

THE GROUP OF MINISTERS (GOM) WILL SOON MAKE A DECISION ON THE TAX RATES FOR HEALTH AND LIFE INSURANCE PREMIUMS.

INDIAN ECONOMY



To address the growing demand for reducing the 18% GST on health and life insurance premiums, the GST Council, led by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, has set a 50-day deadline for a new Group of Ministers (GoM) to review the tax rate. The council will meet again in November to discuss potential changes based on the GoM's recommendations.

The council also decided to expand a ministerial group responsible for rationalizing GST rates to include more

members who will specifically review insurance policies. Additionally, a new GoM will explore the future of the GST Compensation Cess, which was extended until March 2026 to repay special borrowings for state revenue losses. The GoM will assess if the cess should continue in any form and address concerns about adequate state compensation.

Other decisions included reducing the GST on three cancer drugs from 12% to 5%, increasing the rate on car seat covers to 28%, and lowering the tax on some savoury snacks from 18% to 12%. The council also reviewed real estate GST issues, including factoring land costs in construction services.

Furthermore, the council decided to exempt universities from GST on research funds and to resolve existing tax demands from foreign airlines on service imports. This policy shift aims to align with the Budget's focus on increasing research funding.

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AT THE BRICS SUMMIT IN RUSSIA, DOVAL MAY HOLD A MEETING WITH CHINESE FOREIGN MINISTER WANG YI.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



National Security Adviser Ajit Doval will attend a three-day BRICS and BRICS Plus security officials' meeting in St. Petersburg starting Wednesday. He will meet Russian NSA Sergei Shoigu and, potentially, China's top diplomat Wang Yi. While the government has not confirmed a meeting with Wang Yi, his presence follows recent high-level discussions aimed at resolving the ongoing India-China military standoff at the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

In July, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar met Wang Yi twice to discuss an early resolution to the LAC situation and to rebuild bilateral relations. Subsequent meetings between Indian and Chinese officials have focused on accelerating discussions and maintaining peace along the border.

A meeting between Doval and Wang Yi would be notable given Wang's role as China's Special Representative for border talks and his recent congratulatory message to Doval. Past discussions between the two have led to significant breakthroughs, including the partial disengagement of troops at the LAC.

CENTRE FINALIZES ₹26,000-CRORE DEAL WITH HAL FOR 240 SU-30MKI JET ENGINES.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY



On Monday, the Defence Ministry signed a ₹26,000-crore contract with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) for 240 AL-31FP aero-engines for Su-30MKI aircraft. The engines, assembled under license by HAL in India, were approved by the Cabinet Committee on Security last week.

The contract was signed in the presence of Defence Secretary Giridhar Aramane and Air Chief Marshal V.R. Chaudhari. HAL will manufacture the engines at its Koraput Division, with deliveries scheduled at 30 engines per year over the next eight years.

HAL plans to involve local defense manufacturers, including MSMEs and other industries, aiming to increase the indigenous content of the engines to over 54% by the end of the program. D.K. Sunil, HAL's CMD, highlighted that nearly 1,000 engine parts will be indigenized, boosting the domestic engine manufacturing ecosystem.

The 240 engines are for maintaining the operational capability of the Su-30MKI fleet, not for aircraft upgrades. The Indian Air Force (IAF) has 259 Su-30MKIs and has approved the purchase of 12 additional jets to replace those lost.

INDIA AND THE UAE SIGN AGREEMENT FOR CIVIL NUCLEAR COOPERATION

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) signed a historic memorandum of understanding (MoU) for civil nuclear cooperation on Monday. The agreement, between Nuclear Power Corporation of India Ltd. (NPCIL) and the Emirates Nuclear Energy Company (ENEC)-led Barakah Nuclear Power Plant Operations and Maintenance, was finalized during Crown Prince Sheikh Khalid bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan's visit to India.

This MoU marks the first formal nuclear cooperation deal between the two nations, building on their 2015 agreement to collaborate on the peaceful use of nuclear energy. It reflects the UAE's strategy to expand investments in nuclear energy.

Additionally, the two countries signed agreements for long-term LNG supply between Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) and Indian Oil Corporation Ltd., and a Production Concession Agreement between Urja Bharat and ADNOC for Abu Dhabi Onshore Block 1. They also reached an MoU on food park development in India with the Abu Dhabi Developmental Holding Company PJSC (ADQ).

The visit also highlighted India and the UAE's participation in the I2U2 grouping with Israel and the U.S., and coincided with the first India-Gulf Cooperation Council meeting in Saudi Arabia.

GOVERNMENT CONFIRMS CASE OF 'CLADE 2' MPOX, NOTES IT IS NOT PART OF THE CURRENT WHO EMERGENCY.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



The Union Health Ministry confirmed on Monday that a person has tested positive for Mpox caused by the clade 2 strain. This travel-related case is similar to the 30 previous cases reported in India since July 2022 and is not part of the current WHO public health emergency, which concerns clade 1.

The patient, a young male recently returned from a country with Mpox transmission, is isolated in a designated facility and is clinically stable. Public health measures, including contact tracing and monitoring, are in place, with no widespread

risk to the public.

The WHO notes that most current Mpox cases involve young males, with sexual contact being the most common mode of transmission. The Ministry has instructed states and Union Territories to ensure healthcare workers are informed about Mpox symptoms, diagnosis, and management.

The Health Ministry continues to monitor the situation closely, with strengthened surveillance, screening at points of entry, and enhanced laboratory testing. State AIDS control societies are also on alert to improve case detection and community awareness.

ULTRA-FAST STUDIES OF THE PHOTOELECTRIC EFFECT UNCOVER THE SECRETS OF MATTER.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY



Albert Einstein, despite his groundbreaking work on gravity and spacetime, won his sole Nobel Prize for explaining the photoelectric effect. This effect involves electrons being emitted from a metal when exposed to light, with their energy dependent on the light's frequency rather than intensity. In 1905, Einstein proposed that light is composed of photons, which, when they have enough energy, can eject electrons from the metal.

This principle underpins solar cells, where photons from sunlight knock electrons loose to generate electric current. Further understanding of the photoelectric effect can improve solar cell efficiency and reveal subatomic features.

Recent advances include the development of ultrashort light pulses, with 2023 Nobel laureates recognized for creating attosecond pulses—lasting around 10^{-18} seconds—to study electron dynamics. For instance, in 2010, Ferenc Krausz's team observed a 20-attosecond delay in electron emissions from a neon atom. Recent research has extended this to X-ray regimes, revealing up to 700 attoseconds delays in core electron emissions from nitric oxide molecules, attributed to factors like shape resonance and multi-electron interactions.

These findings enhance our understanding of X-ray-matter interactions and electron correlation, crucial for applications such as protein imaging and next-generation electronics. The research highlights how fundamental studies can lead to unforeseen practical applications, underscoring the value of exploring basic scientific principles.



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IMPLICATIONS OF THE INTERNET ARCHIVE CASE FOR DIGITAL BOOK-LENDING

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

The Internet Archive (IA), a non-profit, has digitized over 835 billion web pages and 44 million books, making them widely accessible. Its mission includes providing broad access to digitized books, though the extent of access varies by user type—those with disabilities can access full texts, while others typically see only previews.

Two key experiments by IA led to significant copyright disputes with book publishers. The first, Controlled Digital Lending (CDL), involved digitizing and lending books online on a 1:1 ratio with physical copies. The second, the 'National Emergency Library,' temporarily relaxed this policy during the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to legal action from publishers for copyright infringement.

The core legal question was whether CDL constituted 'fair use' under U.S. copyright law. Courts evaluated four factors: the purpose and character of use, the nature of the copyrighted work, the amount used, and the effect on the market. The district and appellate courts ruled that CDL did not qualify as 'fair use.' The courts found that IA's digital copies did not add transformative value and could potentially harm the market for physical books.

The decision raises concerns about the future of CDL and its impact on book-lending. While CDL improves digital book-lending efficiency, the court's stance might suggest that physical library lending could also be viewed as infringing on publishers' markets. Historically, copyright laws have balanced public access with publisher interests, allowing libraries to lend books despite potential economic impacts.

MSMES FACE NEW CHALLENGES WITH UPDATED MACHINE SAFETY REGULATIONS

INDIAN ECONOMY



India's Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) face potential challenges due to new safety regulations for machinery and electrical equipment, as outlined in the Machinery and Electrical Equipment Safety (Omnibus Technical Regulation) Order, 2024. Issued by the Ministry of Heavy Industry (MHI) on August 28, the regulations introduce stringent safety standards for equipment including pumps, cranes, and compressors, effective in a year.

While export-oriented items are exempt from these regulations, most domestic producers, who are primarily MSMEs, supply both domestic and international markets. The Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) report warns that the new standards, which require prior approvals from the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), will increase costs and complicate compliance for MSMEs.

Many smaller firms lack the advanced technology needed to meet these standards within the given timeframe. The report suggests delaying implementation and providing support to help MSMEs adapt, as the current situation could lead to widespread difficulties and potential closures.

THE ROLE OF DISTRICT AGRO-METEOROLOGY OFFICES IN AIDING FARMERS

INDIAN ECONOMY



The India Meteorological Department (IMD) plans to revive District Agro-Meteorology Units (DAMUs) under the Gramin Krishi Mausam Sewa (GKMS) scheme, which were shut down earlier this year. Established in 2018 in collaboration with the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, DAMUs provided critical, localized weather-based agricultural advisories to India's small and marginal farmers.

DAMUs, situated within Krishi Vigyan Kendras

(KVKs), utilized weather data from the IMD to offer advice on farming practices, including sowing, irrigation, and pest control. These advisories were sent out twice weekly in local languages via text messages, WhatsApp, newspapers, and direct communication, helping farmers plan their activities and prepare for extreme weather events.

The shutdown was influenced by NITI Aayog's push for privatization and monetization of these services, which it misrepresented as automated. Critics argue that privatizing such services could lead to high costs for farmers, with some private firms charging up to ₹80,000 annually for crop advisories, creating financial barriers for small farmers.

There is growing concern that without DAMUs, farmers may lose access to affordable, unbiased agricultural information, which is crucial for adapting to climate variability and building resilience in farming practices.

TWO ANTI-SUBMARINE WARFARE VESSELS FOR THE INDIAN NAVY WERE LAUNCHED AT COCHIN SHIPYARD.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

On Monday, the Indian Navy launched two anti-submarine warfare shallow watercraft at Cochin Shipyard, the fourth and fifth in a series of eight. Named INS Malpe and INS Mulki, these 78-meter vessels are equipped with indigenously developed sonar and are designed for coastal anti-submarine operations, maritime tasks, and mine-laying. Capable of speeds up to 25 knots and an endurance of 1,800 nautical miles, each vessel displaces about 900 tons and features advanced weapons systems. The ships, with 12 MW propulsion power, are set to replace the Abhay-class ASW corvettes. The contract for these Mahe-class ships was signed in April 2019 with Cochin Shipyard Ltd. Vice-Admiral Srinivas emphasized that the vessels support India's self-reliance and readiness amidst current geopolitical and security challenges.



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