

Growth in industrial output at 5-month low of 4.1% in March

Slowdown in construction and consumer-centric sectors pulls down IIP growth in the first month of data since the crisis began in West Asia

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

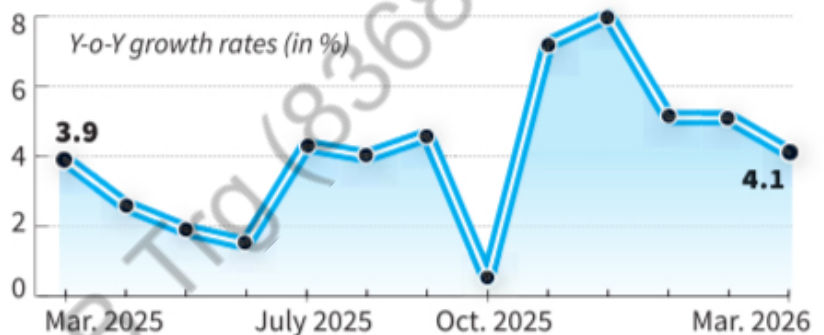
Growth in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) slowed to a five-month low of 4.1% in March 2026, the first month of data after the West Asia crisis began, pulled down by a near-halving in construction sector growth rates and low growth in consumer-centric sectors.

Data released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation on Tuesday showed that growth in the IIP has been slowing since January, even before the West Asia crisis broke out on February 28. Economists point out that the full economic impact of the crisis will play out over the next few months. For the full financial year 2025-26, growth in the IIP stood at 4.1%, marginally faster than the 4.07% recorded in 2024-25.

According to Madan Sabnavis, chief economist at the Bank of Baroda, the growth of 4.1% in March is "impressive given that the core sector growth was negative for the month". Data

Slippery slope

Latest official data showed that IIP growth has been slowing since January 2026, even before the West Asia war began



SOURCE: MINISTRY OF STATISTICS AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

released earlier this month had shown that the eight core sectors, which make up about 40% of the IIP, had contracted 0.4% in March.

Within the IIP, the manufacturing sector slowed to a five-month low of 4.3% in March, although this was faster than the 4% recorded last March.

"Domestic manufacturing has begun to bear the brunt of costlier and tighter supplies of petroleum products and natural gas," Dipti Deshpande, principal economist at Crisil, said.

Growth in the capital goods sector, notably, accelerated to a 29-month high 14.6% in March from an already-robust 12.4% in

February. While growth in the infrastructure and construction sector slowed to a nine-month low of 6.7%, economists still felt it highlighted strength in the economy. "Importantly, the strength in capital goods and infrastructure goods underscores that investment-led demand remains intact, even as consumer non-durables posted a muted 1.1% rise," Vikrant Chaturvedi, associate director of research at Brickwork Ratings said. The 1.1% rise in consumer non-durables came on a low base as the sector had contracted 4% in March last year.

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Growth in industrial output at 5-month low

According to Ms. Deshpande, this is not the first data point showing the stress in the manufacturing sector.

“The Purchasing Managers’ Index also slipped in March from February but remained in the expansion zone, indicating the likely uneven impact of the conflict across sectors and time based on their ability to absorb the shock.”

“The March data captures only a part of the shock as uncertainty and weak producer sentiment have yet to fully manifest in production data,” she added. “The deeper impact is expected to show up down the road, particularly in the first quarter of this fiscal.”

Google's AI data hub project kicks off in Andhra Pradesh

Chief Minister Naidu lays foundation for 1-Gigawatt centre on 600 acres on Vizag outskirts; it will be one of India's largest FDI projects with data storage, AI cloud, at an investment of ₹1.35 lakh cr.

V. Kamalakara Rao
VISAKHAPATNAM

Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday laid the foundation stone for the Google Data Centre at Tarluvada, on the outskirts of Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, one of the largest single Foreign Direct Investment projects in India.

The 1-Gigawatt hyper-scale AI data centre is coming up on 601.4 acres at an investment of ₹1.35 lakh crore. It will be managed by Google's subsidiary Raiden Infotech in partnership with Adani Infra. AdaniConneX and Airtel Nxtra are also partners in the wider Google-Adani-Airtel venture, which forms part of Google's announced \$15 billion investment.

The facility will offer large-scale data storage along with AI cloud infras-



The project will be managed by Google's subsidiary Raiden Infotech in partnership with Adani Infra. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

tructure, and an upcoming subsea cable system will give Visakhapatnam direct digital links with several countries.

Union Minister for Electronics and Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnaw said the port city was set to become India's next technology landmark. "Visakhapatnam will become AI-patnam," he said.

Adani Digital Labs Director Jeet Adani said India

currently had about 1.3 Gigawatts of total data centre capacity, and that the Visakhapatnam project alone would add nearly 1 Gigawatt at a single location.

Laura Williams, Consul General at the U.S. Consulate General in Hyderabad, said the Google project embodies the strength of the U.S.-India partnership.

The government said the project had been enabled by its "speed of doing

business" policy, and that it planned to build a 6.5-Gigawatt digital hub in the State. The centre would create jobs in AI, cloud operations, cybersecurity and data science, and to draw allied investment in power systems, cooling technologies, server manufacturing and networking.

Speaking at the event, Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu called the project a matter of pride for north Andhra and said it would place the State on the global technology map.

Union Minister for Electronics and Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnaw drew a parallel between Hyderabad's Cyber Towers and the Google AI hub in Visakhapatnam, saying the port city was set to become the country's next technology landmark.

SECOND CENTRE
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A.P. eyes second mega data centre in Vizag with Reliance as key partner

Sambasiva Rao M.

AMARAVATI

The Andhra Pradesh government is moving ahead with its plans to position Visakhapatnam as a major data infrastructure hub, with another large-scale data centre project in the pipeline involving Reliance Industries.

On Tuesday, Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu laid the foundation stone for a 1 GW Google hyperscale AI data centre in Visakhapatnam.

The project, estimated at around \$15 billion (₹1.35 lakh crore), is being developed as a joint venture involving AdaniConnex, Google Cloud, and Airtel Nextra.

Another project

Parallely, as per sources in the government, the State government is in the final stages of firming up another major data centre project of 1.5 GW in the same city, with Reliance expected to be the principal partner.

According to sources, discussions for this project began earlier, with the Andhra Pradesh Economic Development Board confirming in November 2025 that negotiations were underway with Digital Connexion—a consortium comprising Reliance Industries, Brookfield, and Digital Realty.

The proposed Reliance-backed facility is expected to attract investments ex-

The proposed Reliance-backed facility is expected to attract investments over ₹1.6 lakh crore

ceeding ₹1.6 lakh crore. Highly placed sources in the Secretariat in Amaravati indicated that a memorandum of understanding (MoU) had already been signed with the APEDB, signalling steady progress toward project finalisation. Sources also said that RIL had asked for about 900 acres of land.

Official announcement

Sources also said that the government was likely to officially announce the development in the second or third week of May.

Officials said that the upcoming data centre complex would be built to global standards, incorporating high-density AI-ready racks, dedicated power substations, and redundant power supply systems.

It is also expected to feature robust connectivity infrastructure to cater to hyperscalers, enterprise clients, cloud service providers, and emerging artificial intelligence workloads.

With back-to-back mega investments, Andhra Pradesh is aiming to transform Visakhapatnam into a leading destination for next-generation digital infrastructure and AI-driven industries.

Rahul meets Nicobarese community, promises to fight against infra project

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, on Tuesday visited the Great Nicobar Island and met with Nicobarese community leaders at Rajiv Nagar in Campbell Bay. They explained their concerns and fears about the Union government's ₹92,000-crore infrastructure project on the island.

Mr. Gandhi's visit to Nicobar comes weeks after a delegation from the island visited him in New Delhi to raise their issues with the way the Union government is proceeding with the "holistic development" project. A draft master plan envisions the island as a tourism-reliant economy by 2055.

Addressing the attendees at the community hall in Rajiv Nagar, Mr. Gandhi said he had promised to visit the Island when he met with the Nicobarese delegation. "I don't want to say much here today. I am here to listen to you and assure you that we will do whatever we can to fight for you," he said.

He added that he had



Hearty reception: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi being welcomed by a member of the Nicobarese community during his visit. PTI

made it to the island despite the local administration first refusing permission and later coming up with "excuses" to prevent him from reaching the island. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands Congress in-charge, Manickam Tagore, said in a statement on Tuesday that Mr. Gandhi's visit to Nicobar had been possible even "after all the hurdles created by the administration under Amit Shah".

"For the first time, tribal communities will have a direct opportunity to express their concerns, struggles, and aspirations to the Leader of Opposition. While Narendra Modi has chosen not to listen to their voices, decisions have

been made to hand over precious forests and land to his corporate friend Gautam Adani," Mr. Tagore further said.

Village maps

Leaders of the Tribal Council of Little and Great Nicobar told *The Hindu* that they shared their anxieties about the Centre's project, and also explained their demand to return to their ancestral lands and villages along the island's west coast.

"We were also able to show him the maps marking our ancestral villages across the island," one leader said, adding that Mr. Gandhi assured them of raising their issues in Parliament as well.

9,400 accounts banned for being linked to digital arrests

In documents before Supreme Court, WhatsApp says its probe began from the initial input from govt. sources to identify and run down the creators or administrators behind scam operations

Krishnadas Rajagopal

NEW DELHI

Documents placed on record in the Supreme Court show WhatsApp asserting to the Home Ministry that it detected and banned up to 9,400 accounts linked to “digital arrests” and “law enforcement impersonations” after independent investigations.

The platform said it had focused on bringing down the entire network of scamsters, mostly active in Cambodia.

Not isolated

Warning signals sent from probe agencies and the Union government are not treated as isolated or one-off reports, but as a “seed” to map and disrupt the entire criminal network, the platform said.

The platform said its probe fanned out from the initial “seed” input from government sources to identify and run down the creators or administrators behind scam operations such as digital arrests or accounts actively promoting scam activity within groups and channels.

The communication between WhatsApp and the Home Ministry was annexed to a status report filed on behalf of the In-

Curbing virtual fraud

The government and industry stakeholders are taking coordinated measures to fight digital scams

- WhatsApp is working on SIM binding — linking the account with physical SIM card — to detect SIM swapping and cloning
- Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning systems being used to detect impersonation of law enforcement agencies, misuse of official logos and synthetic content



dian Cybercrime Coordination Centre (I4C) by the Ministry. Attorney-General R. Venkataramani appears for the Ministry in the Supreme Court.

The report said several steps were discussed in a meeting convened by the Inter-Departmental Committee under the chairmanship of the Special Secretary (Internal Security) in March. WhatsApp, along with major telecom service providers (TSPs) such as Airtel, Vodafone-Idea, Reliance Jio, and BSNL, were invited.

WhatsApp said its work on SIM binding — linking the account with the physical SIM card — was on and the platform would comply with the provisions of the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Eth-

ics Code) Rules, 2021. These include the provisions related to identification and labelling of ‘Synthetically Generated Information’ (SGI) commonly used in video calls made for ‘digital arrests’.

The Ministry and other stakeholders also agreed on introducing mechanisms for identifying and blocking device IDs used in digital arrest scams. WhatsApp said it would continue to strengthen Artificial Intelligence/Machine Learning-based systems to detect impersonation of law enforcement agencies, misuse of official logos and synthetic content.

Detection models

The report said the online platform has introduced detection models and warning mechanisms to

identify impersonation patterns and alert users. It had further agreed to retain data of deleted accounts for a minimum period of 180 days to assist law enforcement investigations.

Recently, Chief Justice of India Surya Kant had flagged digital arrest scams the “most disturbing” and lethal among cybercrimes, which not only result in merely financial loss to victims but also a “blistering sense of violation”. The CJI had said that such crimes must not be seen as mere economic offences, but an offence against human dignity.

The Home Ministry had clocked over 2.41 lakh complaints related to digital arrests scams alone, involving losses of approximately ₹30,000 crore.

The CJI’s Bench had taken *suo motu* cognisance of digital arrests scams in January this year, saying that victims were psychologically coerced by fraudsters dressed up convincingly as police officers and judicial officers to cough up huge sums of their savings to avert fictional arrests or punitive action. One of the cases before the Supreme Court was that of a 78-year-old woman lawyer, who was duped by fraudsters in a digital arrest scam.

Rajnath Singh calls for unified SCO approach to eliminate terrorism

The Minister says the real test for SCO members lies in maintaining consistency and rejecting double standard, particularly in addressing state-sponsored cross-border terrorism; he calls for a more 'orderly world' rather than a 'new world order'

Saurabh Trivedi
NEW DELHI

Terrorism remains the most serious threat to global peace and the emerging world order, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said while addressing the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Defence Ministers' meeting in Bishkek.

Emphasising zero tolerance, he called for a unified and consistent approach to eliminate terrorism, extremism, and radicalism in all forms.

Mr. Singh underscored that terrorism cannot be justified under any circumstances, asserting that it has no nationality and no theology. He stressed that no grievance, real or perceived, can excuse violence against innocent people.

Highlighting the importance of credibility, he said the real test for SCO member states lies in maintaining consistency and rejecting double standard, particularly in addressing state-sponsored cross-border



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh addressing the SCO Defence Ministers' meet in Bishkek on Tuesday. ANI

der terrorism and safe havens.

Referring to the Pahalgam terror attack, Mr. Singh said the carnage had shaken the conscience of humanity and reaffirmed India's resolve to hold perpetrators accountable. He noted that through Operation Sindoor, India demonstrated that terrorism epicentres were no longer immune from response.

He also recalled the Tianjin Declaration, which reflects

the collective commitment of SCO nations to combat terrorism decisively.

“Three evils”

The Defence Minister highlighted the role of SCO's Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure in countering radicalisation and extremism.

He said tackling the “three evils” – terrorism, separatism and extremism – required a unified front, stronger cooperation, and

decisive action against those who supported or sheltered terror networks.

Beyond security concerns, Mr. Singh pointed to the broader global context marked by increasing unilateralism, conflicts, and a fractured world order. He noted that nations were becoming more inward-looking, weakening global consensus, and cooperation. In such a scenario, he said, the SCO has a pivotal role to play in promoting stabil-

ity, dialogue and mutual respect.

Describing the SCO region as home to some of the world's most ancient civilisations, Mr. Singh said it reflected a shared heritage of cultural exchange, trade and cooperation. He emphasised that this legacy should guide member nations in addressing present-day challenges collectively.

Calling for a more “orderly world” rather than a new world order, Mr. Singh stressed the need for dignity, respect, and peaceful coexistence among nations. He urged SCO members to prioritise diplomacy over conflict and ensure that the current era was defined by peace and prosperity, not war.

Reaffirming India's commitment, Mr. Singh invoked the philosophy of ‘Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam’ – the world is one family – and expressed confidence that stronger cooperation within the SCO could transform regional security challenges into opportunities for lasting peace and stability.

UNGA president meets Jaishankar, makes a dig at Trump Board of Peace

Shubhajit Roy & Divya A
New Delhi, April 28

THE VISITING President of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), Annalena Baerbock, said on Tuesday that the UN, multilateralism and international law are under "direct attack". Baerbock, who met External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar Tuesday, also made a dig at US President Donald Trump's Board of Peace, wondering how a framework based on joining fee for nations will operate and adding that there is a reason the UN is responsible for ensuring peace and security in the world.

"Because every country, no matter how big or small, how powerful or rich has a seat at the table, because you will not find just peace for anybody in the world if you have to pay the fee to join it," she said. Her comments are important since Trump's Board of Peace has been perceived as an alternative to the UN. After meeting Baerbock, Jaishankar said that they discussed UN80, SDGs, AI implications and the West Asia conflict. "Underscored the need for reformed multilateralism reflective of today's realities, particularly of the Global South."

Addressing the media at the UN House after the meeting,



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar with UNGA President Annalena Baerbock during a meeting in New Delhi on Tuesday. PTI

Baerbock said, "We are witnessing growing geopolitical tensions, increasing fragmentation, and pressure on the three pillars of the UN — peace and security, development, and human rights... Today, the UN, multilateralism, and international law are not only under pressure, but under direct attack." During her meeting with Jaishankar, Baerbock focused on strengthening cooperation on shared global priorities and highlighted India's role as an essential partner in advancing multilateral solutions.

Admitting that the UN was indeed facing challenges in an

increasingly fragmented world, she emphasised that it is still the only forum where all 193 countries are represented and have equal rights. "As much as the world needs the UN, the UN these days also needs the world," she said.

"Bringing peace to regions is not as easy as just speaking about it," she said, when asked about the West Asia conflict.

"You need the experience of ceasefire, negotiation, and the UN is a unique place where every country around the world has been at the table —

no matter how big or small, no matter how powerful or rich."

E. EXPLAINED

Shared priorities

The UNGA will meet for the 80th anniversary session this September. Baerbock's visit is aimed at strengthening India's position ahead of the UNGA, where New Delhi is expected to push for the stalled UNSC reforms. India and Germany have been on the same page on the expansion of the UNSC as both are aspirants for the permanent membership.

"And yes, it is challenging for the United Nations these days, but we should not forget it has always been challenging. There was no single decade in UN history without a war," she added.

Baerbock, who was earlier Foreign minister of Germany, also weighed in on reforms in UNSC, something that New Delhi has advocated consistently over the last few decades. This is also important since Germany and India are part of the G-4 grouping, which has been pushing for UNSC reforms.

"While the UN is indispensable, it has to reform itself to be

more efficient, more agile and avoid duplication to better deliver on the ground and meet the challenges of the 21st century and beyond," she said. "In this time, the discussions about the reform of the security council have also increased. Different proposals are on the table — also a proposal from this country (India), but many other proposals as well, especially also from the African Union, which is not represented in the security council as a whole continent, to be a permanent member."

"As one of the founding members of the UN, India has played a critical role throughout the organisation's 80-year history and across all three of its pillars... Since 1948, India has contributed over 300,000 troops to over 53 missions. More than 184 Indian peacekeepers have made the ultimate sacrifice in service of global peace," she said.

In response to a question, the UNGA president hoped that the next UN secretary general is a woman. The tenure of current Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, will come to an end on December 31, 2026. Former Chile President & ex-UN High Commissioner for Human rights Michelle Bachelet and UNCTAD Secretary General Rebeca Grynspan, are in the fray.

U.S. President 'unhappy' with Iran's peace proposal

Reuters

DUBAI/WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump is unhappy with the latest Iranian proposal on resolving the two-month war, a U.S. official has said, dampening hopes for resolution of a conflict that has killed thousands, disrupted energy supplies, and fuelled inflation.

Iran's latest proposal would set aside discussion on its nuclear programme until the war, on hold following a ceasefire announced earlier this month, is ended and disputes over shipping from the Gulf are resolved.

Mr. Trump, whose approval rates are falling amid domestic pressure to end a war for which he has given shifting rationales, is unhappy with the proposal as he wants nuclear issues dealt with from the outset, said a U.S. official briefed on the President's Monday meeting with his advisers.

White House spokesperson Olivia Wales said the U.S. has "been clear about our red lines" as it seeks to end the war.

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Trump 'unhappy' with Iran's peace proposal

Meanwhile, Iran's Deputy Defence Minister Reza Talaei-Nik said on Tuesday that Tehran was ready to share defensive weapons capabilities and experiences gained from "America's defeat" with "independent" nations including those of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, which includes Russia, China, India, Pakistan, and Central Asian states.

Iranian government spokesperson Fatemeh Mo-hajerani told state media on Tuesday that the Islamic Republic had prepared for maritime blockade scenarios as early as the U.S. presidential election in 2024, and made necessary arrangements so that "there is nothing to worry about".

She added Tehran was using northern, eastern, and western trade corridors that do not rely on Gulf ports to neutralise the blockade's effects.

Decline in shipping

Between 125 and 140 ships usually crossed in and out of the strait daily before the war, but only seven have done so in the past day, according to Kpler ship-tracking data and satellite analysis from SynMax, and none of them were carrying oil bound for the global market.

Senior Iranian officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the proposal carried by Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi to Islamabad over the weekend envisioned talks in stages, with the nuclear issue to be set aside at the start.

Mr. Araghchi has shuttled in and out of Islamabad twice during the weekend. He also visited Oman and on Monday went to Russia, where he met President Vladimir Putin and received words of support from a longstanding ally.

A first step under the Iranian proposal would require ending the U.S.-Israeli war on Iran and providing guarantees that the U.S. cannot start it up again. Then negotiators would resolve the U.S. Navy's blockade of Iran's trade by sea and the fate of the Strait of Hormuz, which Iran aims to reopen under its control. Only then would talks look at other issues, including the longstanding dispute over Iran's nuclear programme, with Iran still seeking some kind of U.S. acknowledgment of its right to enrich uranium.

UAE announces exit from OPEC group

Associated Press

DUBAI

The UAE announced on Tuesday that it will leave the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) effective May 1, stripping the oil cartel of

one of its largest producers and further weakening its leverage over global oil supplies and prices.

Making the announcement via its state-run WAM news agency, the UAE said it would also be leaving the wider OPEC+

group, which Russia had led in order to try to stabilise oil prices.

“This decision reflects the UAE’s long-term strategic and economic vision and evolving energy profile, including accelerated investment in domestic

energy production, and reinforces its commitment to a responsible, reliable, and forward-looking role in global energy markets,” the UAE said.

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UAE announces exit from OPEC group

“Following its exit, the UAE will continue to act responsibly, bringing additional production to market in a gradual and measured manner, aligned with demand and market conditions,” it added.

The move had been rumoured as a possibility for some time, as the UAE pushed back in recent years against production quotas it felt had been too low – meaning it was not able to sell as much oil to the world as it had wanted.

The UAE has had increasingly frosty relations with Saudi Arabia, OPEC’s largest producer, over political and economic matters in West Asia, even after both came under attack by fellow OPEC member Iran during the current war.

Seven killed, dozens wounded after Pakistani strikes in Afghan province

Taliban officials say missiles struck civilian facilities which Pakistan dismissed as a 'blatant lie'; the attack was the first violent incident since peace talks earlier this month; Islamabad accuses Taliban regime of sheltering militants which Kabul denies

Associated Press
KABUL

Mortars and missiles fired from Pakistan on Monday struck a university and civilian homes in north-eastern Afghanistan, killing seven people and wounding at least 85, Taliban officials said.

Pakistan denied the accusation of targeting a university.

The strikes were the first violent incident since Chinese-mediated peace talks between the two sides earlier this month.

Both countries had been embroiled in months of deadly fighting that has killed hundreds of people



Toll of truce: An Afghan boy receives medical treatment after being injured in Pakistani shelling in Asadabad on Tuesday. AFP

since late February, when Afghanistan launched a cross-border attack on Pakistan in retaliation for air-strikes inside Afghanistan.

Afghan deputy government spokesman Hamdullah Fitrat said Monday's at-

tack took place in Asadabad, the capital of Kunar Province, as well as various areas in another district in the province.

'War crime'

Authorities said the death

toll stood at seven, with 85 people wounded.

Mr. Fitrat said the wounded included women, children and students at the Sayed Jama-luddin Afghani University, and described the attacks as "an unforgivable war crime, barbarity, and provocative act."

Afghanistan's Ministry of Higher Education said about 30 students and professors were injured in the strike on the university, which it said had caused extensive damage to the facility.

In a statement, Pakistan's Information Ministry said that "Pakistan's targeting is precise and intelligence based. No strike has

been carried out on the said university. The claims are frivolous and fake."

Afghan and Pakistani officials met in Urumqi, China in early April, and had agreed not to escalate their conflict and "explore a comprehensive solution," Beijing had said after mediating the talks.

On Saturday, Afghan Foreign Minister Amir Khan Mutaqi described the recent negotiations in China as "positive."

Pakistan accuses Afghanistan of harbouring militants that carry out deadly attacks inside Pakistan, especially the Pakistani Taliban, known as Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan. Kabul denies the charge.

DHAKA

Bangladesh starts fuelling its first nuclear plant in landmark move



AP

Bangladesh has begun loading uranium fuel into its first nuclear power station on Tuesday, a key step towards bringing the 2,400 MW plant online to ease pressure on the overstretched power grid.

The Rooppur nuclear plant, built with loans from Russia, could meet 10% of the power demands of the South Asian nation. AFP



Rupee falls 53 paise to close at 94.68 against U.S. dollar

The rupee depreciated 53 paise to close at 94.68 against the U.S. dollar on Tuesday, as elevated crude oil prices and unabated foreign capital outflows amid rising geopolitical uncertainties dented investor sentiments. At the interbank forex market, the rupee opened at 94.35 against the U.S. dollar, then lost ground and settled for the day at 94.68, registering a fall of 53 paise over its previous close. On Monday, the rupee closed at 94.15 against the U.S. dollar. PTI

Crude oil imports slip by 2 MT over Jan.; 50% more costly

Amid the ongoing West Asia conflict, India paid ₹1.2 lakh crore for the March imports as opposed to ₹86,000 crore in January, representing a 40% increase overall, PPAC data showed

M. Kalyanaraman

CHENNAI

In a reflection of the impact of the West Asia war that started end of February, India's crude oil imports dipped to some 19 million tonnes in March, down by 2 million tonnes from January and 1 million from the shorter month of February. March imports were the lowest since July 2025.

India paid ₹1.2 lakh crore for the March imports as opposed to ₹86,000 crore in January, representing a 40% increase overall, data from the Petroleum Planning & Analysis Cell (PPAC) showed. In terms of the price India has paid for unit imports, this is an increase of more than 50%.

Indigenous crude oil production was 2.17 million tonnes, same as January. India is the world's third-biggest oil importer and consumer. Compared



Quick fix: The Centre had ordered ramping up of LPG production early March to compensate for the fall in imports. NAGARA GOPAL

with March 2025, India's imports fell by almost 17% and imports of crude oil products declined by some 30%.

At nearly 1.4 million tonnes, domestic LPG production was up by 20% compared with January and 30% increase compared with February. The government had ordered a ramping up of LPG production early March to compensate for the fall in imports as a consequence

of the West Asia war.

First, a 25% increase was claimed. Refineries were directed to maximise LPG output by diverting petrochemical streams. Then a 30% increase was claimed by government by mid-March, then 40% by late March.

In March, LPG imports fell from nearly 2.2 million tonnes in January to some 0.82 million, representing a decrease of more than 62%. The March Snapshot,

published a few days ago, revealed that there was a pullback of nearly 8% in household LPG supply, nearly 50% reduction in non-household LPG supply, and 75% in bulk LPG supply compared with March 2025.

In March, the Indian government set in motion a process to bring back Indian-flagged LPG carriers stuck in the Persian Gulf region due to U.S.-Israel war on Iran. Four LPG carriers were brought back and reached India in March. They were carrying some 1.8 lakh tonnes of LPG.

The LPG import shortfall is estimated to be narrower in April. Meanwhile, India has contracted with many foreign ships to bring in LPG from the U.S. in May. Some of the Indian-flagged LPG ships that had been lying idle after unloading, may well be leaving for U.S. ports for loading, if surplus LPG was available there.

Rs 36,230 cr

The cost of the six-lane — expandable to eight corridor, which has been developed by the UP Expressways Industrial Development Authority.

Less travel time

It is expected to reduce travel time between Meerut and Prayagraj from 10-12 hours to 6-8 hours.

Traverses 12 districts

It starts at Bijauli in Meerut and ends at Judapur Dandu in Prayagraj, establishing direct connectivity between west and east UP.



GANGA EXPRESSWAY

Key facts about India's 594-km mega corridor

The expressway, touted as India's longest, will be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi today. MAULSHREE SETH pieces together the project



120 kmph
The maximum speed the expressway has been designed for

Stretch 1

MEERUT-BADAUN

129.7 km

Covers Meerut, Hapur, Bulandshahr, Amroha, Sambhal and Badaun districts

Stretch 2

BADAUN-HARDOI

151.7 km

Covers Badaun, Shahjahanpur and Hardoi districts

Stretch 3

HARDOI-UNNAO

155.7 km

Covers Hardoi and Unnao districts

Stretch 4

UNNAO-PRAYAGRAJ

156.847 km

Covers Unnao, Rae Bareilly, Pratapgarh and Prayagraj districts

Infrastructure

The expressway includes major and minor engineering structures to ensure uninterrupted traffic flow

14 MAJOR BRIDGES, including a 900-960 metre bridge over the Ganga in Hapur and a 720-m bridge

7 RAILWAY OVERBRIDGES
32 FLYOVERS

185 MINOR BRIDGES
453 UNDERPASSES

795 CULVERTS
21 INTERCHANGES developed for entry and exit