

At over 5 m barrels/day, crude oil imports hit a record in March

SIX-MONTH HIGH. Return of Russian barrels push up import numbers

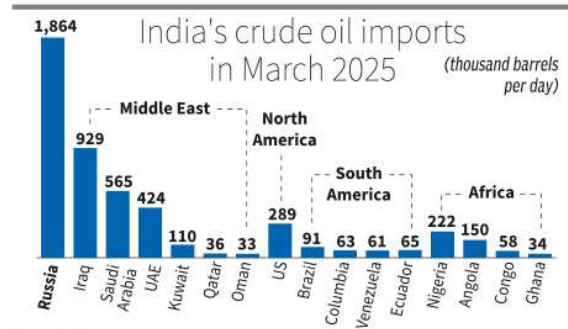
Rishi Ranjan Kala
New Delhi

India's crude oil imports surpassed 5 million barrels per day (mb/d) during March 2025 — the highest monthly volume in over 15 years — aided by strong domestic demand coupled with high refining capacity and favourable economics with Russian barrels.

Another interesting development is the return of Russian barrels pushing up import numbers. Indian refiners are fast adapting to the evolving trade dynamics by deftly navigating sanctions to procure Russian barrels despite higher logistics costs and ship-to-ship transfers (STS) with imports hitting a six-month high in March 2025.

According to trade numbers from global real-time data and analytics provider Kpler, India imported a record 5.13 mb/d of crude oil last month, on a provisional basis, compared to 4.78 mb/d in February 2025 and 4.95 mb/d during March last year.

"India's overall crude imports in March are estimated at around 5,133,000 (b/d), based on Kpler data — the highest monthly import volume on record since 2008. This surge has pushed refinery throughput to near-record levels, reflecting a combination of structural and seasonal factors," Sumit Ritolia, Kpler's Lead Research



Source: Kpler

Analyst for Refining & Modelling, told *businessline*.

He explained that with low scheduled maintenance outages in February and March, most Indian refineries are operating at elevated levels. Besides, March marks the fiscal year end for PSUs oil marketing companies (OMCs), who typically ramp up runs to meet or exceed their annual MoU targets — a recurring seasonal pattern.

That apart, robust demand for fuel, agricultural activity (harvesting season), high industrial output and pre-summer logistical movement is also pushing up demand.

RUSSIAN BARRELS

Higher imports in March also point to strong refining margins, supported by robust local demand and the availability of discounted Russian barrels, Ritolia emphasised.

India's imports of Russian crude surged to around 1.9

mb/d in March, marking an increase of over 400,000 b/d m-o-m and more than 200,000 b/d y-o-y. Of this, Urals alone accounted for around 1.43 mb/d, a 4-month high, reinforcing its role as the dominant Russian blend in India's import mix.

"This rebound underscores a critical trend: despite the presence of sanctions, Russia's crude flows to India remain resilient. The current structure of sanctions, lacking secondary enforcement targeting buyers or shippers, appears insufficient to significantly disrupt this trade," Ritolia said.

The Kpler analyst explained that following the recent drone attacks on Russian refineries, domestic crude processing fell to about 5.2–5.3 mb/d (January 2025: 5.5 mb/d), increasing export availability.

"Urals FOB prices dropped to (approx) \$55–57 per barrel in March, below the \$60 price cap, enabling

use of Western logistics and insurance. Indian refiners have capitalised on this arbitrage buying more Russian barrels at discounted prices despite logistical complexity," he added.

GOING AHEAD

Elaborating on import volumes during March and evolving trade dynamics Ritolia opined "March numbers validate a few key themes (such as) India remains a core demand centre for Russian oil amid Western disengagement. Price and refining economics outweigh geopolitical pressure — at least in the current framework."

Trade sources said that after the January 10 US OFAC sanctions, there is a rebound in mainstream crude oil tanker demand largely due to apprehensions in India and China over supply. Russian replacement barrels being sourced from Middle East and Atlantic basin pushed up tonne-mile demand and rates for VLCCs and Suezmaxes.

OPEC's latest monthly oil market report pegs India's overall oil demand expansion during January-March 2025 to grow by 221,000 b/d Y-o-Y, while it is expected to rise by 239,000 b/d, Y-o-Y, to average at 5.8 mb/d in 2025.

On the other hand, the US EIA expects India to increase its liquid fuels consumption by 0.3 mb/d in both 2025 and 2026, compared with an increase of 0.2 million in 2024.

RECEIPTS EXCEED REVISED ESTIMATE BY 34%

CPSE payouts touch record ₹74K-cr in FY25

PRASANTA SAHU
New Delhi, March 30

THE CENTRE'S DIVIDEND receipts from public sector enterprises (CPSEs) have exceeded the budget target (revised estimate) of ₹55,000 crore by 34% to reach nearly ₹75,000 crore in 2024-25, setting a new record.

The dividend receipts from CPSEs — an important source of non-tax revenues — in FY25 are 16% more than the previous high of ₹63,749 crore in FY24.

Robust dividends from energy sectors like Coal India and Oil & Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) have boosted these non-tax receipts.

Coal India is the top dividend payer to the government with ₹10,252 crore compared with ₹9,532 crore in the previous year. Similarly, top state-run explorer ONGC has paid ₹10,002 crore compared with ₹7,594 crore in FY24.

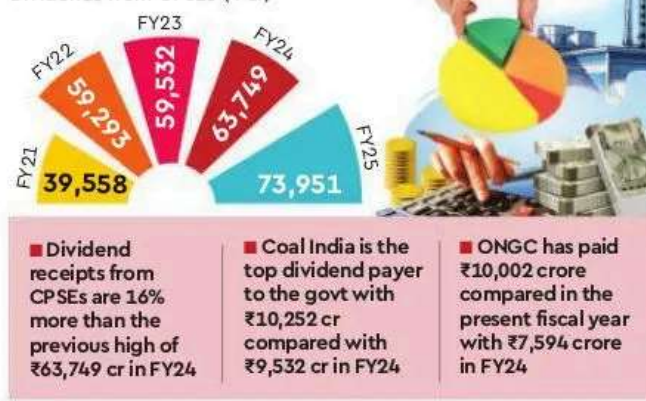
With margins improving due to lower crude prices during the year, the petroleum sector as a whole has paid ₹22,146 crore to the government in FY25, 14% more than ₹19,353 crore in FY24.

In the budget presented on February 1, the government marginally revised down dividend receipts from CPSEs to ₹55,000 crore from ₹56,260 crore in the budget estimate. However, the receipts turned out to be nearly ₹19,000 crore more than the revised estimate.

As against the budget estimate of ₹50,000 crore, the dividends from CPSEs and other residual stakes in other firms had fetched the Centre

MONEY MATTERS

Dividends from CPSEs (₹ cr)



■ Dividend receipts from CPSEs are 16% more than the previous high of ₹63,749 cr in FY24

■ Coal India is the top dividend payer to the govt with ₹10,252 cr compared with ₹9,532 cr in FY24

■ ONGC has paid ₹10,002 crore compared in the present fiscal year with ₹7,594 crore in FY24

₹63,749 crore in FY24, the second highest in any financial year.

For FY26, the Centre has estimated dividend receipts at ₹69,000 crore assuming benign crude and other global commodity prices. Higher dividend receipts from CPSEs and the Reserve Bank of India have cushioned the government's fiscal deficit in recent years.

Thanks to the RBI dividend of ₹2.11 trillion as against the budget estimate of ₹80,000-90,000 crore, the fiscal deficit for FY25 has been pegged at 4.8% of the GDP in a revised estimate from 4.9% estimated earlier.

With higher dividends from CPSEs and likely lower capex than the target, the actual fiscal deficit may be even lower at 4.7% in FY25.

In November 2024, the Centre

tweaked the capital management guidelines, giving the CPSEs more operational and financial flexibility by relaxing the criteria for payment of dividends, share buyback, issue of bonus shares and splitting of shares.

According to the revised guidelines, every CPSE would pay a minimum annual dividend of 30% of profit after tax (PAT) or 4% of the net worth, whichever is higher.

Earlier, norms mandated CPSEs to pay a minimum annual dividend of 30% of PAT or 5% of the net worth, whichever is higher.

Given that the net worth of CPSEs has multiplied in recent years, the tweak would give comfort to them to reward shareholders without putting pressure on business expansion.



India's oil hunt expands with new discoveries

With new oil and gas exploration projects underway in Bihar's Samastipur and Uttar Pradesh's Ballia, the region could emerge as a game changer for India's energy security

FIRST
Column

India, heavily reliant on imports for 87 per cent of its oil needs, is now eyeing a potential energy revolution in its underexplored eastern basins. South Bengal, Bihar, and Eastern Uttar Pradesh are emerging as key oil hotspots, with untapped reserves that could reshape the region's economy. The Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC)'s exploration in Ballia and Samastipur spans 308 sq km, holding the promise of transforming some of India's most impoverished areas.

The new oil and gas exploration in Bihar's Samastipur and UP's Ballia holds the potential to reshape India's energy landscape. However, challenges in land acquisition remain, necessitating strong local support for seamless drilling operations. A commercial discovery here could unlock the entire Ganga Basin, spanning Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal, for further exploration. Initial investments in the two explorations are likely to be about ₹125 crore — ₹85 crore for Ballia and ₹35 crore for Samastipur. Explorations are on in the Punjab — Haryana Ganga basin too. The study is being conducted in — Machhiwara, Samrala, Ludhiana East tehsils, Nawanshahr, Jalandhar, Gurdaspur, and Amritsar.

The discovery at Ashoknagar, yielding high-quality crude superior to Bombay High, has positioned the Bengal Basin as India's eighth commercially producing hydrocarbon zone. Meanwhile, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands hold vast untapped natural gas reserves, estimated at 610 million tons. With just 10 per cent of India's sedimentary basins currently under exploration, the country plans to expand this to 16 per cent within a year — paving the way for a new era in domestic oil and gas production. The monetisation of the Ashoknagar-1 discovery has made the Bengal Basin India's eighth commercially producing hydrocarbon zone, leading to its upgrade to a Category-I productive basin. With this, ONGC has discovered seven out of eight producing basins in the country.

The seven basins discovered and put into production by ONGC are: Krishna-Godavari, Mumbai Offshore, Assam Shelf, Rajasthan, Cauvery, Assam — Arakan Fold Belt, and Cambay. India is on track to increase its exploration acreage to one million square km by 2030, and oil and gas yields are expected to increase significantly.

The approval process for exploration and production activities in the petroleum industry has been simplified, reducing 37 approval processes to just 18, of which nine are now available for self-certification. The new Oilfields (Regulation and Development) Amendment Bill in 2024, passed by the Rajya Sabha in December 2024, ensures



policy stability for oil and gas producers and enables a single licence for all hydrocarbons. This opens up the entry of private companies. The ONGC has signed a MoU with BP to explore collaboration in oil and gas projects in India and abroad. The partnership will focus on enhancing production, trading, and exploring new energy vectors. This collaboration aims to boost ONGC's output, optimise the management of fields, and create value in additional energy vectors such as carbon sequestration.

Key export destinations India has witnessed a remarkable surge in petroleum product exports over the last decade. The country's refining capacity, now exceeding 250 million metric tonnes per annum (MMTPA), has enabled it to cater to global markets. Key export destinations include South



SHIVAJI SARKAR



THE APPROVAL PROCESS FOR EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION ACTIVITIES IN THE PETROLEUM INDUSTRY HAS BEEN SIMPLIFIED, REDUCING 37 APPROVAL PROCESSES TO JUST 18, OF WHICH NINE ARE NOW AVAILABLE FOR SELF-CERTIFICATION

Asian, African, and European countries.

The emphasis on export — oriented growth and establishing Special Economic Zones (SEZs) for refineries have further boosted this trend. Exports not only contribute to foreign exchange reserves but also enhance India's stature as a global energy supplier. As of April 2021, India's crude oil reserves were estimated at approximately 587.335 million metric tonnes, with the western offshore region holding the largest share, followed by Assam and Gujarat.

The Bihar and UP discoveries add to the hope of the country's hydrocarbon exploration efforts, promising long-term gains in energy production and economic growth. Through intense seismic surveys since 2016-17, the ONGC made 68 discoveries and monetised 36. Key discoveries in Kutch, Saurashtra, West Bengal, and the KG Basin reinforced confidence in upgrading these basins to category-I (producing). It has identified 26 sedimentary basins, categorised into four groups by

the Directorate General of Hydrocarbons (DGH) based on their hydrocarbon prospectivity.

To harness the country's untapped oil and gas potential, ONGC is actively exploring reserves across 13 of these basins under the Nomination and New Exploration Licensing Policy (NELP) regimes. The exploration successes have strengthened India's domestic hydrocarbon reserves. India is set to become a key driver of global oil demand by 2030, fuelled by economic growth, urbanisation, and rising vehicle ownership. With the new finds India's capacity in refinery is to reach 295 million tonnes.

Oil imports may rise to 5.6 million barrels. But for the new oil basins, output is to drop to 540,000 barrels a day. By 2035, domestic oil production is likely to rise but so are imports by an aspiring nation with larger activities. Though battery vehicles are being junked by US President Donald Trump, India continues with it. It too has heavy import liabilities in battery and other components. The ONGC produces 1.26 million barrels a day, 76 per cent of this of high quality.

India's import dependence is rising, 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. Despite efforts to enhance energy efficiency, India's growing energy needs will necessitate a balanced approach between exploration, imports, and refinery expansion.

India's energy demand is set to rise to 11 per cent of global demand by 2040, positioning the country as a key player in the global oil and gas sector. India's crude oil imports rose to 179.3 million tonnes in December, from 173.7 million tonnes in the same period the previous year.

Meanwhile, domestic oil production declined slightly to 21.6 million tonnes from 22 million tonnes, according to the latest data from the Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell (PPAC). Once the Gangetic Valley finds go for commercial production, the PPAC projection may have to be revised. India hopes to maintain a balance in the import and export of petroleum products.

India's oil and gas exploration efforts are poised to reshape its energy landscape, reducing import dependency and boosting domestic production. New discoveries in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal, along with policy reforms, signal a promising future for the sector.

With ONGC expanding its exploration footprint and collaborating with global players, India is strengthening its hydrocarbon reserves. As energy demand rises, balancing imports, exploration, and refinery expansion will be crucial for sustaining economic growth and energy security.

(The writer is a senior journalist. Views expressed are personal)

IOC to fast-track sustainable aviation fuel production

Aneesh Phadnis
Mumbai

The first batch of sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) could be available before next March with Indian Oil Corporation (IOCL) implementing a co-processing method for its production.

While IOC has tied up with LanzaJet to produce SAF using alcohol-to-jet technology, the state oil marketing company is parallelly working on more cost effective co-processing method to fast track the availability of SAF before introduction of government mandate. The government has set an indicative blending target of one per cent of SAF in conventional jet fuel for international flights from 2027.

CO-PROCESSING PLANT
“Co-processing involves lower capex compared to a new standalone plant as it

The government has set an indicative blending target of 1% of SAF in conventional jet fuel for international flights from 2027

utilises an existing facility,” said an industry executive. “It is expected that SAF from the co-processing plant in Panipat will be available within a year and significantly earlier than one produced using ATJ method,” he added.

SAF refers to waste-derived aviation fuel. It is produced from various sources such as used cooking oil, agricultural waste, fats or non-food crops. SAF, which is referred to as biofuel, can re-

duce carbon dioxide emissions by upto 80 per cent depending upon the feedstock used and production method.

As of now there are 11 globally approved pathways for production of SAF. While both ATJ and co-processing methods are recognised, LanzaJet’s own plant in the US is set to commence production from this year.

“The ATJ project with LanzaJet is currently in the design engineering stage. Subject to successful due diligence, IOC will initiate the investment approval process,” he said.

USED COOKING OIL

It is learnt IOC will rely on used cooking oil as a feedstock for producing SAF with co-processing method.

IOC did not respond to an email query on the topic.

Along with IOC, other state oil marketing compan-

ies too are working on manufacture of SAF. Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Ltd is relying on CSIR-Indian Institute of Petroleum’s single step process that uses used cooking oil or palm waste to produce SAF. Last December it invited expressions of interest from companies to partner for its SAF production plant.

According to a November 2024 media report, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd is planning to set up a SAF production plant by 2027. The company is finalising locations for the facility which could come up at its Mumbai or Kochi refineries. Last month, Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd announced a tie up with Boeing to advance SAF ecosystem in India. HPCL’s R&D centre has also patented its proprietary Trijet technology for converting used cooking oil into SAF.



OMCs add 10,000+ EV charging stations in FY25

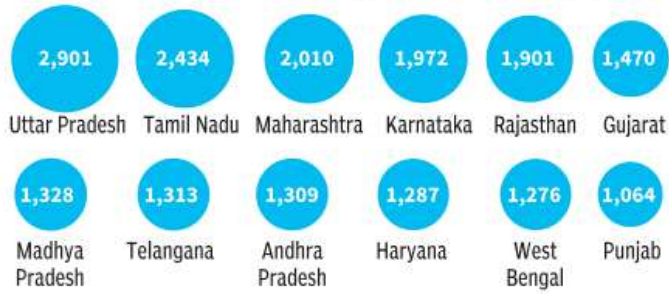
G Balachandar
Chennai

Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) — Indian Oil Corporation Ltd, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd, and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd — have significantly expanded their electric vehicle charging infrastructure, adding over 10,000 new Electric Vehicle Charging Stations (EVCS) in the first 11 months of the current fiscal year. With this addition, the total number of EVCS at their retail outlets stood at 25,852 as of March 1, 2025.

Of these, 5,817 stations were set up under the Faster

Top States* for EV charging station installations by OMCs

Number of EVCS installed as of March 1, 2025



*States with more than 1000 Source: Rajya Sabha Answers

Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles (FAME-II) scheme, while 20,035 were installed using the OMCs' own funds. The cumulative number stood at about 15,800 as of March 31,

2024, recording a sharp increase in installations during the current fiscal. Indian Oil alone accounts for over 50 per cent of the total EVCS deployed by OMCs.

Uttar Pradesh, Tamil

Nadu, and Maharashtra are the top States in terms of ECVS installations by these companies.

Also, the Ministry of Heavy Industries (MHI) has sanctioned ₹873.50 crore under FAME-II to the three OMCs for the installation of 10,585 additional charging stations, Union Minister of State for Heavy Industries Bhupathiraju Srinivasa Verma, said in a Rajya Sabha response on Friday.

The PM Electric Drive Revolution in Innovative Vehicle Enhancement (PM EDRIIVE) scheme, launched on September 29, 2024, has earmarked ₹10,900 crore for two years, with ₹2,000 crore specifically allocated for set-

ting up Electric Vehicle Public Charging Stations (EVPCS) across the country.

Meanwhile, an official from an OMC stated that while the number of charging stations at fuel outlets, including the ones on highways, is steadily increasing, electric vehicle turnout has not kept pace.

CHARGING TIME

Concerns over charging time and the preference of many EV owners to charge their vehicles at home are cited as key reasons for low utilisation levels.

“With just one public charger available for every 135 EVs—far below the global average of one charger

per six to twenty EVs—charging infrastructure remains a top concern for potential buyers, according to TrendLyne data.

Meanwhile, private companies have been making significant investments to expand India's EV charging infrastructure over the past five years. Leading the charge are key players like Charge Zone, Tata Power, and Statiq, which have been rapidly deploying charging stations across the country. Tata Motors, India's largest electric passenger vehicle (PV) manufacturer by volumes, has announced a plan to more than double the number of charging points by 2027.

Petro product exports up 3.7% in April-Feb

ARUNIMA BHARADWAJ
New Delhi, March 30

INDIA'S PETROLEUM PRODUCT exports grew by 3.7% in volume terms, reaching 59.0 million tonne (MT) during April–February, compared to 56.9 MT in the same period last fiscal, according to data from the Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell. The increase was primarily driven by higher shipments of motor spirit, petcoke, and fuel oil.

However, despite the rise in export volumes, the value of these exports declined by nearly 7% to \$40.4 billion in the first eleven months of the current fiscal, down from \$43.4 billion in the same period last year. This decline was attributed to weaker global prices compared to the previous fiscal.

In February alone, petroleum product exports rose by 6% year-on-year, reaching 5.6 MT, up from 5.3 MT in February 2024. However, in value terms, exports fell by 5% to \$3.9 billion, reflecting the impact of lower prices.

On the import front, refined oil product imports rose by 5.6% to 46.8 MT during April–February, up from 44.3 MT in the same period last year. The import bill for these products also increased by 3.8% to \$21.9 billion, compared to \$21.1 billion in the previous fiscal.

India's domestic petroleum

HIGHER SHIPMENTS

Petroleum products export



product consumption in the first eleven months of the ongoing fiscal rose to 218.3 MT, a 2.6% increase from 212.7 MT in the same period last year.

The growth was fueled by higher demand for diesel, motor spirit, liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), and aviation turbine fuel (ATF).

While the demand for ATF increased by 9.3%, that of LPG and motor spirit grew by 5.5% and 7.4% respectively. Diesel consumption recorded a growth of 2.1% during April–February from last year.

India projects domestic petroleum product demand to reach a record 252.9 MT in FY26.



PFWS 'Mission Olympics 2025 Sports Meet' concludes



NEW DELHI: The Annual Sports Meet 2025, held under the PFWS Mission Olympics banner, concluded with a grand closing ceremony at the New Police Lines Sports Ground, Kingsway Camp, on March 29.

Delhi Police Commissioner Sanjay Arora attended as the Chief Guest, while Olympic silver medallist Ravi Kumar Dahiya and Arjuna Award-winning wrestler Sarita Mor were Special Guests. The event also saw the presence of PFWS President Ritu Arora and officials from ONGC and Indian Oil Corporation.

Over three days of competition, athletes from across Delhi competed in athletics, badminton, shooting, wrestling, basketball, football, cricket, and kabaddi. PFWS athletes excelled, winning 47 of the 138 medals awarded, including 17 golds.

Addressing the gathering, Arora praised the competitors for their dedication and highlighted PFWS's role in supporting police families. Dahiya and Mor shared their experiences, encouraging young athletes to pursue their dreams with discipline and perseverance. **MPOST**

PM launches ₹33,700 crore projects, targets Congress

Modi highlighted the projects' focus on infrastructure, housing, education, and rural empowerment

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BILASPUR, 30 MARCH

Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched a ₹33,700-crore development package in Chhattisgarh, presenting a vision for the economic transformation in the tribal-dominated state while sharply criticising the Congress over corruption and policy failures.

Addressing a massive gathering in Bilaspur, Modi emphasised that the projects are align with his government's broader agenda of infrastructure expansion, housing, education, and rural empowerment. His visit reinforced the Central government's commitment to accelerating Chhattisgarh's growth, positioning the state as a key beneficiary of national development initiatives.



The projects unveiled by Modi include three lakh new houses under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, 130 PM-SHRI schools equipped with smart classrooms and modern laboratories, a 540-km petroleum pipeline to enhance regional energy security, and an extensive network of rural roads and power grids aimed at improving connectivity in Maoist-affected areas.

Modi emphasized that these initiatives would create thousands of jobs and accelerate the state's economic development. He stated that his government was ensuring that every family in Chhattisgarh, especially in tribal regions, has access to quality education, modern infrastructure, and better livelihood opportunities.

He further added that the

projects are part of a larger effort to integrate Chhattisgarh into India's economic mainstream, reducing its historical dependence on mining and agriculture by fostering industrial and educational hubs.

Taking aim at the Opposition, Modi accused Congress of failing Chhattisgarh's youth through recruitment scams, misgovernance, and stalled development projects. He alleged under the Congress rule, corruption was rampant, recruitment exams were marred by paper leaks, and government funds meant for the poor were misused.

He assured the people that under the BJP's leadership, every rupee allocated for development is being spent transparently and efficiently. Highlighting the BJP's recent electoral victories, Modi stated that from the Lok Sabha elections to the Assembly and

civic polls, the people of Chhattisgarh have shown their trust in the BJP's vision, and the party remains committed to delivering on its promises.

A significant moment during Modi's visit was Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai's tribute to Bilasa Devi Kewat, the legendary tribal leader after whom Bilaspur is named. The gesture, widely seen as an effort to bolster the BJP's tribal outreach, linked Kewat's courage to the government's women empowerment initiatives. Sai remarked that Bilasa Devi was a symbol of strength and leadership, much like the women of today who are shaping India's future.

He added that her legacy aligns with the Modi government's flagship schemes like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao and Ujjwala Yojana, reinforcing the BJP's appeal among women voters.



IN CHHATTISGARH

PM Modi lays foundation stone and inaugurates Rs 33,700 crore projects

BILASPUR: Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone on Sunday and inaugurated multiple development projects of more than Rs 33,700 crore related to various sectors in Chhattisgarh.

Modi inaugurated projects, laid foundation stones, and commenced various works during a function held in Mohbhattha village in the Bilaspur district.

It was his first visit to the state after the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

He flagged off the Mainline Electric Multiple Unit (MEMU) train service in the Abhanpur-Raipur section via Mandir Hasaud and handed over the keys (replica) of houses to three beneficiaries under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G).

Modi laid the foundation stone of NTPC's Sipat Super Thermal Power Project Stage-III (1x800MW) of over Rs



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the foundation stone laying and inauguration of multiple development projects, in Bilaspur. Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai is also seen

PTI

9,790 crore located in Bilaspur district. This pit head project is based on the latest state-of-the-art Ultra-Supercritical Technology with high power generation efficiency.

He also initiated the commissioning of the First Super Critical Thermal Power Project (2X660MW) of Chhattisgarh State Power Generation Company Limited (CSPGCL) of Rs 15,800 crore.

Modi dedicated to the nation three power transmission projects of more than Rs 560 crore of POWER GRID under the Western Region Expansion Scheme (WRES).

He laid the foundation stone of Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd's City Gas Distribution (CGD) project for Korea, Surajpur, Balrampur and Surguja districts.

The project includes over

Highlights

- » Modi inaugurated projects, laid foundation stones, and commenced various works during a function held in Mohbhattha village in the Bilaspur district
- » He flagged off the Mainline Electric Multiple Unit (MEMU) train service in the Abhanpur-Raipur section via Mandir Hasaud and handed over the keys (replica) of houses to three beneficiaries under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G)

200 km high-pressure pipeline, more than 800 km MDPE (Medium Density Polyethylene) pipeline and multiple CNG dispensing outlets of Rs 1,285 crore.

Modi laid the foundation stone of the Visakh-Raipur Pipeline (VRPL) Project of Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) spanning 540 km of Rs 2,210 crore. This multiproduct (Petrol, Diesel, Kerosene) pipeline will have a capacity of over 3 Million Metric tonnes per Annum.

He laid the foundation stone for seven railway projects with a total length of 108 km and inaugurated three railway projects of Rs 2,690 crore with a total length of 111 km.

He also dedicated 100% electrification of the rail network of Indian Railways in Chhattisgarh.

The PM inaugurated the upgraded Jhalmala to Sherpar section of NH-930 (37 Km) and Ambikapur-Pathalgaon section of NH-43 (75 Km) to 2 Laning with paved shoulder. MPOST

PM slams Congress for encouraging Naxalism in Chhattisgarh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Bilaspur
(New Delhi)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said Naxalism got encouragement for decades in Chhattisgarh and other states due to policies of Congress. His assertion came on a day when 50 Naxals including 14 with a cumulative reward of ₹68 lakhs on their heads, surrendered in Bijapur district of the state. On a day's visit to Chhattisgarh, Prime Minister Modi laid the foundation stone and inaugurated multiple development projects of more than ₹33,700 crore related to various sectors there.

He inaugurated projects, laid foundation stones, and commenced various works during a function held in Mohbbhattha village in the Bilaspur district. It was his first visit to the state after the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

Addressing a public meeting there, Modi said the situation is rapidly changing and a new era of peace is setting in Naxal-affected areas.

"Over the decades, Naxalism got encouragement in many states including Chhattisgarh due to policies of Congress. Whichever region lagged in development, Naxalism flourished there, but what did the party that ran the government for 60 years do? It declared such districts as backward and turned away from its responsibility," he said.

He said many mothers lost their beloved sons and many sisters lost their brothers (in Maoist violence).

"The indifference of erstwhile governments was like adding fuel to the fire. You (Chhattisgarh) have also suffered it (the Naxal menace). The (previous) Congress government never took care of amenities

of poor tribals," Modi said and listed the Centre's initiatives like Swachh Bharat Abhiyan and Ayushman Bharat Yojana, which gives free treatment up to ₹5 lakh.

The Prime Minister said under the double-engine government, the situation in Chhattisgarh has been rapidly changing. "Due to development and welfare efforts, a new era of peace is being seen in the naxal-affected areas," Modi said, adding that Naxalism got encouragement due to the policies of Congress.

He said the BJP government not only builds houses for people but also ensures enriching lives of residents. Modi said dreams of lakhs of people to get pucca houses remained on paper when Congress was in power.

"The housing dreams of the poor people went missing in files during the previous (Congress) government, but the BJP government has fulfilled this dream. Our government not only makes houses but also makes (enriches) lives of people who live there," he added.

Modi said people's trust in the BJP is growing because the government has fulfilled every promise it had made to the people.

He slammed Congress, saying Chhattisgarh had to be made a separate state as development was not taking place during Congress' rule in the region. "Congress never took care of your lives and amenities," he said.

As regards the projects, the Prime Minister flagged off the Mainline Electric Multiple Unit (MEMU) train service in the Abhanpur-Raipur section via Mandir Hasaud and handed over the keys (replica) of houses to three beneficiaries under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G).

Modi laid the foundation stone of



PM Narendra Modi with Chhattisgarh CM Vishnu Deo Sai and BJP leader Raman Singh during the foundation stone laying and inauguration of various development works in Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh

NTPC's Sipat Super Thermal Power Project Stage-III (1x800MW) of over ₹9,790 crore located in Bilaspur district. This pit head project is based on the latest state-of-the-art Ultra-Supercritical Technology with high power generation efficiency.

He also initiated the commissioning of the First Super Critical Thermal Power Project (2X660MW) of Chhattisgarh State Power Generation Company Limited (CSPGCL) of ₹15,800 crore.

Modi dedicated to the nation three power transmission projects of more than ₹560 crore of POWER GRID under the Western Region Expansion Scheme (WRES).

He laid the foundation stone of Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd's City Gas

Distribution (CGD) project for Korea, Surajpur, Balrampur and Surguja districts.

The project includes over 200 km high-pressure pipeline, more than 800 km MDPE (Medium Density Polyethylene) pipeline and multiple CNG dispensing outlets of ₹1,285 crore.

Modi laid the foundation stone of the Visakh-Raipur Pipeline (VRPL) Project of Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) spanning 540 km of ₹2,210 crore.

This multiproduct (Petrol, Diesel, Kerosene) pipeline will have a capacity of over three million Metric tonnes per Annum.

He laid the foundation stone for seven railway projects with a total length of 108 km and inaugurated three railway projects

of ₹2,690 crore with a total length of 111 km. He also dedicated 100 per cent electrification of the rail network of Indian Railways in Chhattisgarh.

The Prime Minister inaugurated the upgraded Jhalmala to Sherpar section of NH-930 (37 Km) and Ambikapur-Pathalgaon section of NH-43 (75 Km) to 2 Laning with paved shoulder.

He also laid the foundation stone for the upgradation of the Kondagaon-Narayanpur section of NH-130D (47.5 km) to a two-lane with a paved shoulder. These projects of over ₹1,270 crore will significantly improve accessibility to tribal and industrial regions, leading to holistic development of the region. The Prime

Minister also dedicated to the nation two flagship educational initiatives, 130 PM SHRI Schools across 29 districts and Vidya Samiksha Kendra (VSK) at Raipur.

A total of 130 schools will be upgraded under the PM Schools for Rising India scheme.

These schools will provide high-quality education through well-structured infrastructure, smart boards, modern laboratories, and libraries.

VSK in Raipur will enable online monitoring and data analysis of various education-related government schemes. Griha Pravesh of three lakh beneficiaries under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana Gramin (PMAY-G) was held during the function.

50 NAXALITES SURRENDERS IN CHHATTISGARH

BIJAPUR: Fifty Naxalites, including 14 with a cumulative reward of ₹68 lakh on their heads, surrendered in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district on Sunday, a police official said.

They laid down arms in front of senior officials of the state police and the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), he added.

"They surrendered citing the hollow and inhuman Maoist ideology, exploitation of tribals by senior cadres of the outlawed Communist Party of India (Maoist) as well as differences brewing within the movement. They are also impressed by security forces setting up camps and the 'Nija Nellana' (your good village) scheme under which forces and the administration are providing basic amenities in remote areas," Bijapur Senior Superintendent of Police Jitendra Kumar Yadav said.

"Of the 50 who surrendered, six carry rewards of ₹8 lakh each, which three have bounties of ₹5 lakh each. Five have rewards of ₹1 lakh each on their heads.

The District Reserve Guard (DRG), Bastar Fighters, Special Task Force (STF), CRPF and its elite unit CoBRA (Commando Battalion for

Resolute Action) played a key role in their surrender," Yadav said.

They will be rehabilitated as per the government's policy for Naxalites leaving the movement and joining the mainstream, the SP added.

The surrender comes hours ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the state. He will lay the foundation stone, initiate the commencement of work and dedicate to the nation multiple development projects of more than ₹33,700 crore.

Incidentally, security forces gunned down 18 Naxals, including 11 women, in twin encounters in Chhattisgarh's Sukma and Bijapur districts in the Bastar region on Saturday, recording a major success in the mission to eradicate Naxalism before March 31, 2026.

With the latest successes, 134 Naxalites have been gunned down in separate encounters in the state so far this year. Of them, 118 were eliminated in the Bastar division. In 2024, a total of 792 Naxalites had surrendered in Bastar region, comprising seven districts, as per police.

Trump threatens tariffs on buyers of Russian oil

JAYANTH JACOB @ New Delhi

US President Donald Trump on Sunday said he was “pissed off” at Russian President Vladimir Putin and warned he would impose secondary tariffs of 25% to 50% on buyers of Russian oil if Moscow blocks his efforts to end the war in Ukraine. The threat, if it materialises, could have wider ramifications for both India and global market stability.

Speaking to NBC News, Trump also threatened Iran with bombing and secondary tariffs if Tehran failed to reach an agreement with Washington over its nuclear programme. In his first comments since Iran



rejected direct negotiations last week, he said that US and Iranian officials were in talks.

Sources in New Delhi said the comments appeared to be more of a “negotiating” tactic.

India has consistently said purchasing oil from Russia, its ally, is a key component of its oil buying strategy. Western sanctions on Russia resulted in discounted oil prices, causing India’s imports of Russian oil to surge dramatically, rising from less than 1% of its total crude oil imports before the Ukraine war to an astounding 40%.

In March 2025, India’s crude oil imports exceeded 5 million barrels per day.