

CCS not just new buildings, direction of country will be set from here: PM

Modi inaugurates Kartavya Bhavan 3, first of the 10 new Common Central Secretariat buildings

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 6

UNDERLINING THE administrative reforms undertaken by his government over the past 11 years, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said the new central secretariat building he inaugurated was not merely a building, but would be the site of deliberations for making India a developed country.

"These are not only some new buildings and ordinary infrastructure. In Amrit Kaal, the policies of Viksit Bharat will be made here, important decisions for Viksit Bharat will be taken. In the coming decades, the direction for the country will be set from here," he said.

Over the past 11 years, he said around 1,500 obsolete laws and 40,000 compliances had been done away with. He said with the use of Jan Dhan, Aadhaar and mobile, delivery of government schemes had become transparent and free of leakages. He said



The illuminated Kartavya Bhavan 3 on Kartavya Path on Wednesday night. PTI

10 crore fraudulent names had been removed from the list of beneficiaries of various schemes, saving ₹4.3 lakh crore.

Earlier in the day, the PM inaugurated Kartavya Bhavan 3, the first of the 10 Common Central Secretariat (CCS) buildings proposed by the govern-

ment as a part of its Central Vista redevelopment plan. The building, located on Janpath, will house offices of the Ministries of Home Affairs, External Affairs, Rural Development, Petroleum and Natural Gas and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises.

In the evening, he addressed

a gathering on Kartavya Path, with ministers including Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Manohar Lal, MPs, bureaucrats and government employees in attendance. At Kartavya Path, he said it was time to change the way the government thinks of files. To the em-

ployees who will be shifting into the new building, he said if a file that affects one lakh people is delayed on their desk, it means that one lakh human days are wasted.

He said important ministries of the Union government, including Home Affairs, were working out of buildings constructed by the British colonial government. "Workers here did not have adequate space, light or ventilation," he said. He said those working at the new complex would have a good working environment. He said Union government ministries operate out of 50 different locations across Delhi, with some working from rented spaces that cost the government ₹1,500 crore a year in rent. The PM also said 8,000 to 10,000 employees have to go from one building to another every day, leading to higher expenditure and traffic congestion.

"The grand Kartavya Bhavan and other major infrastructure projects are not only a testament to India's pace but also a reflection of its global vision," he said.

Parliament passes legislation to modernise India's maritime laws

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The Carriage of Goods by Sea Bill, 2025 was passed by the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday even as the Opposition continued loud protests against the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bihar. The Lok Sabha passed another maritime legislation, the Merchant Shipping Bill, 2024.

Amid the din in the Upper House, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman also tabled the Demands for Grants for Manipur for 2025-26. Manipur has been under President's Rule since February 13.

The Rajya Sabha was earlier adjourned, soon after the tabling of papers and obituary references at



Large backing: The Bill marks a significant step towards aligning India's maritime legal framework with global standards. REUTERS

11 a.m. When the House reassembled at 2 p.m., Bhubaneswar Kalita, who was in the Chair, called for taking up the Carriage of Goods by Sea Bill, 2025, even as Opposition members continued to protest and trooped into the Well of the House. The Bill was

approved by a voice vote amid the din. It had been passed by the Lok Sabha earlier.

Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal said, "Today, with the passage of the Bills, the Modi government's push for India's

modern shipping gets double endorsement from Parliament."

The Merchant Shipping Bill, 2024 is meant to be progressive, future-ready legislation that replaces the outdated Merchant Shipping Act of 1958. The Bill marks a significant step towards aligning India's maritime legal framework with global standards and strengthening the country's position as a trusted maritime trade hub.

The Carriage of Goods by Sea Bill, 2025, repealed the Indian Carriage of Goods by Sea Act, 1925.

The legislation is expected to simplify maritime trade laws, reduce litigation risks, and enhance transparency and commercial efficiency in cargo movement by sea.

190 rescued, two bodies recovered after Uttarkashi floods

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Around 190 people were rescued from Dharali town in Uttarkashi district of Uttarakhand on Wednesday, a day after devastating flash floods wreaked havoc, leaving scores missing and the town covered in mud and slush. Rescue teams also recovered two bodies from the site.

Bad weather continued to hamper rescue efforts, with roads to the area blocked by mud and boulders following landslides triggered by heavy rainfall. Rivers across the State remained above danger levels after continuous downpour over the past 50 hours.

Uttarakhand's Disaster Management and Rehabilitation Secretary Vinod Kumar Suman said "*prima facie*", around 15 people were missing from the disaster spot". Efforts were under

way to ensure that the rescue teams were able to work continuously, he added.

Tireless efforts

Mr. Suman said, "As many as 150 Army personnel from Rajputana Rifles and 12 jawans from Ghatak battalion are working tirelessly in the rescue operations in Dharali while 100 personnel of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police [ITBP] are also assisting... Around 40 Army personnel are walking to the disaster site from Nelong valley while a 50-member team of the Army's medical wing has reached till Tekla." Around 80 jawans of the State Disaster Response Force were stuck in Papadgadhi due to landslips, he added.

Additionally, 130 ITBP personnel are expected to reach the site on Thursday.

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War footing: Army personnel undertaking a search-and-rescue operation at Dharali, Uttarkashi, on Wednesday following the flash floods. PTI

PM likely to be in China for SCO meet, his first visit in 7 yrs

SHUBHAJIT ROY

NEW DELHI, AUGUST 6

PREPARATIONS ARE underway to schedule a visit by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to China where leaders of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation will gather for the Summit in Tianjin from August 31 to September 1, sources said Wednesday.

On the sidelines of the Summit, if the visit materialises, Modi is also expected to hold bilateral talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping, a meeting that will take place amid rising tensions with the US over trade tariffs and purchase of Russian oil.

The two leaders last met on October 23, 2024 on the margins of the BRICS Summit in the Russian city of Kazan, setting the stage for the disengagement of troops at two friction points along the Line of Actual Control in eastern Ladakh and resumption of patrolling.

The Prime Minister's visit, which sources said is still being planned, will be his first to China in seven years – the last visit was in 2018. The military standoff along the LAC in eastern Ladakh began in May 2020 following Chinese incursions. The disengagement process was completed in November 2024, days

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'Trump's imposition of 50% tariff is economic blackmail to secure unfair trade deal'

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, on Wednesday said the second round of 25% tariff imposed on India was an "economic blackmail" aimed at securing an unfair trade deal.

In a post on X, Mr. Gandhi said Prime Minister Narendra Modi should not let his "weakness" override the interests of the Indian people.

"Trump's 50% tariff is economic blackmail – an attempt to bully India into an unfair trade deal. PM Modi better not let his weakness override the interests of the Indian people," he wrote on X.

Congress communication chief Jairam Ramesh also took a dig at the Union government's earlier assertions regarding the close personal relationship between Mr. Modi and the U.S. President.



Rahul Gandhi

"Mr. Modi has time and again flaunted his supposedly close friendship with President Trump. On Feb 14, 2025, he had shown off his knowledge of algebra by telling President Trump that $MAGA + MIGA = MEGA$," Mr. Ramesh said on X.

✓ Now President Trump, while still claiming to be a friend of Mr. Modi, has hit India hard and unjustly. While his tariff and penalty actions are simply unacceptable, the fact remains that they also reflect the abysmal failure of Mr. Modi's personalised and headline-grabbing style of hu-

glomacy," Mr. Ramesh added.

Earlier, in a separate post, Mr. Gandhi had alleged that Prime Minister Modi cannot resist U.S. President Donald Trump's repeated threats due to "the ongoing U.S. investigation into Adani".

However, business tycoon Gautam Adani, and seven other defendants have been accused of paying about \$265 million in bribes to Indian government officials to secure lucrative solar energy supply contracts on terms that expected to yield \$2 billion of profit, according to an indictment unsealed in a New York court in November last year.

The Adani group had denied the allegations and maintained it is "committed to maintaining the highest standards of governance, transparency and regulatory compliance across all jurisdictions of its operations".

INDIA, BRAZIL HEAD U.S. TARIFF LIST

COUNTRIES RATES



Source: White House

INSIDE

**IN INDIA TARIFF,
TRUMP SIGNAL TO
OTHER IMPORTERS
OF RUSSIAN OIL**

**RAHUL: ECONOMIC
BLACKMAIL, BID TO
BULLY INDIA**

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Trump raises U.S. tariffs on Indian imports to 50%

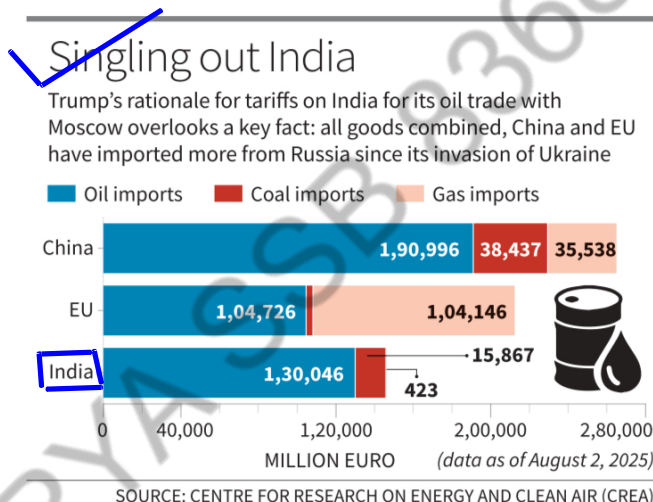
U.S. President signs executive order for 25% tariff on Indian goods on top of the 25% announced on July 31; one part takes effect from today, the other after 21 days; 'extremely unfortunate', says MEA

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

U.S. President Donald Trump on Wednesday signed an executive order imposing an additional 25% tariff on imports from India, in response to India "directly or indirectly" importing oil from Russia. This is over and above the 25% tariff on Indian imports that Mr. Trump approved on July 31.

While the initial 25% tariff will come into effect from Thursday, the additional 25% tariff will come into effect after 21 days.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), in response, said it has made its stand clear – through an earlier statement following Mr. Trump's threat of additional tariffs – that these ac-



tions were "unfair, unjustified and unreasonable". It was "extremely unfortunate" that the U.S. has chosen this course of action, the MEA said.

"To deal with the national emergency described in Executive Order 14066 [relating to Russia's

actions in Ukraine], I determine that it is necessary and appropriate to impose an additional *ad valorem* duty on imports of articles of India, which is directly or indirectly importing Russian Federation oil," Mr. Trump's executive order said. "Accordingly,

and as consistent with applicable law, articles of India imported into the customs territory of the United States shall be subject to an additional *ad valorem* rate of duty of 25%," it added. Over the last few days, Mr. Trump has repeatedly threatened additional tariffs on India as a "penalty" for its oil imports from Russia.

In response to one such threat, the MEA on Monday pointed out that, not only did the U.S. encourage such trade previously, both the European Union and the U.S. actively trade other items with Russia in excess of the amount that India pays for Russian oil.

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'ECONOMIC BLACKMAIL'

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Putin holds 'constructive' talks with U.S. envoy ahead of sanctions deadline

Agence France-Presse

MOSCOW

Russian President Vladimir Putin held "constructive" talks with U.S. envoy Steve Witkoff in Moscow on Wednesday, the Kremlin said, two days ahead of a U.S. deadline for Russia to halt its Ukraine offensive or face fresh sanctions.

U.S. President Donald Trump, who had boasted he could end the conflict within 24 hours of taking office, has given Russia until Friday to make progress towards peace or face new penalties.

But three rounds of Russia-Ukraine talks in Istanbul have failed to make headway on a ceasefire, with the two sides far apart in their demands.

Russia has escalated drone and missile attacks against its pro-Western neighbour to a record high and accelerated its advance on the ground.



New leaf: Vladimir Putin, left, and U.S. President Donald Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff meet in Moscow on Wednesday. AP

"A quite useful and constructive conversation took place," Mr. Putin's aide Yuri Ushakov told journalists after the three hour meeting.

Mr. Putin and Mr. Witkoff exchanged "signals" on their positions, Mr. Ushakov said, without elaborating.

The Kremlin released video of Mr. Putin shaking hands with Mr. Witkoff at

the start of the meeting.

Ahead of the talks, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy urged Washington to increase its pressure on Moscow to agree to a ceasefire.

Sanctions threat

The White House has not outlined what action it would take against Russia, but Mr. Trump has previously threatened to im-

pose "secondary tariffs" targeting Russia's key trade partners, such as China and India.

The move would aim to stifle Russian exports, but would risk significant international disruption.

Mr. Trump said on Tuesday that he would await the outcome of the Moscow talks before ordering any economic sanctions.

"We are going to see what happens," he told reporters. "We will make that determination at that time."

Without explicitly naming Mr. Trump, the Kremlin on Tuesday slammed "threats" to hike tariffs on Russia's trading partners as "illegitimate".

Russia's campaign against Ukraine since February 2022 has killed tens of thousands of people, destroyed swathes of the country and forced millions of people to flee their homes.

Trump moots Vance's name as Republican pick for 2028

U.S. President floats the idea of the Vice-President teaming up with Secretary of State Marco Rubio to create a formidable Republican ticket; Trump not to seek a third term, though he wanted to

Agence France-Presse
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump suggested on Tuesday Vice-President J.D. Vance is “most likely” to secure the Republican party nomination for President in 2028.

Mr. Trump has avoided naming a preferred successor and said in February that, while Mr. Vance was “very capable,” it was too soon to make such calls.

Asked on Tuesday whether Mr. Vance was the heir-apparent to his Make America Great Again (MAGA) movement, Mr. Trump told reporters: “Well, I think most likely.”

“In all fairness, he’s the Vice President,” he said.

The remarks followed speculation that Mr.



Heavyweight: J.D. Vance, left, acts as the chief domestic policy advocate and a key diplomatic envoy in the Trump government. AFP

Trump might attempt to defy constitutional limits and seek a third term.

“It’s too early, obviously, to talk about it, but certainly he’s doing a great job,” Mr. Trump said. “And he would be probably favoured at this point.”

Mr. Trump also floated

the idea of Vance teaming up with Secretary of State Marco Rubio to create a formidable Republican ticket.

“I think Marco is also somebody that maybe would get together with JD in some form,” Mr. Trump said.

Mr. Trump has suggested serving another term several times, despite the U.S. Constitution limiting Presidents to two terms.

T-shirts emblazoned with “Trump 2028” and “Rewrite the rules” continue to be sold on Mr. Trump’s official online store.

However, Mr. Trump said on *CNBC’s Squawk Box* on Tuesday he would “probably not” seek a third term.

“I’d like to,” he said. “I’d like to run. I have the best poll numbers I’ve ever had.”

Mr. Vance, a former Marine and lawyer, has taken on a prominent role in the administration, acting as chief domestic policy advocate and key diplomatic envoy.

OpenAI said to eye \$500 bn valuation in likely staff share sale

Reuters

ChatGPT maker OpenAI is in early-stage discussions about a stock sale that would allow employees to cash out and could value the company at about \$500 billion, a source familiar with the matter said.

That would represent an eye-popping bump-up from its current valuation of \$300 billion, with the sale underscoring OpenAI's rapid gains in users and revenue as well as the intense competition among AI firms to secure talented workers.

The transaction, which would come before a potential IPO, would allow current and former employees to sell several billion dollars worth of shares, said the source.

Bolstered by flagship



MS-backed OpenAI has about 700 million weekly active users.

product ChatGPT, OpenAI doubled its revenue in the first seven months of the year, reaching an annualized run rate of \$12 billion, and is on track to reach \$20 billion by year-end, the source added.

Microsoft-backed OpenAI has about 700 million weekly active users for its ChatGPT products, a surge from about 400 million in February.

INFLATION PROJECTION FOR CURRENT FISCAL REVISED DOWNWARD TO 3.1% FROM 3.7%

Reserve Bank holds repo rate at 5.5%, retains FY26 GDP growth at 6.5%

HITESH VYAS
MUMBAI, AUGUST 6

IN LINE with expectations, the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) on Wednesday left the repo rate — the key policy rate — unchanged at 5.5 per cent.

Despite growing uncertainties related to US tariffs and geopolitical tensions, the RBI retained its real GDP growth projection for FY26 at 6.5 per cent, with Governor Sanjay Malhotra asserting that the economy was performing "very well" and would "continue to further improve" when asked to respond to US President Donald Trump calling the Indian economy "dead".

Meanwhile, the central bank sharply lowered its Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation forecast for the current fiscal by 60 basis points (bps) to 3.1 per cent, compared to an earlier estimate of 3.7 per cent. After cutting the repo rate by 100 bps over the last three consecutive monetary policies, the six-member MPC's unanimous decision to keep the repo rate unchanged offers no additional relief to borrowers ahead of the upcoming festive season, as they will have to continue paying higher interest



RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra at the RBI headquarters in Mumbai on Wednesday.
Amit Chakravarty

rates on their loans. However, Malhotra said the transmission of past rate cuts is "continuing".

"The current macroeconomic conditions, outlook and uncertainties call for continuation of the policy repo rate of 5.5 per cent and wait for further transmission of the front-loaded rate cut to the credit markets and the broader economy. Accordingly, the MPC unanimously voted to keep the repo rate unchanged," the RBI Governor said while announcing the monetary policy. The rate-setting panel also decided to continue with the 'neutral' policy stance. Despite the global uncer-

tainities, the RBI on Wednesday retained both its annual and quarterly real GDP growth forecasts at 6.5 per cent for FY26 and for April-June 2025, 6.7 per cent for July-September 2025, 6.6 per cent for October-December 2025, and 6.3 per cent for January-March 2026. In Q1 FY27, real GDP is expected to grow 6.6 per cent.

The Governor said the above normal southwest monsoon, lower inflation, rising capacity utilisation, and congenial financial conditions continue to support domestic economic activity, with domestic growth evolving "broadly" along expected lines

even though some high-frequency indicators showed mixed signals in May and June. The supportive monetary, regulatory, and fiscal policies including robust government capital expenditure should also boost demand, he added. In the medium-term also, Malhotra said the prospects of the economy are "bright" amid a changing world order, aided by its inherent strength, robust fundamentals, and comfortable buffers. "Opportunities are there for the taking, and we are making all efforts to create enabling conditions through a multi-pronged yet cohesive approach to policy making," he added.

However, he warned that while financial market volatility and geopolitical uncertainties have abated from their peaks in recent months, trade negotiation challenges continue to linger.

"Prospects of external demand, however, remain uncertain amidst ongoing tariff announcements and trade negotiations. The headwinds emanating from prolonged geopolitical tensions, persisting global uncertainties, and volatility in global financial markets pose risks to the growth outlook," the Governor said.

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com

We are doing very well: Malhotra on Trump's 'dead economy' jibe

Mumbai: Days after US President Donald Trump described the Indian economy as "dead", RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra asserted that the domestic economy is performing "very well" with its contribution to global growth at 18 per cent, significantly higher than America's 11 per cent.

"We have a very robust growth rate of 6.5 per cent. In fact, as per International Monetary Fund (IMF), it (India's growth) is 6.4 per cent, and 3 per cent growth rate for the world... we are contributing about 18 per cent (to global growth), which is more than the US, where the contribution is expected to be much lesser, I think about 11 per cent. We are doing very well and we will continue to further improve," Malhotra said when asked for his comment on Trump's reference to the Indian economy as "dead".

HITESH VYAS