

REGION

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AAP SLAMS LG, BJP OVER DELHI FLOODS; QUESTIONS DESILTING AND RELIEF WORK



Yamuna Flood: Delhi CM Reviews Situation, Orders Prompt Relief Work



NEW DELHI: Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Friday directed officials to monitor the Yamuna water level round-the-clock and ensure prompt safety and relief work to help those hit by flood in low-lying areas.

After a meeting, the Chief Minister said on X, "Today, I held an online meeting with all the District Magistrates of Delhi to review the water level of the Yamuna and the situation of heavy rainfall."

"Clear instructions have been given to the officials that 24x7

monitoring should continue, there should be no laxity in relief work, and the safety of every Delhi resident should be the topmost priority. The entire government team is alert and fully prepared to deal with every situation," she wrote.

On Friday, the Yamuna water level at Delhi's Old Railway Bridge stood at 207.33 metres at 7 a.m., coming down slightly from 207.35 metres at 6 a.m.

By 8 a.m., the water level receded to 207.31 metres, holding out hope for a possible respite over the next 24 hours.

On Thursday, the Yamuna water level touched the season's highest level of 207.48 metres, breaching the 207-metre mark for the fifth time since 1963. According to the weather department, moderate rainfall with normal cloud cover is expected in Delhi on Friday, while September 6 and 7 are likely to witness heavy rains accompanied by thunder and lightning.

After a brief respite on September 8 with partly cloudy skies in the afternoon and evening, the IMD says, tor-

rential downpours may return on September 9 again with thunder and lightning. Skies will remain partly cloudy on September 10. Meteorologists warn that this fresh spell could last for an entire week, keeping the mercury between 34-35 degrees Celsius and the minimum temperature between 23-25 degrees Celsius.

Earlier in the week, CM Gupta inspected a flood relief camp near Geeta Colony Flyover and the Old Iron Bridge to review the Yamuna's water level and the condition of affected areas.

She met families staying in relief camps, listened to their concerns, and assured them of all possible assistance.

The Chief Minister emphasized that the government is maintaining round-the-clock vigilance and that departments concerned are working tirelessly to mitigate the impact. She reassured citizens that there is no need to panic.

The Chief Minister spent significant time in the affected localities and received detailed briefings from officials.

She instructed authorities engaged in relief operations to ensure an uninterrupted supply of essential items such as clean drinking water, food, medical aid, and safe accommodation.

BANKING & FINANCE

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ICICI BANK LAUNCHES A DEDICATED BRANCH FOR STARTUPS IN BENGALURU



Rising Yamuna: Delhi Faces Flood Chaos, Thousands Evacuated as Homes Submerge



OUR CORRESPONDENT
New Delhi

Ananya waded through chest-deep water, holding her 6-year-old daughter tightly and clutching a small bag of clothes. Around 2 AM on September 2, floodwaters had suddenly surged into her home in Yamuna Bazar Ghat. "We had no time to save anything. The water just kept rising. Now we are living in a tent, and the water is still coming. How long will we stay here? Why is no one taking responsibility?" she asked, her voice shaking.

Nearby, her neighbors were doing the same. Some dragged mattresses and utensils, others carried pets and small livestock. The streets had turned into rivers, and families stumbled through knee- and chest-deep water to reach government shel-

ters. Low-lying neighborhoods including Vijay Ghat, Mayur Vihar, Geeta Colony, Civil Lines, Majnu Ka Tila, Rajghat, and Shahdara bore the brunt of the sudden flooding. Officials said around 10,000 people have been rescued and accommodated in 38 camps, "while over 15,000 families along the Yamuna floodplains remain affected," sources informed.

For Ramesh, a resident of Vijay Ghat, the evacuation was a nightmare. He carried his daughter, Meera, through waterlogged lanes to a relief camp. "Every two to three years, floods come here. We were promised relocation after the last one, but nothing has been done," he said. In the camps, families share tents, sometimes four to five households together, making privacy and basic facilities scarce. Children miss school, meals are irregular, and personal

belongings are left in the water, soaking and vulnerable. Sumita, another displaced resident, said, "The tents are not fully set up. If it rains again, all our things will be ruined."

Some, however, appreciated the temporary relief. Sanjay Kumar, a rickshaw driver who has lived on the Yamuna Ghat since 1980, said, "At least we have food, water, and a place to stay. It's not ideal, but it's better than nothing."

Flooding in Delhi is both historic and recurring. According to the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), more than 75,000 people live in flood-prone areas along the Yamuna. The 1978 floods were the most severe, with water levels reaching 207.49 metres. This year, the river touched 207.43 metres, nearly two metres above the danger mark. In July 2023, floods forced the evacuation of over 20,000 residents in Mayur Vihar, ITO, and Civil Lines.

Chief Minister Rekha Gupta visited relief camps on September 2, walking through flooded streets and speaking with residents. "All possible help is being provided. Water is being drained, and only submerged areas are at risk," she said. Public Works Department Minister Parvesh Verma added, "Even if the Yamuna reaches 209 metres, flooding in residential areas is unlikely. Residents need not panic."

POTPOURRI

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INDIAN CRICKET LEGEND YUVRAJ SINGH OFFICIALLY LAUNCHES GROUNDBREAKING MULTI-CITY IGPL TOUR



Kejriwal urges Delhi govt to speed up food & tents relief



OUR CORRESPONDENT
New Delhi

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) chief and former Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Friday urged the Delhi government to provide immediate relief to flood-affected residents, alleging delays in the supply of food and the setting up of tents.

Kejriwal visited a relief camp at Shastri Park in northeast Delhi, where he interacted with displaced families. "I can see that people are facing issues. They are not getting food on time. There are mosquitoes everywhere. It has been raining but tents were only put up yesterday," he told reporters. "This is a natural calamity. We urge the government to provide facilities to people. It is the responsibility of the government to make adequate arrangements."

The AAP leader said waterlogging across the capital had worsened the crisis. "The desilting of drains did not happen on time. There is sewer backflow in many areas and there is no drinking water in many places. I urge the government to provide facilities to people," he said.

Kejriwal also appealed to the BJP-led central government to extend aid to flood-hit states across north India. He pointed out that the Centre had dispatched relief materials to Afghanistan after an earthquake and stressed that similar urgency was needed for affected citizens within the country.

"All of north India is grappling with floods — Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Uttarakhand, Jammu and Kashmir and Delhi. I urge the Centre to provide relief to people," he said. "When Afghanistan was hit by an earthquake, the Centre sent relief materials there. We should help other countries. But the Centre should provide relief materials to people here also."

On Thursday, Kejriwal had travelled to Punjab, where several districts have been inundated after heavy rainfall, to review the situation in the AAP-ruled state.

India's Forex Reserves Surge by \$3.51 Billion to \$694.23 Billion



MUMBAI: India's foreign exchange reserves rose by \$3.51 billion to \$694.23 billion for the week ended August 29, data released by the RBI on Friday showed.

Foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, increased by \$1.69 billion to \$583.94 billion during the week. Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound, and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves.

The gold component of the forex reserves increased by \$1.77 billion to \$86.77 billion at the end of the week. Central banks worldwide have accumulated substantial amounts of gold as a safe-haven asset in their foreign exchange reserves amid uncertainty created by geopolitical tensions. The share of gold maintained by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) as part of its foreign exchange reserves has almost doubled since 2021.

The special drawing rights in the forex kitty stood at \$18.78 billion, up \$40 million.

An increase in the country's foreign exchange kitty gives the RBI more headroom to strengthen the rupee vis-à-vis the US dollar. Adequate forex reserves enable the RBI to intervene in the spot and forward currency markets by releasing more dollars to prevent the rupee from going into a free fall and curbing its volatility.

India's foreign exchange reserves are sufficient to fund more than 11 months of goods imports and about 96 per cent of external debt outstanding, RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra said recently.

The RBI Governor said: "Overall, India's external sector remains resilient as key external sector vulnerability indicators continue to improve. We remain confident of meeting our external financing requirements."

GST Reforms to Benefit Middle and Lower Income Groups: Industry Leaders

NEW DELHI: Industry leaders welcomed the recently announced GST reforms, which reduce the number of tax slabs, stating that it will make tax compliance easier while also directly benefiting consumers through lower prices.

Jharkhand Chamber of Commerce Joint Secretary Navjot Alang Rubal said that the reduction of the number of slabs from four to two under the new GST structure is a highly positive step.

According to Rubal, this reform will greatly benefit the middle and lower-income groups as the tax reductions on essential items of daily use will bring a noticeable drop in prices.

He further added that the government has addressed the needs of all sections of society in this reform. In the agricultural sector, GST on tractor tyres has been reduced from 18 per cent to 5 per cent.

For the education sector, GST on pencils, erasers, books, and notebooks has been completely removed, making education more affordable for students.

Similarly, GST on many medical devices has been reduced, while medical insurance and essential medicines for diseases like cancer and diabetes are now exempt from tax.

Bhadargarh Chamber of Com-



merce and Industries President Subhash Jagga described this as a consumer-friendly move that will bring down prices.

He noted that the timing of its implementation during the Navratri festive season is especially encouraging, as it will boost market demand. Ranchi pharmaceutical trader, Amit Kishore Agarwal, expressed his gratitude to the government, pointing out that GST on many life-saving medicines has been removed altogether.

Taxes on some medicines have been cut from 12 per cent to 5 per cent, while certain medical devices are now either tax-free or fall under the 5 per cent bracket, Agarwal added.

Sarla Anil Modi School of

Economics' Assistant Professor, Dr Isha Khanna, also welcomed the reforms, calling them an important milestone.

She said that reducing the number of slabs from four to two will simplify compliance and lower the prices of essential goods, thereby strengthening urban demand.

She added that despite earlier policy measures such as low interest rates, credit growth has not reached expected levels and private investment remains subdued due to global uncertainties and supply chain disruptions.

In this context, the GST reforms will help unlock domestic demand, which is critical for sustained economic growth, Dr Khanna said.

Water Politics Divides-Flood Unites: Haryana Farmers Rush Relief to Flood-Hit Punjab, Setting Aside Decades-Old Water Dispute

Spirit of brotherhood resurfaces as villages send food, fodder, and cash aid across the border

NEERAJ MOHAN
Chandigarh

In a heartwarming display of solidarity, thousands of tractors and trailers loaded with relief material are streaming from Haryana into flood-ravaged districts of Punjab.

Fodder, wheat, flour, potatoes, tarpaulins, milk, drinking water, ration, and kitchen items are being sent by farming communities who have set aside their long-standing differences over water-sharing to extend a helping hand in Punjab's hour of crisis. Videos and photos flooding social media show Haryana villagers pooling wheat, ration, and cash contributions, preparing tractor-trailers of relief bound for Punjab. The political bitterness over the decades-old Sutlej-Yamuna water dispute has taken a backseat as farmers of both states once again rediscover their unity—much like during the historic farmers' agitation of 2019-20.

"This is the duty of the younger brother to serve the elder brother in times of crisis. Punjab always stood with us, now it is our turn,"



said Robin, a young farmer from Yamunanagar who led a group of youth transporting aid to Dera Baba Nanak.

From Marwa Kalan village of Yamunanagar, Sandeep Sharma echoed similar sentiments: "We cannot see our brothers in Punjab suffer. On the directions of our elders, we have dispatched two tractor-trailers of relief material." In Jind district's Sukkain Khurd village, residents went further—sending 40 quintals of wheat, 20 quintals of potatoes, 100 quintals of fodder, Rs 2 lakh in cash, and other essential items in three tractor-trailers. "We will stand with our brothers until normalcy returns," pledged village sarpanch Gurmeet Rana.

Along the Punjab-Haryana border, villagers in Kaithal, Jind, Fatehabad, and Sirsa even offered to shelter livestock from

Punjab until floodwaters recede. "We will take care of their cattle as our own," said farmers.

Farmer unions, including Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) factions, have also swung into action. Union leaders have instructed ground-level cadres to visit villages across Haryana and mobilize support. "This is the time to rise above politics and stand united with Punjab," said one farmer leader, recalling the unity shown during the agitation against the three farm laws.

The solidarity is not limited to Haryana. BKU leader Rakesh Tikait has appealed to farmers in Uttar Pradesh to collect ration and dispatch it to Punjab. Meanwhile, a dairy farmer from Karnal's Bala village donated 150 quintals of fodder, arranging free transportation for Punjab's cattle owners.

NITI Aayog Charts Out Roadmap for Atmanirbhar Bharat in Pulses

NEW DELHI: NITI Aayog's Thursday report on 'Strategies and Pathways for Accelerating Growth in Pulses towards the Goal of Atmanirbharta' is relevant and significant today. It explores the state of the country's pulse sector and its future potential.

The good news is that the report projects a steady rise in pulse production in the country. Incidentally, India is the world's largest producer, as well as consumer, of pulses. Pulses are essential to the Indian diet, offering a budget-friendly and sustainable source of plant-based protein and vital micronutrients. In addition, they are rich in fibre, vitamins, and minerals, benefiting both human and animal health.



The relevance of the report lies in the fact that, sustaining the livelihoods of over five crore farmers and their families, the sector is vital to rural economies and the vision of 'Atmanirbharta'. In fact, Union Budget 2025-26 had announced the launch of a six-year 'Mission for Atmanirbharta in Pulses' with a special focus on Tur, Urad, and Masoor. Meanwhile, to meet exi-

gencies like crop shortfall, price volatility, etc., the government maintains a buffer stock of major pulses such as Tur, Urad, Chana, Moong, and Masur under the Price Stabilisation Fund (PSF) for market interventions. Thus, pulses are procured and stored for regulated release to meet market demands.

According to a statement from the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution on April 1, the government has some 15.75 LMT worth

of stock of major pulses. The ministry has also stated that to augment domestic availability of pulses and control price volatility, duty-free import of Tur and Urad has been allowed till March 31, 2026.

In its First Report Demands for Grants (2024-25), submitted in December 2024, the Standing Committee on Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Food Processing observed, "The production of Pulses has increased from 198 lakh tonne in 2013-14 to 242.46 lakh tonne in 2023-24." But the actual production in 2023-24 was about 50.04 LMT below the target for that period. India imported 47.39 LMT of pulses to augment stock, while exports amounted to about 6 LMT.

President Murmu Confers National Teachers Awards, Lauds Their Contribution In Nation-Building

NEW DELHI: On the occasion of Teachers' Day, President Droupadi Murmu felicitated 45 exceptional educators and conferred national awards on them at a special event held in the national capital's Vigyan Bhawan.

President Murmu hailed the teachers for transforming the classrooms and preparing the children to become capable and upright citizens of tomorrow.

Addressing the gathering, the President spoke about the importance of education in our lives and laid special emphasis on investing in girls' education, stating that this would be an invaluable investment in the building of our family, society and nation. Notably, the awardee teachers, including 24 male and 21 female teachers from schools in metros, towns, and far-flung villages, were chosen

through a rigorous three-stage selection process for their innovation and impact on student learning.

President Droupadi Murmu said that education is essential for a person's dignity and security, much like food, clothing and shelter. "Education makes a person capable. Children from the poorest backgrounds can touch the skies of progress with the power of education. Affectionate and devoted teachers play the most important role in giving strength to the flight of children. The biggest reward for teachers is that their students remember them throughout their lives and make commendable contributions to the family, society and country," she said.

RBI Council Reviews Macroeconomic Trends, KYC Reforms & Inclusion Strategy

NEW DELHI: The Sub-Committee of the Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC-SC), chaired by RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra, on Thursday reviewed global and domestic macroeconomic and financial sector developments, with a focus on issues that could affect financial stability.

According to the RBI, the panel assessed progress on inter-regulatory matters such as simplifying Know Your Customer (KYC) processes and ongoing drives to expand financial inclusion. It also discussed the draft National Strategy for Financial Inclusion (NSFI) 2025-30.

"The FSDC-SC reaffirmed its commitment to improving financial sector resilience through inter-regulatory coordination and maintaining vigilance on emerging challenges, including heightened trade uncertainty and persisting geopolitical frictions," the central bank said in a statement.

AAP slams LG, BJP over Delhi floods; questions desilting and relief work

OUR CORRESPONDENT
New Delhi

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Thursday hit out at Lieutenant Governor V. K. Saxena and the BJP-led governments over the flood situation in the national capital, accusing them of staying away from ground-level relief work while people struggled in submerged neighbourhoods.

The Yamuna was flowing at 207.44 metres at 4 pm, slightly lower than 207.45 metres recorded between 2 pm and 3 pm, according to official data. The level remains above the danger mark of 205.33 metres.

AAP Delhi state president Saurabh Bharadwaj questioned whether the desilting of major drains, including the Yamuna and the Najafgarh drain, had been carried out properly. "The LG sir is so knowledgeable and an expert on rivers and drains, and there is a BJP government with 'double engine' (actually four engines), yet Delhi is submerged," he said in a post on X.

Bharadwaj demanded a third-party audit of desilting and asked why Saxena had not visited flood-hit areas this



year. "If desilting has been done honestly, then why is Delhi still submerged? Why is the LG silent on the whole matter?" he asked.

The AAP leader also circulated old news clippings from 2023, when Saxena had written to then chief minister Arvind Kejriwal pointing out factors behind the flooding. In comparison, Bharadwaj posted videos of Kejriwal and other AAP leaders inspecting flood-hit areas last year. "The difference is clear — a government that works versus a government that gives empty slogans," the party said.

Delhi had faced one of its worst flood-like situations in

2023 when the Yamuna swelled to 208.66 metres, forcing more than 25,000 people to evacuate. The only comparable flood level was recorded in 1978, when the river touched 207.49 metres.

This year, residents in low-lying areas have again borne the brunt. At Mayur Vihar Phase I, families shifted to relief camps after their homes were inundated were forced to move again when floodwaters entered the camps themselves. "We left our house thinking the camp would be safe, but by evening the water came here too. We had to pack whatever little we had and move again," said Ramesh Kumar, a

daily wage labourer.

AAP alleged that basic arrangements in the relief camps were missing. "People affected by the floods in Delhi are facing a lot of difficulties. Even proper arrangements for food and drinking water have not been made. The question is, where are the BJP's four engines sleeping?" the party said.

Several evacuees echoed the complaint. "We got some biscuits and bottles of water on the first day, but nothing since then. There are children and elderly people here, and no medical help has reached us," said Anita Devi, a resident of Yamuna Bazar whose home was submerged. Meanwhile, Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta visited the Old Railway Bridge and a relief camp near Yamuna Bazar earlier this week, while Public Works Department Minister Parvish Verma inspected the ITO barrage on Wednesday.

AAP leaders use the phrase "four-engine" to describe the BJP's control at the Centre, in Delhi, in the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), and through the lieutenant governor's office.

Flood-hit residents left to fend for themselves, says Congress leader Devender Yadav



OUR CORRESPONDENT
New Delhi

Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee president Devender Yadav on Tuesday visited flood-hit Badarpur Khadar and accused the BJP government of failing to protect people from the rising Yamuna waters.

Large parts of the area remain submerged, with nearby colonies, roads and low-lying localities inundated. Yadav said residents were suffering due to the "negligence and lack of planning" by the Delhi government and administration.

"The people of Delhi are pay-

ing the price for the government's failures. The Haryana government, led by the BJP, released lakhs of cusecs of water from the Hathnikund barrage. Despite repeated warnings from us, the Delhi government did not hold discussions or press Haryana to release water in a controlled manner," Yadav said.

He alleged that the rising water levels of the Yamuna had become a crisis for residents living along the riverbanks because of the government's inaction. "Flood relief measures should have been taken in advance. Once time is lost, ar-

rangements and solutions have no meaning. People are left to fend for themselves, while the government has not begun any real rescue or relief operations," he added.

According to him, people in the area are making their own arrangements to escape the floodwaters as official help has not reached them. "The chief minister has only made announcements to complete formalities, but no effective steps have been taken," Yadav claimed.

The Congress leader said the floods had put the lives and livelihoods of poor families at risk, yet the government remained indifferent to their suffering. He noted that residents were demanding the construction of an embankment (pusta) in Badarpur Khadar. "If the government builds a strong embankment here, the threat of annual floods can be averted. This is the demand of local residents who face this problem every year," he said.

Yadav held the administration's "failures and poor arrangements" responsible for the worsening situation, stressing that timely preparedness could have prevented much of the damage.

Delhi govt to release Rs 1,600 crore in GST refunds before Diwali: CM



OUR CORRESPONDENT
New Delhi

Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Sunday announced that the Delhi government will release Rs 1,600 crore in pending GST refunds to traders before Diwali, providing long-awaited relief to the business community.

At a special meeting held at her Civil Lines camp office with senior officials, including GST commissioner Nandini Paliwal and finance secretary Shurveer Singh, Gupta directed the Department of Trade and Taxes to clear all pending refunds that are undisputed and genuine. She claimed that the previous AAP-led government had failed to take steps to settle the dues, which have been pending since 2019.

"This Diwali will be bigger and brighter for the traders of the capital. The refunds pending for years will finally be released," she said.

To make the refund process faster and more transparent, Gupta said the Delhi GST department, in collaboration with IIT-Hyderabad, has developed an advanced IT module. The system uses data analytics, automation, and expedited verification to ensure quicker settlement of applications. "This will provide timely relief to traders," she added.

The chief minister stressed that prompt refunds would ease liquidity constraints for businesses, cut litigation costs, and collectively boost Delhi's economy. "Ease of doing business for traders is our top priority. We are committed to protecting and promoting their interests," Gupta said.

As part of these efforts, the government has also set up a Traders' Welfare Board with representation from business associations. According to Gupta, this ensures that the concerns of traders are addressed effectively.

She directed officials to strictly adhere to rules while processing applications but to ensure that delays are eliminated. "Refunds must be disbursed on a priority basis," she said.

Gupta underlined that the government's measures are aimed at fostering a business-friendly environment in the capital, adding that timely support to traders will also contribute to wider economic growth.

BJP a thoroughly anti-Bengali party, CM Mamata Banerjee says in Bengal Assembly



KOLKATA: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday described the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) as a thoroughly anti-Bengali political force.

"BJP is a communal, anti-lower caste and anti-Bengali force. They are, in a real sense, also anti-Hindu. We need a change in West Bengal. The change is to totally wipe out the BJP from West Bengal first and then from the country. Their exit bell has already rung," the Chief Minister said while addressing a motion on the issue of the alleged harassment of Bengali-speaking people in the BJP-ruled states on the third and final day of the three-day special session of the West Bengal Assembly on Thursday.

While she was speaking on the floor of the House on Thursday afternoon, the BJP legislators were protesting and shouting slogans coming down to the Well of the house against the "undemocratic" suspension of the leader of the opposition in the state assembly Suvendu Adikari on Tuesday. "BJP is anti-Bengal and anti-Bengali. They don't want me to speak in Bengali in the house. So they are disturbing me during my speech. They steal votes and are thoroughly corrupt. They cannot win the elections in West Bengal like this. They will all be defeated," the Chief Minister said.

She even went to the extent of describing the protests by BJP workers as the behavior of evil forces like "Ravana". Commenting on the Union Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman's decision for GST revision, the Chief Minister said it was because of the pressure from her that the Union government was ultimately forced to take this decision. "It is almost time for the BJP's exit. They have sold the entire country," the Chief Minister said.

Earlier, a total of five Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) legislators were suspended from the House within less than two hours on the last day of the special session of the West Bengal Assembly on Thursday. The suspended BJP legislators include the party's Chief Whip in the house, Shankar Ghosh, fashion designer-turned-politician, Agnimitra Paul, veteran party MLA, Mihir Goswami, cricketer-turned-politician Ashok Dinda, and Bankim Ghosh. Earlier on Tuesday, the Leader of the Opposition, Suvendu Adikari, was also suspended.

Delhi govt to provide more law researchers to HC judges, free Wi-Fi in lower courts: CM Rekha Gupta

OUR CORRESPONDENT
New Delhi

Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Thursday announced that the Delhi government will increase the number of law researchers assisting Delhi High Court judges and extend free Wi-Fi connectivity to lower court premises in the city.

Speaking at an event to launch the Delhi High Court mobile app, an online human resource management portal for judicial officers, and a pilot project for e-office, Gupta said the government would fully support digitisation initiatives in the judiciary. "I hope pendency of cases will go down with the use of technology and people will get justice more quickly," she said.

An official said that while



High Court judges currently have three law researchers, the number will now be raised to four. The remuneration of these researchers has also been increased to Rs 80,000, Gupta announced. The government will provide free Wi-Fi services in district and lower court premises to improve connectivity for

judges, judicial officers, lawyers and litigants. Gupta also said a "permanent feature" of household help for judges after retirement has been introduced.

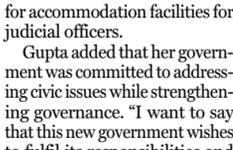
Highlighting the government's budgetary support to the judiciary, she said Rs 200 crore has been earmarked in the 2025-26 Delhi Budget for

setting up hybrid courts, while Rs 540 crore has been allocated for accommodation facilities for judicial officers.

Gupta added that her government was committed to addressing civic issues while strengthening governance. "I want to say that this new government wishes to fulfil its responsibilities and work round-the-clock to serve the people of Delhi," she said.

On the civic front, she said the government had increased solid waste processing capacity from 14,000 metric tonnes daily to 30,000 metric tonnes in the past six months. Work was also under way to rejuvenate the Yamuna by tapping 200 drains flowing into the river. Old sewage treatment plants have been repaired and upgraded, while new facilities are being built, she said.

Delhi High Court Advocates for MSME-Friendly Customs Reforms in Line with Government's Entrepreneurship Policy



NEW DELHI: The Delhi High Court has directed the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) and the Commissioner of Customs to consider providing preferential treatment to start-ups and micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) facing delays in customs procedures, especially for low-value consignments.

The court highlighted the need to align customs operations with the government's policy of promoting small businesses. A division bench, comprising Justices Pratibha M Singh and Shail Jain, noted that under Section 110 of the Customs Act, 1962, the prescribed timelines for customs clearance are six months, which can be extended by another six months. Such extended timelines, the court observed, could place undue burden on small businesses, particularly when the goods involved are not prohibited.

The bench suggested that the CBIC and the Commissioner of Customs explore measures such as expedited timelines, warehousing solutions, and

provisional release of goods for start-ups and MSMEs dealing with low-value consignments.

The court emphasised that providing such preferential treatment would support the government's objective of fostering entrepreneurship and small business growth.

The CBIC and the Commissioner of Customs have been asked to submit affidavits detailing their considerations and any proposed steps by October 28, 2025, the next hearing date. This directive aims to ease the challenges small enterprises face in navigating complex customs procedures, thereby creating a more supportive business environment in India. This move reflects the judiciary's proactive role in encouraging a business-friendly ecosystem, particularly for emerging and small enterprises that are crucial to India's economic growth.

Kejriwal Appeals for Donations as Punjab Faces Deadliest Floods in 37 Years

AAP Leaders to donate one Month's Salary

NEW DELHI: Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) supremo Arvind Kejriwal on Tuesday appealed to the nation to come forward and extend financial support to flood-hit Punjab, which is reeling under its deadliest floods in the last 37 years. He announced that all MPs and MLAs of the AAP will donate one month's salary to the Punjab Chief Minister's Relief Fund, urging people to contribute generously.

In a video address shared on the party's official X handle, AAP National Convener Kejriwal described Punjab as a land that has always fed the country and stood at the forefront during times of national crises.

"Punjab has always stood tall with its head held high in the face of any calamity that has befallen the country. Whenever any attack happened in the country, Punjab was always the first to receive a blow. During



the times of food crisis, Punjab is always at the forefront to help the nation, but today, Punjab is in crisis. I appeal to all my fellow countrymen to help the people of Punjab in every possible way during this difficult time," he said.

Kejriwal stressed that the scale of destruction was unprecedented, with more than 1,000 villages submerged and over 2.5 lakh people rendered homeless. Thousands of acres

of crops have been destroyed, leaving many families without livelihoods.

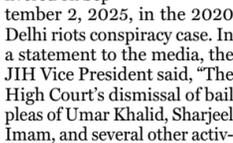
"This is no ordinary flood. Such a calamity has struck Punjab after 37 years. People's lifetime savings and earnings have been washed away," Kejriwal noted.

Kejriwal lauded the resilience and spirit of Punjabis who, despite losing homes and jobs, continue to help their neighbours in distress.

JIH Vice President, Malik Moatasim Khan expresses disappointment over Delhi HC judgment in 2020 Delhi Riots Conspiracy Case

KAVITA SHARMA
New Delhi

The Vice President of Jamaat-e-Islami Hind (JIH), Malik Moatasim Khan, has expressed grave concern and disappointment over the recent Delhi High Court judgment delivered on September 2, 2025, in the 2020 Delhi riots conspiracy case. In a statement to the media, the JIH Vice President said, "The High Court's dismissal of bail pleas of Umar Khalid, Sharjeel Imam, and several other activists under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) is extremely disheartening. These young people have now spent nearly five years in jail without their trial commencing in earnest.



trap gangs are now targeting elderly men. Most victims pay out of fear and shame. In this case, the family chose to fight, and we supported them. The Haryana State Women Commission also took cognizance, and we thank Gurgaon Police for swift action."

Advocate Ankit Gupta, representing the victim, added, "The noble profession of advocacy is being tarnished by a few who misuse legal provisions for extortion. The arrest of the advocate sends a clear message—no one is above the law."

Police have confirmed that further investigation is underway.

Advocate and Two Women Arrested in Gurgaon for Honey-Trapping Senior Citizen, Demanding Rs 10 Lakh

NEERAJ MOHAN
New Delhi

The Gurgaon police have arrested a local advocate and two women for allegedly honey-trapping a senior citizen and demanding Rs 10 lakh from him under threat of a false rape case.

According to the Palam Vihar Police, the accused include Advocate Kuldeep Malik and two women identified as Asha and Kanchan alias Kritika. The case was registered after the victim's daughter filed a complaint, alleging that her father, a widower, was targeted in an extortion plot.

The complaint states that the women initially contacted the

senior citizen through a missed call, gradually built a rapport with him, and eventually visited his residence. During the visit, one of the women allegedly attempted to get intimate with the man before abruptly leaving, saying, "Kaam ho gaya, evidence mil gaya" ("The job is done, we've got the evidence").

Following this, the senior citizen reportedly began receiving calls demanding Rs 10 lakh in exchange for not filing a rape complaint. When he refused, one of the women lodged a rape case 14 days after the alleged incident.

The family approached DCP Karan Goel along with their lawyer Ankit Gupta and social



activist Deepika Narayan Bhardwaj. An audio recording was submitted, reportedly capturing Advocate Kuldeep Malik demanding Rs 6.5 lakh to settle the matter and allegedly revealing that the extortion gang was active across multiple districts in Haryana.

Men's rights activist Deepika Narayan Bhardwaj commented on the arrest, saying, "Honey

Haryana's 8 major economic sectors hit by 50% Trump tariffs

SATISH HANDA
Panipat

From 27 August, a 50% tariff has been imposed on goods exported from India to the US hitting Haryana exporters hard due to its major share in exports. Industries likely to be most affected include textiles and garments, footwear, auto parts, steel, engineering, agriculture, and pharma. According to exporters from Panipat, The textile sector will face the biggest impact. Apart from this, the US is the largest market for Indian auto parts, adversely affecting the manufacturers from Gurugram, Faridabad, Sonapat, Rohtak and Rewari's Bawal and Dharuhera. Information reveals, earlier, cars, small trucks and their parts were having 25% duty, while commercial vehicle parts had 10% and such a huge hike in tariff would adversely affect exports to US. According to Pawan Yadav, President of Manesar Industries Association, 32% of India's auto parts exports went to the US last year, with higher tariffs, exports could be severely hit in future.

Sources reveal, Gurugram alone accounts for 10% of India's exports to the US. The new tariffs may also affect Hisar's steel and aviation, Karnal's basmati rice, Panipat's textiles, Ambala's scientific equipment, and Rohtak's nut-bolt and Bahadurgarh footwear industry. Information also reveals that



Gurugram's Garments, Pharma and Automobile Industry alone will be affected by 25,000 crore annually. President Pawan Yadav Manesar Industry Association said Gurugram's industries are likely to face losses worth Rs 25,000 crore due to the 50% US tariff, since out of 400 garment exporters over 150 depend on the US. Former Gurugram Industries Association President, JN Mangla while talking to *The Financial World* said that orders have stopped for 10 days, existing ones have been cancelled, production halted, and without alternatives, mass layoffs may follow.

Sources further reveal, Hisar's steel and aviation sectors may be hit, presently doing annual exports worth Rs 10.53 crore may get stuck. Under a pact with Haryana, the US Trade and Development Agency (USTDA) was to invest Rs 10.53 crore (\$1.25 million) in developing Hisar Airport and the Integrated Aviation

Hub. Now there are concerns the agency may withdraw or the project may face hurdles. Vinod Dhamija, Chairman of HCCI Panipat Chapter, said the new tariffs will badly hit textiles. Panipat exports worth over Rs 12,000 crore to the US annually, including Rs 1,500 crore during Christmas facing crisis, since about 30% of orders are stalled, and with demand for cushion covers, towels, curtains, and durries are being shifted by US buyers to Bangladesh, Pakistan, or Vietnam.

The decision will have 1-1.5% impact on basmati exports from Karnal. All India Rice Exporters Association Chief Satish Goyal stated that US takes 4.5% of India's 6 million tonnes export which equates to an impact of 1-1.5%, manageable by diverting to other markets. He said, this is not a big impact, adding that rice exporters of Haryana can sell this rice in other countries as well, and alternatives are being explored.

Vital for India's journey towards self-reliance: PM Modi shares article on NEP 2020 significance

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday shared an article on the significance of National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, explaining how it would be central to India's journey towards self-reliance and development.

The article penned by Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan gives detailed insights into the evolving role of teachers in a changing world and how their role as 'transformers' will shape the future generations into responsible and upright citizens. Sharing the Union Minister's article titled 'The Teacher in a changing world' published in a leading daily, PM Modi wrote, "The Union Minister explains the significance of the NEP 2020 and also how the teachers today are quickly embracing digital classrooms, AI, changing curricula and varied learning



needs, supported by platforms like PM eVidya, DIKSHA and SWAYAM." Dharmendra Pradhan, penning down his views on India's journey towards self-reliance and development, said that the NEP 2020 remains an ambitious national endeavour and forms the core of the 'atmanirbharta' mission by 2047. "The NEP designates teachers

as 'transformers' who will shape future generations into responsible, skilled and well-rounded citizens. The Prime Minister has consistently emphasised teachers' crucial role in this regard," he wrote in the article. He further said, "Parents give birth; the guru gives life. These life-givers are the soul of the magnificent building. The school building, which the

government can construct, is like the body, but the teachers are the soul." Notably, the Prime Minister recently gave a clarion call for attaining 'atmanirbharta' and 'going swadeshi' while addressing the nation from the ramparts of Red Fort in his Independence Day speech and subsequently on multiple occasions from various platforms, for building a prosperous India by 2047. The NEP 2020 has recently completed five years since coming into existence. The NEP has laid down an ambitious roadmap to transform India's schools into spaces where learning is no longer confined to textbooks, marks or memorisation. The "5+3+3+4" structure and National Curriculum Framework for School Education 2023 are designed to promote experiential and competency-based learning.

National food bowl in perils as 4 Lakh acres submerged, Khudian seeks immediate relief from centre

**JAGMOHAN SINGH
Amritsar**

Punjab Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Minister Gurmeet Singh Khudian urged Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan for an immediate relief and massive financial package to address the devastating impact of floods, besides, demanding enhanced compensation to support affected farmers after over four lakh acres of state's agricultural land submerged, threatening both state and national food security.

In a press release, Khudian accompanied Union Agriculture Minister to flood-affected areas in Amritsar, Gurdaspur and Kapurthala districts, showcasing the devastating impact on agriculture sector. Highlighting the extensive damage caused by floods,



Punjab Agriculture Minister informed that standing crops at over 4 lakh acres of farmland have been inundated according to preliminary assessments. With paddy fields being the worst affected, just weeks before harvesting season, he said that this devastation has resulted in significant losses for farmers and the state's agricultural

economy. The impact on the rural economy is further exacerbated by substantial damage to livestock.

Expressing concerns over the current compensation for flood victims, Punjab Agriculture Minister said that crop damage compensation stands at Rs 6,800 per acre, which is insufficient considering the extent of losses incurred by farmers. He urged the Central Government to increase this compensation to at least Rs. 50,000 per acre.

Khudian has also demanded the immediate release of Rs 8,000 crore of Rural Development Fund (RDF) and Market Development Fund (MDF) staked by the Centre Government. Apart from this, Punjab requires a special package to mitigate the impact of the floods and support the state's economy, he affirmed.

Congress corners Gadkari for promoting ethanol mixed fuel



**KAVITA SHARMA
New Delhi**

The Congress party cornered the Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari over aggressively lobbying for "ethanol blending policy", alleging that there was clear conflict of interest involved as his two sons were main ethanol suppliers.

Spokesperson and Chairman of the AICC's Media and Publicity Department referred to Gadkari's claims made in 2018 that ethanol mixing will help in bringing down the cost of diesel to Rs 50 per litre and petrol alternative to Rs 55 per litre.

"Instead, the common man is left paying more—vehicles guzzle more fuel, break down sooner, and each litre of ethanol guzzles a staggering 3,000 litres of water", he pointed out, while adding, petrol prices have soared from Rs 71.41 in 2014 to Rs 94.77 per litre in 2025, and diesel from Rs 55.49 to Rs 87.67 per litre.

Alleging a clear conflict of interest in Gadkari promoting the policy of ethanol mixing, Khera disclosed that both his sons are involved in ethanol business. He said, Cian Agro Industries Infrastructure Ltd, which is a key ethanol supplier, is owned by Nikhil Gadkari while Sarang Gadkari is director at Manas Agro Industries, which is also engaged in ethanol production.

The senior Congress leader revealed that Cian Agro's revenue jumped from Rs 18 crore in June 2024 to Rs 523 crore in June 2025, while the stock price surged by 2184% from Rs 37.45 in Jan 2025 to Rs 638 in August 2025. "While the common man's wages have stagnated and declined, Cian Agro's financial ascent is staggering", he remarked.

Khera also referred to the unprecedented "policy acceleration" with obvious interests in fulfilling the target of blending 20 percent ethanol before the 2025 deadline, advanced from 2030 in the 2022 policy amendment. "This is the first time in Indian history that any policy has achieved its target before the deadline", he quipped.

India Aims to Raise Share of Gas in Energy Mix to 15 Pct by 2030: Hardeep Puri



NEW DELHI: India aims to raise the share of gas in its energy mix to 15 per cent by 2030 from about six per cent at present to cut its carbon footprint, Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas, Hardeep Singh Puri, said on Tuesday.

In a post on social media platform X, the minister said India will have 49 more LNG dispensing stations by December, in addition to 13 running currently. India is currently the world's fourth-largest gas importer with eight LNG terminals comprising a combined capacity of 52.7 million tonnes a year. "By 2030, 10 terminals, 66.7 MMTPA; 13 LNG dispensing stations now, 49 more coming up," Puri posted. "Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, LNG is India's bridge to a greener, secure future," he added. Meanwhile, at the 9th brainstorming session in Goa on 'Challenges of the Indian Oil and Gas Sector' with ministry officials and captains of India's energy sector, the minister discussed seismic data acquisition and processing efficiency with a detailed analysis on the capability of manpower, availability of latest technology, equipment and workstations, etc. He also deliberated upon the status of stratigraphic well drilling, along with deliberations on offshore drilling cost and drilling well location release process, learning from global energy majors and, more importantly, continuing to boost the 'Make in India' component in India's rapidly expanding energy sector by discussing ways to develop India as the manufacturing hub for E&P machinery and components.

Rahul Gandhi urges PM Modi to Announce Relief Package for Flood-Hit States

NEW DELHI: Amid devastating floods sweeping across northern India, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to take immediate action and announce a Special Relief Package for the affected states, especially Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and J&K.

In a post on social media platform X, Gandhi called for urgent Central government intervention and relief for thousands of families battling the disaster. "Modi Ji, the floods in Punjab have caused devastating destruction. The situation in Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal, and Uttarakhand is also extremely worrying," he posted on X. "In such difficult times, your attention and the active help of the central government are extremely necessary. Thou-



sands of families are struggling to save their homes, lives, and loved ones. I urge that an immediate announcement be made for a special relief package (Special Relief Package) for these states, especially for the farmers – and that relief and rescue operations be expedited," he added.

He also shared a video message, appealing to the Prime Minister: "It is saddening to see people struggling to save their families and loved ones. Modi Ji, it is the responsibility of the government to safeguard people's lives. I urge you to protect them and arrange a Special Relief Package as soon

as possible." The situation on the ground remains grim. Heavy rainfall and cloudbursts have triggered flash floods in multiple northern states.

In Punjab, 29 people have reportedly died and thousands have been displaced in what officials are calling the worst flood in recent history.

Entire villages are submerged, and the state machinery is under tremendous pressure to rescue marooned residents.

In Jammu and Kashmir and Uttarakhand, flash floods and landslides have claimed lives and caused widespread destruction, while many people are still missing. Himachal Pradesh has also reported collapsed roads, snapped power lines, and significant damage to infrastructure.

Flood Crisis Engulfs Bhagwant Mann Govt, Undermines Pro-Farmer Image Gained by Halting Haryana's Water

**NEERAJ MOHAN
Chandigarh**

The unprecedented floods ravaging Punjab, one of India's richest agricultural states, have plunged the Bhagwant Mann-led Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government into a political quagmire, threatening to erode the pro-farmer image it painstakingly built by obstructing Haryana's water share from the Bhakra Nangal Dam.

As floodwaters have submerged nearly 1900 villages, displaced over 3.54 lakh people, and damaged crops across 4 lakh acres ahead of the harvest season, the crisis could prove a decisive blow to AAP's prospects in the upcoming 2025 assembly elections.

Ground reports indicate growing resentment, with farmers and residents directly blaming the state government's mismanagement of water resources—a



narrative now bolstered by Bhakra Beas Management Board (BBMB) data suggesting that releasing water to Haryana could have mitigated the disaster. Moreover, the flood situation, described by Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann as worse than the catastrophic 1988 deluge, has exposed the AAP's contentious stance on water sharing.

As per the internal reports on April 23, 2025, a BBMB techni-

cal committee meeting deliberated the water availability for the depletion period beginning September 2024 to May 2025 and recommended releasing 8,500 cusecs of water to Haryana, including an additional 4,500 cusecs for eight days.

At that time, the Bhakra reservoir's water level stood at 1,555 feet, with a storage of 1.3 billion cubic meters. However, Mann's govern-

ment, citing Punjab's "water rights," resisted this move, deploying police to block releases and staging high-profile protests at the Nangal Dam. This decision has come under scrutiny as recent BBMB figures and meteorological data reveal that the refusal to lower reservoir levels exacerbated the flooding triggered by 74% above-normal rainfall in August.

Meanwhile, speaking anonymously, officials have vindicated the technical panel's April call, noting that releasing the additional 4,500 cusecs could have reduced the reservoir level by at least 25 feet, creating space to accommodate the monsoon inflows.

Even as the India Meteorological Department (IMD) had forecasted 105% of normal rainfall, a prediction the BBMB factored into its long-range forecast released on April 23.

Rahul Gandhi Promises 'hydrogen bomb' like explosive soon

**KAVITA SHARMA
Patna**

As the Voter Adhikar Yatra concluded with a mammoth show of strength here today, the Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said that very soon he will be coming out with more explosive revelations like a "hydrogen bomb" which will be more powerful than the "atom bomb" like revelations he made about Mahadevapura in Karnataka. He said, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will not be able to show his face to the nation after those revelations are made public, as it will be established beyond any doubt that he has been repeatedly stealing elections.

Addressing a mammoth public rally, organised at the conclusion of the 'Voter Adhikar Yatra' at the historic Gandhi Maidan here today, Gandhi thanked the people of Bihar for their overwhelming response and support to the yatra. He said the people of Bihar had lived up to their reputation of being revolutionary, as from Bihar the message about voter



theft (vote chori) had travelled across the country.

Maintaining that voter theft was an attack on the Constitution and the rights of people, Rahul Gandhi said, the same forces, which had killed Mahatma Gandhi, were now trying to kill the Constitution. "But we will not allow that to happen at any cost", he asserted with a huge thumping applause from the responding crowd.

Cautioning that the BJP will not stop merely at vote theft, Gandhi told the people, "the voter theft will lead to taking

away your rights, reservation, employment, education, democracy and the future of the youth". They will not only be taking your vote, they will take your ration card and land also, he further warned.

The Leader of Opposition sounded an advance alert to the BJP telling them in that he will soon be coming out with more revelations, more explosive than Mahadevapura. "While the Mahadevapura revelations were like an atom bomb, I will now be coming out with a hydrogen bomb to

expose voter thefts in different parts of the country, after which Modi will not be able to show his face to the country", he said, while pointing out, he had already provided proof of the voter theft in black and white and will be producing more. Addressing the rally, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said, this was the fourth yatra led by Rahul Gandhi to protect the rights of people. He said, the 'Voter Adhikar Yatra' had created awareness against vote theft not only in Bihar but across the country.

He accused Prime Minister Modi of being habitual of stealing votes. He said, even those who had defrauded the banks had fled the country during this regime. He cautioned people against their votes getting stolen by the Modi-Shah duo.

Emphasising the importance of the right to vote, Kharge said, it was only because of this right that people were cared about. "Only because you have the right to vote, people reach out to you", he observed, while adding, "otherwise, nobody will bother or care". He said,

this right was under constant attack.

The Congress president criticised the lack of proper deployment of police at the rally. He said, despite senior national leaders like the Leaders of Opposition in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, one Chief Minister and several others being present at the rally there were no proper arrangements. He cautioned the police against acting in a partisan manner, telling them that their time was limited as the current Bihar government was changing within six months.

Kharge also took a dig at Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, reminding of his past spousal of the socialist cause. "You have now fallen in the lap of the RSS and the BJP and they will junk you in some dump yard," he remarked.

Among those present included Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren, KC Venugopal, Tejashvi Yadav, M A Baby, Dipankar Bhattacharya, Sanjay Raut, Yusuf Pathan, Krishna Allavara, Rajesh Ram, Shakeel Ahmad and others.

Voter Adhikar Yatra being discussed across India says Mallikarjun Kharge



NEW DELHI: On the concluding day of the Voter Adhikar Yatra in Patna, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said on Monday that the Yatra led by Leader of the Opposition (LoP) in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi and Bihar Leader of the Opposition (LoP) Tejashwi Yadav is being discussed across the country.

"Voter Adhikar Yatra is being discussed across the country. BJP tried its best to stop it, but the people of Bihar, Rahul Gandhi, Tejashwi Yadav, and all leaders of the Grand Alliance stood firm. Finally, our Yatra was completed successfully," he said.

He further added that the land of Bihar is the mother of democracy, alleging that the BJP, in collusion with the Election Commission, is working to destroy democracy and the Constitution. Kharge also highlighted LoP Rahul Gandhi's series of nationwide campaigns.

Need to become self-reliant in manufacturing tech for speech & hearing says President Murmu

NEW DELHI: India must become self-reliant in manufacturing technologies that can help remove disabilities such as speech and hearing and make them more accessible to the common man, said President Droupadi Murmu.

The President was speaking at the diamond jubilee celebrations of the All-India Institute of Speech and Hearing (AIISH) at Mysuru, Karnataka.

"Today, technology is playing an important role in every field. The use of the latest technologies will prove to be very helpful in removing disabilities related to speech and hearing," President Murmu said. "But for the latest technologies and devices to reach the common people, their development and manufacturing



in the country is necessary. For example, to make devices like Cochlear Implants available at a low cost, we must become self-reliant in their manufacturing," the President added.

Speaking on the occasion, the President noted that, like other issues, speech and hearing-related

issues also require experts to identify the symptoms and diagnose them in the initial stages.

"Society should be aware and have an attitude of cooperation and sympathy towards people suffering from speech and hearing issues," President Murmu said.

Kashmir floods: Rivers swell, bridges closed, crops damaged

NEW DELHI: Continuous rainfall in Kashmir triggered flooding across several districts of south Kashmir, damaging crops, disrupting connectivity, and forcing large-scale evacuations.

Government officials in Kulgam, Anantnag, Pulwama, and Shopian shifted hundreds of residents, including nomadic families, from low-lying and flood-prone areas as rivers and streams swelled dangerously.

In Kulgam, the Veshaw River crossed the danger mark by afternoon, inundating areas like Qaimoh and forcing people to move to safer places. Deputy Commissioner Athar Aamir Khan said evacuations had been carried out in vulnerable zones including Gudder and Laisoo. As a precaution, the administration closed the Chambund Bridge, following earlier closures of the



Pahloo Bridge and the Laisoo-Gudder road.

In Anantnag, heavy waterlogging hit towns and adjoining areas. Police and SDRF teams used boats to rescue residents from flood-hit localities. At least seven families were shifted in Kokernag, where rising waters also damaged small bridges.

Pulwama witnessed flooding in several orchards after the Romshi Nallah swelled, damaging crops in Gooisu. The Pahoo-Kakpora road was submerged and closed for traffic. Deputy Commissioner Dr. Basharat Qayoom said the immediate priority was saving lives, while crop loss would be assessed later.

SANTOSH KUMAR DASH & SITAKANTA PANDA SUGGEST AUTHORITIES TO ALIGN FARES WITH INFLATION

IIP uptick good,
but jobs must be
the North Star

July's 3.5% rise in the Index of Industrial Production is a relief -- and well-timed -- coming a day after the United States activated 25% penalty tariffs on India, ostensibly over Russian oil purchases. The print is lower than last July's 5%, yet the composition matters: manufacturing broadened out, with double-digit gains in basic metals, electrical equipment and other non-metallic minerals -- classic capex-led sectors that reflect the Centre's public investment push. Green shoots in consumption are visible too. Consumer durables (7.7%) and even long-anxious non-durables (0.5%) turned positive for the first time in nine months, riding a rare alignment of headline retail inflation near 1.5% and food price disinflation. Set against that, the weak links are clear. Mining shrank for a fourth straight month, as coal-belt floods in Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha and Chhattisgarh cascaded through supply chains. Power output barely ticked up, far below last year's base. And tariff-exposed, labour-intensive clusters -- textiles, leather and allied MSMEs -- are already signalling stress. If jobs crack here, the hard-won disinflation dividend will not translate into sustained demand, especially in rural markets. Policy must therefore pivot from celebrating the headline to insuring the recovery's most fragile joints. First, restore supply quickly: time-bound dewatering of mines, rail logistics prioritisation for coal, and pre-festival maintenance to stabilise generation. Second, ring-fence jobs in export-facing MSMEs: rapid GST refunds, enhanced export credit insurance, working-capital lines with partial guarantees, and targeted interest subvention tied to payroll retention. Third, keep rural purchasing power steady: prompt MGNREGA payments, assured procurement, calibrated buffer releases to hold food inflation down, and last-mile delivery of fertiliser and energy support. Trade diplomacy should chase carve-outs and timelines while firms diversify markets and move up the value chain with technology upgrading and standards. Public capex has bought the economy time; now crowd in private investment by cutting logistics frictions and policy uncertainty. The recovery is real but reversible. Protecting employment -- more than the index -- will decide whether this momentum endures.

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Learning to ignore things is one of the great paths to inner peace

THE FINANCIAL WORLD

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Fare truths: Tiny hikes won't save Railways

Train accidents have become so common in India that they, alarmingly, no longer evoke widespread outrage. However, each accident points to a deeper, systemic crisis within the Indian Railways, calling for increased investment and reforms in the railway system. The basket of problems of the Railways has been spilling over for so many years. Frequent accidents, massive casualties, awfully dismal infrastructure, chronic overcrowding, insufficient train connectivity, corruption, and inadequacy of passenger amenities, all contribute to an ever-growing list of concerns that continue to plague India's railway sector.

The lack of sufficient investment in upgrading capacity and modernising infrastructure has become a pressing issue. Modernisation of railway stations is progressing at a slow pace, and many still lack basic amenities. Over 98% of the revenue is consumed by operating costs, leaving little room for modernisation. This chronic underinvestment has led to severe congestion on high-demand freight routes and a significant reduction in average speeds -- sometimes as low as 30 kmph. Consequently, the Railways struggles to remain competitive against road transport. Delays and inefficiencies are increasingly common, and without a comprehensive and sustained modernisation effort, the system risks further deterioration, with safety and operational challenges only set to escalate.

Though the Railways has been in dire need of big money in the wake of massive annual losses, passenger fares had remained unchanged for five years till July 1. The Comptroller and Auditor-General observed in 2021 that the operational losses in the passenger segment increased from Rs 36,286 crore in 2015-16 to Rs 68,269 crore in 2021-22, which had to be cross-subsidised entirely using the surplus generated from freight. Moreover, a statement printed on IRCTC tickets, "IR recovers only 57% of the cost of travel on average," underscores the long-standing issue of under-recovery in passenger operations. Therefore, in this sense, an across-the-board fare increase was long overdue. For the first time since January 2020, the Union government finally raised the passenger fares, effective July 1.



The Railways' internal revenue primarily comes from passenger and freight collections and sundry heads such as rent, catering receipts, commercial utilisation of land, and advertisements. The Union Budget for 2025-26 projects freight to contribute 62% of the total internal revenue in 2025-26, with passenger train operations contributing 31% and sundry revenue 4%.

However, revenue from passenger and freight fares is largely consumed by high operational costs, leaving little for capital expenditure and modernisation. Therefore, the government provides budgetary support for these initiatives. In 2025-26, Budget estimates indicate that government support, including both budgetary and extra-budgetary resources, will account for about 99% of capital expenditure and the remaining 1% from internal revenue.

Debt trap

Government support through gross budgetary support and extra budgetary resources is crucial to sustaining capital expenditure. However, it is equally important for the Railways to generate sufficient revenue to finance these expenditures, or it would risk falling into a debt trap. The rising debt servicing obligations for extra budgetary resources have become a concern. Interest expenditure is projected to grow from Rs 8,598 crore in 2016-17 to Rs 31,433 crore in 2025-26, while principal repayment will rise from Rs 7,000 crore to Rs 27,905 crore over the period. In 2025-26, these combined expenditures are expected to account for 20% of internal revenue. This, in turn, reduces

the funds available for capital spending.

In this context, the recent modest fare increase implemented by the government could be an attempt to address these financial needs. However, its impact on the overall financing of the Railways is likely to be minimal. In fact, this increase is the lowest since 2013. The staggered increases -- ranging from 2 paise per km for air-conditioned sleeper class, 1 paise per km for non-AC sleeper class, and just half a paise per km for second class -- will have negligible effects on the Railways' finances. Additionally, the government's decision to leave suburban fares, ordinary class, and monthly season ticket rates unchanged is puzzling.

Problems with pricing policy

The pricing policy of the Railways has several shortcomings. First, it disproportionately burdens passengers opting for AC coaches, and such a policy could backfire, as these passengers may switch to alternative modes of transport. To put this into perspective, 5.2% of the 809 crore passengers on AC coaches contributed 54% of the total passenger revenue of Rs 80,000 crore in the financial year 2024-25. This underscores the vital role that premium services play in sustaining the financial health of the Railways.

Second, not raising suburban fares is both regressive and populist -- it effectively means forgoing a legitimate and significant source of revenue. In 2021-22, the loss from suburban railway services was Rs 8,316 crore. Moreover, the Railways recovers a mere 37% of the costs from suburban railway services, underscoring the immense financial strain they are under. Similarly, keeping ordinary class fares unchanged means forgoing significant revenue, with Indian Railways incurring a Rs 15,282-crore loss in 2021-22 from operating passenger, local, and ordinary trains.

Third, the Railways' over-reliance on freight fares for revenue generation is a significant concern, using these to cross-subsidise passenger services. This strategy comes at a cost, as freight has been losing market share to road transport. According to the Union Budget 2025-26, the Railways' share of freight traffic has declined from 36% in 2007-08 to around 26% in 2021-

22. Additionally, about 52% of freight revenue in 2025-26 is expected to come from coal transport, up from 45% in 2015-16, highlighting an increasing dependence on coal for revenue. However, India's climate change commitments suggest that the Railways will earn less revenue from coal transport in the future.

Finally, the policymakers have been oblivious of the fact that railway fare cannot be insulated from the impact of inflation. This meagre fare hike will mean nothing next year in real terms. In fact, policy eye-washes do more harm than it intends to serve. For such visible public goods, any price rise leads to public resentment, so cosmetic, tiny-bit fare increases prolong the delay in defraying the big-money costs of operations. As consumers would cry foul at fare hikes in quick succession, and any fare hike, big or small, takes a gap of five or six years, so small hikes become inadequate for a sector known for guzzling big money.

Rational strategy

The data suggest that revenue from passenger services across categories fail to cover costs. Except AC 3-tier and AC chair car (in certain years), all other classes of passenger services have recorded losses in all four years between 2018-19 and 2021-22.

While losses in the passenger segment are often justified as the social service obligation of the Railways to provide affordable transportation, this argument should not be overused to the point that it mirrors the situation with BSNL or Air India. As the Standing Committee on Railways (2020) recommended, the social service obligation need to be reassessed. A more prudent approach would involve rationalising passenger fares across the board to reduce losses while still ensuring affordability. This will require small, frequent fare hikes aligned with inflation and implemented uniformly across all categories.

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MANSUKH MANDAVIYA EXPLAINS HOW RS 1 LAKH CRORE PLAN TARGETS 3.5 CRORE JOBS

From dividend to dignity: Jobs drive nation-building

India's growth story has always been written by its Shram Shakti, or labour power. There has been a remarkable arc in India's economic progress over the past 11 years, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership. India has risen from the world's 10th largest economy in 2014 to the fourth largest today. It has carved out an enviable niche for itself in the global arena, and the strength of its human resource has had no small role to play in this journey.

Fueling this success story is the fact that India's economic growth has been accompanied by an unprecedented expansion of employment. According to RBI-KLEMS, while only 2.9 crore jobs were created between 2004-2014, over 17 crore jobs were created in the decade that followed. Formalisation has also accelerated, as EPFO data shows.

Social security coverage

The real transformation, however, has been in social security coverage. In 2015, only 19% of Indians were covered under at least one social protection scheme. By 2025, that number has surged to 64.3%, reaching 94 crore beneficiaries, making India the second-largest social security system in the world. The International Labour Organization has acknowledged this achievement as one of the fastest expansions of coverage globally.

As we look ahead, it is clear that the future of the nation will be decided not only by the pace of GDP growth, but also by the quality of jobs we create, the security we extend to workers, and the opportunities we provide



to our youth. Against a global backdrop of rising automation, uncertainties induced by Artificial Intelligence, supply-chain shifts, and other vulnerabilities shaping jobs worldwide, India stands at a demographic inflection point.

Of India's population, about 65% is under 35 years of age, constituting a critical demographic dividend that gives our economy an edge as countries in the West reflect ageing populations. For years, India's demographic dividend -- its Yuva Shakti -- has been cited as its greatest strength. Yet, this potential remained underutilised. As we strive towards the vision of a Viksit Bharat by 2047, the task before us is clear: we must shift from 'possibility' to 'prosperity'.

Employment, in this backdrop, is no longer just an economic indicator; it is the foundation of dignity, equality and national strength. It demands that we make our youth employable, integrate them into the formal economy, equip them with financial literacy, and ensure that they are protected by a robust social security

net. Only then can our demographic advantage truly translate into a lasting national dividend.

An ambitious programme

It is to address this challenge, and to bridge any gap between aspiration and opportunity, that the government has launched the Pradhan Mantri Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana. Initially put forth in the Union Budget 2024-25, and announced by the Prime Minister in his 12th Independence Day address, it represents a significant break from the past in both scale and design. With an outlay of Rs 1 lakh crore, this is the most ambitious programme in India's history, expected to create over 3.5 crore jobs over two years.

What sets this scheme apart is its architecture. Unlike earlier programmes supporting employment generation, this scheme addresses the dual challenge of youth employability and enterprise competitiveness simultaneously. By offering direct financial incentives to both first-time employees under Part A (up to Rs 15,000 in two instalments) and employers under Part B (up to Rs 3,000 per new hire per month), it lowers entry barriers for workers while reducing hiring risks for businesses.

Equally important is the scheme's explicit push towards formalisation and social security integration. Benefits will be channelled through Direct Benefit Transfer, ensuring transparency and linking new workers to social security systems from day one. The scheme is thus a structural nudge towards a formal, secure and productive labour market. Further, the added focus on incentives to employers in the manufacturing sector is a further propellant towards

making Bharat aatmanirbhar (self-reliant).

The Pradhan Mantri Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana signals a shift from scheme-based interventions towards a comprehensive employment ecosystem. It builds on the learnings of earlier initiatives, such as the Production-Linked Incentive, the National Manufacturing Mission, and Make in India, and recognises the changing nature of work in a competitive global set-up.

By supporting workers and employers, the scheme recognises that job creation is a shared responsibility. As India seeks to become a global manufacturing hub while embracing digital innovation, the scheme ensures that no one is left behind. Even the smallest enterprise and the newest entrant to the workforce are integrated into the journey of national development.

A new India

This scheme is more than a policy announcement. This initiative is a concrete step towards converting demographic dividend into public prosperity. It is part of the foundation towards realisation of the vision of Viksit Bharat, where every youth has access to meaningful work, every work has dignity, and every youth gets the opportunity to realise his or her dreams. Employment is, in its truest sense, nation-building. With this initiative, the Modi government reaffirms its commitment that no youth will remain without opportunity.

Mansukh Mandaviya, Union Minister of Labour and Employment and Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India. Views are personal.

BOOKS: REVIEW

Novel delves into love, faith
and fine print of belonging

Ponnu Elizabeth Mathew's debut, *The Remnants of Rebellion*, opens with a feeling rather than a plot point: when Aleyamma steps into the sprawling hill house at Puthulloor, it "feels like home," though she has never lived there. That friction -- between recognition and strangeness -- animates the entire novel. The house, bequeathed by her late grandfather, is an inheritance of rooms and riddles: "fifteen rooms, leaving out the corridors, loggias and curiously shaped spaces," a topography of memory that doubles as a map of Kerala's layered histories.

Puthulloor itself is vivid and particular. Mathew writes the landscape as a living archive -- "fecund with Hevea brasiliensis," those early rubber plantations that tether local lives to colonial decisions made oceans away. The rubber trees are more than décor; they are timekeepers of extraction, labour, and class, and their ordered lines throw into relief the disorder in Aleyamma's life: the

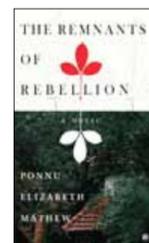
griefs she cannot name, the mother she cannot reach, and the older married man she cannot stop thinking about. The novel's title promises rebellion; its pages are littered with its remnants -- quiet refusals, generational compromises, and the stubborn stains of prejudice.

Like Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*, Mathew writes as a critic and custodian of Kerala's Syrian Christian milieu. She probes the mythology of origin and the seductions of "chosenness," showing how pride can curdle into endogamy, othering, and entitlement. Yet the portrait is not a takedown. It is intimate, sometimes exasperated, always attentive -- alive to small generosities and to the uses and misuses of faith. If Roy's novel made Ayemenem a character, Mathew makes Puthulloor a chorus, its rains, mould, and greenery singing a counter-melody to the house's whispers.

The book is structurally ambitious without being opaque. Chapters shuttle between past and present,

letting secrets surface in eddies rather than announcements. Mathew's prose is lush but controlled: atmospheric sentences that know when to step back and let a gesture carry meaning. The result is immersion without murk. You can smell wet earth, hear the rubber tapping, feel the damp that never fully leaves linen or bone. Crucially, Mathew uses this sensorial richness to do thematic work. Aleyamma's artistic vision -- tormented, searching -- mirrors the novel's own method: re-layering, scraping, repainting until the figure in the frame looks back.

Characters arrive sketched with economy and bloom in the light of scene. Elsy Chedatt, who "drives a Willys Jeep like a veteran" and cooks like a remembered dream, is both archetype and one-off; she grounds the book's domestic world in skill and humour. Eesho, the enterprising grandfather, is progressive without becoming a saint; he is the type of man whose decisions ripple long past his lifetime. Krishnan Uncle,



The Remnants of Rebellion
By Ponnu Elizabeth Mathew
Aleph
320 pages; Rs 899

"Appacha's best friend, driver and Aleyamma's Maths tutor," is a node where loyalty, class, and secrecy intersect. Even the "mean-spirited, obese mother" -- a description that risks flattening -- acquires complexity as Mathew reveals the pressures, humiliations, and performances that calcify into meanness. The author is wary of caricature; when she edges close, she corrects course with a detail, a remembered line, a vulnerability.

Mathew also threads in the wider scene -- the rise of Hindu nationalism, the casual sexism that structures both work and family, the moral certainties that feel increasingly non-negotiable in public life. These elements never read like grafts from a news ticker. They are the air the characters breathe, the limits they push against and internalise. Aleyamma's affair with an older mar-

ried man is not posed as a romantic transgression to be sensationalised, but as a symptom: a search for recognition, the ache for someone who sees the artist before the woman is policed into smaller shapes.

If the novel falters, it does so in moments of slack pacing. A few transitional chapters linger a beat too long on mood, and some motives -- particularly around secondary conflicts -- feel under-articulated. Readers who prefer a propulsive plot may bridle at the book's willingness to dwell. Yet even the slower passages are rarely empty; they accrue texture and context, and the payoffs, when they come, are earned.

What distinguishes *The Remnants of Rebellion* is its moral temperance. Mathew refuses tidy verdicts. She grants her people their contradictions and lets them live with the consequences. The "rebellion" of the title is less a banner than a practice -- of telling the truth a little more plainly, of refusing a script, of claiming a home that history says is yours but habit says you cannot enter. The novel is not out to scandalise tradition; it invites traditions to examine themselves, to account for the wounds they inherit and the ones they inflict.

ICICI Bank launches a dedicated branch for startups in Bengaluru

NEW DELHI: Aimed at empowering India's growing startup ecosystem, ICICI Bank today announced the launch of a dedicated branch for startups in Bengaluru.

The new branch is designed to serve as a one-stop destination for emerging businesses at various stages of their journey, offering a comprehensive suite of digital and physical banking solutions. Key services available at the branch include business banking facilities such as current accounts (including GIFT City accounts), overdraft facilities, corporate credit cards, escrow services, foreign currency accounts, and working capital loans, including those backed by Standby Letters of Credit (SBLC), Fixed Deposits, and



the Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE) scheme. In addition, the branch provides tailored personal banking offerings for startup founders and employees, including family banking, 3-in-1 demat accounts, HUF accounts, home

loans, loans against property, gold loans, personal loans, credit cards, and investment options. To support seamless digital banking, the branch offers Corporate Internet Banking (CIB), the InstaBIZ app, Trade Online, and an Integrated Payment System

for vendor and tax payments, along with e-collections, e-mandates, payment gateway, and UPI solutions. Startups can also access over 250 APIs via the bank's Developer Portal for smooth integration across payments, collections, and auto-reconciliation processes. Additionally, the branch will support global business needs through swift remittance services and assistance with Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and Overseas Direct Investment (ODI) transactions. ICICI Bank continues to strengthen its presence in Karnataka, where it already operates a wide delivery network of over 460 branches and more than 1,020 ATMs and cash recycling machines (CRMs).

India's GST Collections Rise 6.5 Pct in Aug to Rs 1.86 Lakh Cr



year-on-year to Rs 19,359 crore. Net GST revenue stood at Rs 1.67 lakh crore in August 2025, recording 10.7 per cent year-on-year growth. The data has been released just ahead

NEW DELHI: India's Goods and Services Tax (GST) collections rose by 6.5 per cent to Rs 1.86 lakh in August, government data released on Monday showed.

GST collections have been rising steadily to remain above the Rs 1.8 lakh crore mark for the eighth month in a row, reflecting the growing economic activity in the country. The gross domestic revenue grew 9.6 per cent to Rs 1.37 lakh crore, while tax from imports dipped 1.2 per cent to Rs 49,354 crore in August. GST refunds were down 20 per cent

of the meeting of the GST Council, comprising the Centre and states, which will deliberate on introducing a two-slab GST rate of 5 and 18 per cent on most goods, while a separate higher 40 per cent tax will be levied on sin goods such as cigarettes, tobacco, and sugary drinks as part of the rationalisation exercise. Buoyant tax collections in recent months have helped to strengthen the country's fiscal position and the macroeconomic fundamentals, which help to ensure stable growth. Meanwhile, global investment

bank and financial advisory firm Morgan Stanley has raised its forecast for India's GDP growth in 2025-26 on the back of the robust 7.8 per cent growth in the April-June quarter and expects the forthcoming cuts in GST to spur domestic demand, which would offset the decline in exports due to the US tariff hike.

"We expect impending GST tax cuts, the upcoming festive season and strong trends in rural demand to provide a fillip to domestic demand. As such, we expect the composition of growth to change with public spending softening, external demand weakening (mainly goods exports) and private sector demand picking up," it said in a report. "We estimate that the incremental drag from external demand at around 50 basis points (bps) could potentially be offset from likely GST cuts, which could boost growth by about 50bps," it observed.

HSBC Says US Tariffs Won't Derail Indian Equity Market; Keeps Neutral Rating



NEW DELHI: Indian equity markets are expected to remain resilient despite global challenges, supported by strong domestic investor backing and US tariffs having minimal effects, a new report said on Tuesday.

The data compiled by HSBC Global Investment Research gave a 'neutral' stance on India, even though it maintained that five out of nine risk factors for Indian markets are improving. "Tariffs won't derail the market, as the direct impact on the earnings of listed companies is likely to be muted," the research firm said. Fewer than 4 per cent of BSE 500 companies depend on US exports, the pharmaceutical sector is exempt from tariffs, reducing earnings risk. Consumption prospects are improving amid government tax stimulus and easing inflation, it said, adding that wage growth should pick up for a more sustained revival. Monetary policy is more supportive and can ease the pressure on banks, the largest weight in the listed universe, it said. "While we find improvements in some of the factors driving equities, we think the upside potential over the near term is still limited," the statement said. The earnings growth is expected to moderate to 8-9 per cent in 2025, though the consensus estimate of earnings growth is 11 per cent for calendar year 2025, the brokerage said.

Domestic mutual funds experienced record inflows via systematic investment plans in July. "This is the strongest supportive factor for Indian markets and can be a powerful force even when foreign inflows are muted," the brokerage said. HSBC predicted that, though the popular narrative suggests otherwise, both Indian and Chinese markets can perform simultaneously, as both are driven by local investors with limited participation from foreign institutions.

Central Banks Now Hold More Gold Than US Bonds for 1st Time in 30 Years



NEW DELHI: For the first time in over three decades, central banks around the world are holding more gold than US government bonds, marking a major shift in how countries manage their reserves.

Traditionally, most nations kept their "treasure chest" of reserves filled with US dollars, some euros, and American government bonds, known as Treasuries, along with a smaller share of gold. But now, gold has taken the lead.

According to the European Central Bank's 'International Role of the Euro 2025' report, central banks collectively hold over 36,000 tonnes of gold.

At current prices, this stockpile is worth over \$3.6 trillion. That is against \$3.8 trillion they hold in US Treasuries, based on the US Treasury's June 2024 survey.

The change has been driven largely by gold prices, which have soared above \$3,500 an ounce this year, according to Reuters data.

The big question is why central banks are turning to gold. Experts point to three main reasons. First, gold cannot be frozen or seized.

After Russia's dollar and euro reserves were blocked in 2022 following its war in Ukraine, countries began seeking "sanctions-proof" assets. Second, concerns are growing about America's rising debt levels, making many central banks cautious about keeping too much of their reserves in US bonds.

And third, diversification plays a role, as central banks want to spread risk by holding a mix of currencies and gold.

The numbers show how strong this trend has been. Data from the World Gold Council (WGC) reveals that central banks bought 1,082 tonnes of gold in 2022, 1,037 tonnes in 2023, and 1,045 tonnes in 2024.

GST Rationalisation is a Diwali gift to the common citizen: Economists

NEW DELHI: The Central government has given a major Diwali gift to the common citizen by reducing GST rates, economists said, noting that this move will not only boost demand during the festive season but also help offset the losses caused by recent US tariffs.

Economist Pankaj Jaiswal said: "This is truly a bumper Diwali gift from the government. The reduction in GST will help bring down inflation and strengthen domestic consumption. With the festive season already underway, this timely decision is very welcome."

He noted that the US tariffs imposed last month had raised concerns about declining exports and reduced production. However, this decision ensures that such risks are minimised. With more disposable income in people's hands, the economy is expected to get a positive push, he added. CA Praveen Sahu added that the two-tier GST structure of 5 per cent and 18 per cent, with nearly 80 per cent of goods falling under the 5 per cent slab, will significantly benefit



the general public. According to him, this reform will increase purchasing power and stimulate consumption.

Economist Rajiv Sahu described it as the biggest tax reform since the introduction of GST in 2017. He emphasised that it will provide immediate relief to consumers, encourage spending, support industries, and strengthen the overall economy.

Echoing this, Chamber of Commerce General Secretary Aditya Manya Jain welcomed the reform, highlighting that reducing taxes on essential daily

use items will not only benefit consumers but also provide relief to investors and traders. He added that this step will help maintain the momentum of economic growth while addressing concerns arising from international tariffs.

Economist Ajay Rotti particularly appreciated the reduction of GST on health insurance from 18 per cent to zero. He called it good news for the public and a historic step that will also benefit MSMEs by lowering the costs of essential goods. This, he said, will boost consumption and further strengthen the economy.

GST 2.0: Industry Needs to Swiftly Pass Benefits to Consumers

NEW DELHI: Leading industry chambers on Wednesday said the benefits of the GST reforms should swiftly reach consumers and expressed readiness to partner with the government to ensure a smooth, timely rollout that lifts demand and supports jobs.

The GST Council, chaired by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, on Wednesday rationalised the indirect tax structure, cutting the current four slabs down to two — scrapping the 12 per cent and 28 per cent rates, while retaining the 5 per cent and 18 per cent slabs. CII Director General Chandrajit Banerjee said this move on GST reforms is a phenomenal milestone. "CII not just welcomes the GST Council's forward-looking decisions—moving to two rates of 5 per cent and 18 per cent from September 22, simplifying refunds and MSME procedures, and exempting individual life and health insurance from GST, but also sees this as pathbreaking," he said in a statement.

This clarity will ease compliance, reduce litigation, and give businesses and consumers the



predictability they need. By lowering rates on everyday items and critical inputs, the reforms provide immediate relief to families and strengthen the foundation for growth. "CII strongly holds the view that the industry would swiftly pass benefits to the consumers," Banerjee added. PHDCCI President Hemant Jain said that the roll-out of GST rate rationalisation from September 22 is a landmark reform that addresses both consumer welfare and revenue efficiency. By reducing rates on daily essentials such as toiletries, packaged foods, and utensils from 18-12 per cent to 5 per cent, the reform will ease household budgets and stimulate demand, he said. In agriculture, lowering GST on tractors, tyres, irrigation systems, and farm machinery to 5 per cent will cut input costs and directly benefit farmers, said Jain.

Momentum of growth will stay strong and unwavering



SATISH SINGH
The recent surge in both the manufacturing and service sectors has resulted in an impressive growth rate of 7.8% during the first quarter of the current financial year, marking the highest increase in five quarters. This positive development comes as a surprise to many economists, who had anticipated a potential slowdown in economic activity during this period. The Reserve Bank of India had also projected a more conservative growth estimate of only 6.5%.

In particular, the service sector exhibited remarkable performance in the June quarter, achieving a robust growth rate of 9.3%, the highest recorded in the last 8 quarters. This surge was largely driven by a significant 9.8% increase in public administration, defence, and other services, as well as a compact 9.5% growth in financial, real estate, and professional services. Conversely, the manufacturing sector, while experiencing growth, saw a more modest increase of 7.7%, which is the highest in the last four quarters. Alarmingly, the construction sector, known for its labour intensity, registered its lowest growth in nine quarters at just 7.6%. Moreover, agricultural output saw an encouraging growth rate of 3.7% this quarter, more than double the rate observed during the same period of the previous financial year.

Nominal GDP experienced a notable increase of 8.8% in the June quarter; however, the Finance Ministry had forecasted a higher growth target of 10.1% for the current financial year. It is crucial to recognise that the slower pace of nominal GDP growth poses challenges for the government in meeting its fiscal deficit

and debt-to-GDP ratio targets. Nevertheless, there are optimistic expectations for growth in the upcoming quarter.

It is important to note that a slowdown in loan disbursement during this period has hindered even higher potential growth rates in the service and manufacturing sectors. According to data from the Reserve Bank of India dated June 27, 2025, the year-on-year growth rate of bank loans increased by 9.5%, reaching a total of Rs 184.83 lakh crore. However, this growth is not considered sufficient for robust economic development. Notably, this increase follows a three-year low in loan growth rates recorded in May, when the total stood at Rs 168.86 lakh crore as of June 28, 2024. Meanwhile, deposits saw a more favourable growth rate of 10.06%, exceeding loan growth by over 50 basis points on an annual basis. As of June 27, 2025, total deposits stood at Rs 234.26 lakh crore, up from Rs 212.85 lakh crore in the same period a year prior.

In other economic indicators, private expenditure accelerated by 7% in the first quarter of the current financial year compared to the previous quarter, suggesting an improvement in consumer demand. Government expenditure also grew at 7.4%. Investment, driven predominantly by public capital expenditure, grew at a rate of 7.8%. It is essential to mention that private final consumption expenditure had reached its lowest point in five quarters during the last quarter of the previous financial year.

Several factors, including income tax relief, a 100-basis-point reduction in the repo rate, favourable conditions for Kharif sowing, and improvements in the goods and services tax, have stimulated private consumption. In terms of consumer goods, the sale of fast-moving consumer goods



(FMCG) rose to 6% in the first quarter, compared to 5% in the previous quarter. Interestingly, over the last six quarters, FMCG sales in rural areas have consistently outpaced those in urban areas, indicating a shift in spending patterns fuelled by increased economic activity in rural regions.

Furthermore, data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) reveal that the share of private final consumption expenditure in nominal GDP jumped to 60.3% in the first quarter of the current financial year, up from 58.3% in the previous quarter. On the other hand, gross fixed capital formation (GFCF) as a percentage of nominal GDP declined slightly from 31% in the prior quarter to 30.4% in the current quarter.

The latest data reveals that GFCF experienced robust growth of 7.8% in the first quarter of the current financial year. While this figure reflects positive momentum, it represents a decline compared to the more impressive 9.4% growth registered in the fourth quarter of the preceding financial year. GFCF is often interpreted as a crucial indicator of investment demand within the economy.

In a noteworthy development, capital expenditure at both the central level and among the 25 state governments surged by an impressive 33.3% during the first quarter. This substantial increase is indicative of a heightened focus on infrastructure and developmental projects. Furthermore, the production of capital goods also demonstrated considerable strength, recording a growth rate of 9.8% in the same period.

Government expenditure, as represented by Government Final Consumption Expenditure (GFCE), painted a similarly positive picture, exhibiting a strong growth of 7.4% in the first quarter. This marks a significant turnaround from the previous quarter, during which GFCE had contracted. Analysts anticipate further improvements in government spending as economic activities are expected to gain momentum in the upcoming quarters.

Turning to revenue, the gross revenue collected by the Central Government from Goods and Services Tax (GST) reached an impressive Rs 1.96 lakh crore in July 2025. This figure not only reflects a 7.5% increase compared to the same month last year but also represents a 6% rise over the collections in June 2025. This steady growth in GST revenue underscores the country's resilience in economic activities. Moreover, there are expectations of an uptick in consumption demand following the implementation of new GST rates, which could further stimulate economic growth.

However, the latest tariffs imposed by the United

States, coupled with the prevailing uncertainties in the global economy, are projected to exert a partial impact on domestic private investment in the current financial year. This impact is likely to be particularly pronounced in the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector, which is a vital component of the economy, accounting for approximately 45% of the nation's total exports. In an effort to mitigate the negative effects of these US tariffs, Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently undertook a visit to Japan, where a target was set for an investment of 10 trillion yen (approximately \$ 67 billion) in India over the next decade. Furthermore, India is actively pursuing business agreements with various countries, though these endeavours may take time to come to fruition.

The analysis suggests that while US tariffs will exert some pressure on the Indian economy, the overall outlook remains optimistic. Investment, consumer demand, and government expenditure are on an upward trajectory, signalling positive economic health. The agriculture sector has demonstrated remarkable performance during the first quarter of the current financial year, buoyed by favourable monsoon conditions and improved Kharif sowing outcomes. Continuous efforts to expedite loan disbursement further enhance the farming sector's prospects. Inflation remains under control, paving the way for sustained growth in both the service and manufacturing sectors. As a result, projections indicate that the growth rate for the current financial year may range between 6.5% & 7.0%, suggesting a resilient economy poised for continued expansion.

Satish Singh, Ahmedabad Based Senior Columnist, views are personal.

Bank of Baroda Organizes Mega Camp in Bilwaradahalli Under Financial Inclusion Drive

BENGALURU: Bank of Baroda, one of India's leading public sector banks, organized a Mega Camp in Bilwaradahalli, Bengaluru today under the Saturation Campaign of the Department of Financial Services (DFS), Ministry of Finance, and Government of India. The campaign, running from July 1 to September 30, 2025, aims to ensure 100% coverage of financial inclusion and social security schemes at the Gram Panchayat (GP) and Urban Local Bodies (ULB) level across the country.

The programme was graced by the esteemed presence of Shri Radha Shyam Ratho, Executive Director, Reserve Bank of India; Yathish R (IAS), Zilla Parishad CEO; Manjunath, Adyaksha, Banerghatta Gram Panchayat; Smt. Sonali Sen Gupta, Regional Director, Reserve Bank of India; Beena Vaheed, Executive Director, Bank of Baroda; and Bhavendra Kumar, Executive Director, Canara Bank along with other executives from State



Bank of India, Union Bank of India and Canara Bank.

Commenting on the initiative, Beena Vaheed, Executive Director, Bank of Baroda, said, "Camps like these are vital as they bring the benefits of financial schemes directly to households and demonstrate how banking can uplift communities. What stood out today was the strong participation from all the sections of society, which shows the growing confidence in using

formal banking channels. Our aim is to keep strengthening this trust and to make banking more accessible, relevant, and empowering for every segment of society." As a significant part of the programme, claim cheques under the Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PM-JJBY) were formally handed over to beneficiaries, reaffirming the government's commitment to social security and financial inclusion.

GST Council puts these sin goods under 40 pc tax slab

NEW DELHI: The Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council has approved a 40 per cent tax rate for sin and luxury goods, increasing it from the current 28 per cent, effective from September 22, 2025. The GST 2.0 reform reduced taxes primarily to two rates: 5 per cent and 18 per cent.

Goods that used to attract 28 per cent if they applied to harmful or luxury items such as tobacco, sugary drinks, and high-end vehicles were moved up to a 40 per cent rate slab.

Tobacco products, such as cigarettes, cigars, cheroots, cigarillos, gutkha, chewing tobacco (like zarda), unmanufactured tobacco, bidi, scented tobacco and pan masala will attract 40 per cent taxes. Luxury cars with engines over 1200 cc for petrol and 1500 cc for diesel, along with sugary, flavoured and carbonated beverages, will be subject to a new 40 per cent tax slab.



Sin taxes are excise duties on harmful or socially costly goods, levied to discourage usage while generating additional revenue for public welfare.

Tobacco products will, however, stay at 28 per cent plus the cess taxation norm until Compensation Cess loans are paid off, after which they will migrate to 40 per cent slabs, the government announced.

Alcohol remains outside GST's ambit and continues to be taxed separately by states through excise duties.

IITC Ltd, which earns 80 per cent of its profits from cigarettes, faces risks from the tax hike but may benefit from reduced uncertainty regarding regulatory changes, according to analysts. Further, while the slab is being raised, the overall tax burden on tobacco will reportedly stay unchanged at 88 per cent, combining GST and cess.

The prices of consumer goods are expected to come down due to the lower taxes, leading to an increase in demand and spurring growth in the economy.

INTERNATIONAL

US President Trump's tariffs backfire as Asia strikes back

NEW DELHI: In an increasingly multipolar world wherein the waning hegemon is bent on disrupting the international order with unilateral coercive tactics, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit, held from August 31 to September 1 in China's Tianjin, sent some powerful signals.

Particularly since the return of US President Donald Trump, the global trade ecosystem has been subjected to the blows of US protectionism. These policies have included Trump's sky-high tariffs on imports that flout the free market principles of the liberal world order instituted by the US itself.

However, as hard as the US tries to keep together its declining unipolar position, its desperate measures are giving strengthened impetus for the emerging powers to build alignments and assert autonomy away from the Euro-Atlantic geostrategic frameworks. The recently concluded 25th SCO Summit is remarkable in this light.

Recently, Trump raised the already staggering 25 per cent tariffs on Indian imports to 50



per cent - the additional 25 per cent as penalties for continuing to buy crude oil from Russia. With China, the US is currently on an uneasy tariff truce, conditioned on ongoing negotiations between the two. Yet last week, Trump threatened to enforce a 200 per cent tariff on Chinese imports if Beijing limited its supply of rare-earth magnets to the US. Meanwhile, Russia has been facing sanctions since the beginning of its war with Ukraine, wherein the latter is being aided by the US and other Western powers.

Given this context, the image of Chinese President Xi Jinping,

specifically Xi, PM Modi, and Putin, as well as the Tianjin Declaration, registered unequivocal opposition to unilateral coercive measures, including economic ones, which breach the norms of international law established by the UN and the World Trade Organisation.

While on the one hand, there was ample emphasis on the importance of multilateral institutions, especially in terms of security, economy, and trade, on the other hand, PM Modi brought attention to the necessity of reform in line with the aspirations of the emerging Global South. Expressing this urgency in a poignant way, he stated, "To confine the aspirations of the Global South to outdated frameworks is to deny justice to future generations. The colourful dreams of the new generation cannot be displayed on a black-and-white screen. It is time to change the screen." And to that end, he proclaimed that the SCO can play a pivotal role in holding the torch of genuine multilateralism and an inclusive world order, framing its three pillars as Security, Connectivity, and Opportunity.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi standing tall together at the summit of a regional security and economic grouping of Global South countries carries messaging that is hard to be lost on anyone.

Addressing the congregation of over 20 leaders of non-Western countries, Xi Jinping called out the "bullying" practices, hegemonism, and Cold War mentality of bloc confrontation in the international order and asserted true multilateralism. Even as no direct reference to the US and its tariff policies was made, the respective addresses by the leaders,

Afghanistan hit by 5.6-Magnitude Earthquake after over 2,200 killed



NEW DELHI: A 5.6-magnitude earthquake struck Afghanistan, centered 14 km east of Jalalabad, the capital of Nangarhar province, according to the US Geological Survey.

The quake's epicentre, struck on Thursday, at a depth of 10 km, was located at 34.72 degrees north latitude and 70.79 degrees east longitude, Xinhua news agency reported.

The GFZ German Research Centre for Geosciences measured the quake at a magnitude of 6.2. This latest tremor follows a series of earthquakes that have devastated Nangarhar and neighbouring Kunar, Laghman and Nuristan provinces in recent days.

The most catastrophic, a

6.0-magnitude quake, hit late Sunday, causing extensive destruction and significant loss of life and property. Official reports confirmed over 2,200 deaths and more than 3,600 injuries, with rescue operations ongoing to recover bodies from the rubble. The region remains on high alert as authorities and aid organisations grapple with the escalating crisis.

The Taliban government's chief spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, said at a press conference on Monday that the death toll had risen to at least 800 with more than 2,500 injured.

He said most of the casualties were in Kunar. Buildings in Afghanistan tend to be low-rise constructions, mostly of con-

crete and brick, with homes in rural and outlying areas made from mud bricks and wood. Many are poorly built.

Filippo Grandi, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, said that the earthquake intensified existing humanitarian challenges in Afghanistan and urged international donors to support relief efforts. "This adds death and destruction to other challenges including drought and the forced return of millions of Afghans from neighbouring countries," Grandi wrote on the social media platform X.

"Hopefully the donor community will not hesitate to support relief efforts." A magnitude 6.3 earthquake struck Afghanistan on October 7, 2023, followed by strong aftershocks. The Taliban government estimated at least 4,000 people perished in that quake. The UN gave a far lower death toll of about 1,500. It was the deadliest natural disaster to strike Afghanistan in recent memory. The latest earthquake was likely to "dwarf the scale of the humanitarian needs" caused by the disaster of 2023, according to the International Rescue Committee.

Ukraine proposes New Format for Protecting Skies: President Zelensky



NEW DELHI: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has said that Ukraine has proposed to the US a new format for protecting Ukrainian airspace.

"Ukraine has proposed a format for protecting our skies for the US to consider," Zelensky said on Thursday in a post on X after his conversation with US President Donald Trump, adding that they discussed ways to push toward real peace.

According to Zelensky's press service, the conversation with Trump took place following a meeting of the "Coalition of the Willing" in Paris, which was also attended by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) Secretary General Mark Rutte, and leaders of European countries.

Speaking alongside Zelensky at a press conference following the meeting, French President Emmanuel Macron announced on Thursday that 26 countries, mostly European, have formally pledged to deploy troops as part of a future Russian-Ukrainian ceasefire, though not directly on the front line, Xinhua news agency reported.

Macron said the countries would contribute to a "reassurance force" that could deploy troops in Ukraine or provide support on land, at sea, or in the air.

Zelensky welcomed the announcement as a "concrete" step forward and stressed that a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin, whether bilateral or trilateral, is "necessary" for advancing peace efforts.

Concerning the recent US approval of the sale of 3,350 air-launched Extended-Range Attack Munitions system missiles to Ukraine, Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova said on Thursday that the US move runs counter to its claimed willingness to resolve the conflict in Ukraine through diplomatic means.

Russia has repeatedly pointed out that military assistance to Ukraine will essentially only "prolong its suffering" and risk causing the conflict to spiral out of control, she added.

The meetings in Paris come as the efforts to negotiate a peace agreement with Russia appear to be stalled.

China Can't Beat India's Growth, says Ace Investor Mark Mobius

NEW DELHI: Billionaire investor Mark Mobius has said that India remains the leading emerging market and China cannot surpass India's growth in the long run.

Mobius highlighted that despite US tariffs on Indian exports and short-term volatility, India's domestic demand, government reforms, and entrepreneurial resilience will maintain its lead over other emerging markets. The ace investor has invested nearly 20 per cent of his portfolio in India.

In an interview with the Economic Times, he said that sectors like pharmaceuticals, gems, and apparel may be affected by US President Donald Trump's 50 per cent tariff on exports.

Trump's Ego behind US Tariff hike on Indian Goods: Report

NEW DELHI: The 50 per cent punitive US tariff imposed on Indian goods is increasingly being seen as more to do with President Donald Trump's ego being hurt over New Delhi contradicting his claim of having brokered the ceasefire with Pakistan after Operation Sindoor rather than any economic rationale.

"Trump's 50 per cent tariff on Indian goods is as much about showing off power as about economics. The irony is striking. While India is being targeted for buying Russian oil, EU countries quietly imported €21.9 billion in Russian fossil fuels last year—more than the €18.7 billion they sent in aid to Ukraine. The EU has been trying to reduce its dependency on Russia since the start of the Ukraine conflict, yet the numbers remain high," according to an article in the London Daily.

"So, is this really about energy morality—or is it messaging in a



world order that's in flux, where alliances, trade, and even climate priorities are shifting? Perhaps ego is also part of the story," the article further states.

It highlights that the relations between the two countries soured when India refused to credit Trump for "stopping" the recent India-Pakistan flare-up.

Other media reports have also mentioned that Trump is

Sindoor had successfully accomplished the mission for which it was launched.

However, this runs contrary to Trump's narrative of posing as a peacemaker who has brought several conflicts to an end worldwide since he came to power.

Pakistan, on the other hand, has been supporting this narrative and recommended Trump's name for the Nobel Peace Prize as part of its cosy up to Washington.

The London Daily also mentions that "the situation got complicated further when Pakistan suggested nominating Trump for the Nobel Peace Prize, praising his supposed role in the ceasefire. India, unsurprisingly, stayed away from the fanfare. And Trump, who has often hinted that he deserved the Nobel, now faced a scenario that may have marked the final crack in a relationship that once seemed firmly on friendly footing."

Minorities of Afghanistan, B'desh and Pak Can Stay in India without Passport if Entered Before Dec 2024

NEW DELHI: A person from minority community including Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian from neighbouring nations including Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan, who were compelled to seek shelter in India due to religious persecution or fear of it and entered into India on or before 31st December, 2024 – with or without valid documents including passport or other travel documents, will be exempted from any penal action, said a government notification.

The declaration, allowing non-Muslim minority migrants to stay in the country without their passports, has been made in the Immigration and Foreigners Act 2024, which came into force after its notification on September 1 (Monday).

The development has been hailed and widely welcomed by the BJP, as this opens doors for harassed and troubled minorities from the neighbouring countries to seek refuge in the country – a concept championed by the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA).



Union Minister of State for Education Sukanta Majumdar called it "a true step towards justice & humanity". Taking to X, he wrote, "In a landmark decision, the Govt of India has allowed minorities from Afghanistan, Bangladesh & Pakistan – Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi & Christian – who entered India on/ before 31st Dec 2024 due to religious persecution, to stay even without valid documents. A true step towards justice & humanity!"

Moreover, according to the Immigration and Foreigners (Exemption) order 2025, the citizens of Nepal and Bhutan and Tibetans who entered India from 1959 to May 2003 on the special entry permit and are registered with the foreign registration officer, have been given similar relaxation.

Geo-politics Being Re-Calibrated, India's Foreign Policy Finally Becomes Assertive



GOPAL MISRA
It may take a few weeks to finally assess the impact of the SCO summit on the world politics, which concluded on September one in China, attended by the Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, Russian President, Vladimir Putin and indeed, hosted by the Chinese dictator, Xi Jinping, but initial reactions indicate that few rule out the possible outcome of the two-day summit that it would soon be re-defining the world's geopolitics.

Interestingly, in his bid to embarrass India and PM Modi, on many counts, US President Donald Trump, a Republican, who appears to have made self-goals in a bid to express his anger that despite his repeated statements that he had enforced a ceasefire between India and Pakistan during the Operation Sindoor in May this year, and subsequently, India's refusal to endorse his claim, and despite American sanctions, she continued to buy Russian oil. Also, his much-trumpeted Alaska Summit could not offer any strategic or financial mileage Washington might have hoped.

Even with the ongoing tariff drama, instead of hurting India, the SCO summit has paved the way for much more intense economic and strategic cooperation among the three countries or perhaps in other geographies too, China, India

and Russia might work out a trade regime minus dollar as the prime currency for international trade.

It may be recalled that in February 1972, the then US President Richard Nixon, also a Republican like Trump, who had made a historic visit to China from February 21 to 28, 1972, had successfully wrested the Asian giant to the western fold, thus changing the then play in the geopolitics. Nearly more than half-a-century later, the stupidity of the Trump Administration has brought Russia, India and China or RIC together. With the big brother attitude of Xi Jinping the standoff between China and India could not be resolved in Tibet. The SCO summit, however, has ignited the hope that Jinping might quietly implement the dream of his predecessor, Deng Xiaoping, by recognising international borders between India and Tibet.

It cannot be denied that Nixon was quite prophetic, when he had called his visit to China "the week that changed the world". Indeed, it led to the collapse of the USSR, and thus, made the US as the unchallenged only Super Power on the earth, but the contemporary buffoons in White House have brought Russia, India and China together, which Washington would have never approved.

On February 27, 1972, the United States and China had issued a historical joint communique, which is remembered as the Shanghai Communique, bringing the Communist giant abandoning



its Soviet ally. The success of Nixon could be attributed to the nearly seven-month conflict between the Soviet Army and Chinese forces. Also, Mao had psychological hatred against the then Soviet leadership under Nikita Khrushchev.

The history, however, appears to be repeating itself 53 years later, when the top leaders of China, Russia and India accompanied by other friendly countries met on August 31 and September one, 2025 under the banner of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) at a picturesque location in China in Tianjin. They appear to be forming a joint front against the 'erratic trade policies' being announced from the White House daily, mostly hitting the countries like India, Russia and China and also indirectly adversely affecting the fragile economies of the developing countries of Asia and Africa.

Interestingly, if Nixon's visit had paved the way for the USA to emerge as the sole superpower on the earth, the SCO Tianjin Summit 2025, a silver jubilee event of this organization, appears to be heralding a joint front against the USA by the rest of the world. It may

also be scripting an epitaph finally challenging the current American hegemony in world affairs, including its big business corporations using the cheaper labour of China, India and other countries for keeping the American economy a formidable force to reckon with.

The SCO comprises 10 member-states: Belarus, China, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan and now Belarus too has joined the group. It had enrolled 7, which officially joined in July 2024, making it the newest member.

The two-day SCO Tianjin Summit 2025 is the 25th Heads of State Council meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), which took place in Tianjin may be quietly undermining the benefits the US had been enjoying following the culmination of Nixon and Kissinger's week-long visit to China. Indeed, Nixon's statement has been proved prophetic that China-US ties finally weakened the USSR, which had finally led to its disintegration of the USSR in 15 independent countries Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus,

Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan.

Admittedly, Trump is no match to a cunning person like Nixon and his visionary National Security Adviser, Henry Kissinger. It may be recalled that seven months before Nixon's visit, in July 1971, Kissinger had quietly flown from an American base in Pakistan, to have an audience with the then chairman of the Communist Party of China Mao Zedong. On other hand, Trump offered the Pakistani army chief, Asim Munir, 'halal' meat at an unprecedented luncheon meeting held in White House to honour an army general to win radical Muslims in Pakistan. He, perhaps, hopes that under the spell of radical Islam, the ethnic minorities in Pakistan and Bengali Muslims would soon be forgetting the atrocities of the US-led West in committing atrocities against the Muslims of the Indian sub-continent.

It cannot be denied that initially, Trump's tariff regime has adversely affected the vital strategic interests of the US and its allies across the continents and with its weakening for Modi, it is a period of jubilation that on the global platform, he is the most sought after statesman.

Gopal Misra has been associated with national and international media. His books on journalism and geo-politics have been well-appreciated. Views are personal.

Singapore PM Meets FM Sitharaman to Boost Comprehensive Strategic Partnership

NEW DELHI: Singapore's Prime Minister Lawrence Wong on Tuesday met Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and discussed strengthening the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP) across key trade and investment areas.

Wong arrived in India on a three-day official visit, marking a key moment in the deepening strategic partnership between the two nations. This is Wong's first visit to India after assuming office and he is accompanied by his wife and a high-level delegation which includes cabinet ministers and senior officials.

Finance Minister welcomed Wong on his first official visit to India as the Prime Minister. "His visit, coinciding with



the 60th anniversary of India-Singapore diplomatic relations, reaffirms the continued commitment of both countries to further strengthen the partnership," said Finance Ministry in a statement. From the Singapore side, Jeffrey Siow, acting Minister for Transport and Senior Minister of State for Finance, and Gan Siow Huang, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Trade and Industry, also joined the meeting.

Indian diaspora in China accords rousing welcome to PM Modi

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi received a rousing welcome from members of the Indian community upon his arrival in China's Tianjin on Saturday evening, local time, to attend the two-day Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit, beginning Sunday.

PM Modi was greeted with traditional cultural performances and enthusiastic chants of 'Vande Mataram' and 'Bharat Mata ki Jai', reflecting the community's excitement. Sharing the glimpses on his social media platform X, PM Modi said, "China's Indian community accorded a very special welcome in Tianjin." Prime Minister Modi travelled



from Tokyo after concluding his visit to Japan earlier in the day, before landing at the Binhai International Airport in Tianjin. "Landed in Tianjin, China. Looking forward to engaging in in-depth discussions during the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation

summit and meeting with leaders from various countries," PM Modi posted on X after landing in China. According to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), this visit is a testament to India's constructive and proactive role in the SCO.

Indian Cricket legend Yuvraj Singh officially launches groundbreaking multi-city IGPL Tour

KAVITA SHARMA
New Delhi

The Indian Golf Premier League (IGPL) is poised to revolutionize the Indian golfing landscape with the official launch of the IGPL Tour, a pioneering professional circuit that will feature both men and women competing on the same platform. Indian cricket legend Yuvraj Singh officially launched the inaugural IGPL in New Delhi.

The event was graced by Chief Executive Officer, IGPL Uttam Singh Mundy, along with Tour Commissioner/CEO, Asian Tour, Cho Minn Thant, General Secretary, Women's Golf Association of India (WGAI) Champika Sayal, Hon. President, PGAI Romit Bose, Indian Men's Professional Golf Player & IGPL Icon Player Shiv Kapur and Indian Men's Professional Golf Player & IGPL Icon Player SSP Chawrasia. Launching the IGPL Tour, which will begin from September 10th in Chandigarh, IGPL Co-Founder Yuvraj Singh said, "A golfer's life is not easy. When you are going to tournaments, you have to make the cut to earn money and pay the bills. IGPL is providing a format for the younger generation coming on board that you do not



have to worry about financial constraints. The work being done on grassroots level is quite important. You can compare IGPL to IPL, and it can change dynamics in golf like IPL did with cricket. "It's a full IGPL tour, and then it will be followed by a fast-paced IGPL League with both men and women playing together. I think equality in the sport is very important. I hope it will change the face of Golf in India. A lot of efforts have been taken by stakeholders behind the scene to grow the sport. I hope to see our players win medals at the Olympics."

Along with the launch of the tour, IGPL also announced a key partnership with the Asian Tour, the official sanctioning body for professional golf in the

region, allowing IGPL players to compete alongside the top Asian players at the Asian Tour event in India in November at Kenville Golf & Country Club.

Speaking on the partnership, IGPL CEO Uttam Mundy said, "I am elated to announce that Asian Tour has agreed to accommodate our interest for this event this year. Because it's always a tight schedule as far as dates are concerned. The pathway for a domestic tour is very important as a professional golfer. You are always looking to graduate from a domestic tour to a higher tour, and this could be a pathway. We have a pathway for our IPGL players. This is just the start and it will only get better."

Tour Commissioner/CEO, Asian Tour, Cho Minn Thant further added, "I see a lot of similarities between the Asian Tour and IGPL Tour. The tour is spreading across multiple cities and it will also go to Sri Lanka and UAE. It is great to have a tour and the innovation that IGPL will bringing to the sport. It will not be confined to the traditional rules of the sport. We are delighted to join hands with the IGPL in this endeavour." The IGPL Tour is designed to be a game-changer for the sport in India, with its core mission of promoting inclusive excellence and athlete empowerment. The integrated format, a first for professional golf in the country, reflects IGPL's commitment to providing a structured and high-visibility platform for both male and female athletes.

In a move to strengthen the foundation of Indian golf and nurture emerging talent, IGPL has forged key partnerships Indian Golf Union (IGU) as an umbrella partner. IGPL is committed to building a sustainable pathway for India's Olympic golf aspirations, and hence has also formed a partnership with WGAI to elevate women's golf, and provide female athletes with the platforms and exposure they deserve.

TDK Ventures and Kae Capital Unveil Landmark Survey on India's DeepTech Future: Founders Optimistic Despite Persistent Challenges



ARUN KUMAR RAO
Bengaluru

TDK Corporation (TSE: 6762) today announced that its corporate venture capital arm, TDK Ventures, Inc., in partnership with early-stage investor Kae Capital, has released a first-of-its-kind study, DeepTech India 2025: Mapping the Next Frontier. The report captures perspectives from nearly 100 deeptech founders across India, offering rare insights into the opportunities and hurdles defining the country's innovation journey.

The collaboration brings together Kae Capital's grassroots understanding of the Indian startup ecosystem and TDK Ventures' global vantage point, creating a platform to spotlight both progress and potential within India's deeptech sector.

Funding Confidence Amid Capital Constraints: The survey reveals a nuanced fundraising landscape. While over half (53%) of founders believe access to capital remains difficult, and only 3% describe it as abundant, optimism prevails—58% of respondents expressed confidence in securing their next funding round. Key challenges identified include lack of investor understanding (45%), long gestation periods (19%), valuation mismatches (13%), and limited depth of local venture capital (9%).

Notably, the report highlights high-growth "sunshine sectors" such as Energy Transition, Robotics & Automation, B2C Deeptech, AgriTech, Advanced Materials, Semiconductors, Space Tech, and Quantum Technology as hotspots for innovation and funding momentum in the coming years. "Deeptech demands a fundamentally different and nuanced approach. India is at the cusp of transformative growth in this space, and this survey strengthens our understanding of founders' challenges while highlighting India's potential to build global leaders," said Nicolas Sauvage, President, TDK Ventures. "By validating technologies, enabling pilots, and bringing global perspectives, we aim to help Indian innovators scale into world-class companies."

every individual is given the opportunity to reach their full potential. Special Olympics Bharat will continue to pave the way for athletes with intellectual disabilities to showcase their extraordinary abilities. On this auspicious day, we also express our gratitude to the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports (MYAS) for increasing the award money for our athletes."

Mr. Anil Sharma, MLA and Patron Member, SOB Delhi further said "We are elated with the support from all the organisers and state chapters, along with the government and the Indian Army, to help us promote inclusivity through sports. Our aim is to ensure that every individual continues to earn equal opportunities to make a mark and have a chance to showcase their skills."

To reaffirm the organisation's commitment to build an inclusive society and to offer opportunities to each and every individual irrespective of their backgrounds, Special Olympics Bharat also organised Unified Sports and other events across 28 state chapters in India.

Special Olympics Bharat celebrates National Sports Day, providing a platform for athletes with intellectual disabilities

KAVITA SHARMA
New Delhi

Special Olympics Bharat celebrated the National Sports Day 2025 at Maitreyi College, commemorating the birth anniversary of the legendary hockey wizard Major Dhyan Chand Ji. The event at Maitreyi College, New Delhi, was aimed at promoting inclusion through sports and providing a platform for athletes with intellectual disabilities to showcase their abilities.

Over 200 athletes with intellectual disabilities participated across multiple sports, including 50 m Race, Shot Put, Tennis Ball Throw, Bocce, Baggo and Basketball. The event embodied the essence of Unified Sports where athletes with and without intellectual disabilities came together to foster friendship, respect, and inclusion.

The celebrations in New Delhi were graced by eminent dignitaries including Dr. Malika Nadda, President, Special Olympics Bharat, Dr. Upasana Arora, President, SOB Delhi, Mr. Anil Sharma, MLA and Patron Member, SOB Delhi, Mrs. Anupam Sood, Treasurer,



SOB Delhi and Guest of Honour, Mr. Prateek Raj, SDM South-West Delhi.

Mr. Prateek Raj, SDM South-West Delhi, appreciated the efforts of Special Olympics Bharat and said, "It is truly heartening to witness the incredible efforts by Special Olympics Bharat in providing a platform for athletes with intellectual disabilities to shine. This initiative not only promotes inclusion but also underscores the power of sports in transforming lives. I am proud to extend my unwavering support for such noble endeavours,

and I remain committed to fostering an environment where every individual, regardless of their background, can thrive through sports."

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Malika Nadda, President, Special Olympics Bharat said, "Today, as we gather to commemorate National Sports Day, we celebrate the true spirit of inclusion. Through sports, we reinforce the values of discipline, perseverance, and unity — values that transcend barriers. This event reaffirms our commitment to building an inclusive society, one where

GST Rationalization: Will it be the Game-Changer for India's Hospitality Sector?

DR. BHUPESH KUMAR

As India inches closer to a major overhaul of its Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime, the hospitality sector is watching closely. The proposed GST rationalisation—or GST 2.0—seeks to simplify the current four-tier structure into a two-slab system of 5% and 18%, while keeping a 40% levy on luxury and sin goods. The move is expected to ease compliance, boost consumption, and align India's taxation with global norms. But for hotels and restaurants, the implications could be transformational.

Relief for the Mid-Tier Segment

One of the most significant proposals under discussion is the reduction of GST on hotel rooms priced under Rs 7,500 per night—from 12% to 5%. This measure directly targets India's vast mid-market hotel segment, which caters to both domestic tourists and business travelers. Lower tariffs could make stays more affordable, improve occupancy rates, and stimulate demand at a time when the sector is recovering from pandemic shocks.

Food and Beverage (F&B) services, a major revenue source for hotels, are also likely to see a simplified structure: 5% without input tax credit



(ITC) or 18% with ITC. Essentials such as complimentary breakfast and toiletries will be taxed at 5%, reducing operational ambiguities.

Luxury Hotels: A Mixed Bag

While mid-range properties stand to benefit, the luxury segment may see limited relief. Hotels charging above Rs 7,500 a night will continue to attract 18% GST, while luxury add-ons—including alcohol and premium services—could face a steep 40% levy. This effectively maintains the price pressure on high-end tourism and may limit India's competitiveness in attracting ultra-premium international travelers.

Industry Demands: A Uniform 5% With ITC

Leading industry bodies such as the Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAD) and the National Restaurants As-

sociation of India (NRAD) have urged the government to go further. They have demanded a uniform 5% GST rate with ITC across hospitality services, arguing that it would simplify operations and bring India closer to global standards. Competing destinations in Asia—including Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore—levy tourism taxes in the range of 6-10%, making Indian hotels relatively expensive.

Boost to Tourism and Employment

The economic case for rationalisation is strong. The hospitality industry is labour-intensive and has a high multiplier effect: every rupee spent generates Rs 3.5 in output, and every direct job creates more than three indirect ones. Lowering GST could, therefore, not only spur travel but also generate large-scale employment and attract new investments in infrastructure. Stock markets have already

factored in this optimism. Several listed hotel chains have rallied by up to 50% in FY26, reflecting expectations of policy-driven growth.

Compliance and Ease of Doing Business

Beyond rate cuts, simplification of compliance is another major benefit. The current regime often creates disputes over classification—whether a meal bundled with a room should be taxed differently from standalone dining, for example. By delinking F&B charges from room tariffs, the proposed system would eliminate such ambiguities, reducing friction between businesses and tax authorities.

The Road Ahead

The upcoming GST Council meetings will decide the contours of this reform. While the government's priority remains balancing revenue with industry relief, the hospitality sector hopes for a bold approach that prioritises growth and competitiveness.

If implemented effectively, GST rationalisation could be the game-changer the industry has long awaited—making India's hotels more affordable, encouraging inbound tourism, and unlocking the sector's potential as a key driver of the economy.

(The writer is principal, IHM Ranchi. Views are personal)

Diljit Dosanjh asks help for wounded Punjab after recent deluge



MUMBAI: Global Punjabi superstar Diljit Dosanjh, who will be next seen in 'Border 2', has vowed to bring the flood hit Indian state of Punjab back on track.

On September 4, the actor-singer took to his Instagram, and shared a video in which he was seen speaking in Hindi about the devastation sustained by his state. He chose to speak in Hindi to help his message reach a wider audience both in India and the diaspora community.

He said in the video, "I will speak in Hindi today so that the message reaches everyone. The situation in Punjab is very bad due to floods. People have lost their homes. Crops have been destroyed. Animals, cows, buffaloes have died. People's lives have been ruined. Punjab is wounded, but not defeated. We have risen from the lap of Punjab. Punjab has adopted us. And we have to die in the lap of Punjab. We want to tell all those who are suffering that we are with them. This problem will not end with distribution of food and water. Until their lives are restored, we are with them".

He lauded the local NGOs, the Punjab media for doing a great job, and expressed his gratitude to them. He further mentioned, "They are doing a great job on the ground. And the youth of Punjab has come forward and is handling the situation. I would like to thank everyone. All the

resources I have, all the corporate houses I know, our team has talked to them. Everyone is ready to help Punjab. They all want to come forward".

"We will get out of this problem. Punjab has always been in trouble. It happens that something that is very dear to us always gets in the way. This has happened to us many times. But we will get out of this problem. I pray to God that he gives us so much strength that we all brothers and sisters come out of this problem together. And once again, those lives can be restored. I love and respect everyone. If I have said something wrong, if I have hurt anyone, forgive me if I have said anything wrong", he added.

The Indian state of Punjab has endured its worst floods in over 4 decades. The flash floods have hit over 1,400 villages with more than 30 fatalities and 250,000-350,000 people affected.

The Hardest-hit districts included Gurdaspur, Amritsar, Pathankot, Kapurthala, Tarn Taran, Ferozepur, Fazilka, Hoshiarpur, Moga, Sangrur, Barnala, Patiala, and Mohali.

The flooding was triggered by monsoon deluges and upstream water release from dams atop the rivers such as Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej, along with swollen seasonal rivulets. The rescue operations are underway across the state.

Infineon Technologies and Kaynes Semicon Partner to Drive India's First MEMs Microphone and Advanced Semiconductor Packaging



ARUN KUMAR RAO
Sanand, Ahmedabad

In a landmark step for India's semiconductor self-reliance, Kaynes Semicon Private Limited, a pioneering Indian semiconductor manufacturer, has entered into a strategic partnership with Infineon Technologies, a global leader in semiconductor solutions. The collaboration, formalized through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), aims to accelerate India's presence in the global semiconductor supply chain by introducing the nation's first Made-in-India MEMs Microphone and advanced semiconductor packaging solutions.

Strengthening India's Semiconductor Supply Chain: At the heart of this partnership is the launch of Kaynes Semicon's first MEMs Microphone, built using Infineon's market-proven bare die technology. This innovation will primarily cater to the fast-growing True Wireless Stereo (TWS) earbuds market, placing Kaynes Semicon at the forefront of wearable technology manufacturing in India.

In addition, Infineon will supply high-performance power solution bare die wafers, which Kaynes Semicon will package into discrete and module semiconductor products tailored for the Indian market. The collaboration is designed to establish a cost-optimized, locally integrated supply chain—offering customers faster turnaround times, energy-efficient solutions, and enhanced reliability.

Driving Innovation Across Key Industries: Together, Infineon and Kaynes Semicon will address critical semiconductor demands in India across multiple high-growth industries.

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