

Petrol to be cheaper by Rs 10 in Punjab from Monday, diesel by Rs 5

■ **STATE TIMES NEWS**
CHANDIGARH: The Congress-led government in Punjab on Sunday announced a reduction in value added tax (VAT) on petrol and diesel, making them cheaper by Rs 10 and Rs 5 per litre respectively in the state.

The new rates will be effective from midnight. Currently, petrol and diesel rates in Punjab are Rs 106.20 and Rs 89.83 per litre respectively.

The move, which will cost the state nearly Rs 6,000 crore, comes days after the BJP-led central government reduced excise duty on petrol and diesel, and several other states, including Haryana and Himachal Pradesh, slashed VAT rates on the fuels to give relief to consumers.

The decision to reduce VAT on fuel was taken in a Cabinet meeting chaired by Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi.

Addressing the media here, Channi said the Cabinet has taken a major decision of reducing rates of fuel in order to provide relief to the people of Punjab.

"We are reducing the rate of petrol by Rs 10 per litre and

diesel by Rs 5 per litre from midnight," he said. Channi claimed that such a big rate cut was unheard of in the last 70 years.

The chief minister said the new rate of petrol will be Rs 95 per litre and that of diesel would be Rs 83.75 per litre. According to a list provided by the state government, petrol costs Rs 104.01 in Delhi, Rs 95.29 in Haryana, Rs 95.76 in Himachal Pradesh, Rs 96.13 in Jammu and Kashmir, Rs 116.27 in Rajasthan and Rs 94.21 in Chandigarh.

Similarly, diesel costs Rs 86.71 in Delhi, Rs 86.53 in Haryana, Rs 80.34 in Himachal Pradesh, Rs 80.31 in Jammu and Kashmir, Rs 100.46 in Rajasthan and Rs 80.89 in Chandigarh, it showed.

"People of Punjab may consider it a Diwali gift. We will be giving them more such gifts (major public welfare announcements) in the future.

"People have been burdened so much in the past years, but we are taking steps to provide relief to the people in every sector," Channi said, pointing at decisions like reduction in electricity rates taken by his gov-

ernment.

Assembly polls in Punjab are due early next year.

Channi further claimed that after the reduction, the rate of petrol in Punjab will be the lowest among the northern states for the first time in 20 years.

"We are close to UT Chandigarh in rates, but our rates are cheaper by big margins as compared to other states," he said.

After 20 years, diesel in Punjab will be cheaper than in Haryana, Channi said, claiming that petrol in Punjab is cheaper than Delhi.

Channi also hit out at the BJP-led government at the Centre, alleging that ever since it came to power, the rates of petrol and diesel have been shooting up.

He further alleged that the government at the Centre has looted the people of the country.

In the last 18 months, diesel has jumped from Rs 61 per litre to 98.50 a litre, the chief minister said.

Initially, the Centre raised fuel prices by Rs 30 a litre and now has reduced it by Rs 5 and Rs 10 a litre to gain words of appreciation, he claimed.

Cruise drugs case: Aryan Khan skips NCB SIT's summons citing fever

■ **STATE TIMES NEWS**

MUMBAI: Aryan Khan, son of Bollywood actor Shah Rukh Khan, was summoned by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) of the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) on Sunday in connection with the cruise drugs case, but he failed to appear before it citing fever, an official said.

The anti-drug agency's SIT on Sunday asked Aryan Khan to appear before it the same day, the NCB official said.

"But he did not appear before the SIT officials citing fever," he added.

The SIT, headed by the NCB's senior officer Sanjay Kumar Singh, reached Mumbai on Saturday, a day after the agency transferred to it the investigation in six cases, including the controversial cruise drugs case.

The NCB had arrested Aryan Khan and at least 19 others in the cruise drugs case last month and the agency's Mumbai zonal director

Sameer Wankhede has been facing a departmental vigilance probe after an independent witness in this case alleged an extortion bid by those involved in the investigation. Aryan Khan was released on bail on October 30.

On Friday, he had appeared visited the NCB office here to mark his weekly presence as per the bail conditions set by the Bombay High Court. It was Aryan Khan's first appearance at the NCB office after his release from the Arthur Road prison.

In its order, the high court had said that Aryan Khan, Arbaaz Merchant and Munmun Dhamecha, his co-accused who were also released on bail, will have to surrender their passports before the NDPS court and shall not leave India without taking permission from the special court. Besides, they have to attend the NCB office each Friday between 11 am and 2 pm to mark their presence.



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