

Leaders of 26 countries watch China's military parade

HONG KONG, Sept 3 (AP)

THE leaders of 26 countries joined Chinese President Xi Jinping to mark the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II with a military parade in the Chinese capital on Wednesday, in a show of solidarity among nations friendly to Beijing.

Russian President Vladimir Putin and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, who made a rare foreign trip to attend, flanked Xi as they ascended to the viewing platform overlooking Tiananmen Square and watched the display of military hardware and marching troops, marking the first such meeting among leaders of Pyongyang, Moscow and Beijing in 66 years.

The spectacle of Kim standing with Putin and Xi at the viewing gallery of Tiananmen Square marks a major display of their trilateral solidarity in defiance of the West.

Wearing a black suit and a gold-coloured tie, Kim slowly walked into Tiananmen Square's red-carpeted main entrance ahead of the event.

Xi welcomed him into the square, shaking hands with him alongside other state leaders arriving at the venue, including



Armoured vehicles take part in a military parade to commemorate the 80th anniversary of Japan's World War II surrender held in front of Tiananmen Gate in Beijing on Wednesday. (R) Russian President Vladimir Putin, Chinese President Xi Jinping, and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un arrive at a military parade to commemorate the 80th anniversary of Japan's World War II surrender held in front of Tiananmen Gate in Beijing, China on Wednesday. (AP/PTI)

Putin, before moving toward the rostrum. Xi spent more time greeting Kim and Putin, lightly touching their arms in a show of closeness.

Putin walked on Xi's right, while Kim walked on his left en route to the rostrum, occasionally talking to him while smiling.

The three arrived at the rostrum side by side, sharing friendly conversations in a historic moment that displays solidarity

among China, Russia and North Korea.

Leaders from the US, Western Europe, Japan and India skipped the event and countries like South Korea and Singapore sent lower-level officials. But Xi's guest list showed Beijing's growing influence in the Global South and other emerging economies.

Joining Putin and Kim included Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, all considered US

adversaries. Russia's close ally Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko walked next to Kim after taking group pictures with other leaders.

Putin and Kim chatted animatedly with Xi as they climbed up the stairs to the viewing platform. The sight of these leaders, with Xi, appeared to observers as a challenge to a US-led international order.

Asia accounted for the major-

ity of national leaders at the event.

Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto, who initially cancelled his trip to China due to protests at home, made it to Beijing and took part in the event with his counterparts in Southeast Asia, such as Cambodia's King Norodom Sihamoni, Vietnamese President Luong Cuong and Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim.

■ 12% & 28% Slabs Removed, 5% & 18% Remain ■ Sin & Luxury Goods To Be Taxed At 40% ■ Changes Effective Sept 22

Life & health cover, white goods, most cars to get cheaper after GST revamp

Duty Relief Also On FMCG, Food Items

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The GST Council, headed by Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman, on Wednesday agreed to the biggest ever revamp of the eight-year-old indirect tax regime by rolling out a two-rate structure of 5% and 18%, along with a 40% slab for a handful of sin goods and services.

The new rates, barring the incidence on tobacco products, will come into effect from Sept 22, the first day of Navratri, which also usually marks the onset of the heavy buying season.

The sweeping changes, which were catalysed by the Centre, have brought the curtains down on the 12% and 28% rates, and are aimed at simplification of the tax system and ending classification disputes. In other words, no more 'roti versus paratha' skirmishes. Now, all Indian breads will fa-

GENERAL SLASHING OF TAX ACROSS CATEGORIES

| | | |
|---|---|--|
|  <p>INDIVIDUAL HEALTH & LIFE INSURANCE FROM 18% to NIL</p> | <p>AUTOMOBILES 28% to 18%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Petrol & petrol hybrid, LPG, CNG cars (not exceeding 1,200cc & 4,000mm) | <p>including SUVs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > EVs remain at 5% |
| <p>DAILY ESSENTIALS 18% to 5%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Hair oil, shampoo, toothpaste, toilet soap bar, toothbrush, shaving cream |  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Diesel & diesel hybrid cars (not exceeding 1,500cc & 4,000mm) | <p>ELECTRONIC APPLIANCES 28% to 18%</p> |
| <p>12% to 5%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Butter, ghee, cheese, dairy spread, namkeen, jam, fruit juice, utensils |  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Motorcycles (350cc & below) <p>50% to 40%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Most large cars, |  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > AC, TV (above 32", including LED & LCD ones), monitor, projector, dishwasher <p>CONSTRUCTION SECTOR 28% to 18% Cement</p> |

ce zero GST, while all life health insurance plans purchased by individuals will be exempt from the levy.

Several critical medicines are also being moved into the nil rate segment.

Besides, the compensation cess is being done away with along with the implementation of the new tax rates. Existing rates on tobacco products will continue until loans and interests are repaid.

Cars will get cheaper as small cars will attract 18% tax, instead of 29% (28% tax and 1% cess), while the larger ones, including SUVs, will face 40%

GST instead of 50% (28% tax and 22% cess). Electric vehicles will remain at 5%.

"The reforms have been carried out with a focus on the common man. Every tax levied on common man's daily use items have undergone a rigorous look, and in most cases, the rates have come down drastically. Labour intensive industries have been given good support," Sitharaman said after a marathon 12-hour meeting, which saw a few states being cajoled into signing off on the reforms.

Most commonly used food items, such as paneer, ghee

and namkeen, will now be in the 5% or nil brackets while several everyday consumer items, such as hair oil, shampoos and toothbrushes will move into the 5% bracket. Similarly, all white goods—from refrigerators to ACs, dishwashers and TVs sets—have been put into the 18% slab, from 28%, along with cement.

Sitharaman complimented all states for helping thrash out a package largely put together by the Centre, and said states and the Centre sit together in the GST Council.

► Continued on P 18

Consumption boost for festive season

The move is expected to significantly lift consumption, which had just begun to show initial signs of recovery after several sluggish quarters. Calling it a "game changer", companies said they expect demand for grocery products to get a boost ahead of the festive season. The reduction in prices is, however, expected to reflect only on the new stock rolled out in the market, said an industry expert. **P 18**

Will benefit common man, boost eco: Modi

PM Modi said the GST rate cuts "will benefit common man, farmers, MSMEs, middle-class, women and youth and strengthen the economy", adding "the wide-ranging reforms will improve the lives of citizens and ensure ease of doing business for all, especially small traders". He first spoke of gov't's intention to "bring the next-gen reforms" in his I-Day speech last month. **TNN**

Singapore PM meets FM to boost Comprehensive Strategic Partnership

NEW DELHI, Sept 3 (IANS)

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. "Discussions focused on strengthening the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership across key areas of trade and investment, fintech, skill development, sustainability, healthcare, and connectivity.

Both sides agreed to further deepen cooperation in these domains, said the Ministry.

The visit is expected to witness the signing of several high-level agreements across sectors, including finance, digital innovation, skill development, civil aviation, maritime cooperation, and space technology.

The visit comes on the heels of the third India-Singapore Ministerial Roundtable (ISMR) held in New Delhi on August 13. During the roundtable, ministers from both countries reviewed progress in cooperation under six key pillars: Advanced Manufacturing, Connectivity, Digitalisation, Healthcare and Medicine, Skill Development, and Sustainability.

Several new initiatives were identified to enhance collaboration in these areas.

Singapore PM pays tribute to Mahatma at Raj Ghat

NEW DELHI, Sept 3 (IANS)

SINGAPORE Prime Minister Lawrence Wong, who is on a three-day visit to India, paid tribute to Mahatma Gandhi by laying a wreath at Raj Ghat on Wednesday.

While sharing pictures from Lawrence Wong's visit to Raj Ghat on social media platform, Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal stated, "PM Lawrence Wong of Singapore paid tributes to Mahatma Gandhi by laying a wreath at Raj Ghat. Babu's universal ideals of truth and non-violence continue to inspire us." Upon arrival in India, Singapore PM in a post on X wrote, "Arrived in New Delhi for my official visit to India. This trip is especially meaningful as we celebrate 60 years of Singapore-India relations. Was warmly received by Indian Minister of State for Finance."

"Looking forward to more engagement over the next two



Singapore Prime Minister Lawrence Wong pays tribute to Mahatma Gandhi at Rajghat, in New Delhi on Wednesday. (ANI)

days here in New Delhi," he added.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Wong are scheduled to hold bilateral discussions on Thursday with the visiting PM calling on President Droupadi Murmu at Rashtrapati Bhavan later in the day. External Affairs Minister (EAM) S Jaishankar and other dignitaries are also sched-

uled to call on PM Wong during his visit to India.

"Singapore is an important partner for India, including in our 'Act East' Policy. During the visit of Prime Minister Modi to Singapore in September 2024, bilateral ties were elevated to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) stated.

Help speed up EU FTA to stabilise global economy, Jaishankar urges Berlin

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New Delhi: As India looks to circumvent its trade conflict with the US, foreign minister S Jaishankar told his visiting German counterpart, Johann Wadephul, on Wednesday that the country's counting on Ger-



► Putin & Xi chat about immortality, **INSIDE JACKET**

many to expedite the negotiations for an India-EU FTA, underlining that a "decisive conclusion" of the agreement in the coming days will help stabilise the global economy.

The two ministers also discussed the Ukraine con-

Trump leaves door open for trade deal

Characterising New Delhi as a friend who is "killing us" with tariffs, US President Donald Trump left the door open for a trade deal with India, indicating that channels are still open and he is pressing for a better offer. **P 10**

flict as Wadephul urged New Delhi to convince Moscow to join peace efforts and said European Union is not against countries buying Russian energy to meet their needs but opposes refined Russian oil reaching its shores in a roundabout way.

► **Continued on P 20**

Employment in unorganised sector dips in April-June quarter; no. of working owners up

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

LABOUR LANDSCAPE

Source: MOSPI

| Indicator | Jan-Mar 2025 | Apr-June 2025 |
|---|--------------|---------------|
| No of establishments in unorganised non-farm sector (fig in 100s) | 7,85,367 | 7,94,240 |
| Percentage of proprietary and partnership establishments | 95.4 | 95.3 |
| Percentage of hired worker establishments  | 14 | 13.3 |
| Number of Workers (fig in 100s) | 13,13,380 | 12,85,725 |
| Percentage share of working owners | 58.3 | 60.2 |
| Percentage share of hired workers | 26.9 | 24.4 |
| Percentage share of other workers (including unpaid family workers) | 14.9 | 15.4 |

New Delhi: Employment in India's unincorporated sector dipped marginally in the April-June quarter of the current fiscal compared to the previous quarter, though the number of enterprises rose, according to a quarterly survey released Wednesday.

National Statistics Office (NSO) published first quarterly bulletin of unincorporated sector enterprises (QBUSE) with estimates for Jan-Mar and Apr-June 2025. It showed employment fell to 12.9 crore in the April quarter from 13.1 crore in Jan-March.

Despite this dip, employment in both quarters remained substantially higher than the 2023-24 annual estimate of just over 12 crore workers, indicating an overall increase in sectoral jobs.

NSO said April decline

was linked to fewer establishments engaging hired workers and weaker performance of unincorporated manufacturing, where the employment share dropped by over 2 percentage points compared to the previous quarter.

The total number of es-

tablishments in the unincorporated non-agricultural sector rose to 7.9 crore, driven by trade (3.6%) and other services (3.1%), while manufacturing contracted by 4.7%.

The share of working owners rose from 58.3% in January-March to 60.2% in

April-June, signalling a shift toward self-employment and owner-driven enterprises. Manufacturing saw the sharpest fall in hired workers alongside this rise in working owners.

Women accounted for over 28% of the workforce in both quarters, slightly higher than the 2023-24 annual share, underscoring the sector's role in gender-inclusive growth. The rural workforce also grew, from 6 crore to 6.3 crore, pointing to the rising role of unincorporated enterprises in rural economies.

Digitisation trends strengthened, with net use among enterprises climbing from 34% in Jan-March to 36% in Apr-June, highlighting growing digital adoption.

Unincorporated non-farm establishments are those not registered under Companies Act, 1956 or 2013.

Putin tells Ukraine: End war via talks or I will end it by force

Moscow: Russian President Putin told Kyiv on Wednesday that there was a chance to end the war in Ukraine via negotiations "if common sense prevails", an option he'd prefer, but that he was ready to end it by force if that was the only way.

Speaking in China at the end of a visit there, Putin said that he perceived "a certain light at the end of the tunnel"



Putin said he was ready to hold talks with Zelensky if the Ukrainian president came to Moscow

given what he said were sincere efforts by the US to find a settlement to Europe's biggest land war since WWII.

"It seems to me that if common sense prevails, it will be possible to agree on an acceptable solution to end this conflict. That is my assumption," he told reporters in Beijing. "Especially since we can see the mood of the current US administration under President Trump, and we see not just their statements, but their sincere desire to find this solution. And I think there is a certain

light at the end of the tunnel. Let's see how the situation develops. If not, then we will have to resolve all the tasks before us by force of arms."

Putin did not however indicate any willingness to soften his long-standing demands that Ukraine abandon any ideas of joining Nato, reverse what Moscow has described as discrimination against Russian speakers and ethnic Russians, or step back from the idea that Moscow must have full control of at least the Donbas area in eastern Ukraine. He said he was ready to hold talks with Volodymyr Zelensky if the Ukrainian president came to Moscow, but that it remained to be seen whether such a meeting was worthwhile.

He repeated his view that Zelensky, whom has not faced re-election due to martial law despite his official term in office expiring, was illegitimate. Kyiv flatly rejects that, saying it is impossible to hold meaningful elections at a time of war. Zelensky has been pressing to meet Putin to discuss the terms of a possible deal.

Putin told reporters he had always been open to meeting Zelensky, but reiterated the Kremlin's oft-repeated stance that such a meeting had to be well prepared in advance and lead to tangible results. REUTERS