

## INDIA, CHINA REACHES DEAL ON EASING LAC TENSIONS

### INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

**CONTEXT:** India and China have reached an agreement to resolve military tensions at the Line of Actual Control (LAC), addressing outstanding issues in Demchok and Depsang, according to government officials.

During a press briefing, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri announced an agreement between India and China on patrolling arrangements along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), marking the completion of the disengagement process that stalled in 2020. The announcement precedes a potential meeting between Prime Minister Modi and President Xi at the BRICS summit.

## Run-up to resolution

The Indian and Chinese militaries have been locked in the stand-off along the Line of Actual Control since May 2020. India announced that it has reached agreements on patrolling and other issues

**June-July 2024:** Minister Jaishankar meets Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Almaty, Vientiane

**July-August:** Working mechanism of diplomats, military holds meetings in Delhi, Beijing

**September:** National Security Adviser Ajit Doval meets Wang Yi in St. Petersburg

**October:** Military commanders, diplomats meet at LAC points



### Major headway:

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri made the announcement on the breakthrough during a press briefing on PM Narendra Modi's visit to Russia on Tuesday. PTI

India and China have achieved a breakthrough in disengagement in eastern Ladakh after a two-year stalemate, particularly concerning the friction points of Depsang and Demchok. Patrolling along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) will resume as it was prior to 2020, eliminating previously established buffer zones. External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar noted the need for caution and further discussions on the modalities of disengagement, while troop de-escalation remains unresolved amid ongoing tensions.

Chinese troops at Depsang plains have been obstructing Indian patrols from accessing key Patrolling Points (PPs) since early 2020, using face-offs as a tactic. Under established protocols, both sides perform banner drills to prevent escalation. While disengagement from five friction points has occurred since the June 2020 clashes, including the recent disengagement from PP15, clarity on new patrolling norms and troop de-escalation remains necessary to address ongoing tensions along the Line of Actual Control.

# LAWS FOR MINORITY INSTITUTIONS DO NOT BREACH SECULARISM

## INDIAN POLITY

**CONTEXT:** The Supreme Court, led by Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, stated that laws regulating minority-run institutions do not violate secularism, while hearing a challenge to the Uttar Pradesh Madrasa Education Act.

The Chief Justice of India, D.Y. Chandrachud, addressed a challenge to the Allahabad High Court's decision to strike down the Uttar Pradesh Board of Madrasa Education Act, 2004, citing its violation of secularism. The Chief Justice emphasized that regulating madrasas does not inherently violate secular principles and that states have the right to enhance education standards in minority institutions. The case, affecting around 17 lakh students in 16,000 madrasas, will continue its hearing on October 22.

*“A law per se regulating an institution belonging to a particular community does not ipso facto [by the fact itself] offend the principle of secularism”* - Chief Justice of India.

### Rights of Minorities in the Indian Constitution

- **Two Sets of Rights:** The Constitution delineates rights into 'common domain' applicable to all citizens and 'separate domain' for minorities.
- **Common Domain Rights:** Rights in the common domain are universal, ensuring equality and protection for all citizens.
- **Separate Domain Rights:** Separate domain rights are specifically designed to protect the identity and interests of minority groups.
- **Secular State:** The Preamble establishes India as a secular state, emphasizing the significance of religious minority rights.
- **Liberty and Equality:** The Preamble guarantees liberty of thought and equality of status for all citizens, reinforcing inclusive governance.

# NO PAPER TRAIL ON WAQF BILL PROCESS, ALLEGES OPPOSITION

## INDIAN POLITY

**CONTEXT:** During a Joint Committee meeting on the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024, Opposition members questioned the Union Minority Affairs Ministry's consultation process, citing a lack of documented evidence of discussions.

Concerns have been raised over the drafting process of the Uttar Pradesh Board of Madrasa Education Act, 2004, as outlined by the Ministry of Minority Affairs. Opposition leaders criticized the consultative meetings, noting that minutes primarily addressed administrative matters rather than stakeholder input. Questions remain regarding the involvement of the Central Waqf Council and the expertise of the officials involved. The Ministry has yet to provide documentation proving adequate consultations took place, leading to doubts about the legitimacy of the drafting process.

### Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024

- Introduction and Purpose: The Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024 amends the Waqf Act, 1995, regulating waqf property management in India.
- Formation of Waqf: The Bill stipulates that only practicing Muslims for five years can declare waqf, removing waqf by user.
- Government Property: Government properties designated as waqf will no longer hold that status, with ownership determined by the local Collector.
- Central Waqf Council: The Bill alters Council membership to include non-Muslims, while retaining requirements for Muslim representation and gender balance.
- Tribunals and Appeals: The Bill modifies tribunal composition and appeals process, allowing decisions to be appealed in High Court within 90 days.

## IN A FIRST, WIKIPEDIA TAKES DOWN ARTICLE GLOBALLY AFTER DELHI HC ORDER

### INDIAN POLITY

**CONTEXT:** Wikipedia has removed the article on "Asian News International vs. Wikimedia Foundation," marking the first instance of an English article being taken down by the platform in its history.

The Delhi High Court has ordered the takedown of certain content from a Wikipedia page related to a lawsuit filed by ANI against the Wikimedia Foundation, ruling that it interfered with court proceedings and violated the sub judice principle. ANI alleges that the page characterizes it as spreading pro-government propaganda and disinformation. The court stated that such claims could damage the agency's credibility. ANI is seeking edits to the page and ₹2 crore in damages.

### Contempt of Court Act, 1971

- Empowerment of Courts: Articles 129 and 215 of the Constitution empower Supreme and High Courts to punish contempt acts.
- Punishments Defined: Contempt of court can result in fines or simple imprisonment for up to six months.
- 2006 Amendment: The 2006 amendment allows truth as a defence in contempt cases if deemed in public interest.
- Rationale for Contempt: The Act aims to penalize disobedience to court orders, protect judges, and uphold judicial integrity.
- Need for Reformation: The broad definition of contempt and suo motu powers complicate criticism, conflicting with freedom of speech principles.



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# BLACK HOLES IN WEBB DATA ALLAY THREAT TO COSMOLOGY'S STANDARD MODEL

## SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

**CONTEXT:** Astronomers using the James Webb Space Telescope discovered unexpectedly large galaxies dating back 400-650 million years after the Big Bang, challenging existing cosmological models, according to a recent study.

Detecting distant galaxies requires advanced telescopes like the Hubble and JWST, with JWST specializing in infrared observations to study the early universe. A new study analysing data from JWST's CEERS Survey suggests that early galaxies may have formed stars more efficiently than those today, which could challenge current models of galaxy formation and evolution. Researchers emphasize that this efficiency doesn't impact the universe's large-scale structure, primarily driven by dark matter.

Researchers have analysed black holes at the centres of ancient galaxies, referred to as "little red dots" due to their light emission. These black holes significantly contribute to the total light of their host galaxies, which may have led to overestimations of star mass in prior studies. The new analysis, which accounted for the light from these black holes, revealed that the galaxies are less massive than previously thought, thereby preserving the standard model of cosmology.

Researchers assert that the standard model of cosmology remains robust in explaining efficient star formation in the early universe due to extreme conditions and abundant gas. While previous JWST observations suggested potential contradictions to this model, including the early emergence of spiral galaxies, the latest findings indicate that galaxies may be less massive than thought, aligning with standard predictions. The team plans to incorporate more JWST data to refine their analysis and enhance understanding of early galaxy formation.

### Black Holes

- **Definition of Black Holes:** Black holes are dense points in space with gravitational pulls strong enough to prevent light from escaping.
- **Formation Process:** They form from the death of massive stars, which lose thermonuclear fuel and undergo gravitational collapse.
- **Mass and Space:** Black holes occupy zero space but possess mass, increasing in size as they consume nearby matter.
- **Event Horizon:** The event horizon is the point of no return, marking the boundary beyond which nothing can escape.
- **Core Collapse and Singularity:** A massive star's core collapses into a singularity, a point of infinite density and zero volume.



*"If you invest more in your education, then you are likely to get more interest in it."*

*—Benjamin Franklin*

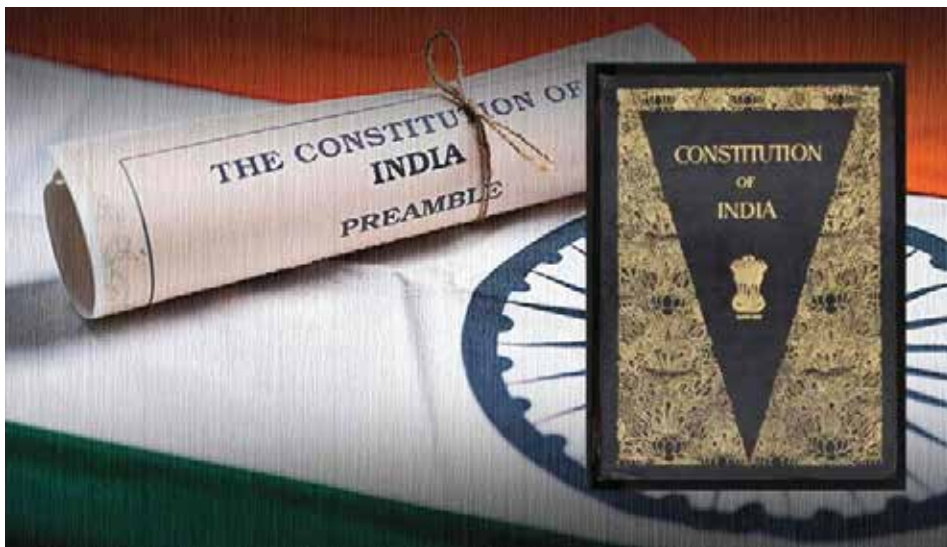


# AN APPROACHING MILESTONE IN CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNANCE

## INDIAN POLITY

**CONTEXT:** November 26 marks the 75th anniversary of India's Constitution, emphasizing the importance of constitutional governance and culture in shaping the democratic identity of the nation across diverse communities.

As we approach Constitution Day, it's vital to recognize core constitutional values shaping India's democratic culture. Key among them is the respect for democratic institutions, evident in India's significant voter turnout, such as 65.79% in the 2024 general election. Additionally, the smooth transition of elected governments reflects a deep commitment to democratic traditions, where political parties accept electoral outcomes, ensuring the people's voice prevails in shaping governance and policy decisions.



Core constitutional values in India include the protection of rights and freedoms through the judiciary, reflecting the framers' commitment to safeguarding individual liberties against state power. Additionally, federalism is emphasized as a vital aspect of governance, recognizing India's diversity. The Constitution balances state autonomy with national identity, ensuring that unique histories and cultures are respected. This approach fosters equity and inclusivity, addressing regional disparities while

upholding a collective national ethos.

The idea of federalism in India has evolved over the last seven decades through the rise of State-level political parties, which have contributed to coalition governments and national political consciousness. Additionally, the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments established local governance institutions like panchayati raj and nagarpalikas. This evolution highlights the importance of regional representation and governance structures in India's democratic framework.

Celebrating 75 years of constitutional governance in India is significant, especially considering historical scepticism about the country's unity. General Claude Auchinleck once doubted India's ability to forge a national identity, viewing it as a diverse subcontinent. However, India has successfully created a cohesive national identity rooted in constitutional ideals, using the Constitution to foster social conscience and political awareness, proving critics wrong in the process.



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# THE CASE FOR A NATURE RESTORATION LAW IN INDIA

## ECOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

**CONTEXT:** India faces significant land degradation, with a need for comprehensive nature restoration laws. The EU's Nature Restoration Law, aiming to restore ecosystems by 2050, serves as a potential model.

India faces significant environmental challenges, with nearly 97.85 million hectares experiencing land degradation as of 2018-19, a notable increase from previous years. Desertification affects 83.69 million hectares, particularly in states like Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Rajasthan. While initiatives like the Green India Mission and the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana have made progress, a more comprehensive approach is needed. India should adopt a nature restoration law similar to the EU's legally binding targets for ecosystem restoration to ensure long-term sustainability.

India could benefit from a Nature Restoration Law, inspired by the EU's model, aiming to restore 20% of degraded land by 2030 and all ecosystems by 2050. Key focus areas include wetland restoration, agricultural biodiversity, river restoration, and urban green spaces. The law could generate significant economic returns, enhance agricultural productivity, and create millions of jobs, while helping India meet its Sustainable Development Goals. Additionally, restoring ecosystems can mitigate climate change impacts and enhance carbon absorption, making timely action essential.

### National Forest Policy and Afforestation Initiatives in India

- **National Forest Goal:** The National Forest Policy (NFP) aims for one-third of India's land area to be under forest or tree cover.
- **Centrally Sponsored Schemes:** Initiatives like the National Mission for a Green India and Forest Fire Protection & Management Scheme support afforestation activities.
- **Desertification Atlas:** The Desertification and Land Degradation Atlas provides data on degraded land, aiding restoration efforts across India.
- **International Commitments:** India pledged to restore 26 million hectares of degraded land by 2030 as part of the Bonn Challenge.
- **Coastal Habitat Rehabilitation:** Tamil Nadu's eco-restoration project focuses on mangrove ecosystems and bio-shield planting across coastal districts.

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# ON SANCTIONS AND SHADOW FLEETS

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

**CONTEXT:** Western media have termed India's tanker ships transporting Russian crude oil as a "shadow fleet," suggesting illegal trading practices and portraying India as facilitating the laundering of Russian oil.

The global shipping industry is highly diversified, with Greeks owning 20% of the merchant fleet and China overtaking Japan as the second-largest owner. Most ships are built and repaired in China, Japan, and South Korea, while marine insurance and regulations are centered in the UK and Europe. Ships register under "flag states" for identification, often utilizing Flags of Convenience to obscure ownership. Classification societies ensure safety and facilitate insurance, including Protection and Indemnity coverage through risk-sharing clubs.



Turkey, a NATO member, is trading in Russian oil, risking the loss of its Protection and Indemnity (P&I) insurance club due to U.S. leverage over London-based clubs. Ship owners can bypass this by transferring vessel management to a European firm with P&I cover, allowing them to continue operations. Additionally, companies often use shell corporations to obscure ship ownership, while some register ships in jurisdictions like Eswatini, a non-signatory of the International Maritime Organization, to avoid regulatory scrutiny.

India faces accusations of complicity in shadow fleets supporting Russian shipping, as many Russian vessels have allied with Indian firms and relocated to Dubai. The Indian Register of Shipping (IRS) reported increased certification

of ships linked to Russian entities, raising concerns about India's involvement. Critics argue that enforcing U.S. sanctions on Russian oil is challenging due to the complex shipping industry structure and lack of transparency in ownership. Additionally, the U.K. has taken only mild action against companies violating sanctions, fearing negative impacts on its businesses.



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# HIGH-PERFORMANCE BUILDING STANDARDS AND CLIMATE GOALS

## ECOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

**CONTEXT:** High-Performance Buildings (HPBs) are becoming vital in addressing climate challenges, offering environmental and financial benefits, while India is adapting its policies to support their development and implementation.

India is advancing energy-efficient buildings through initiatives like the Energy Conservation Building Code (ECBC) and the Green Rating for Integrated Habitat Assessment (GRIHA), which promote sustainable practices. Cities such as Hyderabad and Noida are incentivizing compliance with these standards, aiming for 30% of new buildings to achieve net-zero status by 2030. High-performance buildings (HPBs) offer financial advantages, including reduced energy costs, improved indoor air quality, and higher property values, making them increasingly attractive to environmentally conscious investors and tenants.

Carbon financing is crucial for promoting high-performance buildings (HPBs) by converting carbon savings into financial assets, facilitating funding for developers. Carbon credits, tradable permits earned through emissions reduction, provide financial incentives in regions with carbon pricing, like the EU and China. Additionally, green bonds and climate-focused funds are increasingly popular, with \$269.5 billion issued in 2020. These mechanisms help offset the higher initial costs of HPBs, making them more affordable and supporting global carbon reduction efforts.

### Indian Carbon Market (ICM) for Decarbonisation Initiatives

- Objective of ICM: The Indian Carbon Market aims to decarbonise the economy by pricing Greenhouse Gas emissions through Carbon Credit trading.
- Collaboration for Development: Bureau of Energy Efficiency and Ministry of Environment are collaboratively developing the Carbon Credit Trading Scheme to enhance energy transition.
- Sectoral Benchmarks: GHG emissions intensity benchmarks and targets will be aligned with India's climate goals to guide carbon credit trading.
- Incentivizing Low-Carbon Solutions: ICM will create a competitive market, attracting investment and technology for sustainable projects generating carbon credits.
- Capacity Building and Governance: A comprehensive governance structure will ensure effective implementation, supported by capacity building for all involved entities.

# SOME SLACKENING OF MOMENTUM BUT GDP MAY HAVE RISEN 6.8% IN Q2

## ECONOMICS & DEVELOPMENT

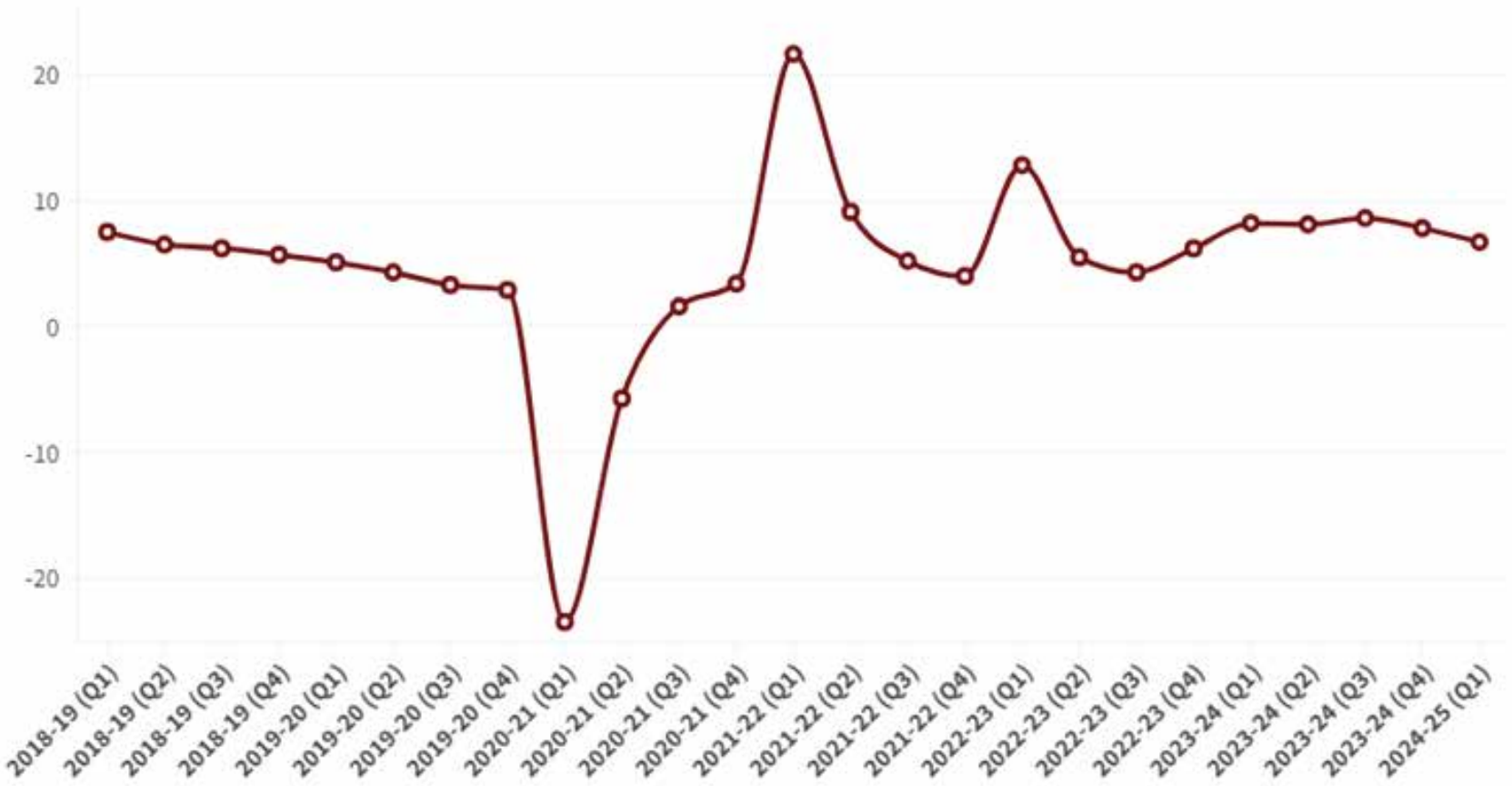
**CONTEXT:** India's GDP is expected to grow by 6.8% in Q2 of 2024-25, slightly surpassing the 6.7% growth in Q1, according to an RBI economic activity index.

The Reserve Bank of India's October Bulletin highlights that India's growth outlook remains strong despite geopolitical tensions, although some high-frequency indicators showed a slowdown in Q2 2024-25. Factors like heavy rains and the Pitru Paksha festival contributed to declines in GST collections,



automobile sales, bank credit growth, merchandise exports, and the manufacturing PMI. However, improvements in consumer perceptions and optimism among industry players suggest a potential recovery, with GDP growth projected at 6.8% for Q2. Positive signs in private investment and consumption spending indicate a favourable outlook for the upcoming festival season.

**Quarter-wise Real GDP Growth Rates (%) for FY 2018-19 to FY 2024-25 (Q1) (Constant Prices)  
(Base Year: 2011-12)**



The Reserve Bank of India's article raised concerns about stretched valuations in Indian stock markets and geopolitical uncertainties in the Middle East, contributing to a pullback in key indices. Inflation surged to 5.5% in September, driven primarily by rising food prices, particularly oils and fats, despite a decline in cereals and pulses. While some food price pressures may be temporary due to the kharif harvest, geopolitical tensions pose risks for net importer countries facing rising commodity prices, especially crude oil and metals.



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# ISRAEL BOMBS INSTITUTION ACCUSED OF FUNDING HEZBOLLAH'S OPERATIONS

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

**CONTEXT:** Israel intensified air strikes against Hezbollah-linked targets in Lebanon, including financial institutions, aiming to disrupt the group's funding sources amid ongoing military operations in the region.

Israel accuses al-Qard Al-Hassan, a Hezbollah-linked financial firm, of funding the group's terror activities, including weapon purchases, while the U.S. sanctions it for allegedly masking Hezbollah's financial operations amid Lebanon's economic crisis.

### ***Economic Toll of Conflict: Israel's Strain from Military Spending***

Israel's conflict with Hamas and Hezbollah has significantly increased military spending, rising from \$1.8 billion to approximately \$4.7 billion monthly. The economy has contracted 5.6% post-October 7 attacks, with growth slowing to 0.2% in Q2 2024. The war has severely impacted Gaza and the West Bank economies, with 90% of Gaza's population displaced and the West Bank contracting by 25%. Economists warn of potential declines in investment and higher taxes as government budgets are strained.

Israel faces significant economic burdens due to ongoing conflict, with military call-ups impacting labor supply and deterring investment. The government is providing housing for displaced citizens, while Moody's downgraded its credit rating, citing concerns over prolonged fighting. Despite these challenges, Israel's diversified economy remains robust, with low unemployment and a growing tech sector. However, projected deficits and rising debt could lead to higher taxes and cuts to public services as financial pressures mount.



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