

MARKET DASHBOARD

SENSEX		TOP GAINERS/BSE		TOP LOSERS/BSE		TOP GAINERS/NSE		TOP LOSERS/NSE		COMMODITIES	
▲	76,704.13	Eternal	242.54, 7.91	NTPC	378.50, -4.86	JBM Auto	584.75, 92.60	Chennai Petro	1,015, -49.90	GOLD (MCDX 10 GRM)	14,5650.85
	633.29 (0.83%)	Tech Mahindra	1,385, 43.40	HUL	2,135, -22.90	MMTC	62.67, 9.52	MRPL	192.05, -8.32	SILVER (MCDX 1 KG)	230,362.4
		Infosys	1,267, 34.20	Sun Pharma	1,778, -16.11	Olectra Greentech	1,056, 152.00	ITI Ltd	264.40, -10.86		↓ (-6542.87)
		HCL Tech	1,357, 36.10	HDFC Bank	843.05, -2.31	Trident Ltd	24.44, 2.39	Vedanta	679.00, -20.36	USD (\$) / INR(₹)	92.856
		M&M	3,215, 85.70	ITC	304.05, -0.81	Waaree Energies	3,185, 302.00	GSPL	258.30, -6.90		↑ (+0.481)

Govt approves Rs 1,718.56 cr MSP funding to CCI for cotton procurement in 2023-24 season

NEW DELHI: The government on Wednesday approved Rs 1,718.56 crore as reimbursement for price support extended under MSP operations to the Cotton Corporation of India for the procurement undertaken in the 2023-24 cotton season.



The decision was taken by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

As market prices of cotton fell below MSP during the season, the government agency had to undertake MSP operations to the extent of 32.84 lakh bales, benefiting about 7.25 lakh farmers and paying about Rs 11,712 crore directly into their bank accounts, officials said.

The cabinet approved incurring expenditure towards reimbursement of price support extended under Minimum Support Price operations for cotton during Cotton Season 2023-24 (October 1, 2023, to 30 September, 2024), they added.

"In a significant step towards strengthening farmer welfare and advancing the vision of Aatmanirbhar Bharat, the CCEA has approved Minimum Support Price (MSP) funding of Rs

1,718.56 crore to the Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) for the cotton season 2023-24," an official statement said.

The Centre fixes the MSP for seed cotton (kapas) based on the recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP).

It has designated the CCI as the central nodal agency for undertaking MSP operations in cotton. CCI procures all Fair Average Quality (FAQ) cotton from farmers without any quantitative ceiling, whenever market prices fall below MSP levels.

During the 2023-24 cotton season, the area under cultivation was estimated at 114.47 lakh hectares, with production pegged at 325.22 lakh bales, accounting for near-

ly 25 per cent of global cotton output. As part of its preparedness, CCI has established a robust procurement network across all 11 major cotton-growing states, with over 508 procurement centres operational in 152 districts, ensuring seamless and accessible procurement for farmers. The central government fixes the MSP for seed cotton (kapas) based on the recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP), the statement said.

"Cotton remains one of India's most vital cash crops, sustaining the livelihoods of approximately 60 lakh farmers and supporting 400-500 lakh people engaged in allied activities, including processing, trade, and textiles," it added.

Govt mulls authorising more ministries to issue content takedown orders

NEW DELHI: The government is considering authorising some more ministries, including Defence, External Affairs, and Home Affairs, to issue content takedown orders to social media platforms, sources said on Wednesday.

Inter-ministerial discussions are currently underway, government sources said, but they did not provide a timeline for when this may be implemented.

At present, the Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY) is the nodal ministry for takedowns and content blocking orders, and the latest move to expand the ambit of designated ministries would ensure that takedown orders can be issued faster on misleading, illegal content and AI-generated deepfakes.

Discussions are on with Defence, Ministry of External Affairs, and Ministry of Home Affairs, government sources said adding that once decided, the changes can be brought through tweaks in IT Rules itself.

Section 69A of the IT Act, 2000, empowers the

Centre to block public access to online content, websites, apps, or social media posts in the interest of national security, sovereignty and public order.

In February this year, the Centre tightened rules for social media platforms such as YouTube and X, mandating the takedown of unlawful content within three hours and requiring clear labelling of all AI-generated and synthetic content.

The new rules had come in response to the growing misuse of Artificial Intelligence to create and circulate deceptive, obscene, and fake content on social media platforms and those fabricating real-world events. It mandated embedding of permanent metadata or identifier with AI content and banned content considered illegal in eyes of law as well as shortened user grievance redressal timelines.

The response timelines were reduced to two hours for platforms to take down flagged content involving material that exposes private areas, and in case of full or partial nudity, or sexual acts.

AP High Court admits PIL alleging massive irregularities in Shirdi Sai transformers procurement

AMARAVATI: A public interest litigation (PIL) alleging large-scale irregularities in the procurement of distribution transformers - linked to Shirdi Sai Transformers - by Andhra Pradesh DISCOMs has been admitted by the Andhra Pradesh High Court.

The petition, filed by former IPS officer A B Venkateswara Rao, alleged a systematic pattern of inflated pricing, suppression of competition, and arbitrary award of contracts in the procurement of 25 KVA distribution transformers for agricultural electricity connections.

The petitioner contends that procurement prices witnessed a steep and unexplained escalation from around Rs 54,278 per unit in 2020-21 to approximately Rs 1.39 lakh per unit, reflecting an increase of nearly 157 per cent without any commensurate change in technical specifications.

The PIL further highlights a significant mismatch with benchmark prices in other states, noting that similar transformers were procured by Telangana DISCOMs at substantially lower rates, ranging between Rs 66,609 and Rs 88,210 per unit.

It is alleged that successive tenders led to the dis-



proportionate allocation of large volumes - running into tens of thousands of transformers - to a single vendor, Shirdi Sai Transformers, at these elevated prices, resulting in a heavy burden on the public exchequer.

According to the petition, the tendering process itself was vitiated by restrictive and tailor-made eligibility conditions that led to the disqualification of otherwise qualified bidders, thereby eliminating fair competition. It also points to questionable procurement practices such as splitting of tender quantities, post-tender changes in eligibility criteria, and repeated extensions of purchase orders at the same inflated rates, cumulatively driving up costs.

The petitioner has fur-

ther raised concerns over possible downgrading of technical specifications and perfunctory inspection processes, suggesting that even quality compliance may have been compromised.

In view of these allegations, the petitioner has sought a comprehensive investigation by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) into the procurement ecosystem, including possible collusion between officials and private entities. The petition also calls for production of complete tender records, internal correspondence, and evaluation documents, along with independent technical testing of the supplied transformers by national agencies such as CPRI to ascertain compliance with prescribed standards.

Ukraine launched over 500 Western missile systems at Russia since 2023

MOSCOW: Since 2023, Ukrainian forces have launched more than 500 Western-supplied long-range missiles against Russia, marking a significant shift from frontline defence to deep-strike warfare, the Russian defence ministry has said.

By the numbers, the Kremlin estimates that roughly 120 Storm Shadow/SCALP-EG missiles and 13 ATACMS were used in 2023, rising sharply in 2024 with around 220 ATACMS strikes and more than 90 Storm Shadow launches. Usage slowed in 2025, with about 45 Storm Shadow and 24 ATACMS, while March 2026 saw seven Storm Shadow strikes on Bryansk.

These systems have expanded Ukraine's reach. Storm Shadow/SCALP missiles can strike targets up to 250-560km away, flying at low altitude to evade radar, while ATACMS ballistic missiles deliver high-speed,



GPS-guided precision against strategic sites.

Thus, Kyiv overall has used over 500 Western missiles, the overwhelming majority of which are British Storm Shadow and American ATACMS missiles. French SCALP missiles are used significantly less often, in conjunction with the British ones, the Russian defence ministry said.

The impact has reportedly been substantial as per TASS, with Ukraine

now capable of targeting Russian airbases, ammunition depots and logistics hubs deep inside Russian territory and occupied areas, forcing Moscow to move assets further from the front and complicating supply lines. Strikes on rail nodes and fuel storage have increased operational costs manifold while slowing down resupplying.

The Storm Shadow/SCALP-EG is a British-French air-launched cruise missile equipped

with a subsonic turbojet engine, an infrared homing system, and an onboard processor with GPS. Its capability to fly at extremely low altitudes (30-40 meters) allows it to remain outside the range of air defences. The British version, Storm Shadow, has a range of 560 km.

The ATACMS tactical ballistic missiles have several upgrades and are equipped with a GPS/INS navigation system, ensuring high strike accuracy.

ACROSS THE GLOBE

Social media highlights concern about Indian restaurant's closure in Singapore

SINGAPORE: Singapore's iconic Indian vegetarian restaurant, where Prime Minister Narendra Modi was hosted to a meal by then-Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, has been closed for nearly two months, with intense speculation surrounding the future of the eatery in the Little India precinct here.

One of the oldest Indian-origin businesses here, Komala Vilas' prolonged closure for "renovations" has sparked a discussion on Facebook about whether the restaurant has shut for good.

The Komala Vilas vegetarian meal in November 2015 by Lee and Modi was described as "dosa diplomacy", according to a media report then.

Over the seven decades, the restaurant became a household name and a tourist attraction, especially for serving traditional South Indian

meals on banana leaves.

"Was disappointed to discover that Komala Vilas in Little India has been closed for renovations since January 19, but it is listed as open on Apple Maps.

Sharing to help others avoid the same letdown," The Straits Times quoted from a Facebook post on Wednesday.

In the same thread, another user said: "Sad to see the 70+ year old iconic legendary South Indian vegetarian restaurant shut its doors after probably 4 generations of being family owned and operated."

On the restaurant's Google reviews page, customers have been posting regular updates to say the eatery has yet to reopen.

"We are temporarily closed for renovation starting Monday, January 19, 2026," the Singapore daily cited the notice posted on the restaurant's

shutter as saying. The sign did not state when the restaurant would reopen.

However, there were no signs of any renovation works being carried out at the site, the newspaper added.

Rajakumar Chandra, former chairman and current adviser of the Little India Shopkeepers and Heritage Association (LISHA), said he was aware of the speculation about the restaurant.

LISHA represents most of the businesses in the precinct - eateries, hotels, motels and small Indian-origin businesses.

"It has been over two months without any work being done. This is creating speculation and rumours about what is happening," the daily quoted Rajakumar as saying.

"Multiple people have asked him what will become of the restaurant." "Komala Vilas is a

longstanding heritage business," he added, saying that it was upsetting to see the restaurant shut for the past few months.

Komala Vilas Vegetarian Restaurant was established in 1947 by Murugiah Rajoo. It is now run by his grandson, Rajakumar Gunasekaran, 40.

The restaurant is listed as an SG Heritage Business by the National Heritage Board (NHB), a title awarded to businesses that are the "backbone of Singapore's cultural landscape and provide time-honoured trades, goods or services", according to the broadsheet report.

"I'm overseas right now. I'll get back to you at the end of the month," Gunasekaran said in response to the daily call on March 17.

He had previously given the same response to Tamil Murasu, a Tamil daily here.

B'desh: Nine coaches of 'Nilsagar Express' derails, at least 40 injured

RAJSHAHI: At least 40 people were injured and train services on key northern Bangladesh routes were disrupted when nine coaches of "Nilsagar Express" derailed in Rajshahi district on Wednesday, authorities said.

The accident, which occurred near Tilakpur station between Santahar in Bogura and Akkelpur in Joypurhat, of Adamdighi upazila, left between 40 and 45 people were injured, authorities said, though some reports suggested the number could exceed 100, according to local media.

The Dhaka-bound train, travelling towards Chilahati, went off the tracks with multiple coaches in what

witnesses described as a severe accident.

According to eye witness reports, passengers jumped from the train - including from the roof - as the incident unfolded.

At least eight injured passengers were rescued immediately by fire service teams, while six others were treated at Adamdighi Upazila Health Complex for minor injuries. Other injured passengers were taken to nearby hospitals, with the full toll still being assessed, The Business Standard Bangladesh reported.

Emergency services, including police and fire personnel, remain at the scene as rescue operations continue.

Following the incident, rail links between Dhaka and the country's northern districts, including routes towards Rangpur, have been suspended, causing significant disruption during a busy pre-Eid travel period. Officials said repairs and the removal of damaged coaches could take time, advising passengers to seek alternative transport.

The cause of the derailment is yet to be officially confirmed, though initial reports point to ongoing track repair work in the area, possible speed or signal issues.

Engineers are likely to begin clearing the line once all passengers have been accounted for.

Trump flags Hormuz role as Israel claims killing of Iran's intelligence minister Khatib

TEHRAN/ WASHINGTON: Amid escalating hostilities in the Middle East, US President Donald Trump raised questions over the future of the Strait of Hormuz, even as Israel claimed the assassination of Iran's Intelligence Minister Esmail Khatib and stepped up strikes on key military and energy infrastructure.

Israel on Tuesday said it had killed Iran's Intelligence Minister Esmail Khatib in a targeted strike, a day after eliminating senior security figure Ali Larjani. Tehran has vowed retaliation, signalling a sharp escalation in the conflict.

The developments come alongside intensified military exchanges. There are reports that the United States has deployed 5,000-pound bunker-buster bombs targeting missile facilities along the strategically crucial Strait of Hormuz, while Israel said its air defence systems were inter-



cepting Iranian missile barrages over cities including Tel Aviv. At least two people were reported killed in Israel.

Weighing in on the situation, Trump suggested that US allies should assume responsibility for securing the Strait of Hormuz if American actions were to result in the collapse of the Iranian regime. In a post on Truth Social, he crit-

icised "non-responsive allies" and questioned why countries dependent on the route were not taking the lead.

European nations, however, have pushed back against Washington's call to deploy warships to the region, with several leaders indicating willingness to consider joint patrols only after active hostilities subside.

On the ground, Israel has expanded its offensive inside Iran. The Israeli military said it carried out a wave of strikes targeting command centres, missile infrastructure and internal security facilities in Tehran, including sites linked to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).

It also claimed to have degraded Iranian air defence systems to widen its operational reach.

In a video message, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu displayed what he de-

scribed as a "target list" of Iranian officials marked for elimination, claiming that multiple names had already been "removed."

Meanwhile, Iran announced the execution of a man accused of spying for Israel, identified as Kourosh Keyvani, following approval by the country's Supreme Court.

Energy infrastructure has also come under attack. Parts of the South Pars gas field in southern Iran were struck in what Iranian media described as a US-Israeli operation, Iran International reported.

Regional tensions continued to widen, with the United Arab Emirates stating it had intercepted multiple missiles and drones launched from Iran. Since the start of the conflict, UAE authorities reported casualties among military personnel and civilians, along with over a hundred injuries.