Kerala to ‘Keralam’

WHY IN NEWS: The State of Kerala was officially renamed to **Keralam** after Parliament passed the **Kerala (Alteration of Name) Bill, 2026** and the Union Home Ministry notified the change.

WHAT IT IS: State renaming refers to the official alteration of the name of an existing State through a **law made by Parliament under Article 3** of the Constitution. The change is subsequently reflected in the **First Schedule** of the Constitution, which lists India’s States and Union Territories.

Rationale Behind the Name Change

- **Linguistic Identity:** The state is called Keralam in the local Malayalam language, whereas “Kerala” was an anglicized version used in administrative records and the First Schedule of the Constitution.
- **Cultural Heritage:** The name Keralam reflects the region’s indigenous roots and native linguistic identity, which originated during the state’s reorganization on November 1, 1956.
- **State Resolution:** The Kerala Legislative Assembly unanimously passed resolutions in 2024 urging the central government to formalize the name Keralam across all languages listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution.

Renaming of a State: Constitutional Procedure

- **Article 3:** Parliament can alter the name, area or boundaries of any State by law.
- **State Proposal:** Usually, the State Legislature passes a resolution requesting the change and sends it to the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).
- **MHA Clearance:** MHA consults relevant agencies/ministries and obtains necessary No Objection Certificates (NOCs).
- **President’s Recommendation:** The Bill can be introduced in Parliament only on the prior recommendation of the President.
- **State Legislature Consultation:** The President refers the Bill to the concerned State Legislature for its views within a specified period. Its consent is not mandatory; Parliament is not bound by its views.
- **Simple Majority:** The Bill is passed by a simple majority in Parliament. It is **not** a constitutional amendment under Article 368.
- **Presidential Assent:** After assent, the new name takes effect and the First Schedule is correspondingly amended.

Historical Precedents of State Renaming

Earlier Name	New / Proposed Name	Key Point
Madras	Tamil Nadu (1969)	Reflected Tamil linguistic and cultural identity
Mysore	Karnataka (1973)	Represented the wider Kannada-speaking region
Uttaranchal	Uttarakhand (2007)	Restored the historically preferred regional name
Orissa	Odisha (2011)	"Orissa" to "Odisha" and "Oriya" to "Odia"
Kerala	Keralam (2026)	Seeks alignment with the Malayalam name Keralam

Impacts of Renaming a State

- **Administrative Changes:** Requires updating government records, maps, signage, databases and official documents.
- **Financial Cost:** Creates expenditure due to changes in stationery, signboards, digital systems and public infrastructure.
- **Legal Adjustments:** References to the State in relevant laws, rules and official records may need updating.
- **National Coordination:** Central agencies such as Railways, Posts, Survey of India and Registrar General must align their records.
- **Public Adjustment:** Citizens, businesses and institutions may face short-term transition and documentation issues.

Iran Nuclear Deal

WHY IN NEWS: The Iran nuclear deal is back in the news as the **US and Iran hold talks to ease tensions and explore a broader peace agreement**. Iran's uranium enrichment, US sanctions, IAEA inspections and the future of the 2015 JCPOA remain key issues.

WHAT IS IT: The **Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)** is a **2015 nuclear agreement** between Iran and the **P5+1 countries plus the EU**. Iran agreed to limit its uranium enrichment and nuclear activities under IAEA monitoring in return for relief from nuclear-related economic sanctions.

What Did Iran Agree To?

Under the original JCPOA:

- **Uranium enrichment:** Limited to **3.67% U-235**.
- **Uranium stockpile:** Capped at **300 kg of UF_6**, equivalent to about **202.8 kg of uranium**.
- **Natanz:** Allowed limited uranium enrichment using restricted numbers/types of **centrifuges**.
- **Fordow:** No uranium enrichment was to take place there for **15 years**; it was to be converted into a nuclear, physics and technology centre.
- **Arak:** Its **heavy-water research reactor** was to be redesigned so it could not produce significant quantities of weapons-grade plutonium.
- **IAEA:** Given extensive access to **verify and monitor** Iran's compliance.

Nuclear Enrichment: Key Terms

Term	Meaning
U-235	Fissile isotope of uranium capable of sustaining a nuclear chain reaction.
Centrifuge	Machine used to separate uranium isotopes and increase the proportion of U-235.
UF_6 (Uranium Hexafluoride)	Gaseous uranium compound commonly fed into centrifuges during enrichment.
LEU: Low-Enriched Uranium	Generally uranium enriched to below 20% U-235.
HEU: Highly Enriched Uranium	Conventionally uranium containing 20% or more U-235.
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency, headquartered in Vienna, Austria. Verifies the peaceful use of nuclear material through safeguards and inspections.

Uranium Enrichment: Understand it Simply

Natural uranium contains only about **0.7% U-235**. Enrichment means increasing the concentration of U-235, generally using rapidly spinning **gas centrifuges**.

Enrichment	Remember as
~0.7%	Natural uranium
3.67%	Original JCPOA limit
Below 20%	Low-Enriched Uranium (LEU)
60%	Level Iran has produced
~90%	Common benchmark for weapons-grade uranium

> **Remember:** 60% enriched uranium is not the same as weapons-grade uranium, but reaching higher enrichment levels becomes progressively easier once uranium has already been enriched substantially.

Important Nuclear Sites in Iran

- **Natanz (Uranium Enrichment):** One of Iran's main uranium-enrichment centres, where centrifuges are used to increase the concentration of U-235.
- **Fordow (Underground Enrichment Site):** A highly protected facility built underground near Qom. The JCPOA placed strict limits on nuclear activities at this site.
- **Arak (Heavy-Water Reactor):** Known for its heavy-water research reactor. Under the JCPOA, the reactor was to be redesigned to greatly reduce its ability to produce weapons-usable plutonium.
- **Bushehr (Nuclear Power Plant):** Iran's major civilian nuclear power plant, located along the Persian Gulf coast and used for electricity generation.

Iran and the NPT

Iran is a member of the **Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)** as a non-nuclear-weapon State.

- Under the NPT, non-nuclear-weapon States agree not to develop or acquire nuclear weapons.
- They can use nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, subject to IAEA safeguards and verification.
- The NPT recognises **five Nuclear-Weapon States:** USA, Russia, UK, France and China.

> **Note:** India, Pakistan and Israel are not parties to the NPT. North Korea announced its withdrawal in 2003.

JCPOA: Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action

The JCPOA began to weaken in **2018**, when the US withdrew from the deal and brought back sanctions on Iran. In response, Iran gradually stopped following several restrictions under the agreement, including limits on uranium enrichment, uranium stockpiles and advanced centrifuges.

Chabahar Port: Important for India?

Chabahar Port is a strategically important Iranian port located on the **Gulf of Oman** in southeastern Iran.

For India, it provides an **alternative route to Afghanistan and Central Asia** without passing through Pakistan.

India is involved in the **Shahid Beheshti Terminal** through **India Ports Global Limited (IPGL)**. In May 2024, IPGL signed a **10-year contract** with Iran for operating and developing the terminal.

> **Note:** Chabahar is on the Gulf of Oman, NOT the Persian Gulf.

Map Facts to Remember

- **Location:** Gulf of Oman
- **Not inside:** Persian Gulf
- **Position:** East of the Strait of Hormuz
- **Nearby strategic port:** Pakistan's Gwadar Port

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