

GST refund norms eased; officers lose arrest powers

99% of GST rate and process issues addressed, says Union Finance Minister after 57th meeting of the GST Council; measures likely to come into effect from April 1, 2027; rates remain unchanged

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

The Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council on Thursday took a slew of decisions in its 57th meeting here to enhance simplification, improve certainty in tax treatment, remove holdups in the processing of input tax credits, and ease the compliance burden on businesses, especially smaller ones.

The council also recommended removing arrest powers of GST officers and increasing the prosecution threshold from ₹1 crore to ₹5 crore.

The general penalty will also be reduced from ₹25,000 to ₹10,000.

"I can say that 99% of issues in GST relating to rates and processes have

Good and simple

The 57th meeting of the GST council decided to enhance simplification, improve certainty in tax treatment, and ease the compliance burden on small businesses

KEY DECISIONS

- Tax officers' power to arrest scrapped
- Prosecution limit increased to **₹5 crore** turnover
- Export of services brought into input tax credit system

The committee has also decided to examine proposal to allow small taxpayers to file returns once a year

- Automated registrations, reduced paperwork, and eased input tax credit processes

- No notices for amounts below **₹10,000**, pending notices to be cancelled

New measures likely to come into force from April 1, 2027

now been addressed," Nirmala Sitharaman, Union Finance Minister and Chairperson of the GST Council, said following the meeting.

"The door is not closed to further reforms, and those will be taken up as needed, but the bulk of

them are now done," she added.

Apart from easing processes related to GST registration and availing of refunds and input tax credits, the council has also eased the litigation-related rules of the tax system, providing relief to

small taxpayers. Ms. Sitharaman said that all the changes are expected to come into effect from April 1, 2027, and added that no GST rates were changed during this meeting.



I can say that 99% of issues in GST relating to rates and processes have now been addressed... The door is not closed to further reforms, and those will be taken up as needed, but the bulk of them are now done

NIRMALA SITHARAMAN
Union Finance Minister



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INDIA bloc leaders stage stir at Rajghat against CEC

Sandeep Phukan

NEW DELHI

For the third day in a row, leaders of the Indian National Developmental, Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) on Thursday protested in Delhi against alleged “vote *chori* (theft)” and demanded the removal of Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar, staging a symbolic *satyagraha* at Mahatma Gandhi’s memorial at Rajghat.

Following two days of face-offs with the police, Opposition leaders protested at Rajghat without the police preventing them from reaching there. They offered floral tributes at the memorial, with Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge saying they “prayed that the BJP government gets the wisdom to stop vote *chori*, remove the CEC, and protect the citizen’s right to vote”. The INDIA bloc said it will continue its protest on Friday.



Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge addresses media with party leaders and INDIA bloc MPs on Thursday. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

Leaders of the Opposition bloc are likely to march towards Rashtrapati Bhavan after assembling at Parliament House in the morning.

Senior leaders, including Mamata Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee, may join the march, even though President Droupadi Murmu has not yet given an appointment to meet them.

Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi,

Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Mr. Kumar of “hijacking” the country by allegedly indulging in vote theft.

Lunch at CP

In a replay of Wednesday’s outreach, Mr. Kharge hosted a lunch for Opposition MPs and leaders at Moets restaurant in the Outer Circle of Connaught Place.

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CRPF TROOPS DEPLOYED

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Police warn public against joining October 10 protest

Police personnel carry out announcements over loudspeakers, warn residents against joining the protest; youth organisations mobilise people, conduct door-to-door SIR awareness campaigns

Shrimansi Kaushik
NEW DELHI

With the police holding meetings with residents and using loudspeakers to announce that prohibitory orders are in place near Jantar Mantar and youth organisations going door-to-door to mobilise those affected by the special intensive revision (SIR) process, people are in a dilemma over whether to join the protest on October 10 seeking removal of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar and suspension of the SIR drive.

Police officials visited local mosques and market places in Old Delhi and announced that Section 163 of BNSS is in place in the New Delhi area, requesting



Demonstrators seeking resignation of CEC Gyanesh Kumar and suspension of SIR drive at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi. FILE PHOTO

citizens to not participate in the protest. "Advise your friends, family and children not to participate in any protest because administration is only doing its work...", announced a police official at Baghwali Masjid in Chandni Chowk

on Thursday.

Locals in central Delhi said they are afraid to join the protest. Salauddeen, president of the Matia Mahal Traders' Organisation, said, "We are afraid that if we join the protest, we will be detained by the police."

However, in many areas, associations have insisted on their "right to protest" and have even mobilised people from their areas for October 10. "We will not stop... SIR is a genuine issue that needs to be addressed," said Ashok Bhasin, president of the North Delhi Residents' Welfare Federation.

Outreach campaigns

Youth organisations are conducting door-to-door campaigns among domestic workers and daily wage earners in slum clusters affected by the SIR drive.

Naureen of the Disha Students' Organisation said we have been mobilising people despite expected curbs as many remain unaware of SIR and possible deletions from the roll.

AS DELHI GEARS UP FOR CJP PROTEST TOMORROW, 23,000 CENTRAL FORCES PERSONNEL TO BE ON DUTY

With the Capital bracing for a major security operation ahead of the CJP-AISA protest at Jantar Mantar on Saturday, **SAKSHI CHAND** reports how the Delhi Police is gearing up to tackle the crowd that is expected to throng the protest site.

221 **CAPF** companies

23,000 personnel

The Ministry of Home Affairs has made 221 companies of the Central Armed Police Forces – comprising around 23,000 personnel – available to the Delhi Police from October 8 to 12. Five all-women paramilitary companies will also be deployed. For the deployment, CRPF companies are being brought in from Jammu and Kashmir, West Bengal and Chhattisgarh.

10 DETENTION CENTRES BEING PREPARED



Around 10 detention centres are being prepared across districts, according to officers. Stadiums and other designated facilities, including Rajiv Gandhi Stadium in Bawana and Chhatrasal Stadium, are being readied for people detained during the protest. Such centres are also coming up in Narela, East Delhi and Northwest Delhi.

CHECKING AT DELHI BORDERS

Police will maintain heightened vigilance at Delhi's entry points, with



During protest near CP in New Delhi on Thursday. **AFSHANA BHAT**

officers saying those suspected of attempting to mobilise crowds could be stopped and detained at the borders.

TRAINS TO BE REGULATED



Officers said they have coordinated with railway authorities to regulate train movement into Delhi for a specified period, based on inputs about possible mobilisation from outside the Capital.

RESTRICTIONS ON APP-BASED CABS



Police are coordinating with cab aggregators to regulate movement towards Lutyens' Delhi. With the New Delhi district expected to be turned into a heavily secured zone, officers said they are preparing to restrict entry on roads leading into the area. Cab operators are being sensitised about restrictions on roads leading to the New Delhi district, said officers.

OYO, HOTELS ASKED TO STOP FRESH BOOKINGS



Hotels, guest houses and other accommodation facilities in and around Central Delhi have been

asked to remain shut or restrict fresh bookings for a specified period, said police. Hotel owners in Paharganj have been briefed about not taking new bookings, with similar briefings held in parts of South and North Delhi, they added.

LIQUOR VENDS TO REMAIN SHUT



The Delhi government on Thursday directed the closure of liquor stores in the city on October 9 and 10 due to the "prevailing" situation to maintain public order. An order issued by the Excise department said that the closure was based on Delhi Police inputs as a preventive measure aimed at maintaining "public order".

AROUND 40 METRO STATIONS MAY BE SHUT



Restrictions or closure of around 40 Metro stations in and around sensitive areas are being considered. During the July protest of CJP, around 16 Metro stations were shut.

INTERNET CURBS ON CARDS



Internet restrictions may be imposed in areas where detainees are housed to prevent further mobilisation. Similar curbs could extend to parts of New Delhi and Central Delhi depending on the security situation, officers said.

ACTION COULD BE TAKEN AGAINST YOUTUBERS, 'MOBILE JOURNALISTS'



People recording or livestreaming the protest could face action if they obstruct police operations, violate restrictions or contribute to unlawful mobilisation, officers said, adding that such persons would automatically not be treated as protesters.

MEDIA PERSONNEL ASKED TO CARRY ID CARDS



Police have asked media organisations to ensure journalists covering the protest carry and prominently display valid press identification cards at barricades and sensitive locations.

Is Ambani the 'boss of India', asks Musk

Telecom department dismisses allegation that India's regulatory framework was unfair and discriminatory as baseless and misconceived; statement came in response to SpaceX founder and CEO Elon Musk's charge that 'certain oligarchs' in India were blocking the satellite internet service

Aroon Deep
NEW DELHI

The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) on Thursday rejected allegations that it was shielding oligarchs from competition by delaying approvals for SpaceX's Starlink satellite internet service in India.

The statement came in response to billionaire Elon Musk's charge on Wednesday that "certain oligarchs" were hindering Starlink's launch in India. Bharti-backed OneWeb and Reliance Industries Ltd's satellite internet arm are the other two compa-

nies that have secured satellite internet authorisations from the DoT.

However, the DoT said security assessments for both operators are "currently under way", stressing that the regulatory framework applies uniformly to all satellite communication providers.

"A post is being circulated on social media regarding the fairness of India's regulatory framework for satellite communication services and suggesting that it is being applied in a discriminatory manner," the DoT said. "The suggestion that the framework or its application is unfair or



 Starlink has spent five years complying with every single law and requirement of the government of India, so why still no license

ELON MUSK,
SPACEX FOUNDER AND CEO

discriminatory is baseless and misconceived."

At the India Mobile Congress on Wednesday, SpaceX executive Lauren Dreyer said she hoped Starlink would have received approval to begin services in India by this time next year. She also said the company had al-

ready established 20 facilities in India to process Indian users' data locally.

The DoT said all satellite communication licensees are required to demonstrate compliance with specified security conditions before services can be rolled out. "Under the terms and conditions of li-

cence [sic], every such licensee is required to demonstrate compliance with security conditions," the department said. "This is aimed at ensuring that services provided meet various security requirements to ensure safety of all users and their data."

Mr. Musk, however, doubled down on his criticism on Thursday, amplifying several posts supporting Starlink's launch in India. "Starlink will be of great help to areas of India that have bad or no Internet and even no mobile coverage," he said. "No country has perfect coverage, including America,

but Starlink can fill in the coverage gaps for those who most need it."

In a subsequent post, Mr. Musk named Reliance Industries chairman Mukesh Ambani, asking whether the latter was "the real boss of India".

"Starlink is licensed in over 165 countries and has spent five years complying with every single law and requirement of the government of India, so why still no license," he asked.

Responding to a query at the India Mobile Congress on Thursday on Mr. Musk's remarks, Reliance Jio chairman Akash Ambani declined to comment.

India condemns Saudi airport attacks

Shubhajit Roy & Divya A

New Delhi, October 8

CONDEMNING THE attacks by the Houthis on two airports in Saudi Arabia, India on Thursday said targeting civilian infrastructure is completely “unacceptable”. The Indian Embassy in Riyadh issued an advisory to the Indians in Saudi Arabia to remain alert and vigilant.

The Indian community in the Saudi Kingdom numbers approximately 2.74 million, including skilled and semi-skilled professionals.

This is not the first time in the last seven months, since war in West Asia began, that Delhi issued condemnatory statements and security advisories to warn its citizens to stay safe. Since March this year, at least three such occasions have warranted such statements. The latest statement came amid reports that Yemen’s Iran-aligned Houthis escalated their campaign of strikes against Saudi Arabia, trying to shut down the kingdom’s airspace and oil facilities with missile fire that has killed three people this week.

The Ministry of External Affairs issued a statement: “India condemns the attacks over the past few days targeting Abha International Airport and King Khalid International Airport in

Riyadh, which have resulted in civilian deaths and injuries.”

“The targeting of civilian infrastructure is completely unacceptable. We express our deepest condolences to the families of those who have lost their loved ones... We express solidarity and stand with the people and government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.”

Two people were killed and 28 wounded in an attack at the Abha airport, said Saudi Arabia’s General Authority of Civil Aviation. It said one person was killed and eight others injured in attack on King Khalid airport.

The Indian embassy in Riyadh advised, “In view of the current situation, all Indian nationals in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are advised to remain alert and vigilant, stay indoors as necessary, and follow the instructions issued by local authorities through official channels,” the Mission said.

It advised Indian nationals against circulating or reposting videos or news related to the ongoing events. The 24x7 helpline of Pravasi Bharatiya Sahayata Kendra remains available at toll-free number 8002471234, it said.

The security situation has affected air services between India and Saudi Arabia.

(WITH AGENCY INPUTS FROM RIYADH)

DAYS AFTER INVOKING MECCA PACT TO COUNTER ATTACKS BY IRAN PROXY

Pakistan enters Saudi war against Houthis, sends war jets and troops

PAF aircraft carry out strikes, military says performing in different 'domains'

Express News Service
New Delhi, October 8

DAYS AFTER Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Turkey activated their trilateral military pact, called the Makkah Accord, the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) participated in strikes against Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen, *The New York Times* reported Thursday.

According to a PTI report later Thursday, a senior Pakistan Army general confirmed the presence of Pakistani troops in Saudi Arabia, saying they were performing duties in "multiple capabilities" and "domains", amid increasing attacks in the Gulf kingdom by Yemen's Houthis.

The acknowledgement by



In a screengrab of a video, smoke and flames rise from King Khalid Airport after Houthis said they attacked it, in Riyadh on Thursday. REUTERS

military spokesman Lt Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry came days after Pakistan and Turkiye agreed to deploy their troops in Saudi Arabia under the recently concluded Makkah defence pact, the PTI report said.

The pact, signed by the three countries in August, establishes a framework for col-

lective deterrence and stipulates that an armed attack against any one of them would be regarded as an attack against all. "I can confirm that we, the forces of Pakistan, are already there (in Saudi Arabia). That I can assure you," Lt Gen Chaudhry told CNN in an interview.

According to the PTI report, he did not disclose details of the troop deployment, their capabilities or numbers, saying the information was classified.

Asked whether the troops had been deployed under the Makkah alliance, the spokesman said the trilateral pact "is not something that has come out in a vacuum".

"There is a sustained diplomatic, political, military and people-to-people relationship between Pakistan, Turkiye and Saudi Arabia. So, I can share with you that Pakistani forces, in multiple capabilities and domains, are already there," the report quoted him as saying.

"Whenever there is a military conflict, no participating country starts disclosing how and where it is going to employ its forces," he said, adding that any involvement would be "defensive in nature".

"The objective of this alliance is the defence of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, that will be done," he added.

Meanwhile, Turkish For-

eign Minister Hakan Fidan, according to the PTI report, on Thursday stressed that the trilateral pact is "defensive in nature" and does not authorise attacks on other countries.

Speaking at a press conference in Ankara, Fidan said the pact does not authorise Turkiye to deploy troops to another country's territory to carry out an attack, *Anadolu Agency* reported.

On October 5, *Al Jazeera* and other media outlets in the Gulf region reported that the three countries had agreed to activate "deterrence measures" under the mutual defence pact and rapidly deploy forces to Saudi Arabia to counter attacks by the Houthis.

The *New York Times* detailed the PAF's involvement in a report on how "residents in Saudi Arabia's capital reported multiple explosions Thursday, a day after the Saudi authorities said that Houthi strikes on two major airports in the country had killed three people and injured dozens more".

Houthis claim another strike on airport in Riyadh, warn airlines of 'consequences'

Associated Press

CAIRO

Several explosions were heard in Saudi Arabia's capital of Riyadh on Thursday, including a large blast at the city's international airport, a day after the kingdom said an attack on the airport killed one person and wounded others.

Houthi (Ansar Allah) rebels in neighbouring Yemen claimed responsibility for the new attack on King Khalid International Airport, saying the ballistic missile caused damage but giving no evidence. The



A fighter affiliated with the Houthis firing his machine gun as they advance against Yemeni government troops in Taiz. AFP

Saudis had no immediate comment about the claim.

The spokesperson for the Saudi-led coalition fighting the Houthis, Major General Turki al-Malki,

said they intercepted and destroyed two ballistic missiles launched by the Houthis toward Riyadh, along with a ballistic missile fired toward Khamis

Mushait, in the southwest near the Yemen border.

The Houthis have repeatedly claimed attacks against Saudi airports, military and oil facilities in recent days. Early on Thursday, the rebels warned global airlines "for the last time" about the potential consequences of operating in Saudi airspace, which it called a theatre for its military operations.

King Khalid International Airport "closed again," the Flightradar24 monitor said on Thursday afternoon on X not long after the blasts.

WASHINGTON

Trump says U.S. will not resume strikes on Iran before elections



AP

U.S. President Donald Trump said on Thursday that he will not order a resumption of military strikes on Iran before the November 3 midterm elections in the United States. Mr. Trump has hinted that he was confident that an endgame to the war could come in the days before or after the election. AP

ANKARA

Turkish state not doing enough to pursue peace process, says PKK



AFP

The Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) on Thursday accused the Turkish state of doing little to pursue the peace process that began in 2024, despite the Kurdish group having withdrawn all its combat forces from Türkiye. Turkish Parliament in August voted through a law offering limited amnesty for militants from PKK. AFP