Inter-Ministerial Briefing on Recent Developments in West Asia

Food security situation closely monitored in view of the ongoing developments in West Asia

Department of Consumer Affairs sets up Control Room to facilitate continuous interaction and information exchange with State Governments on prices and supply of food commodities

Adequate buffer stocks of rice and wheat available to ensure sufficient supplies for PDS and any emergency requirements

Online LPG bookings increase to about 97% across the industry

Domestic LPG cylinder deliveries remain normal, with over 18 crore cylinders delivered to households since 1 March 2026

550 awareness camps organized for 5 Kg FTL Cylinders across country; Over 6,700 cylinders sold in these camps

Three-member committee coordinating with State authorities and industry bodies to plan commercial LPG distribution

Two Indian-flagged LPG vessels, Green Sanvi and Green Asha, safely cross strait of Hormuz in past two days

Ministry of External Affairs Closely Monitoring Evolving Situation in Gulf and West Asia; Safety and Welfare of Indian Community Remains Top Priority

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As part of its ongoing efforts to keep the media apprised of developments in West Asia, the Government of India convened a briefing at the National Media Centre today. Representatives from the Ministries of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Ports, Shipping and Waterways, and External Affairs, shared updates on fuel availability, maritime operations, and assistance to Indian nationals in the region, along with measures to ensure stability across sectors. The Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution also provided updates on food security preparedness and prices of essential commodities.

Food security and prices update

The Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution shared an update on the availability of essential food items and the prevailing price situation. It also highlighted measures being taken to ensure adequate supply and maintain market stability. The Ministry said:

<u>Food Security Preparedness</u>

· The Government is closely monitoring the food security situation in view of the ongoing developments in West Asia.

· Adequate buffer stocks of rice and wheat are available to ensure sufficient supplies for the Public Distribution System (PDS) as well as to meet any emergency requirements.

· The National Food Security Act continues to ensure access to foodgrains for vulnerable populations.

<u>Market Intervention – Open Market Sale Scheme (Domestic)</u>

· The Government continues to monitor foodgrain prices and undertakes market interventions through the Open Market Sale Scheme (Domestic) (OMSS – D) whenever required.

· Under OMSS (D), FCI releases surplus wheat and rice in the open market to augment supply, stabilise prices and contain inflation.

· Adequate stocks are available with FCI to undertake such interventions if required.

· The scheme also enables sale of rice to State Governments at subsidised fixed prices to meet additional requirements.

<u>Procurement – RMS 2026–27</u>

· Procurement of wheat under MSP operations for Rabi Marketing Season (RMS) 2026–27 has commenced, primarily through State Government agencies.

· The Department is regularly reviewing preparedness in coordination with States.

· Adequate packaging materials are being ensured for procurement operations.

<u>Foodgrain Packaging</u>

· Proactive steps have been taken to ensure availability of packaging materials during RMS 2026–27.

· In coordination with the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas and the Department of Chemicals and Petrochemicals, the Department is diversifying packaging sources and maintaining contingency measures to address any potential shortfall.

<u>Edible Oil Scenario</u>

· Domestic availability of edible oils remains comfortable despite global uncertainties.

· Imports from key partner countries including Indonesia, Malaysia, Argentina and Brazil continue steadily.

· Improved mustard production has strengthened domestic supply.

· Overall edible oil supply remains stable and the Government continues close monitoring with readiness to intervene if required.

Sugar Sector

· Adequate sugar buffer stocks are available and sugar production in 2025–26 is expected to remain sufficient.

· About 15.80 LMT of sugar has been permitted for export, of which 3.73 LMT has already been exported.

· Major export destinations include Sri Lanka, West Asia and East Africa.

· Retail sugar prices remain stable with inflation remaining around 3% over the past three years.

Prices of Essential Commodities

· The Department of Consumer Affairs monitors daily prices of 40 food commodities reported from 578 centres across the country.

· Price trends are being closely monitored in view of the ongoing developments in the Middle East.

· So far, no unusual volatility has been observed and prices remain stable for most commodities, indicating adequate availability.

· There is no evidence of generalized supply stress or inflationary transmission in essential food commodities.

Availability of Pulses

· Pulses production is estimated to be higher than the previous year at about 266 LMT compared to 257 LMT last year.

· Government stocks of pulses are around 28 LMT, while procurement of Tur and Rabi pulses under the Price Support Scheme is ongoing.

· So far, about 3.21 LMT of Tur and 5.71 LMT of Chana have been procured.

· The import policy for pulses in 2026–27 continues the existing framework of 2025-26 to ensure supply flexibility and stable availability.

· Import of Tur and Urad is allowed under the ‘Free’ category till 31 March 2027, while imports of Chana and Masoor attract 10% duty and Yellow Peas 30% duty.

Availability of Horticultural Crops (TOP)

· Production of major horticultural crops such as potato, tomato and onion are sufficient to meet domestic demand.

· Potato production is estimated at about 584 LMT (against 586 LMT last year), tomato at about 227 LMT, and onion at about 273 LMT.

· The Government of India has set a price stabilisation buffer target of 2 LMT for onion in 2026–27, with National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd (NAFED) and National Cooperative Consumers' Federation of India Limited (NCCF) initiating procurement preparations.

· Procurement of Rabi 2026 onion for buffer stocking is expected to support mandi prices and moderate volatility.

Monitoring and Enforcement

· The Department of Consumer Affairs has set up a Control Room to facilitate continuous interaction and information exchange with State Governments on prices and supply of food commodities.

· The Control Room also monitors enforcement of the Essential Commodities Act, 1955, including action against hoarding and black marketing of essential commodities.

· The Department is also keeping a close watch on the complaints being received on the National Consumer Helpline-1915, available in 17 languages across the country. The helpline is also available through multiple platforms, including WhatsApp and the INGRAM portal , enabling consumers to register grievances with ease.

Energy Supply and Fuel Availability

An update on the prevailing fuel supply situation was shared, highlighting the steps being taken to ensure uninterrupted availability of petroleum products and LPG in the context of the Strait of Hormuz closure. It was noted that:

Public Advisory and Citizen Awareness

· Citizens are advised to avoid panic purchase of petrol, diesel and LPG and rely only on official sources for information.

· LPG consumers are requested to use digital booking platforms and avoid visiting distributors.

· Citizens are encouraged to use alternate fuels such as PNG and electric or induction cooktops.

· All citizens are urged to conserve energy during the current situation.

Government Preparedness and Supply Management Measures

· Despite the ongoing geopolitical situation, the Government has prioritised domestic LPG and PNG supply, particularly for hospitals and educational institutions.

· The Government has already implemented several rationalisation measures on both the supply and demand side, including enhancing refinery production, increasing the booking interval from 21 to 25 days in urban areas and up to 45 days in rural areas and prioritising sectors for supply.

· Alternate fuels such as kerosene and coal have been made available to ease pressure on LPG demand.

· The Ministry of Coal has directed Coal India and Singareni Collieries to supply additional coal to States for distribution to small and medium consumers.

· States have been advised to facilitate new PNG connections for domestic and commercial consumers.

· A review meeting chaired by Secretary (MoPNG) with State officials highlighted measures to ensure adequate LPG supply and directed States to prioritise prioritize LPG distribution, especially for domestic and essential needs, while maintaining strict vigilance against hoarding, diversion, and misinformation. On reports concerning FTL LPG supplies to migrant workers, States clarified that there is no disruption in LPG supply affecting migrants and that supplies remain stable. Secretary informed that states may consider managing targeted distribution of 5 kg FTL LPG cylinders, based on local requirements along with OMCs.

Coordinated Efforts with States/UTs and Institutional Mechanisms

· State Governments are empowered under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 and LPG Control Order, 2000 to monitor supply and act against hoarding and black marketing of petroleum products.

· All Chief Secretaries, ACS/Principal Secretary/Secretary Food & Civil supply of all the States/UTs are requested -

Ø To issue daily press briefings and issue regular public advisories.

Ø To actively monitor and counter fake news / misinformation on social media.

Ø To intensify daily enforcement drives by District admin and to continue raids and inspections in coordination with OMCs

Ø To issue Commercial LPG allocation orders within their States/UTs

Ø To issue SKO allocation orders for additional SKO allotted to the States/UTs.

Ø To promote PNG adoptions and alternate fuels.

· All States/UTs have established control rooms and district monitoring committees to curb hoarding and black marketing.

· The Government of India vide letter dated 27.03.2026 and 02.04.2026 have requested Chief Secretaries of all States/UTs to intensify proactive & regular public communication, conduct daily press briefs at appropriate senior level along with timely dissemination of accurate information through social and electronic media to effectively counter misinformation and to reassure citizens regarding adequate availability and smooth distribution of LPG.

· Currently, 23 States/UTs are issuing regular press briefings.

Enforcement and Monitoring Actions

· Enforcement actions continue across the country to curb hoarding and black marketing of LPG.

· More than 1 lakh raids have been conducted and over 52,000 cylinders seized.

· Over 850 FIRs have been registered and about 220 persons arrested.

· PSU Oil Marketing Companies have strengthened surprise inspections and issued over 1,500 show-cause notices, imposed penalties on 118 LPG distributorships and suspended 41 distributorships.

LPG Supply

Domestic LPG Supply Status:

· LPG supply continues to be affected by the prevailing geopolitical situation.

· No dry-outs have been reported at LPG distributorships.

· Online LPG bookings have increased to about 97% across the industry.

· Delivery Authentication Code (DAC) based deliveries have increased to around 90% to prevent diversion.

· Domestic LPG cylinder deliveries remain normal, with over 18 crore cylinders delivered to households since 1 March 2026.

Commercial LPG Supply and Allocation Measures:

- To look into the issues of availability of petrochemicals like propylene, polypropylene, isopropyl alcohol, butadiene, butyl acrylate etc. for department of Pharmaceuticals, Animal Husbandry, Dept. of Chemicals and Petrochemicals, DPIIT etc, a Joint working group has been constituted which has recommended for diversion of certain volume of C3-C4 molecules by Refinery & Petrochemical complexes for these sectors. This group has also given recommendations for availability of feedstock for C2 based derivatives like LDPE, LLDPE, HDPE etc. and their supplies for the downstream units.
- Total commercial LPG allocation has been increased to about 70% of pre-crisis levels, including 10% reform-linked allocation.

· **Since 23 March 2026, about 6.75 lakh 5-kg Free Trade LPG cylinders have been sold.**

· **PSU OMCs have organised around 550 awareness camps for 5 Kg FTL Cylinders** in Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chandigarh, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Keralam, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Puducherry, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, West Bengal.

· **More than 6,700 - 5Kg FTL cylinders were also sold in these camps.**

· A three-member committee of Executive Directors from IOCL, HPCL and BPCL is coordinating with State authorities and industry bodies to plan commercial LPG distribution.

· **About 79,909 MT of commercial LPG (equivalent to over 42 lakh 19-kg cylinders) has been sold since 14 March 2026.**

<u>Natural Gas Supply and PNG Expansion Initiatives</u>

· Priority sectors continue to receive protected supplies, including 100% supply to domestic PNG and CNG transport.

· **Gas supply to operating urea plants is currently around 70–75% of their six-month average consumption and is planned to increase to about 90% from 6 April 2026 (today).**

· **Gas supply to other industrial and commercial sectors, including City Gas Distribution (CGD) networks, will be increased by an additional 10% from 6 April 2026 (today).**

· CGD entities have been advised to prioritise PNG connections for commercial establishments such as hotels, restaurants and canteens.

· CGD companies including IGL, MGL, GAIL Gas and BPCL are offering incentives for domestic and commercial PNG connections.

· States/UTs and Central Ministries have been requested to expedite approvals required for expansion of CGD networks.

· The Government of India vide letter dated 18.03.2026 has offered all States/UTs additional 10% allocation of commercial LPG to States provided they can help in long term transition from LPG to PNG.

· 17 States/UTs are already receiving additional commercial LPG allocation linked to PNG expansion reforms.

· PNGRB has directed CGD entities to connect institutions such as schools, hostels, community kitchens and anganwadi kitchens through PNG within five days where pipelines are available.

· The Ministry of Road Transport & Highways has adopted an Accelerated Approval Framework for CGD infrastructure for three months to process applications on priority.

· The Government of India vide Gazette dated 24.03.2026 has notified the Natural Gas and Petroleum Products Distribution (Through Laying, Building, Operation and Expansion of Pipelines and Other Facilities) Order, 2026 under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955.

· The Order provides a streamlined and time-bound framework for laying and expanding pipelines across the country, addressing delays in approvals and access to land, and enabling faster development of natural gas infrastructure, including in residential areas.

· It is expected to accelerate PNG network growth, enhance last-mile connectivity, and support the transition to cleaner fuels, thereby strengthening energy security and advancing India's gas-based economy.

· The Ministry of Defence has issued a short-term policy modification till 30 June 2026 to expedite PNG infrastructure installation in defence residential areas.

· PNGRB has extended the National PNG Drive 2.0 till 30 June 2026 to sustain momentum in PNG expansion.

· **Since March 2026, about 3.67 lakh PNG connections have been gasified and about 4 lakh additional customers have registered for new connections.**

Crude Position and Refinery Operations

· All refineries are operating at high capacity with adequate crude inventories, while sufficient stocks of petrol and diesel are being maintained.

· Domestic LPG production from refineries has been increased to support domestic consumption.

Retail Fuel Availability and pricing Measures

· Retail outlets across the country are operating normally.

· The Middle East crisis has led to an abnormal increase in crude prices; however, to protect consumers, the Government of India has reduced excise duty on petrol and diesel by ₹10 per litre.

· Export levy has been imposed at ₹21.5 per litre on diesel and ₹29.5 per litre on ATF to ensure adequate domestic availability.

· Retail prices of petrol and diesel remain unchanged with no increase at retail outlets.

· The Government has advised citizens not to believe rumours and requested State Governments to disseminate accurate information through press briefings.

Kerosene Availability and Distribution Measures

· An additional allocation of 48,000 KL of kerosene has been provided to States/UTs over and above regular allocation.

· A Gazette notification dated 29 March 2026 allows distribution of PDS Superior Kerosene Oil (SKO) in SKO-free States/UTs for cooking and lighting purposes through designated PSU OMC service stations.

· 18 States/UTs have issued SKO allocation orders, while Himachal Pradesh and Ladakh have indicated no requirement.

Maritime Safety and Shipping Operations

The current maritime situation in the Persian Gulf, along with measures being undertaken to safeguard Indian vessels and crew, was also briefed. It was stated that:

· The Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways continues to closely monitor shipping movements, port operations and the safety of Indian seafarers, while ensuring continuity of maritime trade.

· All Indian seafarers in the region are safe and no incident involving Indian-flagged vessels has been reported in the past 24 hours.

· **In the past two days, two Indian-flagged LPG vessels, Green Sanvi and Green Asha, safely crossed the Strait of Hormuz. Green Sanvi is carrying about 46,650 MT of LPG with 25 seafarers onboard, while Green Asha is carrying about 15,405 MT of LPG with 26 seafarers onboard.**

· At present, 16 Indian-flagged vessels with 433 Indian seafarers remain in the western Persian Gulf region. The Directorate General of Shipping (DG Shipping) continues close monitoring in coordination with ship owners, RPSL agencies and Indian Missions.

· The DG Shipping Control Room remains operational 24×7 and has handled 5,113 calls and 10,647 emails since activation, including 25 calls and 100 emails in the past 24 hours.

· DG Shipping has facilitated the safe repatriation of over 1,599 Indian seafarers so far, including 120 in the last 24 hours from airports and various regional locations across the Gulf.

· Port operations across India remain normal with no congestion reported. State Maritime Boards of Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Puducherry have confirmed smooth functioning.

· The Ministry continues to coordinate with the Ministry of External Affairs, Indian Missions and maritime stakeholders to ensure welfare of Indian seafarers and uninterrupted maritime operations.

Safety of Indian Nationals in the Region

Recent developments in the region, including assistance through Indian Missions, were shared during the briefing. It was informed that:

· The External Affairs Minister held telephonic conversations with the Foreign Ministers of Qatar and the United Arab Emirates and discussed the evolving situation in West Asia.

· The External Affairs Minister also received a call from the Foreign Minister of Iran, during which both sides exchanged views on the ongoing conflict in the region.

· The Embassy of India in Tehran has so far facilitated the movement of 1,777 Indian nationals from Iran to Armenia and Azerbaijan for onward travel to India. This includes 895 Indian students and 345 Indian fishermen. The fishermen travelled from Armenia to Chennai on 4 April 2026. The Embassy also facilitated the transit of two foreign nationals—one from Bangladesh and one from Sri Lanka.

· Of the total evacuated, 1,545 crossed into Armenia and 234 into Azerbaijan. India has expressed appreciation to the authorities of Iran, Armenia and Azerbaijan for their support in facilitating safe transit of the evacuees.

· The Ministry of External Affairs continues to closely monitor the evolving situation in the Gulf and West Asia region, with the safety, security and welfare of the Indian community remaining the highest priority.

· A dedicated MEA Special Control Room remains operational to assist Indian nationals and their families, with close coordination ongoing with State Governments and Union Territories.

· Indian Missions and Posts across the region are functioning round the clock, maintaining 24×7 helplines, issuing updated advisories and staying in regular contact with Indian community associations, organisations and companies.

· Missions continue to assist Indian nationals, including visa facilitation, consular services, logistical support and facilitating transit through neighbouring countries where airspace restrictions apply. They remain in close contact with local governments.

· Welfare of Indian students in the Gulf countries remains a priority, with Missions coordinating with local authorities, Indian schools, educational boards and the National Testing Agency to ensure that academic schedules and examinations such as JEE and NEET are not adversely affected.

· Missions are also providing support to Indian seafarers in the region, including coordination with local authorities, consular assistance, facilitating communication with families and assisting requests for return to India.

· Since 28 February, around 7,30,000 passengers have travelled from the region to India.

· In the UAE, airlines continue to operate limited non-scheduled flights based on operational and safety considerations, with around 90 flights expected to operate today to India.

· Flights continue to operate from Saudi Arabia and Oman to various destinations in India.

· Qatar airspace remains partially open, with Qatar Airways expected to operate around 8–10 flights to India today.

· Kuwait airspace remains closed, with Jazeera Airways and Kuwait Airways operating non-scheduled flights from Dammam Airport in Saudi Arabia to India.

· Bahrain airspace also remains closed, with Gulf Air operating non-scheduled flights from Dammam Airport in Saudi Arabia to India.

· Due to flight restrictions and airspace closures, travel of Indian nationals continues to be facilitated through alternative transit routes.

Ø From Israel via Egypt and Jordan.

Ø From Iran via Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Ø From Iraq via Jordan and Saudi Arabia.

Ø From Kuwait and Bahrain via Saudi Arabia.

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