Business Standard 03.03.2026

India signs $1.9 bn uranium supply deal with Canada

NANDINI KESHARI
New Delhi, 2 March

Canadian company Cameco has signed a $1.9 billion agreement with the Indian government to supply 22 million pound of uranium for nuclear energy generation between 2027 and 2035, the office of the Canadian Prime Minister, Mark Carney, announced on Monday.

The deal comes two months after India opened the nuclear energy sector for private participation and diluted liability rules to attract private investment. It is part of a larger strategic energy partnership covering renewable energy, biofuels, hydropower, hydrogen, liquefied natural gas and liquefied petroleum gas, apart from uranium.

Two agreements have been signed to intensify cooperation on critical minerals and energy sources, supporting technical and commercial engagement, and diversifying supply chains. Overall, the two sides have reached 10 commercial agreements worth over Canadian $5.5 billion.

What's more

- Canadian company Cameco to supply £22 mn of uranium for nuclear energy generation between 2027 and 2035
- Canada to join International Solar Alliance
- To conclude long-term LPG arrangement with India

The Canadian government has also decided to join the International Solar Alliance (ISA) and is upgrading to full membership status in the Global Biofuels Alliance (GBA). Canada will also conclude its first long-term LPG arrangement with India.

The two countries will conclude a new Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (Cepa) this year, following a meeting of chief negotiators in India and the finalisation and signing of the terms of reference. The Cepa is likely to double bilateral trade to $51 billion by 2030. The total direct and indirect Canadian investment in India surpassed $80 billion in 2024.

Financial Express 03.03.2026

Centre to ease export procedures

- Insurers will be urged to back exporters' interests

FE BUREAU
New Delhi, March 2

THE GOVERNMENT WILL extend flexibility of procedures to exporters in the wake of the hardship they face due to West Asia conflict. Procedures for export authorisation will be eased and financial and insurance institutions will be urged to support exporters' immediate interests.

In a meeting with stakeholder ministries and key logistics & trade facilitation partners to review the emerging geopolitical situation and its potential impact on India's export-import cargo flows, the Commerce Ministry also offered to coordinate with customs authorities to ensure smooth cargo clearance.

Smooth cargo evacuation would avoid congestion and extended dwell times particularly of time-sensitive export segments such as perishables, pharmaceuticals, and high-value manufactured exports.

The meeting called by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry was also attended by representatives from logistics operators and shipping lines/forwarders, the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs, the Department of Financial Services, the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, the Reserve Bank of India, the export promotion ecosystem and other concerned agencies.

Following the US-Israel strikes on Iran, the Strait of Hormuz—through which 20% of the world's oil transits—has seen a 70% drop in vessel traffic, according to reports. Approximately 170 container ships and 150 oil tankers are currently anchored or "trapped" inside the Persian Gulf or its immediate approaches, unable to exit safely.

Major shipping giants—including Maersk, MSC, Hapag-Lloyd, and CMA CGM—have officially suspended all transits through the Strait until further notice. War risk premiums for ships going through West Asian routes have increased by 25-50%. The shipping companies have also put a war risk surcharge of $ 1,500 to $ 2,000 per 20 feet container to their charges, according to reports.

With the war expanding to other countries, exporters are still awaiting updates on their cargoes at sea. They say it would take a few more days for clarity to emerge on the status of their shipments and the new charges they will have to bear.

As an immediate support measure, the exporters have asked for the restoration of tax refund rates under the Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP) scheme. Just last week, the refund rate was slashed by 50%, dropping from 0.3% to 4.3% of the value of exported products to 0.15% to 2.15%.

They also sought that the insurance premiums under the Export Credit Guarantee scheme should not be raised despite the conflict. The scheme provides insurance cover to exporters against the risk of non-realization of export proceeds due to commercial or political risks. It also sought the ECGC cover to more products.

The Apparel Export Promotion Council has also written to the Ministry of Civil Aviation to waive demurrage charges (fee for occupying terminal space beyond a set period) on export cargo due to flight disruptions.

The gems and jewellery exporters have asked for an increase in time period for the sector for activities like shipments, diamond certification and return of jewellery from exhibitions.

The Department reaffirmed it will continue to engage closely with all stakeholders and relevant Ministries to ensure that India's trade continues to move efficiently and that any emerging issues are addressed in a timely manner, a statement said.

AID ON THE CARDS

Business Line
03.03.2026

Sugar exports may drop, easing concerns over domestic supplies

Prabhudatta Mishra
New Delhi

If the notional sugar stocks reported by mills to the government are accurate, India may face tight supplies this year. Production is now projected to fall below initial estimates, leaving limited availability to meet demand in the first two months of the next season.

However, the US-Israel attack on Iran and subsequent tensions could sharply curb shipments to key Gulf markets, helping ease domestic availability.

MARKET SHIFT. The war and subsequent tensions could curb shipments to key Gulf markets, helping ease domestic availability

The government permitted exports of 2 million tonnes (mt) in two tranches for the current season (October 2025-September 2026). Industry experts, however, expect shipments to be capped around 0.5 mt, effectively retaining about 1.5 mt in the country at a time the production outlook remains weak. Sugar mills reported stocks of about 12.05 mt as of February 28. Domestic production reached 24.63 mt by that date, up from 22.01 mt a year earlier, according to data from the National Federation of Cooperative Sugar Factories Ltd (NFCSF).

LESS CARRY-OVER

The Indian Sugar & Bio-energy Manufacturers Association (ISMA) has pegged net sugar production for the year at 29.29 mt (after ethanol diversion). This implies an additional 4.66 mt of output by September 30.

Combined with existing stocks, this would ensure availability of about 16.71 mt during March-September. Compared with the 16.1 mt allocated during the same period last year, the surplus available for carry-forward appears marginal.

Industry veteran GK Sood, however, questioned the stock figures. "The notional stock appears understated when seen against domestic allocation of 11.05 mt, production of 24.63 mt during October-February and an opening balance of 4.7 mt," he said. Even so, he said the overall balance remains tight, though imports may not be necessary.

The key risk now is whether net production holds at the estimated 29.3 mt or slips further. Sood said output could fall closer to 28 mt. Government allocations also signal caution.

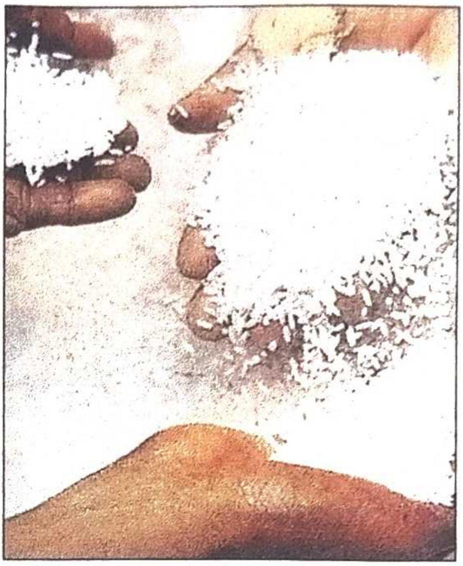
Domestic release for October-March 2025–26 has been set at 13.3 mt, lower than 13.75 mt a year ago. The March quota has been fixed at 2.25 mt, compared with 2.3 mt last year.

PRICES DROP 5-6%

Basmati Prices Feel War Heat as Exports Stuck at the Ports

Prolonged slowdown in exports may raise local supply, put pressure on prices: Industry execs

Jayashree Bhosale



Pune: Basmati rice prices have fallen 5% to 6% locally after disruption in exports to the Middle East, a region that accounts for about half of India's ₹50,000-crore overseas shipments.

The industry expects an even sharper correction in the coming weeks, with more than three-fourths of India's basmati output typically shipped abroad. Any prolonged slowdown in exports could increase local supplies and put further pressure on prices of the premium grain, said industry executives.

The escalation of the war in the Middle East has meant about 200,000 tonnes of basmati rice are stuck at ports and a similar amount is stuck in transit, said the Indian Rice Exporters Association (IREA). "Basmati rice prices have fallen by about 6% since the war broke out in the Middle East, which is a crucial market for Indian basmati rice exports," said Dev Garg, vice president, Indian Rice Exporters Federation (IREF). "If the war is prolonged, basmati rice prices in the domestic market can slide further."

PRICE ROSE 5-10% IN FEB

Basmati rice prices had surged locally in February by 5-10% across varieties due to strong export demand. Iran had increased imports of basmati rice substantially amid the geo-political uncertainties in the region, said exporters. Iran accounts for nearly 40% share of India's basmati rice exports, shows government data.

However, as India exports more than 75% of the basmati production, lower prices may not generate higher demand.

"We are likely to see some more decline in basmati prices in 15-20 days. However, as there is regional preference for different varieties of rice, the fall in production may not lead to increased demand," said Rajesh Shah, an exporter of rice from Maharashtra.

Even the exporters are not resorting to panic sales. "We expect that the situation will normalise soon," said an exporter from Haryana, requesting not to be named.

The impact of lower prices on the farmers is also expected to be limited as most of the farmers have sold their produce. Meanwhile, the exporters have met various central authorities like the APEDA, DGFC (DGFT) and the Commerce Ministry seeking relief from port charges and from arbitrary insurance charges by the shipping companies.

The Economic Times 05.03.2026

MAY FACE DELAYS & HIGH SHIPMENT COSTS OVER CLOSURE OF RED SEA

Apparel Exporters in Choppy Waters

Sutanuka Ghosal

Kolkata: Indian apparel exporters are bracing for delays and higher costs on shipments to the UAE, their fourth-largest market, as tensions in West Asia threaten to disrupt key sea routes.

Exporters say even a modest rise in freight and insurance could squeeze the already thin margins and make it harder to meet contracts.

"Any escalation in logistics and insurance costs due to the West Asia scenario puts us in a very tight spot," said Confederation of Indian Textile Industry chairman, Ashwin Chandran.

A senior executive at a leading apparel exporter, who declined to be named, said key meetings with Middle East buyers have been cancelled in the middle of the shipping season. "Orders are under execution. If the Red Sea closes, logistics costs will rise and turnaround time could increase by 15-20 days," the executive said.

A Stitch in Time...

Turnaround time likely to rise by 15-20 days on closure of Red Sea

KEY ECONOMIC PARTNERS	$1.8 billion
Saudi Arabia, UAE, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain and Kuwait	India's apparel exports to Gulf Cooperation Council in FY25

Tirupur producing over **40%** of India's **knitted garments**

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) comprising Saudi Arabia, UAE, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain and Kuwait remains a key trade and economic partner for India, particularly for apparel. India's apparel exports to the GCC stood at $1.8 billion in FY25. "Coming in the backdrop of the continuing uncertainty on the US tariffs issue and the recent reduction in the rates under the Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products Scheme, the tumultuous developments in West Asia have further added to the challenges faced by Indian textile and apparel exporters," Chandran said.

"Considering the narrow margins under which textile and apparel exporters operate, any escalation in the cost of logistics and insurance due to the West Asia scenario puts them in a very tight spot, affecting their ability to meet contractual obligations besides significantly raising operating costs," he pointed out.

Vinod Thapar, chairman of Knitwear Club in Ludhiana, said that the Middle East is among the most important overseas markets for knitwear products manufactured in the city. "A substantial share of garments manufactured in Ludhiana is supplied to the Middle Eastern markets. But the current tension has led buyers to adopt a cautious stance, weakening overall trade sentiments."

Thapar pointed out that petroleum derivatives also form the backbone of man-made fibres such as polyester, viscose and nylon, which account for a growing share of global apparel consumption. Oil is the primary raw material for polyester yarn derived from petroleum based hydrocarbons.

"Crude prices have already gone up and it will impact manufacturing of man-made fibres," he said.

Tirupur, producing over 40% of India's knitted garments is navigating a tight fashion cycle.

"The orders for April are at various stages. Some have already been shipped. And some are being manufactured. And any delay in its delivery has financial implications which may result in discount pressure on offseason garments," said Raja M Shanmughan, former president, Tirupur Exporters Association.

Business Line 05.03.2026

Gem and jewellery exports lose glitter

TAKING A HIT. Volatility in rupee-dollar rates and gold prices is also seen impacting the business

Suresh P Iyengar
Mumbai

The ongoing war in West Asia and disruptions to global shipments will have a major impact on gem and jewellery exports from India, as the sector grapples with delays in cargo movements and rising costs, said industry players.

The industry is struggling to fulfil pending export orders amid restrictions in cargo movements due to the closure of airspace while rising insurance costs also remain a major concern.

This apart, the volatility in rupee-dollar rates and gold prices is also seen impacting the business, they said.

Kirit Bhansali, Chairman, Gem and Jewellery Export Promotion Council of India, said the ongoing tensions in West Asia could have a significant impact on the gem and jewellery trade, as the region, particularly the UAE and other GCC countries, plays a crucial role in India's export ecosystem as well as in sourcing raw materials.

India's gem and jewellery exports to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries have grown significantly from $5.4 billion in 2021-22 to about $8.3 billion in 2024-25, reflecting the region's increasing importance for Indian exporters.

SOURCING HUB

The GCC is also a key sourcing hub for raw materials and precious metals for the Indian gem and jewellery sector, with imports rising from about $16 billion in 2021-22 to about $28 billion in 2024-25. The GCC countries and the wider MENA region are also key business hubs, where Indian companies have established strong commercial interests, including investments in jewellery retail chains, regional offices, manufacturing units and logistics networks across the region, said Bhansali.

The industry is struggling to fulfil pending export orders amid restrictions in cargo movements while rising insurance costs are also a concern

If the conflict continues, it could lead to logistical challenges as flight disruptions would mean re-routing of shipments and delays at ports, which may result in longer transit times. There could also be a rise in freight and insurance costs due to the heightened risk perception in the region, he pointed out.

UNCERTAINTY RISES

Colin Shah, MD, Kama Jewelry, a leading exporter, said the gems and jewellery sector, which is just coming out of a high tariff regime imposed by the US, is facing a fresh wave of uncertainties due to the crisis in West Asia. This is being compounded by the volatility in dollar rates, leading to unpredictability in exports, as overseas buyers are cautious about closing deals until logistical constraints ease he said.

Additionally, a 3-4 time spike in the insurance on shipments is another concern cutting through the already impacted margins of traders, he added.

However, the demand-supply dynamics in gem and jewellery exports are in control as the current inventories are sufficient to cater to the already weakened demand, said Shah.

Business Line 05.03.2026

Iran war halts grape exports

Radheshyam Jadhav
Pune

The escalating conflict in West Asia has brought Maharashtra's grape exports to the Gulf markets to a standstill, leaving thousands of tonnes stranded at the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority (JNPA) in Navi Mumbai and triggering fears of a supply glut in the domestic market.

According to traders and industry representatives, about 300 containers of grapes, roughly 3,900 tonnes, were loaded for shipment to the Gulf markets through Dubai, before the exports were disrupted by the worsening geopolitical tensions involving the US, Israel and Iran.

In addition, nearly 700 containers are currently lying at JNPA and nearby cold storage facilities, awaiting clarity on vessel movements, as air and sea routes across parts of West Asia remain uncertain.

PRICE CONCERNS

Exporters said traders had procured grapes from farmers at ₹120-170 per kg for the premium export segment.

If the shipments do not resume soon, these consignments may have to be diverted to the domestic markets, where prices are considerably lower.

Industry estimates suggested that the disruption could impact a far larger volume.

According to the Maharashtra Grape Growers Association, around 5,000-6,000 tonnes already at ports are at immediate risk, while another 10,000 tonnes of export-quality grapes remain in vineyards awaiting shipment.

In total, up to 16,000 tonnes of grapes from Maharashtra could be affected if exports to the Gulf countries remain suspended.

RAMADAN SEASON HIT

The Gulf region is a key destination for Maharashtra grapes, especially during Ramadan, when exporters ship large volumes of fresh fruit.

The Economic Times 06.03.2026

China Halts Diesel, Gasoline Exports

China's government has told the country's top oil refiners to suspend exports of diesel and gasoline as an escalating conflict in the Persian Gulf disrupts the arrival of crude from one of the world's largest producing regions.

While the country is only the third-largest supplier of oil products into the region — its vast refining sector primarily serves domestic demand — China's curbs just six days into a war reflect a scramble across Asia to prioritize domestic needs as the crisis in the west Asia deepens.

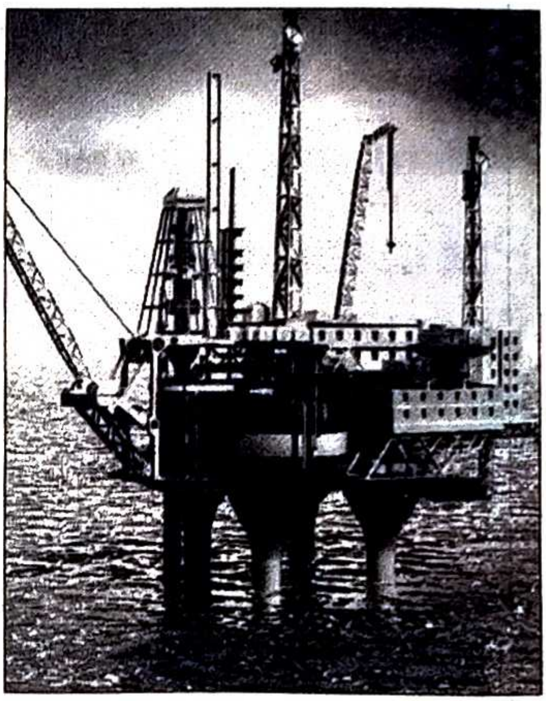
Officials from the National Development and Reform Commission, the country's top economic planner, called for a temporary suspension of refined product shipments that would begin immediately, according to people familiar with the matter. They asked not to be named as the discussions are not public.

PetroChina , Sinopec, CNOOC, Sinochem Group and private refiner Zhejiang Petrochemical regularly obtain fuel export quotas from the government. **Bloomberg**

Financial Express 09.03.2026

India set to unload 33-million barrels of Russian crude

SAURAV ANAND
New Delhi, March 8



AROUND 33 MILLION barrels of Russian crude are expected to be unloaded for India this month, signalling a pickup in purchases by Indian refiners following the recent US waiver that allowed transactions involving Russian cargoes already at sea, according to data from commodity analytics firm Kpler.

So far, about 10 million barrels of Russian crude have been discharged this month, while another 23 million barrels are projected to unload in the coming weeks, based on Kpler AIS projection data. The estimate could change as more tankers signal their destinations and voyage patterns become clearer.

"Following the recent US waiver on certain Russian crude transactions, Indian refiners appear to be ramping up purchases of Russian crude. We are now seeing more crude oil tankers signalling discharge at Indian ports in the coming days, particularly those that were previously on the water without clear destinations," said Nikhil Dubey, Senior Refining Analyst at Kpler. "However, it is important to note that India never stopped buying Russian crude oil. The crude itself is not sanctioned. Some companies had imposed self-restrictions due to their refined product export exposure to international markets, especially as the EU introduced restrictions on importing products refined from Russian crude," he said.