

India's Russian oil imports more than triple to 5.3 bn euro in Mar

NEW DELHI, Apr 14 (PTI)

INDIA'S crude oil purchases from Russia more than tripled to 5.3 billion euro in March as volumes doubled and a surge in oil prices pushed up import bill.

European think tank Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA), in a report, said after a drop in purchases in February, India was back to a buying binge in March. "India was the second-highest buyer of Russian fossil fuels in March 2026, importing a total of EUR 5.8 bil-



lion of Russian hydrocarbons. Crude oil products constituted 91 per cent of India's purchases, totalling EUR 5.3 billion," it said.

Coal (EUR 337 million) and oil products (EUR 178.5 million) constituted the remainder of their monthly imports. In February, India was the third largest importer, purchasing Russian hydrocarbons worth 1.8 billion euro. Crude oil constituted the largest share at 81 per cent (EUR 1.4 billion), followed by coal (EUR 223 million) and oil products (EUR 121 million).

Trump dials Modi, discusses war in W Asia, Hormuz crisis

2nd Call During Conflict; Rubio To Visit In May

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BIG-TICKET DEALS SOON: ENVOY GOR

> It's the first phone call between Trump and Modi after peace talks between US and Iran in Islamabad

> US ambassador Sergio Gor says big-ticket deals, including on energy, are expected to be sealed between India and US in the next 'few days and weeks'

> Trump administration will allow 30-day waiver of sanctions on Iranian oil at sea to **expire later this week**, say two officials

> India's crude imports from Russia surge in **March, with purchases at nearly \$6.2 billion**, compared with \$1.6 billion in Feb

Iran talks could resume in Pak in 2 days: Trump

US President Donald Trump said Tuesday that talks with Iran could resume in Pakistan over the next two days, according to an interview with the New York Post. "You should stay there...because something could be happening over

► **Minab's lost lives will haunt me forever, Majid Majidi tells TOI, P 24**

the next two days, and we are more inclined to go there," Trump was quoted as saying.

Two US officials said on Monday that discussions were still underway about a new round of talks. A diplomat from one of the mediating countries said Iran and US had agreed to a second round. **P 20**



“ I just want you to know we all love you
—Prez Trump

“ Received a call from my friend Prez Donald Trump. We discussed the situation in West Asia and stressed...keeping the Strait of Hormuz open and secure
—PM Modi

conversation that lasted 40 minutes, US ambassador Sergio Gor said both sides were hoping to finalise "incredible deals" in time for secretary of state Marco Rubio's visit to India next month for the Quad foreign ministers' meet.

Asked if the leaders discussed the possibility of a visit

by Trump to India for the Quad summit, the ambassador said the focus now is on Rubio's visit. "...the secretary is coming next month, which we're very excited by. And...he doesn't just show up," Gor said, referring to the proposed deals.

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New Delhi: US President Donald Trump dialled PM Narendra Modi to discuss the situation in the West Asia region, including the importance of securing safe passage of ships through the Strait of

FULL COVERAGE: P 8, 20

Hormuz, and to review what the latter described as substantial progress achieved in bilateral cooperation in various sectors. This was the second time Trump spoke to Modi since the war between US-Israel and Iran broke out on Feb 28.

Responding to a question from TOI shortly after the

India wants to ally with Russia for space station

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New Delhi: Isro has said it wants to partner with Russia for building the country's own space station — Bharatiya Antariksh Space Station (BAS) — by 2035.

“With the rich experience of Russian colleagues, we would like to partner with them in the development of the Indian space station,” said Asir Packiaraj, director of Is-

ro Propulsion Complex, who represented India at Russian Space Forum in Moscow on April 9. “For preparation of BAS, we're looking for good cooperation with Russia... to have common sub-systems for control, powering, communication, tracking.” With the ISS likely to retire by 2030-31, Indian and Russian experts discussed post-ISS opportunities for cooperation.

Currently, both India and Russia are working on plans to

build respective space stations. Packiaraj said India's station will be placed 450 km above Earth, at an inclination of 51.6 degrees, which is the same inclination of the proposed Russian station. Russia can assist India in building BAS by providing critical technologies, including expertise in orbital modules, life support systems and docking assemblies, using Russia's experience from its first space station 'Mir' and ISS.

Lebanon, Israel hold 1st direct talks in decades

Hezbollah Opposes Negotiations

Washington: US secretary of state Marco Rubio hosted a rare meeting between Israeli and Lebanese envoys in Washington on Tuesday, saying he hoped the two countries would agree to a framework for a peace process, even as Israel pressed its war on Hezbollah.



on Tuesday, saying he hoped the two countries would agree to a framework for a peace process, even as Israel pressed its war on Hezbollah.

The two countries went into their first direct negotiations since 1983 with conflicting agendas, with Israel ruling out discussion of a ceasefire and demanding Beirut disarm Iran-aligned Hezbollah. The two countries have remained technically in a state of war since Israel was established in 1948.

Rubio said the Trump administration is "very happy" to be facilitating the discussions, while noting that "we understand we're working against decades of history and complexities" that will not be quickly resolved. Hezbollah opposes the direct talks and was not represented, and the group appeared to step up its fire on northern Israel as the talks began.

"But we can begin to move forward with a framework where something can happen, something very positive, something very permanent, so that the people of Lebanon can have the kind of future they deserve, and so that the people of Israel can live without fear," Rubio said. Rubio and US ambassador to the UN Mike Waltz

The Israeli ambassador to the US told reporters that the Lebanese govt made it clear during the talks that they no longer want to be 'occupied' by Hezbollah

attended the opening of the session at the state department that is being led by US ambassador to Lebanon Michel Issa, Israeli ambassador to the US Yechiel Leiter and Lebanese ambassador to the US Nada Hamadeh Moawad. After the meeting, Leiter told reporters that the Lebanese govt made it clear during the talks that they no longer want to be "occupied" by Hezbollah and that there were conversations about long-term vision for clearly delineated border.

Iran-backed Hezbollah and other critics maintain that Lebanon's govt lacks leverage and that it should instead back the position of Iran, Hezbollah's key ally and patron. Wafiq Safa, a high-ranking member of the militant group's political council, told AP that it will not abide by any agreements made in the talks. Hezbollah enjoys wide influence in Lebanon. Hezbollah-allied politicians hold two cabinet minister positions, though the group's ties have soured with Lebanon's top political authorities, who have been critical of Hezbollah's decision to enter the Iran war. AGENCIES

Demand for crude oil to see biggest quarterly slump since COVID pandemic: IEA

NEW DELHI, Apr 14 (IANS)

THE International Energy Agency (IEA) warned on Tuesday that demand for crude oil will likely see the biggest slump in the second quarter (Q2 2026) since the Covid pandemic slashed fuel consumption.

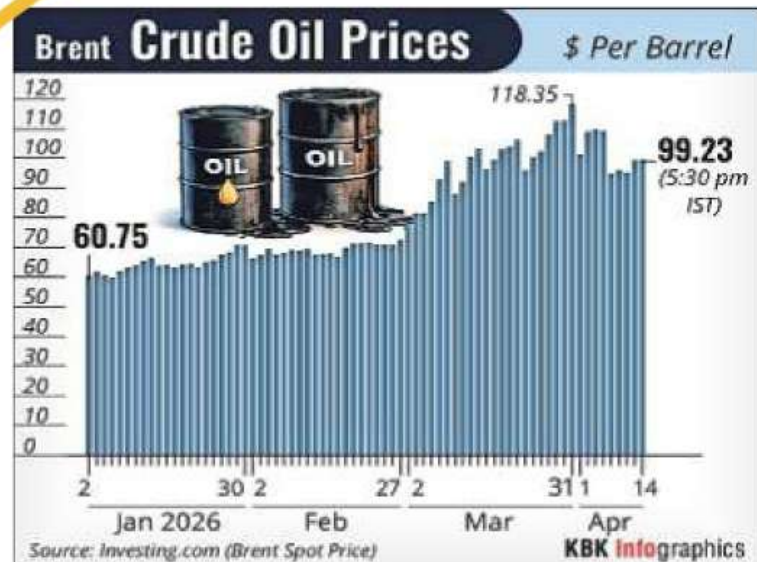
Oil demand is expected to contract by 80,000 barrels per day (kb/d) this year, "as the Iran war upends our global outlook".

"This is 730 kb/d less than in last month's Report and a forecast 1.5 mb/d 2Q26 decline would be the sharpest since Covid-19 slashed fuel consumption. Initially, the deepest cuts in oil use have come in the Middle East

and Asia Pacific, mainly for naphtha, LPG, and jet fuel. However, demand destruction will spread as scarcity and higher prices persist," the agency said in its report.

Global crude throughputs continue to struggle with disruptions to feedstock supplies and infrastructure damage that are tightening global product markets. Oil prices posted their largest-ever monthly gain in March in the wake of the most severe oil supply shock in history.

Spot crude benchmarks and differentials soared, outpacing futures markets, as refiners anxiously scrambled to replace locked-in Middle Eastern cargoes, said the report.



India set to emerge as world's 2nd largest solar market in 2026: NSEFI

NEW DELHI, Apr 14 (PTI)

INDIA is poised to become the World's second-largest solar market in 2026 in terms of annual installation, the National Solar Energy Federation of India (NSEFI) said on Wednesday.

India has achieved its fastest-ever addition of 50 GW of solar capacity in just 14 months, reaching the landmark 150 GW milestone, according to an NSEFI statement.



This marks a significant acceleration compared to the 11 years it took to reach the first 50 GW, followed by nearly three years to scale up to 100 GW.

NSEFI CEO Subrahmanyam Pulipaka said that solar energy is projected to reach 280-300 GW to support India's 500 GW non-fossil capacity target by 2030. With the current pace, India is nearing an annual addition trajectory of 50 GW, firmly aligning with this goal.

US, Iran may meet again in Islamabad for 2nd round of talks by next week

■ **By Sajjad Hussain**

ISLAMABAD, Apr 14 (PTI)

PAKISTAN is engaged in high-level contacts to bring Iran and the US back to the negotiating table and the two sides may meet again in Islamabad for a second round of talks by next week, according to a media report on Tuesday.

The contacts are ongoing for the revival of stalled negotiations between the US and Iran, and talks may be held again before the end of the two-week ceasefire on April 21, 'The Express Tribune' newspaper reported, citing highly placed sources.

They said Prime Minister

Shehbaz Sharif, Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar and Field Marshal Asim Munir are making hectic efforts to ensure the second round of talks, which may end the Gulf war.

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In some high-level meetings held in Islamabad, indications have been given to prepare for the next round of talks between the top leadership of the two warring sides, who held the first direct negotiations in 47 years over the weekend.

According to sources, the next round of negotiations could take place in Islamabad on Thursday. However, on the same date, PM Shehbaz is also scheduled to visit Saudi Arabia at the invitation of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. The prime minister will undertake short visits to Saudi Arabia and Turkey.

After almost six weeks of the West Asia conflict and with less than two hours before US President Donald Trump's deadline for Tehran to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, PM Shehbaz announced on April 8 that both sides had agreed to a two-week ceasefire.