

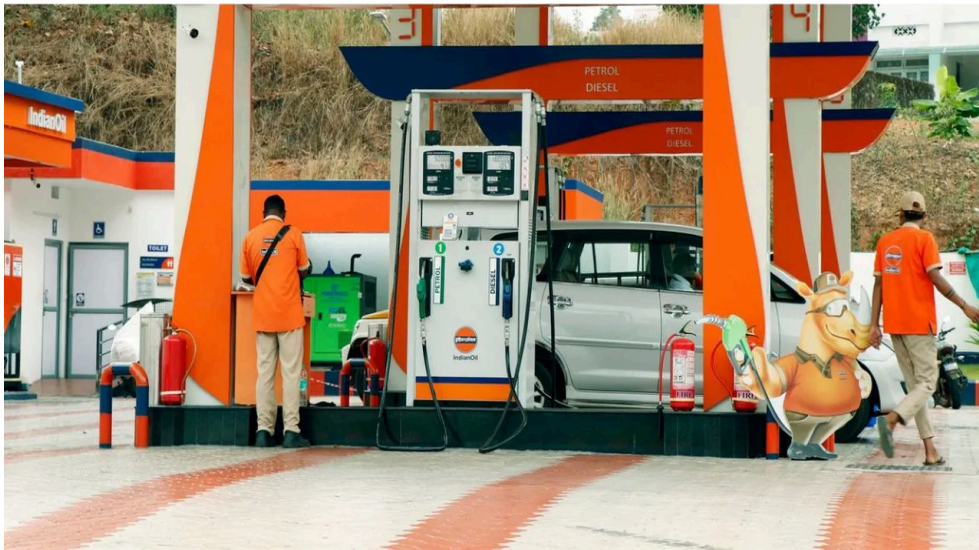
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Ethanol blend in petrol is damaging your vehicle: Manufacturers, consumers flag concerns

Consumers have been voicing dissent over the mixing of ethanol in petrol and have voiced the issues caused to their vehicles.



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A petrol bunk in Kochi, Kerala. (iStock)

Synopsis: India achieved 20 percent ethanol blending in petrol in 2025. However, vehicles manufactured in India prior to 2023 are not compatible with ethanol mixed petrol. Consumers demand that the government make provisions to choose between ethanol-blended petrol and pure petrol.

Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said on 24 July that India has successfully achieved 20 percent ethanol blending in petrol in 2025, five years ahead of its original target set for 2030.

However, vehicles manufactured in India prior to 2023 are not compatible with ethanol mixed petrol and can cause damage to them and reduce fuel efficiency (mileage).

Meanwhile, consumers have been voicing dissent over the mixing of ethanol in petrol and have voiced the issues caused to their vehicles. They demand that the government make provisions to have the consumers choose between ethanol-blended petrol and pure petrol.

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What vehicle manufacturers say

According to vehicle manufacturer Hero Motorcop, using E20 (20% ethanol and 80% petrol) on non-compliant/older vehicles may lead to several disadvantages.

“Older vehicles, manufactured prior to April 2023, may require modifications in the Engine-Fuel system for it to be tuned to run efficiently on E20 fuel. Certain rubber, elastomers and plastic components (like gasket, O-rings, Fuel Tube etc.) may need to be replaced for prolonged usage with new parts made with E20 compatible materials,” it has said.

The company is not alone in making these observations; several other vehicle manufacturers have also pointed out the adverse effects of blending ethanol with petrol.

“Compared to gasoline, ethanol has different chemical characteristics, and it is corrosive to several materials that are frequently used in fuel systems. Component deterioration or damage could result from compatibility problems,” TVS noted.

“Because of its hygroscopic qualities, ethanol can draw moisture from the surrounding air. Phase separation brought on by this water absorption may result in corrosion if the manufacturer doesn’t account for it. Intensive farming methods used to produce ethanol may be a factor in environmental problems such as soil erosion, pesticide use, and deforestation. Utilising sustainable farming methods is essential to reducing these effects,” it added.

‘Give customers choice’

Vishnu Gopal, an area committee member of CPI(M) in Kerala’s Kottayam, told **South First** that he has been noticing a steady drop in mileage.

“I own an automatic transmission Baleno, purchased in December 2022. But over time, I’ve noticed a steady drop in mileage while fuel prices keep climbing. It’s high time petrol and ethanol-blended fuel are sold separately. Consumers deserve to know how much ethanol is being mixed, but why aren’t we given a choice based on what suits our vehicle?” he questioned.

“Who authorised this silent damage to engines under the guise of policy reform? I now spend nearly 25k a month on petrol, and the number of times I need to refill has gone up. How is the average citizen expected to manage this burden? This is a serious but largely overlooked policy failure,” he added.

“I own a 2022 Maruti Suzuki Brezza, I definitely have noticed- mileage has dropped sharply to around 14km/L from the previous 17-18 km/L and also sluggish pickup. It’s a relatively new model, the fuel efficiency has reduced, and the car feels less responsive. This is a classic sign of ethanol blending,” Akanksha Bokdia, a public relations consultant in Chennai, told **South First**.

Another person, Yadhav Prakash, who owns a 2015 model Alto K10 in Chennai, uses the car daily to commute around 50 km to and from his office.

He told **South First** that ever since he purchased the car, it has consistently delivered a mileage of between 18 to 20 kilometres per litre of petrol. He also mentioned that he hasn’t faced any engine-related issues with the vehicle recently.

“I started using E20 petrol recently since it’s becoming more common at fuel stations, but honestly, I’m not very happy with how my car is performing. I drive a petrol sedan that’s a few years old — not one of the newer flex-fuel models — and I’ve noticed a clear drop in mileage. Earlier, I used to get around 16-17 km/l, but now it’s gone down by at least two to three km. Acceleration also feels a bit sluggish, especially with the AC on or while overtaking,” Subramaniam, a native of Thiruvananthapuram, told **South First**.

“I understand the environmental benefits of blending ethanol, and I support cleaner fuel options, but there’s real concern among many of us about whether older engines are ready for E20. My mechanic even warned that prolonged use might corrode engine components or fuel lines if the car

isn't properly tuned or compatible. That kind of long-term risk worries me. The government should make it clearer which vehicles can handle E20 safely."

"Right now, it feels like we're being forced into it without much of a choice. I wish there was a proper awareness campaign or at least labelling at fuel stations," he added.

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Drop in fuel efficiency

Meanwhile, AJ Sanjeeth, a 22-year-old student from Hyderabad, told **South First** that he has been observing a drop in fuel efficiency.

"I used to drive my scooter almost every day when I was at home about two or so years ago. After that, there was a gap during which I couldn't drive because I moved to another state for an education. However, about six months ago, I got my two-wheeler to where I currently reside, and I have to say that I've noticed that there's been an increase in the number of times I have to get a refill on petrol," he said.

"The price, needless to say, has increased, but with the increased frequency, it's making a larger dent in my pocket money than it used to back home. I had to spend about ₹1,000 to travel to my junior college a few years ago, which was about four km away from my house. Now, I have to spend about ₹1,600 for travelling about 5.5-6 km," he said.

Another Hyderabad native, 26-year-old Nazeer Kamran, who is a UX developer, said the ethanol mixed petrol has damaged the engine of his motorbike.

"I don't know about mileage or anything else, but this new petrol has taken a toll on my engine life. I purchased my Royal Enfield bike in 2022, before the ethanol mixing was mandated and also institutionalised in vehicle production. My bike is not made for this fuel. In my opinion, I've been refuelling about 5-10 percent more often than I did two years ago. Where I spent ₹1,400 a month to travel to work, now I have to spend about ₹2,100," he said.

"Part of the problem could be my older engine, but it has taken a toll on my pocket," he added.

Government stresses on benefits

Meanwhile, Puri emphasised that the shift towards ethanol-blended fuel has not only bolstered energy security but also led to significant economic and environmental benefits.

Highlighting the country's clean energy progress, the minister noted that ethanol blending in petrol has risen from just 1.5 percent in 2014 to 20 percent in 2025, a nearly 13-fold increase over 11 years. He added that ethanol production has surged from 38 crore litres in 2014 to 661.1 crore litres by June 2025.

"As a result, India has saved approximately 1.36 lakh crore rupees in foreign exchange by reducing its dependency on imported crude oil. At the same time, 1.96 lakh crore rupees have been paid to distilleries, fueling the growth of the domestic biofuel industry," he said.

Puri said 1.18 lakh crore rupees have been disbursed to farmers, thereby enhancing rural incomes and supporting the agricultural economy.

"The environmental impact has been equally significant. The increased use of ethanol-blended petrol has helped reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 698 lakh tonnes, contributing to India's climate goals," he added.

The ethanol used in blending is primarily derived from crops such as sugarcane, reinforcing the initiative's role in supporting Indian agriculture. Recently, the Union Cabinet approved a price hike for ethanol produced from molasses for the current marketing season.