



**MARKET NEWS :**

Key benchmark indices ended slightly lower after witnessing intraday volatility, ending three-day winning streak. Fears of rise in interest rates following rise in food inflation weighed on the sentiment. Weak global cues also played spoilsport after strong gains on the domestic bourses over the past three trading session. Firm global stocks had aided the rally on the domestic bourses recently. The BSE 30-share Sensex was down 28.31 points or 0.17%, up 83.65 points from the day's low and off 53.26 points from the day's high. The Sensex fell below the psychological 17,000 mark. It had settled a tad above the 17,000 level on Wednesday, 3 March 2010.

Food price index rose 17.87% in the 12 months to 20 February 2010, faster than the annual rise of 17.58% in the previous week, government data released today, 4 March 2010 showed. The fuel price index was up 9.59%. The primary articles index rose 15%. Higher inflation is likely to add pressure on the central bank to raise interest rates in April 2010.

The latest hike in petrol and diesel prices will further increase headline inflation. Higher inflation will put further pressure on interest rates which in turn may impact corporate and consumer confidence. However, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Monday tried to allay fears of fuel price hike stoking inflation. He said the direct effect on the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) will be no more than 0.4%.

Food prices will be keenly watched in coming weeks for the second and third round impacts of the fuel price rise. Market men see a 25 basis points hike in the repo and reverse repo rates each by the RBI at the April 2010 policy review.

Congress president Sonia Gandhi has reportedly signaled her support for a move to raise taxes on fuel in last year's Budget. The Congress president has reportedly praised finance minister Pranab Mukherjee for a well-balanced budget and said growth is the engine of the Budget

European stocks were lower Thursday as investors adopted a cautious stance ahead of key meetings of the Bank of England (BOE) and European Central Bank (ECB). As per market expectations, both the BOE and ECB are widely expected to keep rates at record lows. Key benchmark indices in UK, Germany and France were down by between 0.09% to 0.37%.

On Wednesday, Greece announced further austerity measures designed at getting its fiscal deficit down to levels acceptable to the rest of Europe. Ongoing worries about Greek debt are expected to be one reason for the European Central Bank policymakers to keep rates on hold on Thursday.





**CIL SECURITIES LIMITED**

**Registered Office**

214-Raghava Ratna Towers  
Chirag Ali Lane, Abids  
Hyderabad-500 001  
Andhra Pradesh  
Phone: 040-23203155  
Fax: : 040-23203028  
Email: advisors @cilsecurities.com.

**Corporate Office**

Great Western Building  
20, 2nd Floor, 130/132  
Apollo Street, Opp. Lion Gate  
Mumbai - 400 023.  
Phone: 022-22885177 / 78  
Fax: 022-22885176

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