

Ethanol-blended petrol benefitting farmers: Gadkari

NEW DELHI, Dec 11 (PTI)

ETHANOL-blended petrol has greatly benefitted farmers and resulted in saving of over Rs 1.40 lakh crore of foreign exchange, Lok Sabha was informed on Thursday.

Amid concerns over the use of ethanol-blended petrol, Union Minister of Road Transport and



Highways Nitin Gadkari said after extensive testing, no adverse impact has been found in cars where ethanol mixed petrol is used.

"Use of E-20 petrol (Ethanol Blended Petrol) is a healthy trend. It is a green transition. It is less polluted and also saves foreign exchange," he said in Lok Sabha during Question Hour.

Gadkari said due to the mixing of ethanol in petrol, Rs40,000 crore has been given to the farmers for the raw materials used -- sugarcane, maize etc. -- in ethanol.

Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said following the implementation of the ethanol blending programme, money which was earlier spent on crude oil imports is now going to farmers, who have become "Urjadaatas" apart from being "Annadatas".

He said during the last 11 years -- from Ethanol Supply Year (ESY) 2014-15 to ESY2024-25 up to July 2025 -- ethanol blending in petrol by public sector Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) has resulted in savings of more than Rs 1,40,000 crore of foreign exchange.

India gets first indigenous hydrogen fuel-cell vessel

VARANASI (UP), Dec 11 (PTI)

UNION Minister Sarbananda Sonowal on Thursday flagged off India's first indigenous hydrogen fuel-cell vessel in Varanasi, marking a key milestone in the country's push towards clean, and sustainable inland water transport. At a ceremony held at Namohat, the Ports, Shipping, and Waterways Minister inaugurated the vessel's commercial operations.

Sonowal said the hydrogen-powered vessel reflects India's growing technological capabilities and its commitment to sustainable energy. "This is not just technological progress, but a sign that we are advancing confidently towards green energy and indigenous solutions," he said.

The Minister said it was a matter of national pride that India has now joined the list of countries such as China, Norway, the Netherlands, and Japan that operate hydrogen-powered vessels.

"This proves that our technical capabilities are ready for the future. This has been made possible due to the Prime Minister's visionary leadership. The speed and approach with which every sector has been advancing has ensured that inland waterways now play an important role in India's development journey," he said in Varanasi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Parliamentary



India's first indigenous hydrogen-fuelled passenger vessel, built by Cochin Shipyard Limited begins commercial operations on the Ganga river in Varanasi on Thursday. (PTI)

constituency.

Uttar Pradesh's Minister of State for Transport (Independent Charge) Dayashankar Singh, Minister of State for Ayush, Food Safety and Drug Administration (Independent Charge) Dayashankar Mishra, and Minister of State for Stamp and Court Fees and Registration (Independent Charge) Ravindra Jaiswal were among the public representatives present on the occasion. Sonowal said the development marks a major step in India's shift towards green energy and indigenously developed clean-technology solutions.

He noted that hydrogen engines are an emerging technology offering clean, sustainable energy with near-zero emissions,

though research and testing are still underway before full-scale commercial adoption.

Highlighting the sector's expansion, the Minister said the number of national waterways has increased from five to 111 in the past decade. Cargo traffic on inland waterways rose from 80 million tonnes in 2014 to over 145 million tonnes at present, while tourism activities are operational on 13 waterways.

He added that the foundation for this transformation was laid by the Jal Marg Vikas Project, which created a modern navigation corridor from Haldia to Varanasi on National Waterway-1, with multimodal terminals, advanced equipment, and community jetties.

US seizes oil tanker off Venezuela coast

WASHINGTON, Dec 11 (AP)

PRESIDENT Donald Trump said on Wednesday that the United States has seized an oil tanker off the coast of Venezuela as tensions mount with the government of President Nicolás Maduro.

Using US forces to take control of a merchant ship is incredibly unusual and marks the Trump administration's latest push to increase pressure on Maduro, who has been charged with narco-terrorism in the United States. The has built up the largest military presence in the region in decades and

launched a series of deadly strikes on alleged drug-smuggling boats in the Caribbean Sea and eastern Pacific Ocean. The campaign is facing growing scrutiny from Congress.

"We've just seized a tanker on the coast of Venezuela -- a large tanker, very large, largest one ever seized, actually," Trump told reporters at the White House, later adding that "it was seized for a very good reason."

Trump did not offer additional details. When asked what would happen to the oil aboard the tanker, Trump said, "Well, we keep it, I guess."

The seizure was led by the US Coast Guard and supported by the Navy, according to a US official who was not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on the condition of anonymity. The official added that it was conducted under US law enforcement authority.

The US official identified the seized tanker as the Skipper.

The ship departed Venezuela around December 2 with about 2 million barrels of heavy crude, roughly half of it belonging to a Cuban state-run oil importer, according to documents from the state-owned company

Petróleos de Venezuela SA, commonly known as PDVSA, that were provided on the condition of anonymity because the person did not have permission to share them.

The Skipper was previously known as the M/T Adisa, according to ship tracking data. The Adisa was sanctioned by the United States of America in 2022 over accusations of belonging to a sophisticated network of shadow tankers that smuggled crude oil on behalf of Iran's Revolutionary Guard and Lebanon's Hezbollah militant group.

Navy to commission 1st indigenous diving support craft on Dec 16

NEW DELHI, Dec 11 (IANS)

THE Indian Navy will commission DSC A20, the first vessel of the indigenously-designed and constructed Diving Support Craft (DSC), at Kochi on December 16 under the aegis of Southern Naval Command, officials said on Thursday. The ship will be formally inducted into service in the presence of Vice Admiral Sameer Saxena, Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Southern Naval Command.

The event will mark the addition of a key operational asset to the Navy's inventory, enhancing its diving and underwater support capability.

DSC A20 is the lead ship in a series of five Diving Support Craft being built by M/s Titagarh Rail Systems Limited (TRSL), Kolkata.

Purpose-built for a wide spectrum of diving and underwater missions in coastal waters, the vessel is equipped with



Indian Navy's first indigenously-designed and built Diving Support Craft 'DSC A20' sails at sea ahead of its commissioning under the Southern Naval Command, off Kochi. (PTI)

advanced, state-of-the-art diving systems that meet the highest standards of safety and operational efficiency.

Featuring a catamaran hull

form, the ship offers superior stability, enhanced deck area, and improved seakeeping characteristics, and has a displacement of approximately 390 tonnes.

Bangladesh to hold general elections on February 12

DHAKA, Dec 11 (PTI)

BANGLADESH will hold the general elections on February 12, its first since the ouster of the Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League government in a violent student-led protest in August 2024. "Voting will take place on February 12, 2026, from 7:30 am to 4:30 pm," Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin said in an address to the nation on Thursday.

A referendum will simultaneously be held on the voting day, February 12, to elicit public opinion on a series of reform proposals of the Chief Advisor Muhammad Yunus-led National Consensus Commission. The announcement came a day after the CEC met President Mohammed Shahabuddin, who assured him "optimum support and cooperation" to conduct the general elections in a "free, fair and meaningful" manner.