

UN-led talks to end plastic pollution fail to reach pact

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New Delhi: The UN-led negotiations in Geneva aimed at hammering out a legally binding global treaty to end plastic pollution ended without an agreement on Friday, with the countries failing to arrive at a consensus on ways to tackle the menace. Negotiators from 185 countries, including India, discussed the issue for 10 days but could not find common ground, as major petrochemical-producing countries refused caps on virgin plastic production and controls on certain chemicals.

India is learnt to have aligned with like-minded developing countries and the Gulf Cooperation Council who were against any global phase-out list or trade restrictions on plastic products. India has always pitched for "consensus-based decision-making" to reach an agreement that focuses on aspects



AFP

Major petrochemicals-producing countries refused caps on virgin plastic production and controls on certain chemicals

related to "plastic pollution only", without affecting the right to sustainable development of developing countries. "Production caps and controls on toxics and chemicals of concern are India's redlines," Dharmesh Shah, public policy analyst, who had been tracking the negotiations, told TOI.

Shah said progress has been held back by a small group of countries whose insistence on "consensus-only decision-making" has given the least ambitious voices the power to block measures supported by the majority.

12% & 28% GST slabs set to go, sin goods face 40% levy

Govt's Plan To Be Discussed By Group Of State FMs Next Wk

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

LOOKING TO MAKE LIFE LESS TAXING

New Delhi: Eight years after the launch of goods and services tax, the Centre has circulated the blueprint for GST 2.0, with two main slabs of 5% for common use items and 18% for other goods as it seeks to make life simpler and less taxing for citizens and businesses. The comprehensive revamp plan — which will be discussed by a group of state finance ministers on Thursday — proposes to bring the curtains down on the 12% and 28% slabs, while ending compensation cess ahead of the March deadline, and tax sin goods at 40%.

Food, medicines and medical devices, stationary and educational products and everyday essentials, such as hair oil and toothbrush, will be in the nil or 5% slabs, officials said. Items used by the middle class, such as ACs, TV sets and refrigerators will move into the 18% slab, although there was no clarity on how govt intended to tax automobiles and cement, which currently attract a 28% levy.

Besides, there will be a major cut in GST on health and term insurance, which has been on the table for several

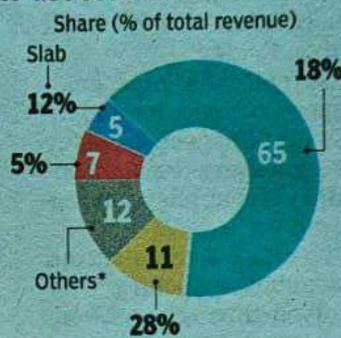
Common use items in 12% GST slab

- Jams, fruit jellies
- Fruit and vegetable juices, pre-packed coconut water
- Namkeens
- Several medicines, medical & surgical items
- Glucometer
- Contact lenses, spectacles & their lenses
- Notebooks, pencils & geometry boxes
- Sprinklers, harvesting threshing machinery, composting machines
- Bicycles, tricycles

Prominent goods in 28% slab:

Air conditioners, dishwashers, automobiles, cement, certain types of TV sets

Contribution of each slab to GST revenue



*Includes special rates such as 0.25%, 1.5%, 3% and compensation cess

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Sweeping rate cuts on table at next GST Council meet

Lower Slabs Likely For Consumer Goods, Insurance

July 12, 2025
Direct tax collections dipped to 3.2% in the fiscal year

GoM on GST to meet next wk

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Amid discussions for reduction of GST for many products, a group of ministers from states, headed by deputy CM Sam... will meet next... members of... had suggested maintaining status... on slabs and rates, citing...

Aug 15, 2025

months.

Apart from insurance, automobiles, health, handi-

crafts, farm goods, textiles, fertilisers and renewable energy have been flagged

among sectors with special emphasis.

Reduction in slabs will end classification disputes over namkeens, parathas, buns and cakes and several other products due to varying rates on ingredients. Special rates of 0.25% on diamonds and precious stones and 3% on jewellery will be retained to promote specific industries, govt sources said while unveiling the plan.

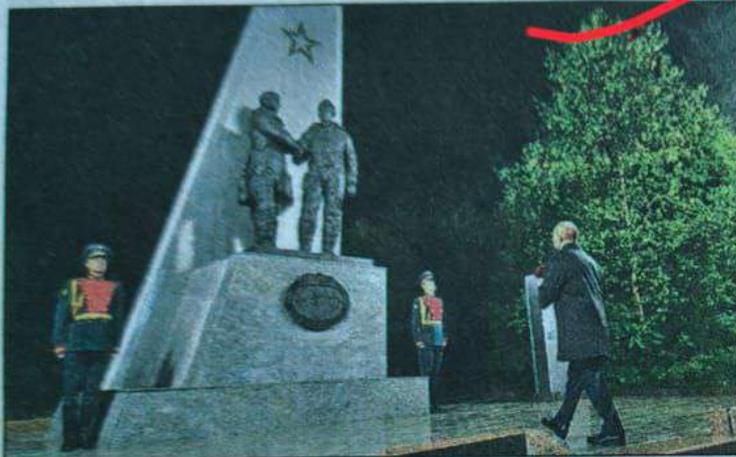
"We have suggested a very simple, well reformed, next generation GST... Broadly, tax incidence will come down because rates on bulk of the items in 12% and 28% slabs will come down," a senior govt official said. The plan is to move 99% of the mass-use items in 12% slab to 5% bracket, with a small set moving to 18%. The proposed changes, which need to be endorsed by the GST Council, will end the patchwork that has been going on since 2017, with every meeting of ministers resorting to small tweaks. As a result, the weighted average tax rate, which had come down to 11.6%, will drop further.

Officials explained, apart from the common man, special emphasis has been given to equipment used by farmers.

Centre... consumption... Labour...

On way to Alaska, Trump says he wants Ukraine ceasefire 'today'

Zelensky Says Summit Should Open Path To Ukraine-Russia-US Talks



Putin lays flowers at a monument commemorating American and Soviet heroes of WWII at the far eastern port city of Magadan in Russia



Activists rally in front of the US embassy in Kyiv to raise awareness about the plight of thousands of POWs still in Russian captivity

Aboard Air Force One/Moscow: President Donald Trump said he wanted to see a ceasefire "today" as he headed to Alaska on Friday for a summit with Russia President Vladimir Putin to help end the war with Ukraine.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, who was not invited to the talks, and his European allies fear Trump might sell out Ukraine by essentially freezing the conflict and recognising — if only informally — Russian control over one fifth of Ukraine. He said the summit should open the way for a "just peace" and three-way talks that included him but added that Russia was continuing to wage war on Friday

Trump sought to assuage

such concerns as he boarded Air Force One, saying he would let Ukraine decide on any possible territorial swaps. "I'm not here to negotiate for Ukraine, I'm here to get them at a table," he said.

Asked what would make the meeting a success, he told reporters: "I want to see a ceasefire rapidly... I'm not going to be happy if it's not today... I want the killing to stop."

The US and Russian presidents are due to meet at a Cold War-era air force base in Alaska's largest city at around 7pm GMT (12.30am IST) for their first face-to-face talks since President Trump returned to the White House this year.

The Kremlin said Putin would arrive in Alaska at 7pm

GMT (12.30am IST) and would be met at his plane by Trump. "He is a smart guy, been doing it for a long time but so have I... We get along, there's a good respect level on both sides," Trump said of Putin. He also welcomed Putin's decision to bring a lot of businesspeople with him to Alaska.

"But they're not doing business until we get the war settled," he said, repeating a threat of "economically severe" consequences for Russia if the summit goes badly.

One source acquainted with Kremlin thinking said there were signs that Moscow could be ready to strike a compromise on Ukraine given that Putin understood Russia's economic vulnerability and costs

of continuing the war. "Apparently, some terms will be agreed upon... because Trump cannot be refused, and we are not in a position to refuse (due to sanctions pressure)," said the source, who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Zelensky has ruled out formally handing Moscow any territory and is also seeking a security guarantee backed by the US. Trump hopes a truce in the war will bolster his credentials as a global peacemaker worthy of the Nobel Peace Prize. For Putin, the summit is already a big win that he can portray as evidence that years of Western attempts to isolate Russia have unravelled and that Moscow is retaking its place at the top table of diplomacy. REUTERS

It will be 7th known face-to-face meeting between Trump & Putin

President Donald Trump's posture toward President Vladimir Putin of Russia over the last two decades or so has veered from admiring to infuriated, cozy to detached, and it is unclear which approach he will take on Friday when they meet in Anchorage. This would be at least their seventh known face-to-face encounter, and the first of Trump's second term. Here's a look at some of the past meetings, and what the two have said about each other over the years:

The Early Years

In 2007, after Time magazine selected Putin as its "Man of the Year," Trump wrote him a congratulatory letter. "As you probably have heard, I'm a big fan of yours!" Trump wrote. Six years later, Trump took the Miss Universe contest to Moscow. Months before the pageant, which he owned at the time, he wondered on social media if Putin would attend, and if so, "will he become my new best friend?" Putin did not attend.

2016 Presidential Campaign

Soon after he formally announced a run for the White House in 2015, Trump told reporters in July that he would "get along very well with Vladimir Putin." The exchange of compliments continued that year, when Putin called Trump "a very bright and talented man," and Trump said that praise was a "great honour."

In July 2016, though, Trump seemed to backtrack after saying repeatedly for years that he had a relationship with Putin. "He said one nice thing about me. He said I'm a genius. I said thank you very much to the



Trump and Putin greet each other before a meeting in Helsinki in 2018

newspaper and that was the end of it. I never met Putin," he said. During the final presidential debate in 2016, Hillary Clinton suggested that he would be Putin's "puppet," which Trump dismissed. But questions over Trump's ties to Russia did not go away, and after he took office in Jan 2017, Russia's role in the US election dominated conversation in the US.

The First Meetings

The first in-person meeting between the two leaders took place at the G20 summit in Hamburg, Germany, where Trump asked Putin about Russian interference in the election. Putin denied any involvement. After the meeting, Trump took his interpreter's notes and instructed him not to brief anyone.

They met again in Nov that year, in Vietnam, and in July 2018 in Helsinki, Finland. On both occasions, Putin denied interfering in the 2016 election. In Helsinki, Trump stood beside Putin and challenged the conclusion of his own intelligence agencies about Russian election interference. Later in 2018, the two leaders spoke informally at dinner during a

G20 meeting in Argentina.

They met once more before the end of the first Trump term, at the G20 summit in Osaka, Japan, in June 2019. By then, the special counsel Robert Mueller had concluded that Russian had carried out a "sweeping and systematic" attack on American democracy. Asked by a reporter whether he would tell Russia not to meddle in US elections, Trump said, "Yes, of course, I will." He then turned to Putin, with a half-grin, and said, "Don't meddle in the election, President," as Putin chuckled.

Trump's Second Term

As he began his second term, Trump expressed an interest in swiftly bringing an end to the war in Ukraine. But his relationship with President Zelensky of Ukraine took a nosedive in Feb after a fiery confrontation at the White House. Trump began to indicate frustration with Putin as the war proved harder to end than he had expected. "I'm not happy with Putin," Trump said in July. He appeared to soften his comments ahead of the meeting in Alaska, saying he "got along well" with Putin. NYT