

Insights Unwrapped

Helium Supply Disruptions in the Middle East (2026)



4th April 2026

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Global Helium Supply Hit by One-Third Loss

Essential uses: The superfluid backbone

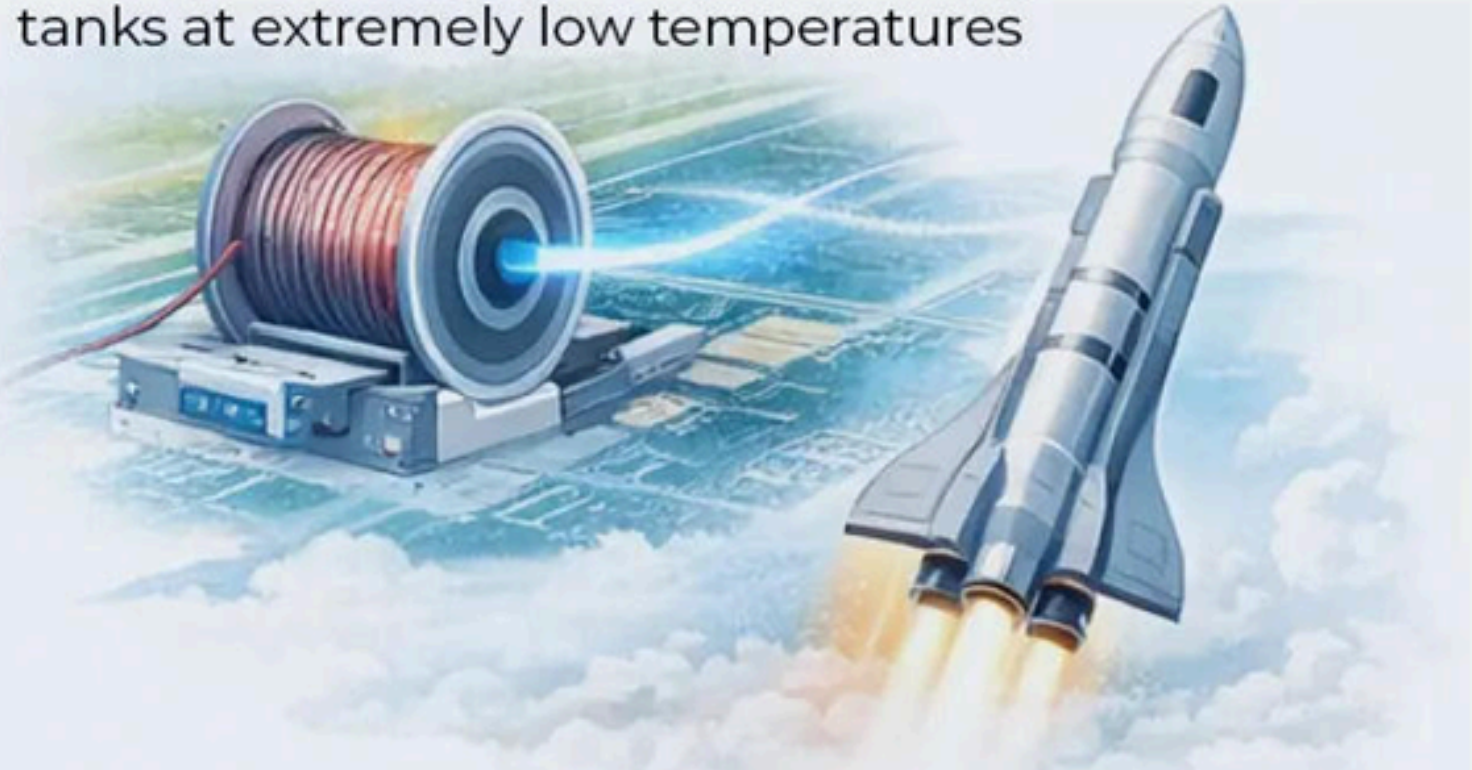
MRI machines: Cooling superconducting magnets to around -269°C for medical imaging



Semiconductor manufacturing: Cooling components and preventing contamination in chip production

Fiber optics: Supporting high-precision manufacturing processes

Aerospace: Purging and pressurising rocket fuel tanks at extremely low temperatures



Source: Times of India

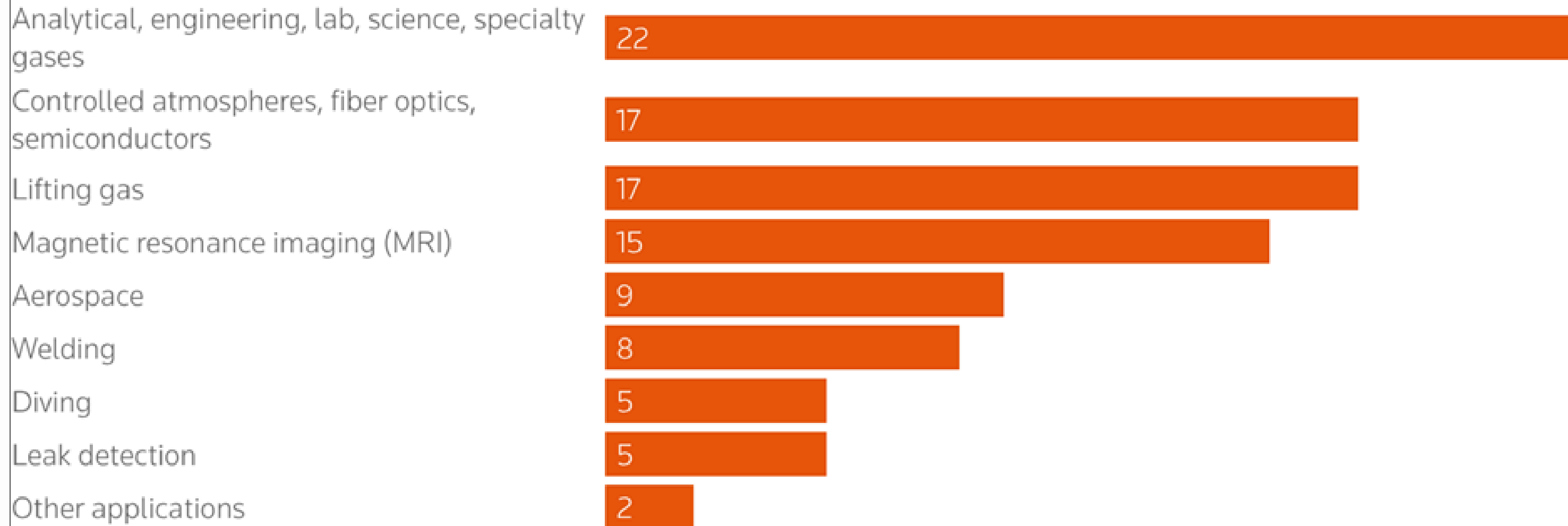
- Qatar and the U.S. are the primary global helium suppliers. Qatar often provides roughly 30-36% of the world's supply.
- Qatar—world's 2nd-largest helium producer—hit by shutdown at Ras Laffan Industrial City due to the Iran war → major supply cut
- **Logistics constraint:** The gas is typically shipped in liquid form and gradually evaporates during transport → must reach users within ~45 days
- Market impact: **prices have doubled since the conflict began**
- **Critical uses at risk:** MRI scanners, semiconductor manufacturing, fiber optics, aerospace (rocket tank pressurization)

(Data Source: Reuters)

Major Application of Helium Gas

Sectoral usage of helium

Breakdown of U.S. helium consumption by end-use sectors (in percentage)



As of February, 2026

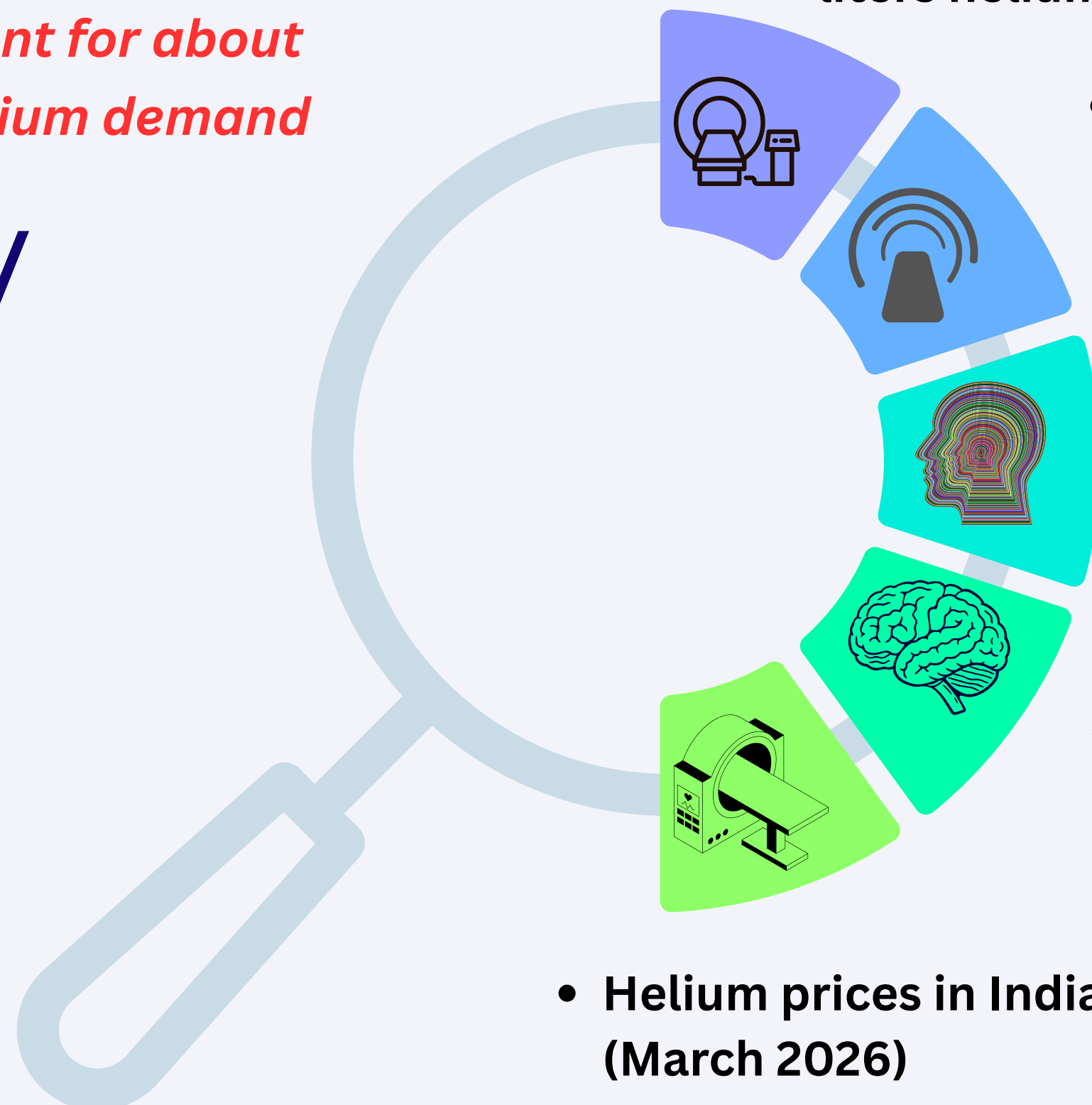
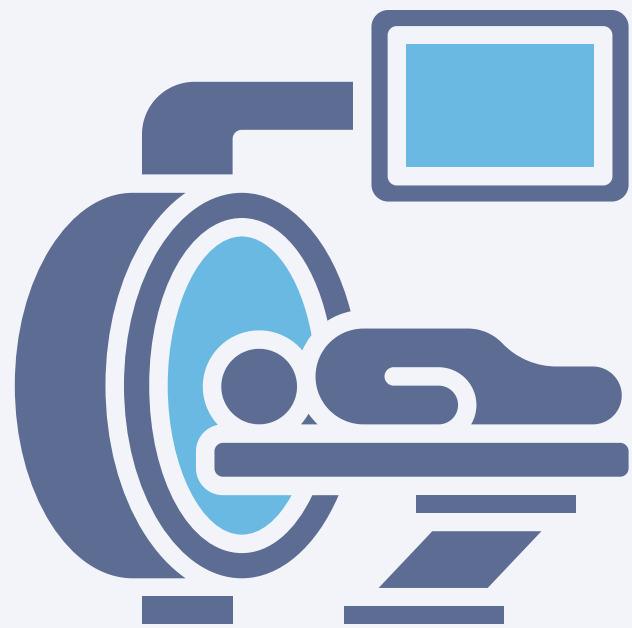
Source: USGS Data | Arunima Kumar and Sumit Saha



Helium is used in several key stages of chipmaking, including cooling, leak detection and precision manufacturing processes, and its prices have soared since the Middle East crisis began.

MRI machines account for about 30–33% of global helium demand

Healthcare / MRI impact



- MRI machines require ~1000-1500 litres of liquid helium (New helium-free MRI machines use <10 liters helium)

- Helium keeps magnets cool at ~4 Kelvin (-269°C)

- **Shortage may lead to:**

- Reduced MRI availability
- Higher diagnostic costs
- Operational disruptions in hospitals

- **Diagnostic centers forced to:**

- Reassess pricing
- Cut costs or limit usage

- Helium prices in India increased by 70–100% (March 2026)

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