

March 17, 2026 – Tuesday

Economy

India's wholesale inflation rises to 11-month high of 2.13% in February

India's gauge for wholesale prices climbed to an 11-month high of 2.13% year-on-year in February, led by higher costs of primary goods including food and non-food articles, official data published Monday showed. The Wholesale Price Index (WPI)-based inflation, which had quickened to 1.8% in January after a rare contraction toward mid-2025, is expected to accelerate further in the coming months due to high input costs, economists said, adding that continuing tensions in the Gulf region pose upside risks.
https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/indicators/indias-wholesale-inflation-rises-to-11-month-high-of-2-13-in-february/articleshow/129618614.cms

Unemployment rate eases to 4.9% in February

India's unemployment rate eased slightly to 4.9% in February from 5% in January, driven by a notable decline in female jobless rate, official data released Monday showed. Female unemployment rate fell to 5.1% in February from 5.6% a month earlier, while the male unemployment rate remained unchanged at 4.8%. The overall jobless rate in urban areas dropped to 6.6% in February from 7% in January, while rural unemployment held steady at 4.2%, according to the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS).
https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/indicators/unemployment-rate-eases-to-4-9-in-february/articleshow/129609521.cms

Easier FDI norms notified for border country investors

The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) on Monday notified changes in the foreign direct investment (FDI) policy, easing investment from countries sharing a land border with India, a week after the cabinet approved the amendments. The policy permits overseas companies with Chinese shareholding of up to 10% to invest in India under the automatic route, according to a press note issued by the department. These investments will be subject to sectoral FDI limits and conditions.
https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/finance/easier-fdi-norms-notified-for-border-country-investors/articleshow/129618218.cms

Finance

Indian bonds end lower under pressure from oil, RBI absence

Indian government debt weakened for a third day on Monday as oil prices stayed elevated, amplifying inflation worries and pressure on the rupee, while the Reserve Bank of India unnerved traders by holding back from more debt-buying. The benchmark 6.48% 2035 bond yield shut at 6.7059%, compared with 6.6798% on Friday. Bond yields move inversely to prices.
https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/markets/indian-bonds-end-lower-under-pressure-from-oil-rbi-absence/article70749868.ece

Bank-NBFC co-lending pacts may be expanded to aid MSMEs

A parliamentary standing committee on finance has recommended expanding structured co-lending arrangements between banks and non-banking financial companies to bridge a $530-billion formal credit gap faced by micro and small medium enterprises, or MSMEs, and lower their cost of capital. Such arrangements would also lower the overall cost of capital for smaller firms that currently heavily rely on NBFCs that lend to them at higher risk-adjusted rates.
https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/bank-nbfc-co-lending-pacts-may-be-expanded-to-aid-msmes/articleshow/129618245.cms

India's market regulator SEBI eases settlement guarantee fund norms for commodity exchanges

In a bid to promote ease of doing business, capital market regulator SEBI has eased settlement guarantee fund (SGF) norms for commodity exchanges. The regulator has inserted a new clause to ease SGF based on prevailing market conditions. The modified rules will come into immediate effect.
https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/markets/indias-market-regulator-sebi-eases-settlement-guarantee-fund-norms-for-commodity-exchanges/article70751014.ece

SEBI to review MFD-IA framework to remove overlap in roles

SEBI will review the regulatory framework governing mutual fund distributors (MFDs) and address overlaps with investment advisers (IAs), and is also preparing a common advertisement code and a digital compliance platform for advisers. Speaking at ARIA Aspire 2026, SEBI Chairman Tuhin Kanta Pandey said the regulator has set up a working group to examine the current framework and harmonise any overlap between the two intermediary segments.
https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/markets/sebi-to-review-mfd-ia-framework-to-remove-overlap-in-roles/article70750049.ece

Banks write off loans worth Rs 9.75 lakh cr in last 11 years

Banks have written off loans worth Rs 9.75 lakh crore in the last 11 financial years, Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary said on Monday. The write off peaked in FY20 at Rs 1.59 lakh crore, and since then it has been declining to Rs 47,568 crore in FY25. Banks have written off Rs 31,723 crore in FY15, Rs 40,416 crore in FY16, Rs 68,308 crore in FY 17, and Rs 99,132 crore in FY18, he said in a written reply to the Lok Sabha.
https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/banking/finance/banking/banks-write-off-loans-worth-rs-9-75-lakh-cr-in-last-11-years/articleshow/129610986.cms

Investors take to digital gold in a big way

Digital gold purchases in India surged 69% to 13.5 tonnes in 2025, according to the World Gold Council, underscoring increasing appetite among younger investors for accumulating the precious metal in small denominations rather than buying traditional jewellery. Digital gold allows consumers to buy, sell and hold bullion online without taking physical delivery, with investments starting from as little as Re 1. Investors buy small quantities of gold through fintech platforms, which providers say are backed by equivalent physical gold stored in secure vaults.
https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/cons-products/fashion-/-cosmetics-/-jewellery/investors-take-to-digital-gold-in-a-big-way/articleshow/129618522.cmsv

Industry

FSSAI authorises 17 r-PET plants, adds 300,000 tonnes of capacity

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) on Monday granted authorisation to 17 recycled PET manufacturing plants. The move helps alleviate packaging supply pressure created by the ongoing war in West Asia. The move, which adds a capacity of 300,000 tonnes to the country's circular packaging ecosystem, will aid the country's 40 per cent recycled mandate in 2026–27. "The FSSAI's move granting final licences will help strengthen India's packaging supply chain at a time when virgin PET faces global pressures in the wake of the Iran-Israel war," stated a release from the Association of PET Recyclers (APR) Bharat.

https://www.business-standard.com/industry/news/fssai-grants-authorisation-to-17-r-pet-plants-adds-3-mt-capacity-126031601276_1.html

India's passenger vehicle sales hit record high for Feb, rose over 10%

India's passenger vehicle (PV) market reported sale of 417,705 units in February, a growth of 10.6 per cent year-on-year (Y-o-Y), as consumer sentiment remained positive following the GST rate cuts in September last year, according to the data released by Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) on Friday. Two-wheelers and three-wheelers posted all-time February highs. Two-wheeler sales stood at 1,871,406 units, up 35.2 per cent Y-o-Y, while three-wheeler sales grew 29 per cent Y-o-Y to 74,573 units, signaling strong momentum in the country's automobile sector.

https://www.business-standard.com/industry/auto/pv-sales-jump-10-6-per-cent-yoy-in-february-siam-data-126031301035_1.html

Agriculture

India's horticulture production to increase marginally in 2025-26: First Advance Estimate

India's horticulture production is projected to remain largely flat at 3708.46 lakh tonnes in 2025-26 from 3707.38 lakh tonnes in the previous year, the government's first advance estimate for 2025-26 released on Monday said. Horticulture has emerged as a key driver in boosting farmers' income, with record growth in both area and production, said Shivraj Singh, minister of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare.

https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/agriculture/indias-horticulture-production-to-increase-marginally-in-2025-26-first-advance-estimate/articleshow/129616637.cms

Govt approves additional 87,587 tonnes sugar export quota for 2025-26

The food ministry has approved an additional export quota of 87,587 tonnes of sugar for the 2025-26 marketing year (October-September), following requests from sugar mills, the ministry said in a circular on Monday. The government had earlier permitted exports of 1.5 million tonnes for the season, and in February allocated an extra 500,000 tonnes to willing mills on a non-swappable basis. Mills failing to export the mandated 70 per cent will face deductions from future export quotas equivalent to the shortfall below the threshold.

https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/india-approves-over-87000-tonnes-additional-sugar-export-quota-for-2025-26-marketing-year/articleshow/129614719.cms

India's basmati rice exports to stay steady despite Middle East conflict: Crisil

An analysis of 47 companies rated by Crisil Ratings, accounting for 60% of the overall Indian basmati rice industry revenue, show that basmati export volume is expected to remain steady this fiscal and next, with growth of up to 2% over the export volume of 6.06 million tonne (MT) logged last fiscal, despite the ongoing Middle East conflict. While exports to Iran, a key market, are likely to be affected, higher demand from other markets in the region, such as Saudi Arabia, Iraq, United Arab Emirates and Yemen will provide an offset.

https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/indias-basmati-rice-exports-to-stay-steady-despite-middle-east-conflict-crisil/articleshow/129603044.cms

West Asia war: Specialty fertiliser imports 10-20% costlier, cos to step up production

Imported specialty fertiliser prices have risen 10-20% since the Iran war erupted, threatening supplies of key farm nutrients, pushing Indian companies to step up production ahead of the key kharif sowing season. The industry is enhancing stocks and raw materials amid fears of a shortage of urea and di-ammonium phosphate (DAP) just ahead of the kharif season.

https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/indl-goods/svs/chem-/-fertilisers/west-asia-war-specialty-fertiliser-imports-10-20-costlier-cos-to-step-up-production/articleshow/129617522.cms

Infrastructure

Centre pushes ₹71,000 crore highway projects in West Bengal; links all 23 district HQs

West Bengal is undergoing a massive infrastructure transformation with National Highway projects worth over ₹71,000 crore now in the pipeline to revolutionize North-South connectivity. From the landmark 5.46-km Farakka Bridge to the 6-laning of the NH-19 industrial corridor, these upgrades aim to slash travel times, boost local trade, and link all 23 district headquarters.
https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/infrastructure/centre-pushes-71000-crore-highway-projects-in-west-bengal-links-all-23-district-hqs/videoshow/129601634.cms

Energy

India may soften new grid-supply rules for renewable power producers

India may ease proposed penalties on wind and solar power producers who fail to meet stricter grid-supply commitments, government minutes showed, after developers warned the changes could hurt revenue and slow clean-energy investment. The power regulator - the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission - proposed tighter rules for wind and solar power producers in a draft published in September.
https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/india-may-soften-new-grid-supply-rules-for-renewable-power-producers/articleshow/129608802.cms

Despite PNG meter connection, nearly 40% customers can't access piped gas

Nearly four out of ten homes with piped natural gas (PNG) meters currently have no gas flowing to them, prompting the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) to direct city gas companies to resolve the issue quickly. This comes as the government pushes consumers of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), supplied in pressurised cylinders, to shift to PNG amid the energy turmoil caused by the Iran war. India has 16.5 million domestic PNG connections, of which only 10.3 million are currently getting regular natural gas supply, according to PNGRB data. The remaining 6.2 million households are inactive customers who have meters installed but don't have any gas flowing into their homes.
https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/oil-gas/despite-png-meter-connection-nearly-40-customers-cant-access-piped-gas/articleshow/129617354.cms

States

Govt hikes arthiyas commission by 10% for Punjab, Haryana wheat procurement

Ahead of the wheat procurement season, the Central government has raised the commission rates payable to ‘arthiyas’ (commission agents) in Punjab and Haryana by 10.32 per cent, from Rs 46 per quintal to Rs 50.75 per quintal, while the same has been done for Rajasthan from Rs 41.40 per quintal to Rs 45.67 per quintal. An official statement today announced that the increased rates will apply starting with the forthcoming Rabi marketing season of 2026-27.
https://www.business-standard.com/industry/agriculture/centre-raises-arthiyas-commission-by-10-for-wheat-paddy-procurement-126031601432_1.html

World Bank approves $300 mn loan to UP for clean air transition

The World Bank on Monday signed an agreement to provide a loan of about USD 300 million to Uttar Pradesh for a clean air transition project. This loan will help support the Uttar Pradesh government's Clean Air Plan, which focuses on integrated solutions to improve the state’s air quality and create job opportunities for youth and women.
https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/national/world-bank-approves-300-mn-loan-to-up-for-clean-air-transition/article70751160.ece

Healthcare

India pharma production hit by propane shortage; vitamin, hormone supply at risk

An acute shortage of propane gas used for reactors and steam generation has led to a full or partial shutdown of several pharmaceutical manufacturing in Gujarat and other hubs such as Maharashtra, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. This has affected the production of a raft of essential medicines such as paracetamol, vitamins and

hormones. Industry sources told ET that boiler operations have been severely affected and this may lead to a production loss and shortage of medicines in the next few weeks as companies grapple with existing inventories and negotiate new purchase orders.
https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/healthcare/biotech/pharmaceuticals/india-pharma-production-hit-by-propane-shortage-vitamin-hormone-supply-at-risk/articleshow/129610214.cms

External

Trade deficit nearly 2x in Feb; exports face battlefield ahead

India's February trade deficit almost doubled to $27 billion from $14.42 billion a year ago as imports rose 24%, led by gold and silver, and exports fell 0.81% to $36.61 billion. To be sure, the trade gap narrowed from $34.68 billion in January. India's trade deficit with China surged to $102 billion in April-February of the current fiscal year, from $91 billion a year ago, according to official data released on Monday.
https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/trade-deficit-nearly-2x-in-feb-exports-face-battlefield-ahead/articleshow/129618330.cms

India-US trade deal to be signed after new US tariff framework is finalised

The signing of the India-US trade deal will take place only after a new tariff framework is finalised, with both sides currently discussing non-tariff barriers and Section 232 tariffs, a senior government official said Monday. The official data, released on Monday, showed India's goods exports to the US fell 12.88% year-on-year to $6.89 billion in February, reflecting the impact of higher tariffs imposed on the country, while imports from the US rose 36.5%.
https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/india-us-trade-deal-to-be-signed-after-new-us-tariff-framework-is-finalised/articleshow/129618250.cms

Exporters, freight forwarders seek government help as war surcharges on cargo surge

Exporters and freight forwarders have sought the government's intervention after global shipping lines began imposing steep war-risk surcharges on cargo to and from the Middle East. In some cases, the charges nearly doubled from previously negotiated rates, adding more pressure on trade facing severe turmoil due to the Iran war.
https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/exporters-freight-forwarders-seek-government-help-as-war-surcharges-on-cargo-surge/articleshow/129618460.cms

India inks terms of reference with Philippines, Maldives for trade pact talks

India has inked terms of reference with the Philippines and the Maldives to start negotiations for free trade agreements (FTAs), the Commerce Ministry said on Monday. The terms of reference (ToR) outline the scope and modalities of a proposed trade pact. With the Philippines, a Southeast Asian nation, negotiations will begin for a preferential trade agreement (PTA), while with the Maldives, it will be for a free trade agreement (FTA), the ministry said.
https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/india-inks-terms-of-reference-with-philippines-maldives-for-trade-pact-talks/articleshow/129610630.cms