

GDP beats forecasts, but West Asia conflict clouds India's growth outlook

NEW DELHI, June 6 (PTI)

INDIA'S economy expanded at faster than expected rate in fiscal 2026 but economists cautioned that growth is likely to moderate this year amid rising energy costs and global uncertainty linked to the West Asia conflict.

Data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) on Friday showed gross domestic product (GDP) growth accelerated to 7.8 per cent in the January-March quarter from 8 per cent in the preceding three months, taking full-year growth to 7.7 per cent, above the second advance estimate of 7.6 per cent. Economists said resilient domestic demand, healthy private consumption and strong investment activity helped the economy weather the initial impact of the conflict in West Asia, which intensified during March.

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“The growth was despite headwinds from the West Asia conflict,” said Dharmakirti Joshi, Chief Economist at CRISIL, noting that fourth-quarter growth remained well above the average pace recorded over the previous 10 quarters. Rumki Majumdar, economist at Deloitte India, said the expansion was broad-based and underpinned by both demand and production.

Gross value added (GVA) growth of 7.9 per cent exceeded GDP growth, reflecting strength across services, manufacturing and construction. Analysts, however, expect growth to slow in fiscal 2027 as higher crude oil and commodity prices, softer global growth, supply-chain disruptions and the prospect of a below-normal monsoon weigh on activity.

CRISIL maintained its FY27 GDP growth
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US dodges Iranian attack on Gulf, Hormuz

Strikes comes as the Trump administration ramps up pressure on Iran to make a deal to end conflict

Iran's Revolutionary Guard said it targeted the Ali Al Salem airbase, which hosts US forces in Kuwait, and the US Navy's 5th Fleet in the tiny Gulf island nation of Bahrain

of the missiles and a seventh failing to reach its target. The military said there were no reports of harm to US personnel. The ballistic missiles were fired after the US earlier in the day shot down four Iranian drones that were launched toward Strait of Hormuz.

"The attack drones posed an immediate threat to regional maritime traffic," US Central Command said on social media.

Kuwait's military said forces were intercepting missiles and drones attacking the country, while Bahrain activated air raid sirens and told residents to move to the nearest safe location and follow official instructions.

Iran's Revolutionary Guard said it targeted the Ali Al Salem airbase, which hosts US forces in Kuwait, and the US Navy's 5th Fleet in the tiny Gulf island nation of Bahrain, according to the state-run IRNA news agency.

The US military is enforcing a blockade on Iranian ports in response to Tehran's chokehold on the crucial corridor for global oil and natural gas shipments, which has sent energy prices spiking and posed political problems for President Donald Trump's Republican Party ahead of the midterm congressional elections.

US Central Command said it hit the radar sites, including an island in the strait, "to defend against further attacks."

It was the latest in back-and-

forth attacks that have strained the tenuous ceasefire in the war and efforts to reach a deal to extend that truce.

"We're going to come out of Iran very quickly and it's going to be very strong, no way or the other, whether it's a piece of paper or the very tough way," Trump said at an event with farmers in Wisconsin.

Trump said the Iranians still have 21 per cent to 22 per cent of their missiles.

Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) said Saturday it attacked US military bases in Kuwait and Bahrain earlier in the day in retaliation for US attacks on Qeshm Island and Sirik County in southern Iran.

In a statement on its official news outlet Sepah News, the IRGC identified the targeted US bases as the Ali Al Salem Air Base in Kuwait and the US Fifth Fleet headquarters in Bahrain.

On Saturday (2200 GMT Friday), four oil tankers, guided by the US army, sought to "illegally exit the Strait of Hormuz without coordination and paying attention to the IRGC Navy's frequent warnings," it said. In response, IRGC's aerospace division immediately fired ballistic missiles at the Ali Al Salem Air Base and the remaining important facilities in the US Fifth Fleet headquarters, it said. The US Central

Command said in a post on the social platform X that US forces struck some of Iran's radar sites on Friday, reports Xinhua news agency. The General Staff of the Kuwaiti Armed Forces said that Kuwaiti air defence systems on Saturday intercepted missile and drone attacks. Any explosions heard in different areas were the result of air defence systems intercepting "hostile targets," the General Staff said in a statement on X.



A Lebanese army soldier removes the rubble of a house that was destroyed in the recent clashes between Hezbollah fighters and Israeli troops in Dibbine village, southeast Lebanon on Friday. (AP/PTI)

Israeli airstrikes kill 9 including Lebanese army officers after ceasefire

BEIRUT, June 6 (AP)

ISRAELI airstrikes on Southern Lebanon on Saturday killed nine people, including three members of the Lebanese military, the Lebanese army and State media said, days after the two sides reached a new ceasefire deal.

An airstrike on a vehicle on a road linking the city of Nabatiyeh with the town of Marjayoun killed a brigadier general, a captain and another soldier, the army said, without immediately releasing their names.

Another airstrike on the southern village of Saksakiyah killed six people and wounded four, the state-run National News Agency said.

"The continued, deliberate, and repeated Israeli aggression against

(Contd on page 5)

Ukraine targets St Petersburg with drone attack

ST PETERSBURG, June 6 (AP)

RESIDENTS of St Petersburg, Russia's second-largest city, were told not to leave their homes after a "large-scale" Ukrainian drone attack targeted the city on Saturday morning, local officials said, underscoring Kyiv's growing ability to hit deep inside Russia.

St Petersburg Governor Alexander Beglov advised St Petersburg residents not to go outside and warned of possible disruptions to mobile Internet service.

Regional Governor Alexander Drozdenko said 141 drones were shot down over the surrounding Leningrad region. Russia's Defence Ministry said its air defences shot down 376



Ukrainian drones.

Although no casualties were immediately reported, the renewed attack on St Petersburg strikes a further embarrassing blow to Russian President Vladimir Putin's efforts to cast the conflict as a distant event that

doesn't affect Russian daily life.

Saturday's attack follows a Ukrainian drone strike that set ablaze an oil terminal in the city and hit a nearby naval base Wednesday, hours before the opening of the St Petersburg International Economic Forum,

Putin's annual showcase for investment.

Speaking at the forum, Putin said Thursday that Russia will strengthen its air defences to counter recent Ukrainian drone attacks, which have reached deep inside his country and cast a cloud over the event in his hometown of St Petersburg.

With the front line barely moving as swarms of drones hinder advances, both sides have sought an edge by launching long-range strikes. In Ukraine, one person was killed and three wounded overnight in the Dnipropetrovsk region, as Russian forces struck three districts nearly 30 times with drones and artillery, regional head Oleksandr Hanzha said Saturday. In Zaporizhzhia, five people sought medical care after

a Russian drone strike started a fire at a parking lot, according to regional head Ivan Fedorov.

Russia targeted Ukraine overnight with 272 strike drones, and air defences shot down 249 of them, the Ukrainian air force said Saturday.

The latest attacks came a day after Putin on Friday rejected a proposal by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy for a face-to-face meeting on the four-year-old conflict, saying he sees "no point" in it.

Thursday's letter, the first public message Zelenskyy has written directly to Putin since Russia sent troops into Ukraine in 2022, was a sweeping critique of the Russian leader's 26 years in power, as well as some taunts about his age.

Threats of sanctions against India would boomerang under PM Modi: Putin



Russian President Vladimir Putin and Uzbekistan's President Shavkat Mirziyoyev during the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum in Russia. (AP/PTI)

ST PETERSBURG, June 6 (ANI)

RUSSIAN President Vladimir Putin has strongly backed India's strategic autonomy, asserting that any Western sanctions threats against New Delhi would "boomerang immediately" and affirming that the South Asian nation has consistently been "guided by its national interests".

The Russian President emphas-

sised that India remains entirely free to select global products that "they consider to be most up to date, most applicable for them and obviously offering the best price-quality ratio".

Speaking at the annual St Petersburg International Economic Forum, President Putin lauded the robust trajectory of New Delhi's global engagements.

"India always acts as a sover-

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'Russia's ties with India trust-based'

ST. PETERSBURG, June 6 (ANI)

RUSSIAN President Vladimir Putin has strongly commended Moscow's bilateral relationship with India, describing ties as "brotherly" and "trust-based" in every sense of the word, even as New Delhi faces persistent pressure from Washington over its energy imports from Russia.

Addressing the St Petersburg International Economic

Forum, the Russian leader highly commended India's human capital and technological prowess, specifically highlighting the country's expertise in coding and software engineering. "We know how talented the Indian people are and how well educated they are. Indians possess outstanding competencies that have earned global recognition, especially in coding and several other fields," Putin stated.

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The Russian President further underscored that Moscow's extensive bilateral cooperation with New Delhi "is not subject to the political environment", reiterating that the Kremlin remains unyielding in its geopolitical commitments.

Ebola outbreak in Central Africa could reach 20,000 cases



Asero Jeanne (C) a mother of five who lost two of her children to Ebola, was discharged from the hospital after testing negative in Mongbwalu, Congo on Friday. (AP/PTI)

NEW YORK, June 6 (AP)

THE Ebola outbreak in Central Africa could grow to 20,000 cases or more, depending on how quickly infected people are isolated to slow the spread, according to a new analysis by US health officials.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention published a range of scenarios generated by computer models, spanning from 10,000 cases to more than 20,000.

Millions are being pushed into hunger by Iran war, says WFP

■ **By Edith M Lederer**

UNITED NATIONS, June 6 (AP)

THE UN food agency said millions of people are being pushed into acute hunger by the Iran war, as it warned would happen if the conflict escalated and oil prices remained high.

The World Food Programme said an analysis in three vulnerable countries found that an additional 2.5 million people in Somalia, 2.3 million in Afghanistan and 1.3 million in Sri Lanka are struggling to meet their basic food needs.

In March, WFP predicted that 45 million people could be pushed into food insecurity by the end of June. That would be

on top of the 318 million people around the world who are already food insecure.

“We remain by that prognosis,” WFP’s acting Executive Director Carl Skau told UN reporters. “That’s mainly because the correlation between the prices of energy and food is so tight in many places, and also that in the poorest countries people are already spending all their money on food, and hence when food prices rise, they eat less.” WFP said in its report, circulated late on Thursday, that its findings indicate the Mideast crisis is generating “significant spillovers,” particularly on the prices of food and fuel, and disrupting trade.

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