Oil prices zoom above $107 after fresh strike on Saudi, Hormuz; experts caution India

NEW DELHI, SEP 14: Oil prices increased more than USD 3 per barrel at the market open on Monday following more strikes on Saudi Arabia and ships in the Gulf on Sunday.

Brent crude futures increased USD 3.62 or 3.46 per cent to USD 108.23 per barrel as of 2214 GMT (Sunday). WTI futures increased USD 3.15 or 3.15 per cent to USD 103.20 per barrel.

On Sunday, Saudi Arabian official media published video footage of what it claimed was a Houthi raid on the country's southern Jazan area, resulting in damage to homes and a mosque. Additionally, the Houthis claimed to have attacked a Saudi military installation in a nearby region.

Meanwhile, despite recent robust GDP growth figures of 7.8 per cent, the spike above USD 107 per barrel presents a critical fiscal and budgetary challenge for India, which depends largely on petroleum imports to run its own economy. Although India has made progress in diversifying its import basket by obtaining oil from the US, Russia and Latin America, industry experts have pointed out that the basic problem is price exposure.

This is how an increase in crude oil could affect the Indian economy, for instance, it will lead to fiscal burden, which suggests that depending on fluctuations in foreign exchange, every USD 10 rise per barrel corresponds to an expected additional outflow of at least USD 2 billion from the economy.

Furthermore, long-term high crude prices will put pressure on state-owned oil marketing firms, driving up retail fuel prices, headline inflation, and government spending.

Wholesale price inflation jumps 9.92% in August on rising costs for manufactured goods

NEW DELHI, SEP 14: Wholesale price-based inflation climbed to 9.92 per cent in August from 9.78 per cent in July due to higher price for food, manufactured goods, petrol, and electricity, as per the government data released on Monday.

The food index's inflation increased from 6.65 per cent in July to 7.05 per cent in August.c

WPI inflation in manufactured goods reached a series high of 8.37 per cent, surpassing July's 8.29 per cent.

Wholesale pricing index (WPI)-based inflation in the fuel and power basket was 22.93 per cent.

"Across groups, mineral oils (containing petroleum products), food articles, manufacture of food products, manufacture of basic metals, non-food articles, and manufacture of chemicals and chemical products have been major drivers of WPI inflation in August 2026," the Commerce and Industry Ministry said while releasing the WPI data.

Since the start of this fiscal year, the WPI has been rising due to the West Asia war and the ensuing blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, which is where most crude oil is imported into India. This increased the cost of crude and fertiliser globally, which had an impact on food prices.

7 years on, insurer ordered to pay Rs 8.06 cr to Swiss firm subsidiary in fire claim dispute

MUMBAI, Sep 14: Seven years after a blaze destroyed the customs bonded warehouse of Victorinox India Pvt Ltd, a subsidiary of a Switzerland-based firm, a consumer commission here has directed an insurance company to pay over Rs 8.06 crore for unfairly repudiating its fire insurance claim.

The company's legitimate claim was rejected "solely on technical ground in a mechanical manner," the District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (South Mumbai) held in its order passed on September 2.

The complainant firm is a wholly owned subsidiary of Switzerland-based Victorinox AG. It deals with export, import and distribution of travel bags, knives, luxury watches, cutlery and other consumer products manufactured by its parent company in India.

The firm had taken a Standard Fire & Special Perils Policy from the New India Assurance Company.

The insurance company's repudiation based solely on procedural non-compliance, in the absence of any substantive disagreement or fraudulent intent, was legally unsustainable," the consumer panel remarked.

The insurer thus adopted an unfair trade practice and committed a deficiency in providing service to the complainant, Victorinox India, the commission said.

As per the complaint, a huge fire broke out on February 16, 2019, at the firm's custom bonded warehouse -- a secure, government-regulated storage facility where imported goods can be held.

The complainant said that all immediate and prompt measures were taken by the staff present at the warehouse to douse the fire.

However, as the fire raged on, services of the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT) Fire Services were sought.

Despite all efforts, the prominence of the fire caused large-scale destruction to the goods stored therein, the complaint said.

It submitted that the insurer's appointed surveyor assessed the net loss at Rs 8,06,49,573.

The insurance firm repudiated the claim in January 2021, citing a breach of Clause 6(i) regarding the non-submission of specific internal agreements and invoices. The commission's examination of email records showed that Victorinox repeatedly supplied the requested documents and participated in virtual conferences to satisfy the surveyor's queries.

The panel noted that the surveyor calculated and assessed loss on the basis of inspection at site and various documents submitted by the insured.

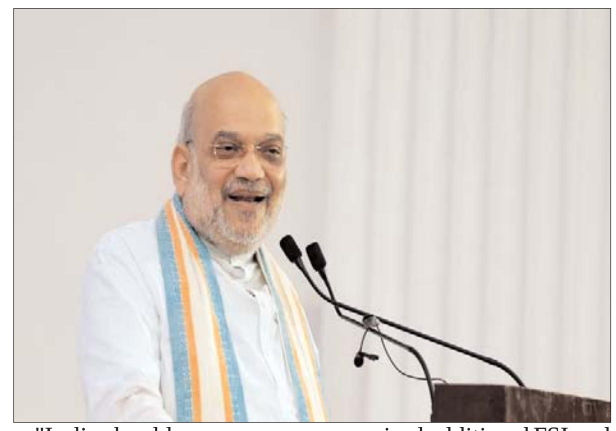
"Once that assessment has been made regarding the loss/damage which took place due to fire and that was not disputed by either party, repudiating the claim invoking clause 6(b) of the policy, in our considered view, was unfair and is not legally sustainable," it said.

The commission concluded that the insurance company rejected the claim "solely on technical grounds, without any valid or justifiable reason".

Hence, the complainant was entitled to receive the insurance claim of Rs 8,06,49,573. New India Assurance has been ordered to pay 9 per cent interest from the date the complaint was filed, it said.

Furthermore, the insurance firm was asked to pay Rs 50,000 for mental distress and Rs 50,000 toward litigation costs within 45 days. (PTI)

From machines to brands, Indians should control lab-grown diamond ecosystem: Shah



MUMBAI, SEP 14: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday said Indians should control the entire lab-grown diamond ecosystem and build globally dominant brands, asserting the market for such diamonds could expand 50-fold in terms of volume.

India now has the infrastructure, skills, capital and traders to seize the opportunity presented by lab-grown diamonds, he said after presenting the 52nd India Gem & Jewellery Awards in Mumbai.

"In terms of volume, the market for lab-grown diamonds is poised to expand to nearly 50 times the size of the current diamond market. This represents a huge opportunity," Shah said.

"It is my appeal to you that lab-grown diamonds' entire ecosystem should be in the control of people of Bharat. It should be our jewellers who should be controlling it. You can do it. People of Surat and Mumbai have demonstrated it," he said.

Shah asked the industry to ensure the entire ecosystem and manufacturing chain of lab-grown diamonds remain firmly in Indian hands, whether it involves manufacturing machinery, producing the diamonds, crafting jewellery, developing brands, or opening showrooms for Indian companies across the globe.

The Union government will introduce a policy for the sector while the Gujarat and Maharashtra governments are also working on policies, he told the gathering.

Shah said the industry needed to move beyond conventional thinking and change its scale as the global trade environment evolved, adding that the Centre would provide all necessary support.Gems & Jewelry

"India should emerge as a founder member and founder industry in the lab-grown diamond business, while Indian brands should become global brands. The world business should have our people's dominance," Shah said.

India's gems and jewellery trade with the world spans almost 6,000 years, Shah said.

Shah said the way the Bharat Diamond Bourse organised the awards reflected India's confidence, skill, wealth and global ambition, and expressed hope that Mumbai would emerge as a global gems and jewellery hub.

He said Surat had played a major role in transforming the industry, with nine out of 10 diamonds in the world being cut, made and designed in the city. The diamond-cutting business is 90 per cent concentrated in Surat, he said.

Shah said the workers in Surat had contributed to India's economy, exports and employment generation and also helped regions such as Saurashtra and Kutch deal with water scarcity.

Mumbai, the financial capital of India, had also played a major role in diamond exports, Shah said, adding that Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis had promised additional FSI and better connectivity to ensure industry players did not leave the state.

Shah said India's gems and jewellery exports reached Rs 2.44 lakh crore in 2025, accounting for 6.3 per cent of the country's total merchandise exports. The sector provides direct or indirect employment to nearly 75 lakh people, he said.

India exports jewellery to the US, Europe, West Asian countries and Hong Kong, while more than 90 per cent of cut and polished diamonds are processed in the country, Shah said.

He said the free trade agreements with the EU, the UAE, Australia, Oman and the UK would help increase India's trade with these markets.

Shah also highlighted the government's measures to strengthen the industry, saying companies involved in rough diamond trading and operating in special notified zones would receive a 15-year income tax exemption under the Taxation and Other Laws (Amendment) Act, 2026.Politics

"This is the beginning of making Bharat a hub in rough diamond trading," he said. Shah said the Bharat Ratnam mega common facility centre, inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, spans 1.25 lakh square feet and provides facilities for 3D printing, casting and refining.

The India Jewellery Park was expected to attract an investment of Rs 50,000 crore and generate nearly one lakh direct and indirect jobs, while the Maharashtra government had offered stamp duty waivers and affordable electricity supply, he said.

Hailing PM Modi, the Union minister said the Centre had introduced fundamental changes over the last 12 years, resulting in India moving from the "fragile five" economies in 2014 to the world's top five economies.

"In 2014, India was rated among the 'Fragile Five', but today it is ranked among the top five," he said.

Referring to the latest first-quarter GDP figures, Shah said India had recorded 7.8 per cent growth and emerged as the fastest-growing economy among major countries.

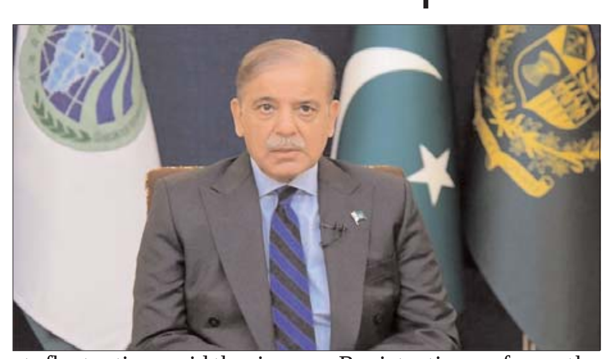
Prime Minister Narendra Modi has made people feel confident that India will be ahead of all other countries in all the spheres on August 15, 2047, Shah said.

He credited the Modi government with measures in infrastructure, manufacturing and exports, including the Production Linked Incentive schemes, saying India's exports were breaking previous records.

He said Prime Minister Modi had set the goal of making India the world's number one country across sectors by 2047 and that the government was making policy changes in line with changing global conditions.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde were also present at the awards ceremony.

Pak PM Sharif announces fuel relief measures amid oil price surge



ISLAMABAD, Sep 13: Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday announced a special relief scheme for users of motorcycles, rickshaws and small vehicles amid a surge in petroleum prices triggered by the ongoing tensions in West Asia.

"In this hour of difficulty, we will not leave the public alone," Sharif said according to a statement released by the Prime Minister's Office.

Under the scheme, users of two- and three-wheelers will get a subsidy of PKR 100 per litre on up to 20 litres of petrol per month, whereas owners of small vehicles, up to 800cc, will receive the same subsidy on up to 30 litres of petrol per month.

Petrol prices in Pakistan are currently hovering above PKR 370 per litre, with the rate fluctuating amid the rise in global oil prices.

While launching the scheme, Sharif said that the government is fully aware of the burden being placed on the public due to the increase in oil prices.

The scheme will come into effect in Islamabad from the intervening night of Monday and Tuesday, and across Pakistan from the intervening night of Wednesday and Thursday.

Registration for the scheme began on Sunday, and details of the procedure will be communicated to the public through an awareness campaign, the statement said

Sharif thanked the provinces for cooperating in providing information on motorcycles, rickshaws and small vehicles for registration under the scheme.

The prime minister's announcement comes amid growing criticism over rising petroleum prices linked to the ongoing tensions in West Asia.

The Strait of Hormuz, through which roughly one-fifth of petroleum trade passed during peacetime, has remained largely blocked amid the US-Iran conflict, disrupting a key route for global oil supplies.

Meanwhile, Iran-backed Houthi forces in Yemen have tightened their grip around the Bab el-Mandeb Strait at the entrance to the Red Sea, choking another key route for global petroleum trade.

Sunday's announcement also comes after the right-wing Jamaat-e-Islami party threatened further protests to press the government to reduce petroleum prices. (PTI)

Unilateral sanctions directly impacting global food security and people's welfare: Iran's Pezeshkian

NEW DELHI, Sep 14: BRICS must expand trade in national currencies and work towards an inclusive global economic framework as excessive dependence on existing financial and trade systems has made emerging economies vulnerable to political shocks, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said on Sunday.

In an address at the BRICS summit, Pezeshkian, taking a swipe at Western powers, was also critical of "unilateral sanctions", saying they are directly impacting global food security and people's welfare.

The Iranian leader's remarks came weeks after the US imposed new economic sanctions on Iran, tightening the squeeze on Tehran's finances amid ongoing military hostilities between the two sides.

The BRICS must play a greater role in building a more balanced, inclusive and just international order, the Iranian president said, stressing that resilience, cooperation and sustainability should be translated into practical action.

The Iranian president said economic resilience could not be sustained without security, referring to what he described as the military aggression by the United States and Israel against Iran.

The attacks on Iran's economic, energy and development infrastructure could have consequences beyond national borders, creating regional and global repercussions, he said.

The Iranian people had paid a heavy price, with civilians killed and infrastructure built over decades damaged.

The Iranian president said the international community has a responsibility to protect civilians and prevent the "normalisation of attacks on civilian targets".

Pezeshkian thanked India, its people and Prime Minister Narendra Modi for hosting the summit, saying its theme -- "Resilience, Cooperation and Sustainability" -- reflected the fundamental global needs at a time when the destinies of nations are increasingly interconnected.

He said the international community's challenge was not merely to manage current crises, but to build a system that strengthens nations against future crises and creates a fairer world.Compare Security Systems

Delving into pressing economic challenges, Pezeshkian said excessive dependence on limited financial and trade systems had made economies vulnerable to political shocks.

Unilateral sanctions directly affected food security and people's welfare, he said, pitching for expanding trade in national currencies and strengthening the New Development Bank to enhance the economic resilience of BRICS members.

On the situation in Gaza and Lebanon, Pezeshkian said the people of the region continued to face the consequences of "crimes and genocide". He called on BRICS to play a more effective role in defending national sovereignty, territorial integrity and the prohibition of the use of force.

Elaborating on global challenges, Pezeshkian said no country could address them alone and called for transforming the capacities of the Global South into shared capabilities.

He highlighted Iran's geopolitical position and energy and transit capacities, saying these could contribute to the development of trade and energy corridors among BRICS members.

On sustainability, he warned that development that increases inequality or transfers today's costs to future generations cannot be sustainable.

The Iranian president also flagged concerns over the environmental consequences of war, saying damage to energy and industrial infrastructure can affect natural resources beyond economic losses.

Pezeshkian identified knowledge and innovation as key elements of the BRICS agenda, stressing that artificial intelligence and emerging technologies should serve as tools for empowering nations rather than instruments of domination. (PTI)