

Govt exempts import duty on key petrochemical products till June 30

NEW DELHI, Apr 2 (PTI)

THE Government on Thursday exempted import of critical petrochemical products from customs duty for three months till June 30, to ensure supply stability and provide relief to consumers of final products amid the crisis in West Asia.

Sectors dependent on petrochemical feedstock and intermediates such as plastics, packaging, textiles, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, automotive components and other manufacturing segments will benefit from the duty exemption which will cost the exchequer Rs 1,800 crore.

In a statement, the Finance Ministry said in light of the ongoing conflict in West Asia and the consequent disruptions in global supply chains, Centre has decided to provide full customs duty exemption

Govt directs refineries to reroute LPG feedstock to industries hit by petrochemical shortage

NEW DELHI, Apr 2 (PTI)

THE Government has directed oil refineries to divert a portion of the feedstock normally used for producing cooking gas (LPG) to industries affected by the ongoing petrochemical shortage, which spans sectors from packaging to condom

manufacturing.

The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, on April 1, directed refineries to allocate a portion of propylene to the petrochemical industry, which has been severely affected, as most feedstock has been diverted for cooking gas (LPG) production.

on critical petrochemical products till June 30.

“This measure has been taken as a temporary and targeted relief in order to ensure continued availability of critical petrochemical inputs for domestic industry, reduce cost pressures on downstream sectors, and

safeguard supply stability in the country,” it said.

Disruption in shipping routes amid the West Asia war has raised concerns over imports of fertiliser, crude oil and natural gas. India is a major importer of fertiliser and petroleum.

Rajnath chairs IGoM meet, urges constant vigil over West Asia crisis

NEW DELHI, Apr 2 (PTI)

DEFENCE Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday emphasised the need for round-the-clock monitoring of the West Asia conflict and called for a calibrated response to deal with any eventuality to ensure that national interests remain protected.

Singh made the comments while chairing a high-level meeting of the Informal Group of Ministers (IGoM) set-up to

monitor the situation in West Asia.

The meeting was attended by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Oil Minister Hardeep Singh Puri, Power Minister Manohar Lal, Chemicals and Fertilizers Minister J P Nadda, Consumer Affairs Minister Prahlad Joshi and Minister of Railways, Information and Broadcasting, Electronics and Information

Technology Ashwini Vaishnaw.

In view of the “uncertain situation”, the Defence Minister underlined the importance of round-the-clock monitoring of the situation and the need to respond in a calibrated manner to deal with any eventuality, an official readout said.

He stressed on the need to leave no stone unturned to ensure that the people of the country face the minimum effect of the conflict, it said.

IAF's Tejas fleet set to resume flights next week after 2-month grounding

NEW DELHI, Apr 2 (PTI)

THE Indian Air Force's Tejas light combat jets are set to return to the skies next week, two months after the entire fleet was grounded following an accident involving one of the aircraft at a frontline airbase.

One Tejas jet sustained damage to its airframe after it overshot the runway at the airbase following a suspected brake failure.

The IAF had also ordered a comprehensive scrutiny of the jets following the accident.

On delays in delivery of Tejas



D K Sunil, the Chairman and Managing Director of the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), the manufacturer of the jets, said the entire fleet of 34 Tejas will fly most likely from April 8 as the glitch found onboard the aircraft's software has been resolved. "All the Tejas jets are set to fly again from next Wednesday," he said.

The fleet was grounded in the first week of February after

Mark 1A variant to the Indian Air Force (IAF), Sunil said HAL will be able ready to deliver over 20 jets by December and that six of them could be supplied soon as the final tests of radar, avionics and missile-firing systems were currently underway.

The delivery of the jets is facing delays primarily due to GE Aerospace missing several deadlines for supply of its F-404 aero engines to power the jets.

ISRO invites proposals from Indian researchers to study data from Aditya-L1 mission

NEW DELHI, Apr 2 (PTI)

THE Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) announced on Thursday that it is inviting proposals from the Indian solar physics community to access data from the Aditya-L1 mission, the first space-based Indian mission to study the Sun.

This is the second such formal call from ISRO for Indian scientists to access the Aditya-L1 mission data; the first call was made in January.

“At present, there are over 27 TB of data in the public domain, and several important scientific results have been published in international peer-reviewed journals. To further maximise the scientific return from this unique mission, the ISRO has released the second Announcement of Opportunity (AO) inviting proposals from the Indian solar physics community for Aditya-L1 observation time,” the ISRO said.

Proposals can be submitted by Indian scientists and researchers based at institutes, universities, or colleges in India. The applicants should be involved in

research in the area of solar science and equipped to submit proposals as principal investigators for solar observations with the necessary scientific and technical justification. The approved observations for this second AO cycle will take place between July and September.

Launched in September 2023, the Aditya-L1 mission was successfully inserted into a halo orbit around the first Lagrangian point (L1) in the Sun-Earth system in January 2024.

This L1 point, located around 1.5 million km away from Earth, offers the unique advantage of continuous, uninterrupted observation of the Sun, free from eclipses or occultation.

The Aditya-L1 mission carries seven scientific payloads -- four for remote sensing and three for in-situ measurements.

“The remote sensing instruments observe different layers of the Sun, including the photosphere, chromosphere, and corona, using various wavelengths of electromagnetic radiation,” ISRO said.

7 mn Iranians ready to fight US: Speaker

TEHRAN, Apr 2 (Agencies)

IRAN'S Parliament Speaker claimed Thursday that 7 million Iranians stood ready to fight any US ground invasion of the Islamic Republic.

Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, who has been discussed as a possible negotiating partner with the US, has offered a series of online posts challenging America since the war's start.

"Right now, in less than a week, a powerful national campaign sweeping the country has brought forward around 7 million Iranians who have already stepped up and declared they're ready to pick up arms and stand in defence of our nation," he wrote on X.

This claim has been circulating on social media accounts for days.

Qalibaf is the first high-rank-

ing official to mention it in Iran, a nation home to some 90 million people.

It is unclear where this figure comes from, but state media and text message campaigns have urged people to volunteer. The government has also called on retired soldiers to express their interest in fighting, while the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard's all-volunteer Basij force has begun accept-

ing if ground invasion is undertaken by the enemy, particularly referring to the possible ground invasion by the US and Israeli forces as the conflict escalates in the region, underscoring Tehran's readiness to escalate its military response if required.

"If the enemy undertakes a ground operation, not a single one should escape with their life," he said, as quoted by Fars News Agency.

The Iranian Army chief asserted-

"Any potential ground offensive against the country would be met with decisive and lethal force", says Iran's Army Chief Major General Amir Hatami

ed that the country's armed forces are fully prepared across both offensive and defensive domains to counter any form of aggression and emphasised the need for constant surveillance of adversary movements, calling for "utmost suspicion and precision" in monitoring developments and executing counter-strategies at the appropriate time.

General Hatami further reiterated that Iran's broader military strategy is aimed at ensuring national security while deterring external threats, adding that Iran would continue its efforts until its strategic objectives are achieved.

"The army is prepared in both offensive and defensive domains to counter any aggression from the enemy, and it is necessary to monitor the movements and actions of the ene-

mies with utmost suspicion and precision, moment by moment, and to execute plans to counter the enemy's assault methods at the appropriate time," he said, as quoted by Fars News Agency.

"The strategy of Islamic Iran is clear: the shadow of war must be lifted from our country, and security must exist for all; it cannot be that some places are secure while our people are not in security. We will not let go of our enemies until we achieve the outlined objectives," he added.

The remarks come amid heightened tensions in West Asia, with fears growing over the possibility of a wider conflict, including the risk of a ground offensive amid ongoing military exchanges in the region from the two fronts, with Iran being on one side and the US-Israeli coalition on the other.

Parliament passes Jan Vishwas Amendment Bill

NEW DELHI, Apr 2 (PTI)

PARLIAMENT on Thursday passed a bill to amend 784 provisions in 79 Central laws for decriminalising and rationalising minor offences to further improve the country's business environment.

The Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2026, was passed in the Rajya Sabha with a voice vote after Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal replied to a discussion on the legislation. The Minister said the legislation will help citizens and MSMEs. The bill was passed by the Lok Sabha on Wednesday.

These laws are administered by 23 ministries, including coal, commerce and industry, shipping, urban development, and transport. Out of 784, 717 provisions are being amended for decriminalising minor offences and 67 to facilitate ease of living.

CAPF Bill gets Parliament's nod

A BILL to create a unified legal framework governing personnel across different Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs), replacing the current patchwork of separate service-rule regimes for the five Central forces, was approved

Budget Session of Parliament to reconvene on April 16 for 3 days

NEW DELHI, Apr 2 (PTI)

THE Budget Session of Parliament will reconvene on April 16 after a brief recess to pass bills to increase the number of Lok Sabha seats from 543 to 816 so that the women's reservation law can be implemented at the earliest.

Sources said the two Houses will reconvene for three days - April 16-18 - to take up the proposed legislations.

The Government is learnt to have conveyed to the Opposition parties that the Houses are likely to meet for three days beginning April 16. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju, while speaking in Rajya Sabha on Thursday, said the House will meet again soon to consider a key legislation.

"We have certain bills and important issues, and we have shared this with the opposition also. We are going to have a very important bill in the next two-three weeks," he said.

According to the Government calendar, the House was scheduled to adjourn sine die (for an indefinite period) on April 2.

by Parliament on Thursday. The Bill, passed by the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday, was approved by the Lok Sabha by a voice vote.

Several Opposition members said the bill should be referred to a joint committee of Parliament for threadbare scrutiny and stakeholder consultations. An amendment moved by TMC MP Mahua Moitra to refer the bill to a select committee of the Lok Sabha was also negated

by a voice vote.

The Central Armed Police Forces (General Administration) Bill comes after Supreme Court, in October last year, dismissed the Centre's plea seeking a review of its 2025 verdict that directed that IPS officers' deputation in CAPFs up to the level of Senior Administrative Grade should be "progressively reduced" and asked for a cadre review to be carried out in six months.

Over 1,200 Indians evacuated from Iran via Armenia, Azerbaijan: MEA

NEW DELHI, Apr 2 (ANI)

THE Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Thursday said that more than 1,200 Indian nationals have been safely evacuated from Iran amid the ongoing conflict in West Asia.

Addressing an inter-ministerial briefing in the national capital, MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said the evacuation is being carried out through Armenia and Azerbaijan with the Centre closely coordinating efforts on the ground.

According to Jaiswal, "Some 1,200 Indian nationals have been evacuated out of which 845 are students." He added, "996 moved to Armenia and 204 to Azerbaijan from where they are being helped by the MEA."

The spokesperson said the Ministry has been working closely with Indian missions and local

'6 Indian ships crossed Strait of Hormuz'

NEW DELHI, Apr 2 (IANI)

THE Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Thursday said that six Indian ships carrying products like LPG, LNG, have safely crossed the Strait of Hormuz so far as New Delhi remains in touch with Iran and other countries for safe transit of Indian ships amid the ongoing conflict in the region.

Addressing a weekly media briefing in New Delhi, MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal also confirmed India's participation in a meeting on Strait of

authorities in both Armenia and Azerbaijan to ensure the safe return of citizens. He noted that arrangements are in place to

Hormuz being hosted by the UK later on Thursday.

When asked whether Indian Government is in talks with Iran and other nations for expediting the movement of 18 Indian-flagged vessels carrying crude oil and LPG that are stranded in the Persian Gulf, Jaiswal responded, "We are in touch with Iran and other countries there to see how best we can get unimpeded transit and safe transit for our ships which are carrying products, including LPG, LNG and other products."

assist evacuees in transit before they are brought back to India.

Earlier, Prime Minister Narendra Modi held discussions

with global leaders to address key international developments, including the ongoing conflict in West Asia.

Speaking about these engagements, Jaiswal said, "The Prime Minister is currently engaging in discussions with leaders from various nations across the globe. In this context, on March 28th, the Prime Minister held talks with the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, Prince Mohammed bin Salman. During this conversation, views were exchanged regarding the ongoing conflict in West Asia. The Prime Minister condemned the attacks targeting energy infrastructure in that region. Both leaders also discussed free navigation and keeping shipping lanes open.

Over 6 lakh passengers have returned to India from the West Asia region amid the developing security situation.