BUSINESS LINE, Delhi, 29.3.2025
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'No disruption in LPG supply due to strike'

Our Bureau
Chennai

Oil marketing companies (IOCL, BPCL, and HPCL) have reassured LPG consumers that there will be no disruption in the supply of cooking gas despite the ongoing strike by bulk LPG transporters affiliated with the Southern Region Bulk LPG Transport Owners Association.

Over 5,500 LPG tanker lorries have gone on an indefinite strike from Thursday, demanding the withdrawal of new tender regulations.

An official statement said the recent tender was finalised after consultations with transporters across regions. Multiple pre-bid meetings were conducted in key cities, like Chennai, Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, and Guwahati, to address their concerns.

Bulk LPG transporters claim latest tenders favour large operators

Rishi Ranjan Kala
New Delhi

ON STRIKE. LPG tanker lorries parked at depot during a strike by Namakkal-based Southern Regional Bulk LPG Owners' Association, demanding scrapping of new tender rules, in Chennai PTI

The All India Bulk LPG Transporters Federation has approached Oil Minister Hardeep Singh Puri, claiming that the tender for ferrying bulk LPG does not have the "experience" clause, which is vital for transporting hazardous materials such as cooking gas.

The issue relates to the tender for bulk transport of LPG that is floated by oil companies — Indian Oil Corporation (IoCL), Bharat Petroleum Corporation (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation (HPCL) — once every five years.

The current agreement period ends on August 31, 2025. The tanker operators are protesting against the latest tender, which was issued on March 1, 2025.

In a letter to Puri on Thursday, All India Bulk LPG Transporters Federation President Khushwant Singh said, "A key issue that remains unaddressed in the corrigendum is the absence of an experience clause, which is particularly vital in the transportation of hazardous materials like LPG."

These tankers ferry liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) from oil refineries to bottling plants.

To highlight this, Singh referred to the recently published tender for propylene transportation by IoCL, where a pre-qualification clause for "Similar Nature of Job" was included. This clause specified that bidders must have experience in transporting pressurised hydrocarbon tank trucks, such as LPG, Butene, Propylene, and Butadiene.

"Surprisingly, no such pre-qualification criteria have been included in the LPG tender 2025-30, despite the substantial scale of the tender and the risks associated with transporting LPG. Even the tragic Jaipur incident has not prompted the tender coordination committee (TCC) or the oil industry to consider the public safety implications more seriously," he added.

In December 2024, an LPG tanker caught fire after an accident on the Jaipur-Ajmer highway leading to several casualties.

"Transporters across the country share similar grievances, with many considering withdrawing from operations as the tender process seems rigged in favour of large fleet operators," the industry body claimed.

LARGE FLEET OPERATORS

After the tender was floated, tanker owners raised their issues in pre-bid meetings following which a corrigendum was issued. However, the industry body claims that their concerns have not been addressed. "It is evident that the relationship between oil industry officials and large fleet operators has grown too close to the point where the pre-qualification criteria (PQC) are being tailored to benefit only a select few, large fleet operators," Singh claimed.

This is evident in the recent propylene transportation tender, which included restrictive clauses like the ownership requirement for tank trucks, ensuring that only large operators could bid. Similarly, the LPG tender 2025-30 seems to have been drafted in a way that favours large fleet owners and creates barriers for smaller operators, leading to an unfair advantage for the chosen few, he added.

"As it stands, every bulk LPG transporter in the industry is deeply aggrieved by the published 2025-30 tender and the lack of response from the TCC and industry officials. Associations in the southern and north-eastern regions have already announced a halt to operations effective March 27, 2025 due to the industry's failure to address their concerns," Singh said.

The Southern Regional Bulk LPG Owners' Association started an indefinite strike on Thursday across Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Puducherry, with more than 5,500 LPG tanker lorries having gone off the road.

"We once again urge your intervention to call for a meeting with the Executive Directors of the three oil companies and request the rollback of the published 2025-30 tender until the proposed KGPL pipeline is commissioned," the industry body urged the Minister.

BUSINESS LINE, Delhi, 29.3.2025
Page No. 12, Size:(9.47)cms X (23.38)cms.

Fossil fuels still dominate power in UP, MP and West Bengal

Radheshyam Jadhav
Pune

An analysis of electricity generation in India's top 10 highest GDP-contributing States reveals a paradox — while some States have aggressively expanded their renewable energy capacity, their power generation remains heavily reliant on coal and other fossil fuels, while others have paid little attention to developing renewable energy sources.

DATA FOCUS.

This imbalance raises concerns about energy sustainability, economic resilience and the country's ability to meet its clean energy targets.

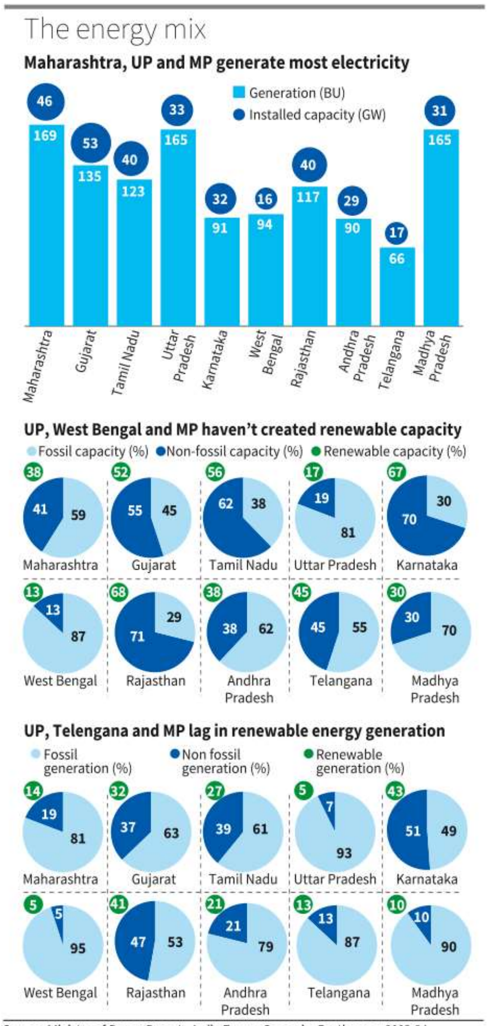
The Ministry of Power, in its report titled 'India Energy Scenario: For the year 2023–24', reveals that States such as Uttar Pradesh (81 per cent), Madhya Pradesh (70 per cent), and West Bengal (87 per cent) have a high share of fossil fuels in their total installed capacity, which directly translates into an overwhelming reliance on fossil fuels for electricity generation — 93 per cent in Uttar Pradesh, 90 per cent in Madhya Pradesh, and a staggering 95 per cent in West Bengal.

These States continue to prioritise conventional coal-based generation, despite having non-fossil fuel capacity that remains underutilised.

Among the high-GDP States, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Rajasthan stand out as leaders in renewable energy generation, with Gujarat at 32 per cent, Tamil Nadu at 27 per cent, Karnataka at 43 per cent, and Rajasthan at 41 per cent.

Tamil Nadu and Gujarat, in particular, have been able to translate a high share of installed renewable capacity (56 per cent and 52 per cent, respectively) into significant renewable power generation.

Karnataka leads in overall renewable energy utilisation, with 43 per cent of its total power coming from renewables, the highest among all States.



Source: Ministry of Power Report - India Energy Scenario: For the year 2023-24

STRUGGLING STATES

However, even in these States, renewable generation is far below installed capacity, signalling the need for better policy support, investment in energy storage and modernisation of the power grid. At the other end of the spectrum, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, and Madhya Pradesh are lagging far behind in the shift to clean energy.

Uttar Pradesh generates only 5 per cent of its electricity from renewables, despite having 19 per cent non-fossil capacity.

Also, West Bengal remains the worst performer, with just 5 per cent renewable energy generation.

Madhya Pradesh, despite having a 30 per cent share of renewable capacity, generates only 10 per cent of its power from non-fossil sources.

This slow transition in key economic States not only raises environmental concerns but also threatens their long-term energy security and industrial sustainability, especially as global markets shift toward cleaner energy standards.

SOLAR AND WIND

As of March 2024, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra lead the country in total installed solar capacity, collectively accounting for 71 per cent of the total 82 GW capacity.

In wind energy, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Rajasthan emerge as the top five States, contributing 85 per cent of the total 46 GW installed capacity.

With India aiming to become a $5 trillion economy, the energy situation in these States will play a critical role in determining economic growth and industrial competitiveness. A continued reliance on fossil fuels in key economic States exposes India to risks such as fluctuating global coal prices, increased carbon emissions, and potential international trade restrictions on carbon-heavy industries.

BUSINESS STANDARD, Delhi, 29.3.2025
Page No. 4, Size:(52.49)cms X (19.90)cms.

India's oil production in dire straits as fuel use continues to be strong

S DINAKAR
Amritsar, 28 March

Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) and Oil India Ltd, which account for most of India's crude oil output, have projected a 10-21 per cent decline in domestic production by 2030 — which they have told a parliamentary committee.

This is despite years of government effort to reverse the fall in production and comes against the backdrop of India's emerging "superpower status" as a demand centre for oil and gas.

India's import dependence is worsening, with the oil ministry telling the standing committee that the share of import in the volume of crude processed will increase to 91 per cent by 2028-29.

ONGC's output is expected to decline by 10 per cent from an estimated 410,000 barrels per day (bpd) in 2025-26 to 372,000 bpd in 2029-30, according to the second report of the Standing Committee on Petroleum & Natural Gas, presented to the Lok Sabha last week.

India's biggest producer of oil and gas is also lagging in exploration. It drilled only 74 exploratory wells essential to find new oil, compared to 124 in 2024-25 and has targeted 111 wells next fiscal, according to the report.

It has also failed to meet production targets it agreed upon with the government, with standalone production including condensate, a liquid product, at 390,000 bpd in 2023-24 as against the target of 458,000 bpd.

Oil India's output is expected to decline by 21 per cent to 66,000 bpd by 2029-30 from 84,000 bpd next financial year, according to the report. On the reasons for this the report said "there has been a natural decline in production of crude oil and natural gas, and there were not many significant (discoveries) of hydrocarbon for quantum jump of production in those old fields". The committee said "even after significant increase in exploration efforts over the years, no new important oil field has been discovered, and that exploration efforts need to be increased substantially".

This exposes the world's fastest-growing economy to suppliers located in the geopolitically sensitive hotspots of West Asia and Russia. The dip comes despite New Delhi's efforts to increase output by relaxing rules, such as opening up no-go areas such as the Andaman basin in the Bay of Bengal to explorers. New Delhi also amended the Oilfields Regulation Act this month in a last-ditch effort to get foreign drillers to bid under the 10th licensing round.

ONGC could not be reached for comments.

Demand surge

The projected slump comes even as the world's top forecasters, led by the International Energy Agency and the US Energy Information Administration (EIA), project India as the biggest contributor to world oil demand this year.

"India is one of the few places growing faster than its pre-pandemic trend," said the EIA's short-term energy outlook, published in January. "We expect liquid fuels consumption in India will increase by 300,000 bpd in both 2025 and 2026, compared with an increase of 200,000 bpd in 2024, driven by rising demand for transportation fuels."

Top executives in state-run refiners project demand for oil to grow at 3-4 per cent annually with gasoline use slated to increase 5-6 per cent next fiscal.

India's refining capacity may increase to 6.2 million bpd in 2028 from around 5 million bpd now, according to the report. But that would involve greater dependence on imported crude oil.

India processed 5.2 million bpd in 2023-24, with indigenous oil accounting for 11 per cent, according to the report.

Gas prospects

Natural gas production may see an upswing even though the increase may not be commensurate with a double-digit increase in consumption and the government's plans to more than double the ratio of gas demand in the proportion of the country's energy mix to 15 per cent.

ONGC's gas production is expected to increase by 25 per cent to 27.8 billion cubic metres (bcm) by fiscal 2030 from 22.3 bcm in 2025-26 during the period, aided by deepwater discoveries in the Krishna Godavari basin on the east coast. Oil India's gas production is expected to go up 42 per cent to 5.1 bcm from 3.6 bcm during the period. Demand for gas was 67.5 Bcm last financial year, according to the oil ministry.

OIL OUTPUT FORECAST

	FY25	FY26	FY30
ONGC			
Crude oil* (standalone)	19.99	20.46	18.52
Natural gas**	20.1	22.25	27.75
OIL INDIA			
Crude oil*	NA	4.2	3.28
Natural gas**	NA	3.55	5.1

*In million tonnes; **in billion cubic metres

Source: Standing Committee Report Petroleum Ministry

BUSINESS STANDARD, Delhi, 29.3.2025
Page No. 2, Size:(16.10)cms X (12.69)cms.

INOX Air Products commissions its first green hydrogen plant

Inox Air Products, India's largest manufacturer of industrial, electronic and medical gases, on Friday announced commissioning of its first green hydrogen manufacturing plant at Asahi India Glass Limited's (AIS) greenfield float glass facility at Soniyana in Chittorgarh, Rajasthan. AIS, India's leading glass manufacturer, has entered into a 20-year off-take agreement with Inox for the supply of green hydrogen to this facility. "The plant, powered by solar energy, will have a capacity to generate up to 190 tonnes of green hydrogen per annum through the electrolysis process," Inox said in a statement. "This will be India's first instance of use of green hydrogen in the float glass manufacturing process, paving the way for sustainable glass production." PTI

BUSINESS LINE, Delhi, 29.3.2025
Page No. 11, Size:(12.71)cms X (9.58)cms.

Natural gas pipeline network operating at 50 capacity, causing losses to entities: PNGRB

Avinash Nair
Ahmedabad

The existing 25,000 km Natural Gas Pipeline (NGPL) network in the country is operating at an estimated 50 per cent of capacity, causing losses to entities operating in the pipeline infrastructure segment, said A Ramana Kumar, Member, Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB), at the 2nd National Conclave on Natural Gas and Petroleum Products Infrastructure in Gandhinagar.

There is 25,000 km of natural gas pipeline available with 10,000 km more coming in the next 2-3 years THE HINDU

UPCOMING EXPANSION

"As of today, we have around 25,000 km of natural gas pipeline. Another 10,000 km is coming in the next 2-3 years. One of the major concerns of pipeline entities is that the capacity utilisation of this pipeline is roughly around 50 per cent," Kumar said in a panel discussion on 'Building India's Next Gen Gas Grids: Infrastructure, Innovation and Investment for a sustainable future' at the conclave on Wednesday.

"There are pipelines where capacity utilisation is less than 10 per cent. We should ponder why this has happened," he said.

"Any pipelines planned for the future should go through some kind of judicial analysis about the demand, including anchor demand. We should look at increasing the capacity utilisation of existing pipelines," he added.

According to PNGRB, a total of 35,000 km of NGPL network has been authorised, of which 25,000 km — with a carrying capacity of 400 million standard cubic meters per day (mmscmd) of natural gas — is functional.

CONSUMPTION UP

Kumar said that the existing pipelines and the proposed 10,000 km of lines will cover almost 95 per cent of the areas that have city gas distribution networks.

With 307 authorised geographical areas, the CGD sector is to be the primary growth driver for natural gas consumption. The tions shared by PN the conclave show tl ural gas consumpt creased from 131 m to 188 mmscmd in F CAGR of just 4.6 pe Consumption of natu used in the power sec clined from 29.8 mm 2015-16 to 24.81 mm 2023-24.

"The Indian power is so sensitive. Coa power is cheap a wherever PPAs allo plants to function. I places, a fixed cost and the plants closed," said PNGRE man Anil Kumar Jain an interaction with apersons on Wednesd

He added, "The some months whe power demand increa power supply cannot filled through the P such times, gas-based is produced."

New surety on anvil for city gas projects

Rituraj Baruah
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NEW DELHI

The petroleum and natural gas regulator has proposed to add insurance surety bonds to bank guarantees and demand drafts as a financial instrument to ensure the timely completion of city gas distribution (CGD) projects and pipelines for petroleum products.

The bonds would work as a financial guarantee, with the insurance company issuing the bond acting as the guarantor.

The bonds would work as a financial guarantee, with the insurance firm issuing the bond acting as the guarantor

"The bid and performance bond shall include insurance surety bond from insurance companies in India/ demand draft/pay order/bank guarantee from any scheduled bank of India for the amount as specified in the regulation," the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) said in a draft amendment to norms for authorizing entities to lay, build, operate or expand petroleum and petroleum product pipelines.

If the commissioning deadline of the CGD network is missed or if service obligations are not met, the insurer would pay the regulator the assured bond amount.

The bond will remain "in full force initially for three years from date of issue and will be extendable three months before expiry of the same, for next three years and so on until the period of authorization of the CGD network in terms of authorization letter," the regulator proposed.

The guarantee amounts for a CGD network in an area with a population of less than 100,000 would be ₹1.5 crore. For areas with a population of 100,000 to 250,000, the bond amount would be ₹3 crore. The highest slab is ₹50 crore for an area with a population of 5 million or more. The regulator has sought comments from stakeholders on the proposal by 15 April 2025.

For an extended version of this story, go to livemint.com

ECONOMIC TIMES, Delhi, 29.3.2025
Page No. 08, Size:(4.19)cms X (11.02)cms.

Oil Min: Plans Afoot to Raise Andaman Sea Output 7 Fold

New Delhi: India's ethanol blending initiative has risen from 1.4% to 20%, which has aided energy security and environmental sustainability, even as the country is stepping up petroleum exploration and production with plans to raise production in Andaman Sea from 35,000 barrels per day to a projected 245,000 barrels, oil minister Hardeep Puri said.

Addressing the summit, Puri outlined the government's multi-faceted approach to diversify energy sources and highlighted the increased investments in ethanol blending, compressed biogas (CBG), and green hydrogen.

He referred to the 2016 transition from a production-sharing model to a revenue-sharing model. This policy shift has encouraged greater private participation and ensured quicker returns on investment, he added. —**Our Bureau**

MILLENNIUM POST, Delhi, 29.3.2025
Page No. 10, Size:(17.14)cms X (20.41)cms.

ONGC NTPC Green acquires 100% stake in Ayana Renewable Power

NEW DELHI: ONGC NTPC Green Private Limited (ONGPL), a 50:50 Joint Venture Company of NTPC Green Energy Ltd and ONGC Green Ltd, has completed the acquisition of 100 per cent equity stake in Ayana Renewable Power Private Ltd on March 27, 2025.

The Competition Commission of India had given its approval for the acquisition on March 11, 2025.

Ayana, a leading renewable energy platform, has capacity of approx. 4112 MW (2123 MW of operational and 1989 MW under-construction assets), strategically located across resource-rich states. Its portfolio is backed by high-credit-rated off-takers such as SECI, NTPC, GUVNL, and Indian Railways.

With this acquisition, the total operating capacity of #NTPCGreen Energy Limited reaches 5.9 GW, including its subsidiaries & JVs, as on date. Through this acquisition, NGEL aims to expand its capacity in the renewable energy sector to meet its target of 60 GW renewable capacity by 2032. MPOST

FINANCIAL EXPRESS, Delhi, 29.3.2025
Page No. 04, Size:(9.95)cms X (13.72)cms.

ONGC NTPC Green completes ₹6,248-cr acquisition of Ayana

ONGC NTPC GREEN (ONGPL) has completed acquisition of 100% equity stake in Ayana Renewable Power for ₹6,248.50 crore. ONGPL is a 50:50 joint venture of NTPC Green Energy (NGEL) and ONGC Green. The acquisition was completed on March 27 for a cash consideration of ₹₹6,248.50 crore at ₹23.22 per share, NGEL said.

ONGC-NTPC JV acquires Ayana for ₹6,248.5 cr

ONGPL has completed acquisition of 100 per cent equity stake in Ayana Renewable Power for ₹6,248.5 crore. ONGC NTPC Green Pvt Ltd (ONGPL) is a 50:50 joint venture of NTPC Green Energy Ltd (NGEL) and ONGC Green. The acquisition was completed on March 27 for a cash consideration of ₹6,248.50 crore at ₹23.22 per share, NGEL said. NGEL contributed ₹3,124.25 crore to total acquisition cost.

PIONEER, Delhi, 29.3.2025
Page No. 4, Size:(18.47)cms X (23.26)cms.

PM to launch development projects in Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh on Sunday during which he will lay the foundation stone, initiate commencement of work and dedicate to the nation multiple development projects worth over ₹33,700 crore in Bilaspur.

Modi will travel to Nagpur and at around 9 am on Sunday, he will undertake darshan at Smruti Mandir and thereafter visit Deekshabhoomi, a statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said.

At around 10 am, he will lay the foundation stone of Madhav Netralaya Premium Centre at Nagpur and address a public meeting.

At around 12:30 pm, he will inaugurate the Loitering Munition Testing Range and Runway facility for UAVs at Solar Defence and Aerospace Limited in Nagpur.

Further, the prime minister will travel to Bilaspur and at around 3:30 pm, he will lay the foundation stone, initiate commencement of work and dedicate to the nation multiple development projects worth over ₹33,700 crore. He will also address a public meeting.

In Maharashtra, coinciding with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's Pratipada program, marking the beginning of the Hindu New Year, Prime Minister Modi will undertake darshan at Smruti Mandir and pay homage to the founding fathers of the RSS. He will also visit Deekshabhoomi and pay homage to Dr BR Ambedkar where he embraced Buddhism along with thousands of his followers in 1956. Prime Minister Modi will lay the foundation stone of Madhav Netralaya Premium Centre, a new extension building of Madhav Netralaya Eye Institute and Research Centre.

The institute was founded in memory of Guruji Shri Madhavrao Sadashivrao Golwalkar. The upcoming project will feature a 250-bed hospital, 14 outpatient departments (OPDs), and 14 modular operation theatres, with an aim to provide affordable and world-class eye care services to the people, the statement said.

Prime Minister Modi will visit the Solar Defence and Aerospace Limited's ammunition facility in Nagpur. He will inaugurate the newly built 1250m long and 25m wide airstrip for Unarmed Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) and the live munition and warhead testing facility to test the Loitering Munition and other guided munitions.

In Chhattisgarh, Modi will inaugurate, lay the foundation stone and dedicate to the nation multiple development projects related to power, oil and gas, rail, road, education and housing sectors worth over ₹33,700 crore in Bilaspur.

The Prime Minister has been committed to improving the power sector across the country, the statement said. In line with this, multiple steps will be undertaken in providing affordable and reliable power and making Chhattisgarh self-reliant in power generation.

He will lay the foundation stone of NTPC's Sipat Super Thermal Power Project Stage-III (1x800MW), located in Bilaspur district, worth over ₹9,790 crore.

This pit head project is based on the latest state of the art Ultra-Supercritical Technology with high power generation efficiency.

He will initiate the commencement of work of First Super Critical Thermal Power Project (2X660MW) of Chhattisgarh State Power Generation Company Limited (CSPGCL) worth over ₹15,800 crore. The prime minister will also dedicate to the nation three power transmission projects of POWERGRID under Western Region Expansion Scheme (WRES) worth over ₹560 crore.

In line with India's net-zero emission goals, reducing air pollution and providing cleaner energy solutions, Modi will lay the foundation stone of City Gas Distribution (CGD) project of Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) in Korea, Surajpur, Balrampur and Surguja districts.

TIMES OF INDIA, Delhi, 29.3.2025
Page No. 14, Size:(10.99)cms X (7.84)cms.

Puri: Fuel may get cheaper if global crude prices stay at current levels

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Oil minister **Hardeep Singh Puri** Friday held out hopes of a cut in petrol and diesel prices — the first in a year — if global crude prices remain at the current subdued levels.

"Today I can tell you seriously. If audience asks when will fuel prices come down further, I would say if this trend (low crude prices) continues, there is reasonable expectation (of a fuel price cut)," Puri said.

Fuel prices were last cut by Rs 2 per litre on March 14, just ahead of LS polls. Prices had till then had remained frozen since May 22, 2022, when Centre reduced excise duty for the second time after Nov 4, 2021. The two reductions together had brought down excise duty on petrol and diesel by a total of Rs 13 and Rs 16 per litre, respectively.

After the second duty cut, BJP-governed states implemented matching cuts in VAT to soften the impact of oil prices surging above $100 per barrel after the Ukraine conflict.

Expectations of a reduction in pump prices have been growing since Sept last year when benchmark Brent crude slumped below $70 per barrel after hitting a high in April 2024. Prices have remained subdued since then, except for brief rallies in June and Sept 2024, and have been trading in the $70-75 per barrel range.

State-run fuel retailers have not passed on the benefit of positive marketing margin on the back of lower crude prices, unlike private retailers, who have gained market share by offering up to Rs 3 per litre discount. Puri pointed out losses incurred by the state retailers on domestic LPG, over and above the subsidy support in the Budget for supplies under Ujjwala scheme.

FINANCIAL EXPRESS, Delhi, 29.3.2025
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Tariff cuts on farm imports & LNG tax removal on the table

NIDHI VERMA & MANOJ KUMAR
New Delhi, March 28

THE GOVERNMENT HAS offered tariff cuts on imports of US farm products like almonds and cranberries as a further concession to the United States, sources said, hoping to avert President Donald Trump's reciprocal tariffs set for next week.

There is also a proposal to scrap import tax on US liquefied natural gas (LNG) to boost purchases and help cut the trade surplus with Washington, a key irritant for Trump, sources said.

Unlike China, Canada and the European Union, India is actively seeking to appease the Trump administration and is open to cutting tariffs on over half of US imports worth $23 billion, *Reuters* reported earlier this week.

In a series of meeting in New Delhi with Brendan Lynch, the assistant US trade representative for South and Central Asia, India agreed to cut tariffs on bourbon whiskey and agricultural products such as almonds, walnuts, cranberries, pistachios and lentils, a source familiar with discussions, said.

The talks to fast-track negotiations will conclude on Saturday.

Continued on Page 12

DEAL-IN-PROGRESS

- US is India's second biggest LNG supplier, and the imports attract a **2.5%** basic customs duty and an additional **0.25%** social welfare tax

- In a series of bilateral meetings, India has agreed to cut tariffs on bourbon whiskey and agricultural products such as almonds, walnuts, cranberries, pistachios and lentils

- There is still resistance in government circles to lowering tariffs for dairy products, rice, wheat and maize

- India is seeking greater market access for shipments of fruits like pomegranates and grapes besides rice to the US market

FINANCIAL EXPRESS, Delhi, 29.3.2025
Page No. 01, Size:(21.88)cms X (30.93)cms.

Tariff cuts on farm imports...

TRADE TALKS ARE 'progressing well' and the bilateral trade pact, still in progress, will benefit both nations, commerce minister Piyush Goyal said on Thursday.

"Securing a favourable deal is a priority for Indian negotiators," one of the source said, adding that India has aligned its offers with US priorities, particularly in the agriculture industry and some other sectors.

The commerce ministry didn't respond to email request for comment, while the US embassy spokesperson in New Delhi said: "We don't have anything to share on private diplomatic discussions."

As far as LNG is concerned, India is the world's fourth-largest importer. In the first 11 months of the current fiscal, it imported 25.9 million tonne of LNG, worth about $14.2 billion, government data showed. The US is India's second biggest supplier but the two sides are looking to ramp up volumes for India's energy-hungry economy.

India currently imposes a 2.5% basic customs duty and an additional 0.25% social welfare tax on LNG

Scrapping the import tax would make US LNG more price competitive, and help trim India's trade surplus with the US, a source said. The surplus totalled $45.4 billion last year.

"We are considering ending the imports tax on US LNG under the bilateral trade agreement, similar to our model with the UAE," one of the sources said.

India currently imposes a 2.5% basic customs duty and an additional 0.25% social welfare tax on LNG, but tax is not levied on supplies from the UAE and Australia under bilateral pacts.

The Centre has already lowered duties for bourbon whiskey to 100% from 150% last month. Import duties range from 30-100% on agricultural products like cranberries, almonds, walnuts, and around 10% on lentils. However, there is still resistance in government circles to lowering tariffs for dairy products, rice, wheat and maize, the source said, adding India is seeking greater market access for shipments of fruits like pomegranate and grapes besides rice to the US market.

The negotiators are expected to agree on the framework for broad contours of the first phase of the bilateral deal, expected to be signed by fall 2025, the sources said. —REUTERS