. and the U.S., both nuclear-weapons states, have to report to the IAEA “international transfers of nuclear material” to non-nuclear-weapon states such as Australia, the press release said.

### Deal to be struck

Australia, for its part, will have to make “an arrangement” with the UN watchdog to be able to use nuclear material “such as nuclear propulsion for submarines”, Mr. Grossi stressed.

The Australian government estimates the multi-decade project will cost almost \$40 billion in the first 10 years, and create an estimated 20,000 jobs.

Three conventionally armed, nuclear-powered Virginia class vessels will be sold “over the course of the 2030s,” with the “possibility of going up to five if that is needed,” Mr. Biden’s national security advisor, Jake Sullivan, said. Britain and Australia will then embark on building a new model, also nuclear-powered and carrying conventional weapons, dubbed the SSN-AUKUS. This will be a British design, with U.S. technology, and “significant investments in all three industrial bases,” Mr. Sullivan said.

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## WPI INFLATION EASES TO 3.85%, MANUFACTURED PRODUCTS HELP

### Wholesale easing

**Price gains measured by the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) continued to ease last month, as inflation in all three product groups and food index slowed**



- **Manufactured products' inflation slid to 1.94% in Feb. from 2.99% in January**
- **Food index-based inflation eased 19 basis points to 2.76%**
- **Onion prices shrank for an 18th straight month, contracting 40.1%**

*February's deceleration in wholesale price gains follows January's rate of 4.73% and December's upwardly revised 5.02%; base effect also contributes as February 2022 had seen inflation of 13.4%*

Inflation based on the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) moderated to a two-year low of 3.85% in February from 4.73% in January, with manufactured products' inflation cooling from 3% to a little under 2%, and primary articles, food and fuel and power recording milder downturns in the pace of inflation from a month earlier. The base effect also contributed as February 2022 saw a 13.4% pace.

The wholesale inflation rate for December was revised upwards to 5.02% from 4.95%. Fuel and power inflation eased slightly to 14.8%. Inflation measured by the Wholesale Food Index eased to 2.76% from 2.95% in January, the pace of decline slightly higher than witnessed in consumer food prices, which moved from 6% to 5.95% in the same period.

Onion prices continued to fall for the 18th straight month, shrinking 40.1%. "Amidst a mixed trend in the wholesale prices of essential commodities in the early part of the month, the wholesale price inflation is anticipated to soften to about 2% in March," ICRA said in a note. "Outlook for food inflation... is clouded by emerging risks such as a potential heat wave and the development of El Nino conditions," it cautioned.

## RBI HAS PERMITTED BANKS FROM 18 COUNTRIES TO TRADE IN RUPEE: CENTRE



*Trade in local currencies have been mooted as a solution to avoid the current wave of wartime international sanctions.*

*The central bank granted nod to domestic and foreign authorised dealer banks in 60 cases for opening special vostro accounts for settling payment in rupee, says Minister in the Rajya Sabha in response to a question by a BJP member*

Banks from 18 countries have been permitted by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to open special vostro rupee accounts (SRVAs) for settling payments in Indian rupees, the government told the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday. In response to a question from Sushil Kumar Modi of the BJP, Union Minister of

State for Finance Bhagwat Kishanrao Karad said the SRVAs could be set up by banks of partner countries by approaching authorised dealer (AD) banks in India that may get permission from the RBI after the due procedure.

Mr. Karad informed that as per records, the RBI had granted approval to "domestic and foreign AD Banks in 60 cases for opening SRVAs of banks from 18 nations — Botswana, Fiji, Germany, Guyana, Israel, Kenya, Malaysia, Mauritius, Myanmar, New Zealand, Oman, Russia, the Seychelles, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Uganda and the United Kingdom".

Of the 18 countries mentioned in Mr. Karad's response, Russia has been vocal in using trade in local currency for the overall process of "de-dollarisation". But India has been supporting the idea of trade in local currency mainly to boost exports.

The process of SRVAs began in July 2022 when the RBI announced that, "it has been decided to put in place an additional arrangement for invoicing, payment, and settlement of exports/imports in INR [Indian rupees]". The announcement came against the backdrop of the commodities crisis triggered by the Western sanctions against Russia after President Vladimir Putin launched the "special military operation" against Ukraine in February 2022. Trade in local currencies have been mooted as a solution to avoid the current wave of wartime international sanctions that are hampering supply chains and global trade flows.

In the past one year, India has finalised trade pacts with partner countries such as the UAE and Australia and begun negotiation with others such as the U.K. and the EU while making inroads for the national currency in bilateral and global trade.

"RBI has also issued FAQs on its website. RBI has clarified matters related to operationalisation of SRVAs through the said FAQs, which are available to banks, importers and exporters," Mr. Karad said in the Rajya Sabha.

## SC TO HEAR TELANGANA'S APPEAL AGAINST GOVERNOR

**QQ In a parliamentary democracy, the Governor has no discretion to delay necessary assent as required on the Bills.**

**Any refusal on the part of the Governor, including delay, will defeat parliamentary democracy and will of the people**

**TELANGANA GOVERNMENT'S petition in SC**



*Several Bills passed by State Legislature are stuck as Governor is yet to act on them, leading to a constitutional impasse, says State govt. counsel; court agrees to take up case on March 20*

The Supreme Court on Tuesday agreed to hear urgently a petition filed by the Telangana government against Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan for creating a "constitutional impasse" by refusing to act on several Bills passed by the State legislature.

Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud assured senior advocate Dushyant Dave, appearing for the State, that the case would be listed on March 20.

Mr. Dave submitted that the Bills have been pending since September 14, 2022, awaiting the assent of the Governor.

"In a parliamentary democracy, the Governor has no discretion to delay necessary assent as required on the Bills. Any refusal on the part of the Governor, including

delay, will defeat parliamentary democracy and will of the people," the State said in its petition filed through advocate S. Udaya Kumar Sagar.

"Several Bills are stuck," Mr. Dave pointed out during the mentioning of the case before the CJI Bench for early listing. 'Illegal action'

The State urged the court to "declare that the inaction, omission and failure to comply with the constitutional mandate qua the assent of the Bills by the Governor as highly irregular, illegal".

Mr. Dave said the Governor may or may not give assent to a Bill. However, the decision should be taken, rather than keeping the Bills pending for months together.

"The Bill must be returned together with a message requesting the Houses to reconsider it or any provisions in it and rethink the desirability of introducing any such amendments," the petition highlighted Article 200 of the Constitution. The Governor would not withhold assent once the Houses reiterate the amendments.

The State trained the spotlight on how under Article 163 the Governor is not "expected to act independently".

"The Governor is required to exercise his functions or any of them in his discretion only on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers with the Chief Minister heading it," the petition said.

The Bills pending the Governor's assent for months include the Azamabad Industrial Area (Termination and Regulation of Leases) (Amendment) Bill, 2022; The Telangana Municipal Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2022; The Telangana Public Employment (Regulation of Age of Superannuation) (Amendment) Bill, 2022; The University of Forestry Telangana Bill, 2022; The Telangana Universities Common Recruitment Board Bill, 2022; The Telangana Motor Vehicles Taxation (Amendment) Bill, 2022; The Telangana State Private Universities (Establishment and Regulation) (Amendment) Bill, 2022; The Professor Jayashankar Telangana State Agricultural University (Amendment) Bill, 2023; The Telangana Panchayat Raj (Amendment) Bill, 2023; and The Telangana Municipalities (Amendment) Bill, 2023.

## INERTIA, INTERVENTION

*Legislative inaction on social issues will legitimise judicial intervention*

The Supreme Court's decision to refer to a Constitution Bench the issue of granting legal recognition to same-sex marriages can be seen as an important step towards ensuring gender equality, despite apprehension that it is encroaching on the legislative domain. Petitioners before the Court view the idea of giving of legal status for marriages between people belonging to the same sex as a natural consequence of the 2018 judgment decriminalising homosexuality. The government, however, contends that there is no need to depart from the heteronormative understanding of marriage. And even if there ought to be such a change, it must come from the legislature. The question before the Court is whether it should interpret provisions of marriage laws in India, especially the Special Marriage Act, 1954, as permitting marital unions between same-sex couples. The Act allows the solemnisation of a marriage between any two persons and is used by those who are unable to register their marriages under their respective personal laws. The Union government has argued that the decriminalisation of consensual relations between adults of the same sex has removed the stigma attached to homosexuality, but has not conferred the right of marriage. And that the state is entitled to limit its recognition to marriages involving heterosexual couples. There is no discrimination, it claims, in keeping same-sex couples out of the definition of marriage.

In terms of the equality norm, the central question is not very complicated. It can be recognised that no civil right available to married heterosexual couples ought to be denied to those who belong to the same gender. The incidental consequences on issues of property and succession may not pose insurmountable difficulties. The Centre's other argument, invoking religious norms and cultural values, against recognising same-sex marriages is weak and inadequate. It is futile to argue that it will undermine faith or rock societal values. The mere fact that many people consider marriage to be a sacrament or a holy union is not enough to deny equal status to the union of people of the same sex or to undermine its essential character as a social and economic contract. Whether the remedy ought to take the form of recognition of same-sex marriages, and, if so, whether it should be through judicial intervention or legislative action, is the question. That the legislature should be involved in bringing about far-reaching changes that may impact the personal laws of all religions is indeed an acceptable proposition. A responsive government that wants to treat this as a matter of policy and not cede space to the courts would act on its own to consider the right of any two people, regardless of gender, to marry or found a family. Legislative inaction on burning social issues will legitimise and invite judicial intervention.

*"Be not afraid of greatness. Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and others have greatness thrust upon them."*

- WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE



## WHY IS WHATSAPP THREATENING TO LEAVE U.K.?

*What is the United Kingdom's proposed Online Safety Bill? Does it mandate a removal of end-to-end encryption? How have other messaging platforms reacted? Did WhatsApp leave or threaten to leave India when a similar rule was notified?*

### The story so far:

During a visit to the U.K. last week, WhatsApp's head Will Cathcart said that WhatsApp would not comply with the country's proposed Online Safety Bill (OSB) which will in effect outlaw end-to-end (E2E) encryption. Mr. Cathcart said that it was the first time a "liberal democracy" was attempting to block a "secure product".

### What is end-to-end encryption?

E2E encryption ensures that a message can only be decrypted by the intended recipient using a secure decryption key that is unique to each sender-recipient pair and to each of their messages. Decryption, even by the messaging service provider, is impossible. Even if the platform's servers are compromised, without the intended recipient's decryption key, only a garbled string of characters will be available. Over the last few years, E2E encryption has been steadily gaining ground. It is offered by default on WhatsApp, Signal, Apple's iMessage and FaceTime and is an option on Meta's Messenger and Telegram.

### What is the Online Safety Bill?

The Online Safety Bill is a proposed British legislation that seeks to improve online safety by placing certain "duty of care" obligations on online platforms.

Most of the criticism is directed against clause 110 of the OSB which empowers the British telecommunications regulator, the Office of Communications, to issue notices to most kinds of internet service providers, including private messaging apps and search engines, to identify and take down terrorism content that is communicated "publicly" and Child Sex Exploitation and Abuse (CSEA) content that is communicated "publicly or privately", and to prevent such content from being communicated in the first place. Although the OSB does not mandate removal of E2E encryption, it would de facto mean breaking it as messaging apps would have to scan all messages that are sent on their platform to flag and take down terrorist and CSEA content. Since the clause also requires the platforms to "prevent" terrorism and CSEA content from being communicated using the platforms, it would mean that WhatsApp would have to implement a client-side scanning mechanism to scan content on users' devices before it is even encrypted. For this, they would need to rely on algorithms that are not very sophisticated and do not understand context. For instance, in 2021, Google automatically blocked a

father's account in San Francisco and reported him to the local police because he had shot videos of his toddler son's infection in intimate areas to share with his son's doctor during the pandemic.

Privacy and free speech advocates, as well as multiple members of the British Parliament, view this Bill as a disproportionate step that allows the state to mandate bulk interception and surveillance.

### What have other platforms said?

Last month, Signal's president Meredith Whittaker told the BBC that Signal "would absolutely, 100% walk" if forced to weaken the privacy of its messaging platform. In a blog post, she wrote, "[encryption] is either broken for everyone, or it works for everyone. There is no way to create a safe backdoor." Matthew Hodgson, the CEO of British Company Element that runs Matrix-based E2E encrypted messenger, said that if the OSB was passed, he may have to exit the U.K. entirely and shift his company's headquarters.

### What if the platforms don't comply?

If platforms do not comply, they may face penalties of up to £18 million or 10% of the platform's global revenue of the preceding accounting year, whichever is higher. Currently, the Bill has been passed by the House of Commons and a House of Lords committee is examining the Bill. Once the committee's report is ready, it will go back to House of Lords for a third reading.

### Did India enact a similar law?

Through the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, the Indian government made it mandatory for messaging platforms with more than five million users in India to "enable the identification of the first originator" of a message, or what is commonly called traceability. This is not the same as asking for scanning and flagging of all encrypted content; it is about getting to the first person who sent a message that may have been forwarded multiple times. In India, WhatsApp did not threaten to leave the market. It instead, sued the Indian government over the traceability requirement. This is mainly because India, with 487.5 million WhatsApp users, is home to 22% of the platform's 2.24 billion monthly active users. WhatsApp's penetration rate in India is over 97% while in the U.K., it is at about 75%. Moreover, the U.K., with 40.4 million users accounts for little less than 2% of global users. Even Mr. Cathcart said it would be "an odd choice" to compromise the app's security for just 2% of its user base.

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## WHY DO LANDFILLS CATCH FIRE DURING SUMMERS?

*How should a municipality respond if a landfill does catch fire? What are some of the permanent solutions?*

### The story so far:

The Kochi landfill site around Brahmapuram that caught fire earlier this month is a stark reminder that Indian cities need to be prepared for more such incidents as summer approaches. Preventing such fires require long-term measures, including thorough and sustained interventions from municipalities.

### How do landfills catch fire?

India's municipalities have been collecting more than 95% of the waste generated in cities but the efficiency of waste-processing is 30-40% at best. Municipal solid waste consists of about 60% biodegradable material, 25% non-biodegradable material and 15% inert materials, like silt and stone. Municipalities are expected to process the wet and dry waste separately and to have the recovered by-products recycled. Unfortunately, the rate of processing in India's cities is far lower than the rate of waste generation, so unprocessed waste remains in open landfills for long periods of time. This openly disposed waste includes flammable material like low-quality plastics, which have a relatively higher calorific value of about 2,500-3,000 kcal/kg, and rags and clothes. In summer, the biodegradable fraction composts much faster, increasing the temperature of the heap to beyond 70-80°C. A higher temperature coupled with flammable materials is the perfect situation for a landfill to catch fire. Some fires go on for months.

### Is there a permanent solution?

There are two possible permanent solutions to manage landfill fires. The first solution is to completely cap the material using soil, and close

landfills in a scientific manner. This solution is unsuitable in the Indian context, as the land can't be used again for other purposes. Closed landfills have specific standard operating procedures, including managing the methane emissions. The second solution is to clear the piles of waste through bioremediation — excavate old waste and use automated sieving machines to segregate the flammable refuse-derived fuel (RDF) (plastics, rags, clothes, etc.) from biodegradable material. The recovered RDF can be sent to cement kilns as fuel, while the bio-soil can be distributed to farmers to enrich soil. The inert fraction will have to be landfilled. However, implementing a bioremediation project usually takes up to two or three years, necessitating a short-term solution for summertime landfill fires.

### What are some immediate measures?

Landfill sites span 20-30 acres and have different kinds of waste. The first immediate action is to divide a site into blocks depending on the nature of the waste. At each site, blocks with fresh waste should be separated from blocks with flammable material. Blocks that have been capped using soil are less likely to catch fire, so portions like these should also be separated out. The different blocks should ideally be separated using a drain or soil bund and a layer of soil should cap each block. This reduces the chance of fires spreading across blocks within the same landfill. Next, the most vulnerable part of the landfill — the portion with lots of plastics and cloth — should be capped with soil. The fresh-waste block shouldn't be capped but enough moisture should be provided by sprinkling water and the material should be turned regularly for aeration, which helps cool the waste heap. Once a site has been divided into blocks, the landfill operator should classify incoming waste on arrival to the site, and dispose

them in designated blocks rather than dumping mixed fractions. Already segregated non-recyclable and non-biodegradable waste should be sent to cement kilns instead of being allowed to accumulate. Dry grass material and dry trees from the site should also be cleared immediately.

While these measures can help reduce the fires' damage, they're far from ideal and not long-term solutions. The permanent and essential solution is to ensure cities have a systematic waste-processing system where wet and dry waste are processed separately and their byproducts treated accordingly.



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