

The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India

# ASSOCHAM VOICE



## Growth Pillars



Make in India



Ease of Doing Business



MSME Growth



Digital Economy



Sustainability and Environment





# Index

|   |                                    |    |
|---|------------------------------------|----|
|    | President's Prologue.....          | 1  |
|    | Secretary General's Prologue ..... | 3  |
|    | Leadership Speaks .....            | 4  |
|   | Economic Updates.....              | 11 |
|  | National Initiatives .....         | 16 |
|  | Regional Initiatives .....         | 25 |
|  | International Initiatives.....     | 29 |
|  | Leadership Outreach.....           | 34 |
|  | In the News .....                  | 35 |
|  | In Social Media .....              | 38 |
|  | Latest Publications.....           | 39 |



# President's *Prologue*

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**Nirmal K Minda**

**T**he Union Budget 2026–27 has been presented at a time of renewed confidence in India's growth trajectory and for ASSOCHAM, it also marks a moment of leadership transition and strategic renewal. As the nation charts its economic priorities for the year ahead, our Chamber is equally focused on sharpening its role as a trusted voice of Indian enterprise.

This Budget sends strong signals around infrastructure-led growth, manufacturing competitiveness, digital transformation, and MSME empowerment. These are areas where ASSOCHAM has consistently engaged with policymakers and industry alike, and we welcome the government's continued focus on capital expenditure, innovation, skilling, and ease of doing business.

In parallel, the India–EU FTA opens new access to high-value markets and encourages higher standards, sustainability, and innovation. The deepening

trade partnership with the United States adds momentum through stronger technology collaboration, resilient supply chains, and greater investment flows.

At this important juncture, ASSOCHAM remains committed to deepening its role as a bridge between government and industry. Through ASSOCHAM Voice, we bring forward informed perspectives, sectoral insights, and practical takeaways to help our members navigate policy shifts and seize emerging opportunities.

As an apex chamber we aim to convert Budget announcements into actionable intelligence for our members across manufacturing, finance, infrastructure, energy, agri-business, startups, and the digital economy. Our objective is not only to interpret policy, but to help businesses align strategy, investment, and innovation with India's national priorities.



# Secretary General's *Prologue*



**Saurabh Sanyal**

The Union Budget 2026–27 showcase coincided with the beginning of my tenure as Secretary General of ASSOCHAM, making this not only a significant policy milestone for the country, but also a meaningful starting point for me personally. It is fitting that this new chapter begins on Budget Day, as both the nation and ASSOCHAM look ahead to a future shaped by competitiveness, capability, and collaboration.

This year's Budget lays out a clear and pragmatic roadmap for India's next phase of growth. The continued thrust on capital expenditure and infrastructure development will drive demand across construction, steel, cement, logistics, and core industries, while also improving connectivity and productivity. The strong policy focus on manufacturing and domestic

value chains further reinforces India's ambition to integrate more deeply into global supply networks and enhance its export competitiveness.

Equally significant is the emphasis on MSMEs, which remain the backbone of India's economy. Measures aimed at improving access to credit, supporting technology upgradation, and simplifying compliance will strengthen entrepreneurship, formalisation, and job creation. For smaller businesses, this Budget signals both opportunity and support to scale with confidence.

The Budget provides a strong platform for growth through sustained capital expenditure, infrastructure development, manufacturing scale-up, MSME empowerment, digitalisation, and skilling. These priorities improve productivity and competitiveness at

home. At the same time, the India–EU FTA and the India–US Trade Agreement widen the horizon for Indian industry by offering greater market access, deeper technology collaboration, and stronger integration into global value chains.

As I assume this responsibility, my priority is to make ASSOCHAM even more sector-responsive, policy-relevant, and outcome-oriented. The Budget provides a strong framework, but its real success will depend on how effectively industry translates intent into execution.

I look forward to working closely with our members, councils, and partners to strengthen ASSOCHAM's role as a catalyst for enterprise growth, policy reform, and national development.

# From aspiration to achievement: Reform express gains momentum in Budget 2026–27

Budget 2026–27 reflects a constructive policy dialogue between government and stakeholders

- By Nirmal Minda, President ASSOCHAM

There is a familiar proverb that says, “The journey matters as much as the destination.” India’s Union Budget 2026–27 reflects this philosophy well. It is not merely a collection of announcements, but a continuation of a reform journey what is aptly described as the *Reform Express*, steadily moving India from aspiration to achievement and from potential to performance.



This Budget can be viewed through five key pillars identified by Assocham — Make in India, Ease of Doing Business, MSME Growth, Digital Economy, and Sustainability & Environment. Importantly, Budget 2026–27 delivers meaningfully across each of these pillars, reflecting a constructive alignment between policy priorities and industry feedback.

At a time when the global economic environment is marked by uncertainty, fragmented supply chains and rising geopolitical risks, the Budget sends a reassuring signal of stability, continuity

and confidence. It reinforces the government’s commitment to growth through public investment, structural reforms and inclusive development.

## Make in India – Public Investment as the Anchor of Growth

One of the strongest pillars of the Budget is the continued emphasis on public capital expenditure as the backbone of the Make in India strategy. Over the past decade, public capex has increased more than fivefold, rising from around ₹2 lakh crore in 2014–15 to ₹11.2 lakh crore in 2025–26. In Budget 2026–27, this has been further raised to ₹12.2 lakh crore.

This sustained investment push reflects the government’s belief in infrastructure as a growth multiplier. Allocations across transport, urban development, power and logistics-linked infrastructure underscore the role of public spending in crowding in private investment, creating jobs and improving productivity.

Assocham has consistently emphasised the importance of predictability in public investment. The continued capex momentum responds to this need and strengthens confidence in India’s manufacturing and infrastructure growth trajectory.

## Ease of Doing Business – Reform Express in Action

The Budget speech highlights

that over 350 reforms have been undertaken in recent years, spanning GST simplification, labour codes, quality standards and compliance rationalisation. Budget 2026–27 builds on this momentum rather than resetting the agenda.

Incremental but meaningful reforms continue through simplification of tax laws, time-bound dispute resolution mechanisms, and reduced compliance friction. The move towards a new Income Tax framework, faster Advance Pricing Agreements and rationalisation of transaction-related taxes reflects industry feedback on the need for certainty and efficiency.

From Assocham’s standpoint, such reforms are critical in translating entrepreneurial intent into executable business decisions. The Reform



Express is clearly not slowing down, it is, in fact, gathering pace.

### MSME Growth – Converting Potential into Performance

The Budget places strong emphasis on MSMEs as engines of growth, exports and employment. A key announcement is the ₹10,000 crore SME Growth Fund, aimed at supporting scale-up and job creation.

Equally important is the Budget’s three-pronged MSME approach of equity support, liquidity support and professional support, recognising that sustainable MSME growth requires more than access to credit alone.

Liquidity measures include further strengthening of the Trade Receivables Discounting System (TReDS), mandating its use for CPSE purchases, providing credit guarantee support for invoice discounting, linking GeM with TReDS, and enabling securitisation of receivables. These steps directly address working capital constraints and delayed payments which are long-standing concerns raised by the industry.



### Digital Economy – Enabling Services, Skills and Infrastructure

The Budget reinforces the role of the digital economy as a driver of

productivity, services-led growth and employment. The proposed Education-to-Employment and Enterprises Committee seeks to align skills with emerging market needs, particularly in services and technology-enabled sectors.

A significant industry-positive measure under this pillar is the tax holiday extended till 2047 for foreign companies offering global cloud services using Indian data centres. This provides a strong incentive for investment in digital infrastructure, positioning India as a competitive hub for data centres, cloud services and digital platforms.

Assocham has consistently advocated greater focus on digital infrastructure and services competitiveness. The Budget’s approach supports this vision by combining skilling, services growth and digital investment incentives.

### Sustainability & Environment – Growth with Responsibility

The Budget integrates sustainability firmly into the growth framework. The ₹20,000 crore Carbon Capture, Utilisation and Storage (CCUS) programme targets hard-to-abate sectors such as power, steel, cement and chemicals, enabling emissions reduction while supporting industrial activity.

Complemented by continued investments in clean energy, efficient transport systems and green infrastructure, the Budget reflects a balanced approach, recognising that economic expansion and environmental responsibility must progress together.

### Listening to Industry, Strengthening Partnership

Overall, Budget 2026–27 reflects



a constructive policy dialogue between government and stakeholders. Several Assocham recommendations have found resonance in the Budget’s design and priorities.

However, this does not imply that all challenges have been resolved. Execution, coordination across levels of government and timely implementation will determine outcomes. Still, the direction of policy is clear and aligned with the needs of a growing economy.

### Conclusion: Reform with Resolve

Overall, Budget 2026–27 reinforces the idea that reform is a journey, not a destination. By delivering across the five Assocham identified pillars, the Budget seeks to convert India’s vast potential into measurable performance.

With this Budget, the *Reform Express* is firmly on track, carrying India from aspiration to achievement and from promise to performance.

*(Published in The Hindu Business Line)*

# Union Budget 2026: Translating intent into execution

- By Nirmal K Minda, ASSOCHAM

**M**icro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and manufacturing remain central to India's growth strategy, contributing nearly 30% to the country's gross domestic product (GDP) and over 45% to merchandise exports. Over the past decade, reforms in ease of doing business, digital public infrastructure, and credit delivery have supported higher formalisation and market access. Initiatives aimed at simplifying compliance, expanding digital payments, and strengthening credit flows have helped enterprises integrate more effectively into domestic and global value chains.

However, regulatory complexity, compliance costs, delayed payments, and uneven state-level implementation continue to constrain investment and scale, particularly for micro and small enterprises. Manufacturing faces persistent challenges related to logistics efficiency, cost competitiveness, and access to long-term finance. Against this backdrop, the Union Budget 2026-27 assumes critical importance in translating reform intent into execution-led growth for MSMEs and manufacturing.



## Industry Demands

Ahead of the Union Budget 2026-27, experts and industry stakeholders underscored the need to strengthen asset monetisation through a single-point approval mechanism, ensure greater regulatory predictability, and improve transparent, fair-value disclosures to attract long-term private capital. It was emphasised that getting more state involvement in national infrastructure and monetisation pipelines through incentives, technical support, and harmonised approval systems is essential to improve fiscal efficiency and project execution.

For MSMEs and exporters, improving fiscal predictability has been a key priority, including timely GST and RoDTEP refunds, strict enforcement of payment timelines by government entities, and the introduction of a tariff-impact relief mechanism for vulnerable sectors. Accelerating dispute resolution in infrastructure and PPP projects through a standing Vivad-se-Vishwas-type framework to unlock stalled assets and reduce contingent liabilities was one of the Budget recommendations from the industry.

On financing, there was a call for expanding long-term credit availability for MSMEs and emerging sectors through targeted refinance and blended finance mechanisms in coordination with SIDBI and major NBFCs. Greater state-level regulatory alignment in land approvals, labour compliances, and local taxation was recommended to reduce procedural frictions and encourage private investment in industrial corridors and logistics parks. Simplifying customs procedures for low-value shipments, strengthening bonded



warehousing rules, and enabling tariff engineering for high-value manufacturing segments were also emphasised to support exports and competitiveness.

## Budgetary Provisions

The Union Budget has introduced a range of targeted measures aligned with these priorities. For MSMEs, a dedicated INR 10,000 crore SME Growth Fund has been announced to support expansion and innovation. The government will facilitate professional institutions to develop "Corporate Mitras," particularly in Tier-II and Tier-III towns, to help MSMEs meet compliance requirements at affordable costs.

To address delayed payments, TReDS has been mandated as the transaction settlement platform for all MSME purchases by CPSEs, supported by CGTMSE-backed credit guarantees for invoice discounting. Linking GeM with TReDS and enabling securitisation of TReDS receivables aims to improve liquidity and create a secondary market for MSME receivables. The removal of the INR 10 lakh value cap on courier



exports is expected to benefit small exporters.

Ease-of-doing-business reforms include lower TCS rates under the Liberalised Remittance Scheme, simplified TDS provisions, automated processes for lower or nil deduction certificates, extended timelines for return revision, and decriminalisation of selected compliance failures. Trade facilitation has been strengthened through a single digital window for cargo approvals, electronic sealing of export cargo, recognition of trusted importers, and rollout of the Customs Integrated System.

Manufacturing-focused measures include sector-specific initiatives across biopharma, electronics, textiles, chemicals, semiconductors, defence, and infrastructure equipment. These include support for container manufacturing, revival of legacy industrial clusters, chemical parks, rare earth permanent magnets, Semiconductor Mission 2.0, and multiple duty exemptions for critical inputs and components across sectors.

### Implications

Collectively, these measures signal a shift from incremental reform to systemic enablement. For MSMEs, improved liquidity through TReDS, credit guarantees, and secondary markets for receivables can reduce working capital stress and encourage formal expansion. Compliance support through Corporate Mitras and simplified tax procedures is likely to lower transaction costs for smaller enterprises.

Ease-of-doing-business reforms across taxation, customs, and dispute resolution enhance predictability and reduce administrative friction, improving investor confidence. Manufacturing provisions strengthen domestic value chains, support higher value addition, and improve logistics efficiency. Recognition of trusted operators and factory-gate export clearance can reduce turnaround times and improve competitiveness.

The effectiveness of these reforms will depend on coordinated

implementation across ministries and States, timely execution, and consistent engagement with industry.

### Conclusion

The Union Budget 2026-27 reflects a comprehensive effort to align MSME growth, ease of doing business, and manufacturing competitiveness within a unified reform framework. By addressing financing constraints, compliance complexity, and infrastructure bottlenecks, the Budget moves decisively from intent toward execution. ASSOCHAM is proud that several of its long-standing policy recommendations have found reflection in the Budget and appreciates the government's openness to industry-led advocacy. If implemented effectively, these measures can help MSMEs and manufacturing emerge as durable engines of investment, exports, and employment in the coming years.

*(Published in The Economic Times)*



# OPINION | Union Budget signals fiscal prudence and growth-oriented reforms

- By *Nirmal K Minda, President, ASSOCHAM*

The first Union Budget of the second quarter of the 21st century indicates the government's vision to continue the path of fiscal prudence. As presented by the Union Finance Minister, the Revised Estimates of the fiscal deficit for 2025–26 have been estimated at par with the Budget Estimates for 2025–26 at 4.4 per cent of GDP. In line with the new fiscal prudence path of debt consolidation, the fiscal deficit in 2026–27 (BE) is estimated to be 4.3 per cent of GDP.

It is proposed to increase the Central Government's capital expenditure (capex) for the financial year 2026–27 to ₹12.2 lakh crore, which is around 9 per cent over the current year's budgetary proposal of ₹11.2 lakh crore. The government will continue to focus on infrastructure creation in cities with populations of over five lakhs, including tier-2 and tier-3 cities that have expanded into key growth centres. Several initiatives have been announced to strengthen infrastructure, which

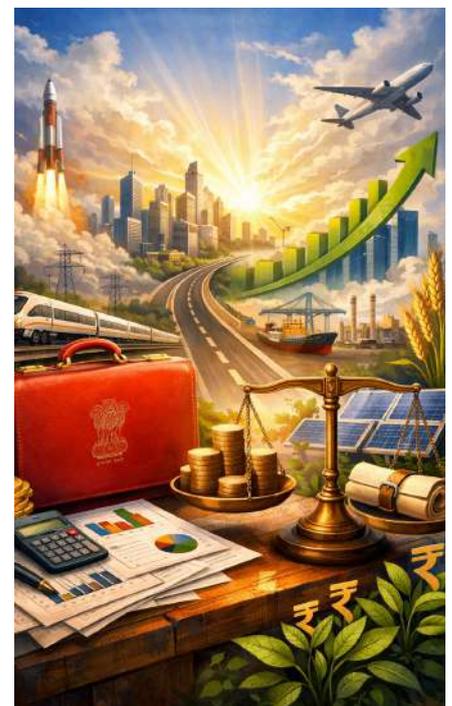
aligns with ASSOCHAM's pre-Budget submission that underlines the importance of prioritising high-quality capital expenditure in logistics, transport, etc., to sustain productivity-driven growth.

## Financial Sector

While India's financial system is becoming more resilient, diversified, and inclusive, it faces new challenges emanating from dynamic forces. To continue on the path of reform-led growth of this sector, a High-Level Committee on Banking for Viksit Bharat has been proposed to be set up to comprehensively review the sector and align it with India's next phase of growth, while safeguarding financial stability, inclusion, and consumer protection.

A comprehensive review of the Foreign Exchange Management (Non-Debt Instruments) Rules to create a more contemporary, user-friendly framework for foreign investments, consistent with India's

evolving economic priorities, has also been proposed in the Union Budget this year.



*(Published in Money Control)*



# Building the future: Infrastructure and sustainability at the core of Budget 2026

- Nirmal K Minda, President ASSOCHAM



India's Union Budget 2026-27 takes wisdom from a simple proverb "A strong house needs a strong foundation." It places infrastructure and sustainability at the heart of economic strategy, recognising that strong foundations and a clean future must grow together, not in isolation.

At a time when global supply chains are uncertain and climate risks are rising, India's approach is to invest boldly in infrastructure while steering growth on a sustainable path. The Budget speech underlines this dual objective of accelerating economic growth and ensuring long-term energy security and environmental responsibility.

## Infrastructure: The Engine That Keeps Growth Moving

Infrastructure has quietly become India's most reliable growth driver. Over the last decade, public capital expenditure has risen sharply from about ₹2 lakh crore in 2014-15 to ₹11.2

lakh crore in 2025-26. This year, the government has raised it further to ₹12.2 lakh crore.

This is more than just a number. Roads, railways, ports, urban infrastructure and logistics networks do more than just creating physical assets. They reduce transaction costs, improve productivity and create jobs across sectors. The Expenditure Profile also reflects sustained allocations towards transport, urban development, power and logistics-linked infrastructure, reinforcing infrastructure's role as a key multiplier for economic activity. This sustained capex push reflects the importance of predictability and continuity in public investment, an area that industry has consistently highlighted.

## Logistics and Connectivity: Addressing a Long-Standing Constraint

High logistics costs have long been a concern for Indian industry affecting competitiveness across manufacturing, agriculture and exports. Estimates suggest that logistics costs in India remain significantly higher than global benchmarks, underscoring the need for a decisive shift towards multimodal and efficient transport systems.

The Budget's announcements on new dedicated freight corridors, operationalisation of 20 national waterways, and promotion of coastal and inland shipping mark important steps in this direction. These measures directly support faster, cheaper and more sustainable movement of goods, especially for

manufacturing and export-oriented sectors. This is a clear recognition that improving competitiveness begins not at the factory gate, but on the road, rail and waterway beyond it.



## Urban Infrastructure and City-Led Growth

India's growth story is increasingly urban. While metropolitan cities remain important, Tier-II and Tier-III cities are emerging as new centres of manufacturing, services and innovation. ASSOCHAM has consistently advocated strengthening urban infrastructure beyond the largest metros.

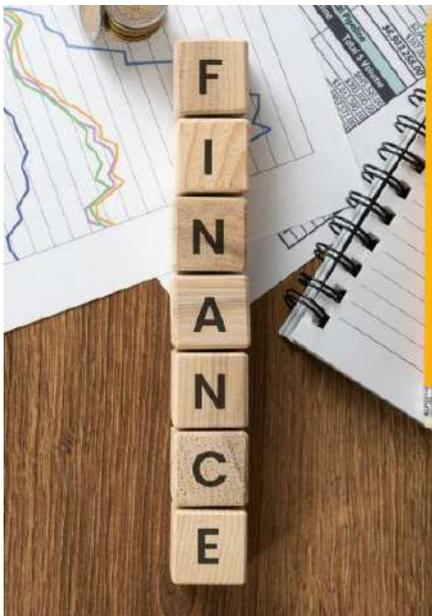
The Budget's focus on **City Economic Regions**, backed by multi-year funding linked to reform outcomes, signals a shift towards integrated urban planning. Better transport systems, utilities, housing and digital infrastructure in these cities can unlock productivity, attract investment and generate local employment.

## Financing Infrastructure with Confidence

One of the challenges highlighted by

industry has been risk perception in infrastructure projects, particularly during the construction phase. The proposal to set up an Infrastructure Risk Guarantee Fund, offering partial credit guarantees, responds to this concern in a pragmatic manner.

Alongside continued asset monetisation through InvITs and REITs, this approach reflects an understanding that infrastructure financing must balance public investment with private participation. Risk-sharing mechanisms such as these help crowd in long-term capital while maintaining fiscal prudence.



### Sustainability: Integrating Growth with Responsibility

Sustainability is no longer a parallel



agenda; it is now central to economic planning. ASSOCHAM has consistently emphasised that India's transition to a low-carbon pathway must be calibrated, especially for energy-intensive and hard-to-abate sectors.

The ₹20,000 crore Carbon Capture, Utilisation and Storage (CCUS) programme announced in the Budget addresses this need. Covering sectors such as power, steel, cement and chemicals, CCUS enables emissions reduction without undermining industrial growth.

### Sustainable Transport and Cleaner Mobility

The Budget also advances sustainability through transport choices. Proposals for seven high-speed rail corridors, expansion of inland waterways and incentives for modal shift recognise that cleaner transport is essential for a growing economy.

Rail and water transport are more energy-efficient and less polluting than road-based systems. Over time, these investments will reduce emissions, cut fuel imports and ease congestion—outcomes that align closely with industry's call for green and efficient logistics.

### Looking Ahead

From ASSOCHAM's standpoint, Budget 2026–27 reflects meaningful alignment between policy direction and industry priorities in areas such as infrastructure expansion, logistics reform, risk-sharing mechanisms and sustainable growth pathways. Several long-standing recommendations have found space in the Budget's design and intent.

The real test, as always, will lie in execution. Timely implementation, coordination with states and sustained momentum will be critical. Yet the direction is clear. India is choosing to build not just faster, but smarter and cleaner.

To return to the opening proverb, a strong house does not stand on foundations alone, it also needs foresight. This Budget takes important steps in that direction, laying the groundwork for an economy that is resilient, competitive and sustainable.

*(Published in The Fortune)*



## Trends in Economic Performance (First Advance Estimates of GDP for FY26)

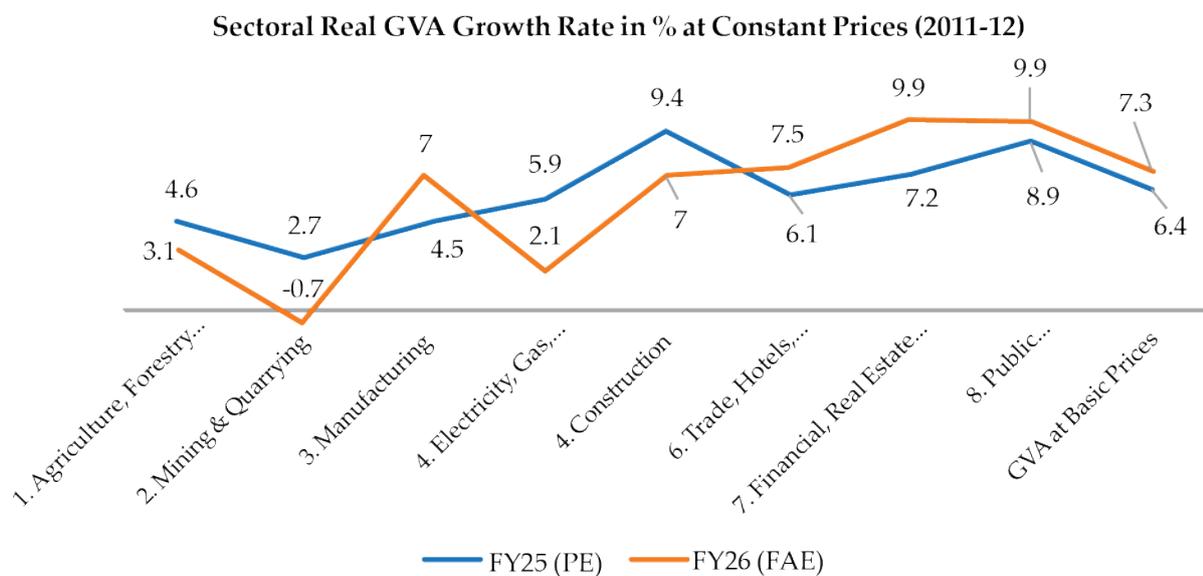
The National Statistics Office (NSO), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), has released the First Advance Estimates of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for the Financial Year (FY) 2025-26. Here are the key highlights:

In the Financial Year 2025-26 (FY 25-26), **Real GDP** is projected to increase by 7.4%, while **Nominal GDP** has recorded a growth rate of 8.0%. Real GDP (GDP at Constant Prices) is estimated to reach INR 201.90 lakh crore in FY 2025-26, against the Provisional Estimates (PE) of GDP for FY 2024-25 of INR 187.97 lakh crore. Nominal GDP (GDP at Current Prices) is estimated to attain a level of INR 357.14 lakh crore in FY 2025-26, against INR 330.68 lakh crore in FY 2024-25.

**Real Private Final Consumption Expenditure (PFCE)** is pegged to attain a growth rate of 7.0% during FY 2025-26. **Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF)** is estimated to have 7.8% growth rate at Constant Prices during FY 2025-26, compared to 7.1% growth rate in previous FY.

Real GVA is estimated at INR 184.50 lakh crore in the FY 2025-26, against the Provisional Estimates (PE) for the FY 2024-25 of INR 171.87 lakh crore, showing a growth rate of 7.3%. Nominal GVA is estimated to reach INR 323.48 lakh crore during FY 2025-26, against INR 300.22 lakh crore in FY 2024-25, showing a growth rate of 7.7%. The following points provide information about the sectoral growth rate of real GVA:

- The Construction sector grew by 7.0% in FY26 compared to 9.4% in FY25.
- Public Administration, Defence & Other Services grew by 9.9% in FY26 compared to 8.9% in FY25.
- Financial, Real Estate & Professional Services grew by 9.9% in FY26 compared to 7.2% in FY25.
- Trade, Hotels, Transport, Communication & Services related to Broadcasting grew by 7.5% in FY26 compared to 6.1% in FY25.
- Electricity, Gas, Water Supply & Other Utility Services grew by 2.1% in FY26 compared to 5.9% in FY25.
- The Agriculture, Livestock, Forestry & Fishing sectors grew by 3.1% in FY26 compared to 4.6% in FY25.
- The Manufacturing sector grew by 7.0% in FY26 compared to 4.5% in FY25.
- The Mining & Quarrying sector contracted to -0.7% in FY26 compared to 2.7% in FY25.



(Graph 1: Sectoral Real GVA Growth Rate in % at Constant Prices (2011-12)  
(Source: MoSPI, Govt. of India)

## Performance of the Industry

In December 2025, the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) growth rate stood at 7.8% compared to the 7.2% growth recorded in November 2025. This growth was notably higher than the 7.8% expansion seen in December of the previous year. The high growth in the Index of Industrial Production was mainly driven by manufacturing (8.1%), mining (6.8%) and electricity (6.3%).

Manufacturing - the sector with the highest weight in the index - grew by 8.1%, with 16 out of 23 manufacturing industry groups showing positive growth. The top three positive contributors for the month of December 2025 are - "Manufacture of basic metals" (12.7%), "Manufacture of motor vehicles, trailers and semi-trailers" (33.5%) and "Manufacture of pharmaceuticals, medicinal chemical and botanical products" (10.2%).

| Period (2024-25) | Mining  | Manufacturing | Electricity | General |
|------------------|---------|---------------|-------------|---------|
|                  | (14.37) | (77.63)       | (7.99)      | (100)   |
| December         | 2.7     | 3.7           | 6.2         | 3.7     |
| January          | 4.44    | 5.50          | 2.44        | 5.01    |
| February         | 1.60    | 2.80          | 3.60        | 2.70    |
| March            | 0.40    | 3.00          | 6.30        | 3.00    |
| Period (2025-26) | -       | -             | -           | -       |
| April            | (-)0.20 | 3.10          | 1.70        | 2.60    |
| May              | (-)0.1  | 2.60          | -5.80       | 1.20    |
| June             | (-)8.7  | 3.7           | (-)1.2      | 1.5     |
| July             | (-)7.2  | 6.0           | 3.7         | 4.3     |
| August           | 6.0     | 3.8           | 4.1         | 4.0     |
| September        | -0.4    | 5.6           | 3.1         | 4.6     |
| October          | -1.8    | 2.0           | -6.9        | 0.5     |
| November         | 5.8     | 8.5           | -1.5        | 7.2     |
| December*        | 6.8     | 8.1           | 6.3         | 7.8     |

(Table 1: Sectoral Performance of Industries (Base 2011- 12)) (% change, Y-O-Y)  
(Source: MoSPI, Govt. of India)

| Period (2024-25) | Primary Goods | Capital Goods | Intermediate Goods | Infrastructure/ Construction Goods | Consumer Durables | Consumer Non-durables |
|------------------|---------------|---------------|--------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| December         | 3.82          | 10.40         | 6.38               | 1.73                               | 8.30              | -7.46                 |
| January          | 5.51          | 7.85          | 5.19               | 6.97                               | 7.25              | -0.24                 |
| February         | 2.80          | 8.20          | 1.00               | 6.80                               | 3.70              | -2.10                 |
| March            | 3.10          | 2.40          | 2.30               | 8.80                               | 6.60              | -4.70                 |
| Period (2025-26) | -             | -             | -                  | -                                  | -                 |                       |
| April            | -0.20         | 14.00         | 4.90               | 4.70                               | 6.20              | -2.70                 |
| May              | -1.90         | 14.10         | 3.50               | 6.30                               | -0.70             | -2.40                 |
| June             | -2.5          | 3.0           | 5.5                | 6.7                                | 2.8               | -0.90                 |
| July             | -0.7          | 6.8           | 6.1                | 13.7                               | 7.3               | 0.5                   |
| August           | 5.2           | 4.4           | 5.0                | 10.6                               | 3.5               | -6.3                  |
| September        | 1.3           | 5.4           | 6.3                | 10.6                               | 10                | -0.3                  |
| October          | -0.6          | 2.4           | 0.9                | 7.1                                | -0.5              | -4.4                  |

|          |     |      |     |      |      |     |
|----------|-----|------|-----|------|------|-----|
| November | 2.2 | 10.1 | 7.4 | 13.0 | 11.2 | 8.0 |
| December | 4.4 | 8.1  | 7.5 | 12.1 | 12.3 | 8.3 |

(Table 2: Index of Industrial Production (Use Based Classification)) (% change, Y-O-Y)  
(Source: MoSPI, Govt. of India)

## Performance of the Core Industry

The combined Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI) increased by 3.7% (provisional) in December 2025 compared to the Index in December 2024.

- **Coal:** Coal production increased by 3.6% in December 2025 over December 2024.
- **Crude Oil:** Crude Oil production declined by 5.6% in December 2025 over December 2024.
- **Natural Gas:** Natural Gas production declined by 4.4% in December 2025 over December 2024.
- **Petroleum Refinery Products:** Petroleum Refinery production declined by 1.0% in December 2025 over December 2024.
- **Fertilizers:** Fertilizer production increased by 4.1% in December 2025 over December 2024.
- **Steel:** Steel production increased by 6.9% in December 2025 over December 2024.
- **Cement:** Cement production increased by 13.5% in December 2025 over December 2024.

**Electricity:** Electricity generation increased by 5.3% in December 2025 over December 2024.

| Sector        | Coal         | Crude Oil   | Natural Gas | Refinery Products | Fertilizers | Steel        | Cement      | Electricity  | Overall Growth |
|---------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|----------------|
| <b>Weight</b> | <b>10.33</b> | <b>8.98</b> | <b>6.88</b> | <b>28.04</b>      | <b>2.63</b> | <b>17.92</b> | <b>5.37</b> | <b>19.85</b> | <b>100.00</b>  |
| Dec-24        | 5.3          | 0.6         | -1.8        | 2.8               | 1.7         | 7.3          | 10.3        | 6.2          | 5.1            |
| Jan-25        | 4.6          | -1.1        | -1.5        | 8.3               | 3.0         | 4.7          | 14.3        | 2.3          | 5.1            |
| Feb-25        | 1.7          | -5.2        | -6.0        | 0.8               | 10.2        | 6.9          | 10.7        | 3.6          | 3.4            |
| Mar-25        | 1.6          | -1.9        | -12.7       | 0.2               | 8.8         | 8.7          | 12.2        | 7.5          | 4.5            |
| Apr-25        | 3.5          | -2.8        | -0.9        | -4.5              | -4.2        | 4.4          | 6.3         | 1.7          | 1.0            |
| May-25        | 2.8          | -1.8        | -3.6        | 1.1               | -5.9        | 7.4          | 9.7         | -4.7         | 1.2            |
| Jun-25        | -6.8         | -1.2        | -2.8        | 3.4               | -1.2        | 9.7          | 8.2         | -1.2         | 2.2            |
| Jul-25        | -12.3        | -1.3        | -3.2        | -1.1              | 2.0         | 16.6         | 11.6        | 3.7          | 3.7            |
| Aug-25        | 11.4         | 2.4         | -2.2        | 3.0               | 4.6         | 13.6         | 5.4         | 4.1          | 6.5            |
| Sep-25        | -1.2         | -1.3        | -3.8        | -3.7              | 1.6         | 14.4         | 5.0         | 3.1          | 3.3            |
| Oct-25        | -8.5         | -1.2        | -5.0        | 4.6               | 7.4         | 5.9          | 5.2         | -6.9         | -0.1           |
| Nov-25        | 2.1          | -3.2        | -2.5        | -0.9              | 5.6         | 6.7          | 14.6        | -1.5         | 2.1            |
| Dec-25*       | 3.6          | -5.6        | -4.4        | -1.0              | 4.1         | 6.9          | 13.5        | 5.3          | 3.7            |

(Table 3: Growth in Eight Core Infrastructure Industries) (% change, Y-o-Y) (\*Provisional)  
(Source: Central Statistical Organization (CSO))

## Inflation Management

Year-on-year inflation rate based on All India Consumer Price Index (CPI) for the month of December, 2025 over December 2024 is 1.33% (Provisional). There is an increase of 62 basis points in headline inflation of December 2025 in comparison to November 2025. Year-on-year inflation rate based on All India Consumer Food Price Index (CFPI) for the month of December 2025 over December 2024 is -2.71% (Provisional). Corresponding inflation rates for rural and urban are -3.08% and -2.09%, respectively.

The annual rate of inflation based on All India Wholesale Price Index (WPI) number is 0.83% (provisional) for the month of December 2025 (over December 2024). Positive rate of inflation in December 2025 is primarily due to increase in prices of other manufacturing, minerals, manufacture of machinery and equipment, manufacture of food products and textiles etc. The month over month change in WPI for the month of December 2025 stood at 0.71% as compared to November 2025.

## Monetary Policy

The RBI MPC unanimously kept the policy repo rate unchanged at 5.25%, with the SDF at 5.00% and the MSF/Bank Rate at 5.50%, while retaining a neutral stance; one member preferred an accommodative shift. Real GDP is estimated to grow 7.4% in 2025-26, supported by resilient services, agriculture and a revival in manufacturing, despite weak net external demand. High-frequency indicators point to steady consumption and investment momentum. CPI inflation remained subdued at 0.7% in November and 1.3% in December 2025. FY26 inflation is projected at 2.1%, with Q1 and Q2 FY27 inflation at 4.0% and 4.2%, respectively.

| Variable                        | Rates  |
|---------------------------------|--------|
| Polio Repo Rate                 | 5.25%  |
| Standing Deposit Facility Rate  | 5.00%  |
| Marginal Standing Facility Rate | 5.50%  |
| Bank Rate                       | 5.50%  |
| Fixed Reverse Repo Rate         | 3.35%  |
| Cash Reserve Ratio              | 3.00%  |
| Statutory Liquidity Ratio       | 18.00% |

(Table 4: RBI Rates (as on 9 February 2026))  
(Source: Reserve Bank of India, RBI)

## Foreign Trade

India's total exports (Merchandise and Services combined) for December 2025\* is estimated at \$74.01 Billion, registering a negative growth of (-)1.01% vis-à-vis December 2024. Total imports (Merchandise and Services combined) for December 2025\* are estimated at \$80.94 Billion, registering a positive growth of 6.17% vis-à-vis December 2024. India's total exports during April-December 2025\* is estimated at \$634.26 Billion registering a positive growth of 4.33%. Total imports during April-December 2025\* are estimated at \$730.84 Billion, registering a growth of 4.95%.

- Merchandise exports during December 2025 were \$38.51 Billion as compared to \$37.80 Billion in December 2024.
- Merchandise imports during December 2025 were \$63.55 Billion as compared to \$58.43 Billion in December 2024.
- Merchandise exports during April-December 2025 were \$330.29 Billion as compared to \$322.41 Billion during April-December 2024.
- Merchandise imports during April-December 2025 were \$578.61 Billion as compared to \$546.36 Billion during April-December 2024.

- The estimated value of services export for December 2025\* is \$35.50 Billion as compared to \$36.97 Billion in December 2024.
- The estimated value of services imports for December 2025\* is \$17.38 Billion as compared to \$17.80 Billion in December 2024.
- The estimated value of service exports during April-December 2025\* is \$303.97 Billion as compared to \$285.53 Billion in April-December 2024.
- The estimated value of service imports during April-December 2025\* is \$152.23 Billion as compared to \$150.01 Billion in April-December 2024.

|   |         | April-December 2025 | April-December 2024 |
|---|---------|---------------------|---------------------|
|   |         | (USD Billion)       | (USD Billion)       |
| <b>Merchandise</b>                              | Exports | 330.29              | 330.29              |
|   | Imports | 578.61              | 578.61              |
| <b>Services*</b>                                | Exports | 303.97              | 303.97              |
|   | Imports | 152.23              | 152.23              |
| <b>Overall Trade (Merchandise + Services) *</b> | Exports | 634.26              | 634.26              |
|   | Imports | 730.84              | 730.84              |
| <b>Trade Balance</b>                            |         | <b>-96.58</b>       | <b>-96.58</b>       |

(Table 5: Trade during April-December 2025\*)

(\*Note: The latest data for the services sector released by RBI is for December 2025)



(L-R) Mr. Saurabh Sanyal, SG ASSOCHAM; Mr. Pradeep Aggarwal, Chairman Real estate ASSOCHAM and Signature Global, Founder and Chairman; Mr. Nirmal K Minda, President ASSOCHAM and Chairman UNO Minda Group; Sandeep Chaufla, Chairman Direct Taxes ASSOCHAM and PwC Partner; Pratik Jain, Chairman Indirect Taxes ASSOCHAM and PwC Partner

## Union Budget 2026–27

**A**SSOCHAM calls the Union Budget 2026–27 as a forward-looking and reform-driven Budget that strengthens the foundations of India’s medium- to long-term economic growth. The Budget reflects several key policy priorities consistently highlighted by industry, particularly the need for sustained public investment, manufacturing-led expansion, MSME scale-up and a simpler, more predictable regulatory framework.

ASSOCHAM noted that the sharp increase in capital expenditure to ₹12.2 lakh crore, along with new freight corridors, national waterways and city economic region development, directly addresses industry’s concerns around infrastructure gaps and logistics costs. The focus on developing city economic regions, especially in Tier II and Tier III cities,



will help unlock agglomeration benefits, spur regional growth and create new urban engines of economic activity. These measures will have a strong multiplier effect on growth and are expected to crowd in private investment and support long-term productivity growth.

ASSOCHAM also views the Budget’s emphasis on cluster-based manufacturing across semiconductors, biopharma, chemicals, textiles, capital goods and rare earths as a decisive step towards deepening domestic value addition and reducing import

dependence. The proposal to establish dedicated rare earth corridors in mineral-rich states such as Odisha, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu is particularly significant for strengthening strategic supply chains and reducing critical import vulnerabilities. Initiatives such as ISM 2.0 and Biopharma Shakti are expected to strengthen India’s position in strategic and future-ready sectors, while supporting technology development and skilled employment.

From an industry perspective, the clear positioning of MSMEs as growth “champions” is another positive feature of the Budget. The ₹10,000 crore SME Growth Fund, expansion of cash-flow based lending and steps to strengthen NBFC-led credit delivery are expected to ease financing constraints and help MSMEs scale up, integrate with global value chains and contribute more effectively to exports and employment.

Mr. N.K. Minda, President, ASSOCHAM, said that “the Union Budget 2026–27 provides a clear and credible reform roadmap for sustaining India’s growth momentum. The strong push on infrastructure, manufacturing clusters and MSME support reflects industry’s core priorities. By combining public investment with structural reforms and fiscal discipline, the Budget creates conditions for higher



private investment, stronger supply chains and quality job creation across sectors and regions.”

According to Mr. Saurabh Sanyal, Secretary General, ASSOCHAM, “the Budget demonstrates strong alignment between industry feedback and policy action. Measures on MSME financing, tax simplification, capital market deepening and services-led employment will improve ease of doing business and investor confidence. The focus on scale, productivity and competitiveness positions the economy well to

navigate global uncertainties while advancing India’s long-term development objectives.”

Overall, ASSOCHAM believes that Union Budget 2026–27 strikes a credible balance between growth, reforms and fiscal discipline. By reinforcing investment-led growth and addressing key structural constraints faced by industry, the Budget is well positioned to support India’s economic expansion, employment generation and long-term development objectives.



Media interaction during the budget session



ASSOCHAM President, Nirmal K Minda, felicitating Shri M. Nagaraju, the current Secretary of the Department of Financial Services (DFS) under the Ministry of Finance, Government

# India’s Financial Strength, MSME Support & Private Investment Push to Drive Next Phase of Growth

ASSOCHAM organised the Post-Budget Conference to discuss and analyse of tax-related proposals at Le Meridien, New Delhi. The conference was attended by senior policymakers, tax experts, industry leaders, and financial sector stakeholders to deliberate on key provisions of the Union Budget and their implications for growth, investment, and competitiveness.

The conference was attended by key leaders along with Nirmal K Minda, President ASSOCHAM, Mr. Saurabh Sanyal, Secretary General, ASSOCHAM; Mr. Prasenjit Singh, Member (Legislation), CBDT, Ministry of Finance; and Shri M. Nagaraju, IAS, Secretary, Department of Financial Services (DFS), Ministry of Finance, Government of India.

Delivering the Keynote Address,



the DFS Secretary highlighted that easing global trade uncertainties and improving India-US trade dynamics are positive signals for Indian industry, especially exporters and MSMEs. He noted that Indian companies have already demonstrated resilience by diversifying export markets and are now well-positioned to expand

capacity as trade conditions improve.

“With global trade conditions showing signs of improvement and India’s financial system on strong footing, this is the right time for industry to step up investments and capacity creation. The banking sector is well-capitalised and ready to support growth across MSMEs,



infrastructure, and sunrise sectors,” Shri Nagaraju said.

He underscored the strength of India’s banking system, pointing out that asset quality has improved significantly, with net NPAs at low levels, while credit growth remains robust across sectors, particularly MSMEs and industry.

“Our MSME sector continues to be a key driver of employment and exports. Expanded credit guarantee support, improved access to finance, and new growth-oriented schemes announced in the Budget will help

high-performing MSMEs scale up and integrate into global value chains,” he added.

Shri Nagaraju also emphasized the importance of sustained public capital expenditure in infrastructure: roads, railways, and urban development which is crowding in private investment and creating long-term growth multipliers. He encouraged corporates to deploy available cash reserves into emerging opportunities such as energy transition, data centres, electronics manufacturing, and other sunrise sectors.

Furthermore, Mr. Prasenjit Singh (Member – Legislation, CBDT), in his address said, “This Budget reflects a clear shift toward a trust-based, taxpayer-friendly administration built on clarity, certainty, and simplification. The focus is on improving ease of living and ease of doing business through streamlined provisions and smarter, more integrated compliance systems.”

He added. “Measures to reduce litigation and ease financial burden during appeals further demonstrate a balanced and pragmatic approach. The strong response to updated return provisions shows that when trust is placed in taxpayers, they respond responsibly. Continued stakeholder consultation will remain key to building a simpler, transparent, and globally competitive tax ecosystem.”

Welcoming the address, Mr. Nirmal K. Minda, President, ASSOCHAM, said the industry deeply values the government’s continued focus on financial stability, credit flow to productive sectors, and policy support for MSMEs.





(Left to Right) - Ms. Swati Agrawal, CEO – Advisory, CARE Analytics & Advisory Pvt Ltd; Mr. Basudev Mukherjee, Assistant Secretary General, ASSOCHAM; Mr. Manoj Kumar Rustagi, Chief Sustainability and Innovation Officer, JSW Cement Ltd; Mr. Kapil Malhotra, Co-Chairman, ASSOCHAM Nation Council on Chemicals & Petrochemicals & Global Business Leader - Fluoropolymers, GFL; Mr. Deepak Mishra, Joint Secretary (Petrochemicals), Department of Chemicals & Petrochemicals, Govt. of India; Mr. Rambabu Paravastu, Advisor & Chief Sustainability Officer, Greenko Group

## Sustainability Is No Longer an Option for India's Heavy Industries

ASSOCHAM organised the India ESG Conclave “Accelerating ESG in India’s Hard-to-Abate Industries: From Purpose to Impact” at Le Meridian, New Delhi. The conference was attended by policymakers, industry leaders, and sustainability experts to deliberate on pragmatic pathways for India’s Net Zero transition.

The conclave focused on integrating ESG across critical sectors, including mining, metals, cement, chemicals, petrochemicals, and hydrocarbons, and highlighting the role of technology. The industry experts also discussed policy support and industry collaboration needed in driving sustainable industrial growth.

During the Conclave, Mr. Deepak Mishra, Joint Secretary



(Petrochemicals), Department of Chemicals & Petrochemicals, Govt. of India, said, “While market conditions may fluctuate, India’s commitment to sustainability is firm and irreversible. The government has moved from having an intention to an action plan, setting targets for lowering carbon intensity and focusing on

a definite transition to a circular economy. Energy-intensive sectors like petrochemicals and plastic products need to integrate their competitive agenda with their sustainability responsibilities. Extended Producer Responsibility shows that good regulation can provide financial as well as environmental returns, thus



encouraging highly efficient recycling systems. In the future, sustainability will move from being a compliance issue to a domain that is defined by innovation, technology, and strategic sustainability initiatives. The organizations that make this transition will not only comply with the regulations but also become important stakeholders in the low-carbon future of the country.”

Mr. Kapil Malhotra, Co-chairman, ASSOCHAM Nation Council on Chemicals & Petrochemicals & Global Business Leader - Fluoropolymers, GFL, Said, ““For hard-to-abate industries such as chemicals and petrochemicals, decarbonisation and the Net Zero pathway are no longer distant ambitions but pressing business priorities. As climate risks intensify, a systems-based approach which combines energy efficiency, cleaner feedstocks, circularity, increased use of renewables and

process innovation is becoming essential. ESG must be viewed as a catalyst for transformation rather than a regulatory obligation. With supportive policy frameworks, technology partnerships and collaborative platforms like the India ESG Conclave, Indian industry can significantly accelerate its transition to a low-carbon, globally competitive future.”

Dr. Rambabu Paravastu, Advisor & Chief Sustainability Officer, Greenko Group, Said, “India’s journey towards Net Zero will be defined by how effectively we decarbonise hard-to-abate sectors while ensuring energy security and economic growth. The need of the hour is the scale-up of non-carbon emissions, the use of green hydrogen, as well as storage solution-based models becoming integral in converting heavy industries such as steel, cement, and chemicals to low-carbon ones. Another area of

paramount importance is arenas such as the India ESG Conclave, which facilitate collective collaboration between stakeholders such as industries, governments, and tech players, accelerating innovative solutions with demonstrable ESG impacts on our collective drive for leading the energy transition revolution globally.”

Mr. Manoj Kumar Rustagi, Chief Sustainability and Innovation Officer, JSW Cement Ltd., Said, “The next 10 years are going to be focused on Industrial decarbonisation specifically hard-to-abate sectors. The opportunity is immense to look for technological solutions which are local and home-grown, to decarbonise and wake economic sense at the same time.”

The event had three panel discussions putting impetus on low-carbon pathways in mining and metals, circularity in chemicals and petrochemicals, and the net-zero roadmap for the hydrocarbon sector. Senior representatives from ONGC, GAIL, Indian Oil, JSW Energy, and Greenko along with government officials, shared insights on green hydrogen, CCUS, clean fuels, and ESG-aligned policy frameworks.

The major highlight of the conclave was the release of a Knowledge Report, underscoring actionable recommendations to accelerate India’s transition towards a resilient, low-carbon industrial .



Chief Guest: Prof. (Dr) Unnat P. Pandit, Controller General of Patents, Designs & Trademarks (CGPDTM) RoC, GI & SICLDR, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India along with Mr. Nakul Sharedalal, Chairperson ASSOCHAM Gujarat IPR Committee and ASSOCHAM Team.

## Bharat GI Mahotsav 2026

“Bharat GI Mahotsav”, organized by ASSOCHAM with the support of the Ministry of MSME, Government of India, concluded successfully at Sindhu Bhawan, Ahmedabad. The four-day Mahotsav was held from 22nd to 25th January 2026 under the theme “Enterprising Charm of India’s GI”, celebrating the diversity, heritage, and economic potential of India’s Geographical Indication (GI) products.

The inaugural day witnessed an enthusiastic response from policymakers, industry leaders, artisans, GI practitioners, and stakeholders from across the country. The Mahotsav serves as a national platform to showcase the strength of Indian Geographically Indicated products across multiple sectors, including handicrafts, handlooms, agriculture, food products, and traditional arts.

Addressing the gathering, Chief Guest Dr. Unnat Pandit, Controller General of Patents, Designs & Trade Marks, highlighted the significant role played by Hon’ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi in promoting Indian GI products globally, effectively positioning him as a Global Brand Ambassador for India’s Geographical Indications. He emphasized that GI products not only protect India’s



Chief Guest Dr. Unnat Pandit, Controller General of Patents, Designs & Trade Marks with the exhibitor in Ahmedabad.

traditional knowledge and cultural heritage but also act as catalysts for economic development and global recognition.

Dr. Pandit further noted that Ahmedabad, recognized both as a Commerce City and a Heritage City, is an apt venue for hosting the Mahotsav, symbolizing the confluence of trade, tradition, and heritage. He underlined the Government of India’s continued initiatives to support artisans, craftsmen and heritage-based industries, particularly through strengthening the GI ecosystem, improving market access and ensuring sustainable livelihoods.

The event features curated exhibitions, live demonstrations, knowledge sessions and B2B interactions aimed at enhancing awareness, commercialization, and value addition of GI products. The Mahotsav reaffirms ASSOCHAM’s commitment in collaboration with the Ministry of MSME to empower local artisans and promote “Vocal for Local” through GI-led growth.

“Bharat GI Mahotsav” will continue over the next three days with thematic sessions, artisan showcases, and stakeholder dialogues, further reinforcing India’s enterprising charm and rich cultural identity.





Mr. Ateesh Kumar Singh, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, DPIIT speaking at Conference

## 5<sup>th</sup> Green investment and Sustainability Summit

It's imperative both government and industry do more together to unlock greater participation in capital formation and climate-aligned growth, highlighted Mr. Ateesh Kumar Singh, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, DPIIT during his address today at ASSOCHAM's 5<sup>th</sup> Green Investment & Sustainability Conclave today on the theme "Financing a Climate Resilient Indian Economy: The Next Wave of Innovation for India" at Hotel Le Meridien New Delhi.

Delivering the Chief Guest Address, Mr. Ateesh Kumar Singh, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, DPIIT, said, "India today stands at a strong macroeconomic position, with robust growth indicators, rising capital expenditure, and sustained policy reforms aimed at improving ease of doing business. However, its important that private sector investment should also move in pace with this momentum. Both government and industry can do more together to unlock greater participation



Lamp Lightning at the venue

in capital formation and climate-aligned growth.

Furthermore, its Equally important to place innovation and R&D at the centre of our growth strategy. Sustainable development cannot rely only on policy intent; it requires stronger industry-led innovation, deeper research capabilities, and collaborative action across sectors. We are committed to a whole-of-

government and whole-of-nation approach and look forward to industry's constructive feedback on how we can collectively accelerate investments and build a climate-resilient, innovation-driven economy."

The Conclave brought together policymakers, regulators, financial institutions, investors, corporates, ESG experts and sustainability leaders to deliberate on strengthening private



Launch of Knowledge Paper by Chief Guest and Key Dignitaries

sector participation, accelerating climate finance innovation, and operationalizing India’s sustainable growth frameworks.

Mr. Rajiv Gupta, Co-Chairman, ASSOCHAM National Council for Insurance and President, PB Fintech Ltd., highlighted the evolving role of financial markets and technology in sustainable finance, “The financial ecosystem must rapidly embed sustainability into mainstream investment decisions. Insurance, fintech and capital markets have a critical role in pricing climate risks, incentivizing green innovation and enhancing transparency. Technology-driven solutions and strong ESG disclosure standards will shape the next phase of sustainable finance in India.”

During his address, Mr. Imad N. Fakhoury, Regional Division Director, South Asia Region, IFC, laid out the financing imperative behind India’s green transition. He emphasised: “We need a massive scaling-up of participation from private capital to finance India’s green transition and building resilience.” Reflecting on the magnitude of investment required to achieve net zero commitments and build climate resilience, he underscored the importance of blended finance, risk-sharing mechanisms, regulatory clarity and global partnerships to crowd in long-term capital at scale.

Furthermore, Mr. Palash Srivastava, Deputy Managing Director, India Infrastructure Finance Company

Limited (IIFCL), spoke about the role of focused green financing in accelerating sustainable shipping and clean mobility infrastructure. He highlighted IIFCL’s support for initiatives such as hydrogen and biofuels bunkering, efforts to facilitate a value-added development fund, and the strengthening of an India-focused shipping line, steps aimed at building a more resilient and future-ready maritime ecosystem.

During the Conclave, ASSOCHAM released the ASSOCHAM–CARE ESG Ratings Knowledge Report, offering insights into emerging ESG integration practices and sustainable finance mechanisms.





Mr. Nabik Bhattacharjee, Assistant Vice President – Data, Tech, AI, Genpact India, Mr. Sankar Ghosh, Managing Director, Accenture APAC, Mr. Sushil Mohta, Chairman of Merlin group and Chairman of World Trade Center, Salt Lake, Mr. Kunal Ghatak, Partner, Business Consulting, EY LLP, Mr. Sunando Bhattacharya, Chief Revenue Officer, Yotta Data Services Pvt Ltd., Mr. Deep Prakash Pant, Senior Director & Head of GCC Practice, NTT DATA, Mr. Kailash Maisekar, Country Director & India Board member, Idox Software LTD.

# New GenGCC: Leveraging India's Growth Story and Protecting your Digital Future

**A**SSOCHAM organized the 10<sup>th</sup> Edition of The TechMeet themed *New GenGCC: Leveraging India's Growth Story and Protecting your Digital Future* on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2026 at Kolkata.

At the occasion, a Knowledge Report entitled “*Eastern India's role in the next GCC wave*” prepared by ASSOCHAM and Ernst and Young was released. The Knowledge Report focuses on Eastern India, with a specific lens on Kolkata, as an emerging GCC destination assessing how structural cost advantages, a growing multinational GCC presence, strong academic institutions, and supportive state-level policies are positioning the region as a credible GCC hub.

In his Keynote Address, Mr. Manjit Nayak, Director, Software Technology Park of India (STPI), Kolkata outlined the role that

STPI is playing as an enabler and catalyst to drive IT growth in this region by providing Plug-and-play infrastructure, Startup–GCC collaboration and Incubation and CoE-led innovation in Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities as well.

In his address, H.E. Mr. Bhaarat Dave, Deputy Head of Mission (or Acting Deputy High Commissioner) the British Deputy High Commission, Kolkata highlighted the importance of Kolkata as an emerging centre for GCC and data centre growth and the initiatives taken by the British Deputy High Commission in facilitating it.

Industry perspectives on the theme were shared by Mr. Sushil Mohta, Chairman of Merlin group and Chairman of World Trade Center, Salt Lake, Kolkata, Mr. Deep Prakash Pant, Senior Director & Head of GCC Practice, NTT DATA and Mr. Kallol Sen, Executive Vice President – Sales

and Regional CEO, CtrlS Datacentres Ltd. in their respective addresses.

Mr. Arindam Sen, Partner and GCC Sector Leader – Technology, Media & Entertainment and Telecommunications, EY India observed how Kolkata is set to play an important role in enabling scalable, resilient and innovation-led operations, reinforcing India's standing as the world's most significant hubs for enterprise value creation.

Earlier in her Welcome Address, Mrs. Perminder Jeet Kaur, Senior Director – Head States & UTs, India, ASSOCHAM outlined the achievements of West Bengal in promoting IT and ITes and the major investments in tech hubs like the Bengal Silicon Valley Tech Hub where global and domestic firms are establishing large campuses and capability centers.



(L-R) Mrs. Perminder Jeet Kaur, Senior Director – Head States & UTs India, ASSOCHAM, Mr. Pramod Kumar Srivastava, Chairman ASSOCHAM Logistic Council, West Bengal, H.E. Mr. Jhakka Prasad Acharya, Hon'ble Consul General, Consulate General of Nepal, Kolkata, Mr. A. Ajay Kumar, Joint Secretary (States), Ministry of External Affairs, Govt of India, Mr. R. Srinivasa Naik, I.R.S., Chief Commissioner of Customs, Kolkata Customs, Mr. Ashish Middha, IFS, RPO & Director, Ministry of External Affairs, Govt. of India, Branch Secretariat, Kolkata & Mr. Akhilesh Jain, Chairman, ASSOCHAM MSME Council, West Bengal

## Building Global Capabilities for International Trade with South & Southeast Asia

With rapid shift in global trade and geopolitical dynamics, Asian countries need to work together to protect regional interests by reducing trade barriers, mutual sharing of resources and technology and strengthening supply chains. In this regard, India is actively driving systematic export intensification across strategic geographies like South Asia and South-East Asia as these regions are natural partners connected by geography, history, culture, and shared economic interests.

Against this backdrop, ASSOCHAM organized a day-long event on 'Building Global Capabilities for International Trade with South & Southeast Asia' in partnership with Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, Branch Secretariat Kolkata on Thursday, 8<sup>th</sup> January 2026 at Kolkata. The program



was organized with the help of industry leaders, consular corp, Indian missions abroad, customs department, export promotion authorities, startups, MSMEs, etc. The discussions were focused on strategic thoughts,

policy reforms, opportunities for market expansion, stakeholder impacts, sustainable actions, etc., crucial for encouraging exports and investments in these emerging market economies.

The objective of the program was to fully unleash the potential of our export-oriented growth model, building the capacity of our exporters and logistics service providers, improving their skills and knowledge, spreading awareness on global standards and certifications and resources to enhance their ability to compete in global markets and increase exports.

The Inaugural Session was graced by Mr. A. Ajay Kumar, IFS, Joint Secretary (States), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India as our Chief Guest. H.E. Mr. Jhakka Prasad Acharya, Hon'ble Consul General, Consulate General of Nepal, Kolkata and Mr. R. Srinivasa Naik, I.R.S., Chief Commissioner of Customs, Kolkata Customs were present as our Guests of Honour. From the Ministry, Mr. Ashish Middha, IFS, RPO & Director, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, Branch Secretariat, Kolkata was present. From ASSOCHAM, Mr. Pramod Kumar Srivastava, Chairman ASSOCHAM Logistic Council, East, Mr. Akhilesh Jain, Chairman, ASSOCHAM MSME Council, East and Ms. Perminder Jeet Kaur, Senior Director - Head States & UTs, India, ASSOCHAM were also present.

In his address, Mr. A. Ajay Kumar observed that Eastern region with Kolkata as its major financial hub plays a significant role in expanding trade and commerce with our South

and Southeast Asian neighbours.

Speaking on the current global economic perspectives, Mr. Kumar stated that major disruptions in the form of unilateralism and reverse globalization have come into play at a time when third world countries like India and ASEAN have emerged as major performers. He emphasized that India along with its neighbours in South and Southeast Asia need to collaborate and cooperate for facilitating inter country trade. He appreciated ASSOCHAM's efforts in organizing the event and opined that eminent speakers representing the Government and Industry would clearly outline the major challenges and opportunities that lie ahead of us.

In his address, Mr. R. Srinivasa Naik observed that trading across borders require a lot of obligations to be met including elaborate documentation, customs clearance and inspection, port and border checkpoints handling agencies, etc., concerning time and cost implications at each stage. In this context, he briefly outlined the activities of the Customs Department which includes revenue collection, prevention of smuggling and illegal activities and examining standards of goods exported and imported on behalf of ministries and departments. Speaking on the issue of Customs Clearance timings, Mr. Naik mentioned that reforms like Single Window Clearance and Customs 2.0 have greatly eased trade facilitation,

bringing down earlier dwell time at ports of more than a week to just 3 days.

H.E. Mr. Jhakka Prasad Acharya observed that India continues to be Nepal's largest trade partner and recent developments in infrastructure like integrated check posts, rail and road connectivity, energy cooperation and customs facilitation have not only improved trade flows but strengthened people to people linkages. He informed that Nepal is open to engagement with Indian industries in sectors like hydropower, tourism, agro and food processing, IT and ITeS and logistics and is actively looking for partners to collaborate in the near future.

In this online session, Indian Missions in Nepal, Indonesia and ASEAN has shared with the delegates on new sectoral opportunities for business and trade for Indian exporters and new partnership interests of overseas companies in India.

The platform played a pivotal role in providing exposure, knowledge and understanding on the current perspectives of doing business with South and Southeast Asian countries. The programme drafted a roadmap for the stakeholders, enabling them to restructure their businesses with a prime focus to become globally competitive, and foster high economic growth in days to come.



Address by Mr. Srinivas Gotru, Ambassador of the Republic of India to ASEAN (Virtually)



Ms. Darshana Kossambe- State Head, ASSOCHAM Goa Council; Dr. Anup Kumar Maurya- Associate Professor, Big Data Analytics, Goa Institute of Management; Dr. Enu Anand- Assistant Professor, General Management & Public Policy, Goa Institute of Management; Mr Syam Ivaturi- CEO & Co- Founder, DishaAI; Mr Fabio Fernandes- Executive, ASSOCHAM Goa Council with all the Women Entrepreneur participants.

# Foundational AI and Digital Skill Development Workshop

The ASSOCHAM Goa Council in collaboration with GSRLM (Goa State Rural Livelihood Mission), Department of Rural Development organized Foundational AI and Digital Skill Development workshop on 23rd January 2026 at Panjim – Goa. The programme is designed to enable women-led enterprises to improve productivity, enhance market reach, and scale sustainably, strengthen digital capabilities & build confidence in using AI-enabled tools.

Self-Help Groups play a pivotal role in grassroots economic development, women empowerment, and inclusive growth. They contribute substantially to local entrepreneurship, micro-enterprise development, Agri-allied activities, handicrafts, food processing, and service delivery. However, in the absence of foundational digital and AI awareness, many SHGs face challenges in adopting digital payments, accessing online markets, leveraging government digital platforms, improving productivity, and making informed business decisions.

Recognising the need to bridge this gap, the Foundational AI and Digital Skill Development Awareness Programme has been conceptualised

to introduce SHG members to basic digital concepts and the emerging relevance of AI in simple, practical, and accessible terms. The programme focuses on demystifying AI, building confidence in the use of digital tools, and highlighting how technology can support everyday SHG activities such as bookkeeping, marketing, customer outreach, quality improvement, and access to financial and government support systems.

On behalf of ASSOCHAM Goa Council, Shri Sagar Govekar, MD at Ethernet Xpress India pvt ltd extended warm welcome to all the SHG participants, eminent speakers and special guest. Smt. Rajashree Wangnekar Assistant General Manager, NABARD Goa Regional Office was invited as the Special Guest. In her special address she congratulated DRDA, GSRLM and ASSOCHAM Goa Council for organizing this timely initiative. She added that NABARD strongly believes that SHGs are the backbone of grassroots development. Programs like this are important to build confidence and ensure that SHG members are ready to benefit from the digital economy. NABARD remains committed to supporting capacity

building and digital empowerment of SHGs. She encouraged all participants to actively engage in today's session and apply these learnings in your daily activities and wished the program every success.

Dr. Anup Kumar Maurya Associate Professor, Big Data Analytics, Goa Institute of Management delivered the technical session one. In this session he trained the SHG participants on the topic "AI for Business Applications: Financial inclusion, expand market access & improve operational efficiency". He explained AI in simple terms and highlighted its practical relevance at the grassroots level, emphasizing that AI is not limited to large companies but can be effectively used by SHGs for business growth and sustainability. The session also emphasized data safety, responsible use of technology, and gradual adoption of digital tools based on the needs and capacity of SHGs. Overall, the session empowered participants with practical awareness and confidence to explore AI-enabled digital solutions for improving business operations, enhancing income opportunities, and achieving long-term self-reliance.





ASSOCHAM Indian Companies stalls at GULFOOD Dubai 2026

## Gulfood 2026 | Dubai

**A**SSOCHAM proudly represented India's growing strength and global competitiveness in the food and beverage sector at Gulfood 2026, held from 26 to 30 January 2026 at the Dubai Exhibition Centre (DEC) and Dubai World Trade Centre (DWTC), Dubai. Recognised as one of the world's largest and most influential trade exhibitions for the F&B industry, Gulfood provided an exceptional platform for Indian enterprises to connect with global markets and stakeholders.

The India Pavilion, facilitated by ASSOCHAM, was inaugurated by distinguished dignitaries, including Dr. Deepak Mittal, Ambassador of India to the UAE; Shri Satish Kumar Sivan, Consul General of India to Dubai; and Shri Avinash Joshi, IAS, Secretary, Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI), Government of India. Their presence reaffirmed the Government of India's

strong commitment to promoting Indian food and agro-based industries on international platforms and strengthening export-led growth.

Gulfood 2026 witnessed the participation of over 8,500 exhibitors from across the world, representing 12 key sectors of the food and beverage ecosystem. The exhibition served as a vibrant hub for innovation, trade, and collaboration, bringing together manufacturers, exporters, buyers, investors, policymakers, and industry leaders under one roof. It once again reaffirmed its status as a premier global marketplace for the F&B sector.

For the fourth consecutive year, ASSOCHAM successfully mobilised and facilitated the participation of its member companies, with a special focus on Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). Through this initiative, Indian enterprises were provided with a unique opportunity

to explore new international markets, establish strategic partnerships, engage with global buyers, and showcase their products and capabilities to a worldwide audience.

The India Pavilion featured a diverse range of products and segments, including dairy, meat and poultry, beverages, pulses, grains, cereals, processed foods, health and wellness products, ready-to-eat items, and organic offerings, reflecting the depth and diversity of India's food processing sector. The strong response from international visitors and buyers highlighted the growing global demand for high-quality, sustainable, and value-added Indian food products.

ASSOCHAM's participation at Gulfood 2026 also underscored its continued commitment to enhancing the global footprint of Indian businesses.



Shri Satish Kumar Sivan, Consul General of India to Dubai and Ms. Deepti Pant, Senior Director & Head- International Relations – ASSOCHAM

## World Health Expo (WHX) Dubai 2026

The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) marked its first-ever participation at the World Health Expo (WHX) Dubai 2026, one of the world's leading global platforms for the healthcare and life sciences sector. The four-day exhibition was held at the Dubai Exhibition Centre (DEC), Expo City Dubai, and witnessed participation from thousands of exhibitors and industry stakeholders from across the globe.

ASSOCHAM's debut at WHX Dubai 2026 signified a strategic step towards strengthening India's global footprint in healthcare, medical technology, pharmaceuticals, diagnostics, wellness, and allied sectors. The India Pavilion, curated and led by ASSOCHAM, served as a comprehensive showcase of India's growing capabilities, innovation-driven solutions, and manufacturing excellence in the healthcare and life sciences ecosystem.

The India Pavilion was formally inaugurated by Shri Satish Kumar Sivan, Consul General of India to Dubai, who highlighted India's rapid progress in healthcare innovation, digital health solutions, and cost-

effective medical technologies. The inauguration reflected the strong diplomatic and economic ties between India and the United Arab Emirates, particularly in the healthcare and life sciences domain.

WHX Dubai 2026 attracted a diverse global audience, including policymakers, healthcare professionals, hospital administrators, investors, technology providers, and international buyers. The exhibition further reinforced its reputation as a premier global forum for showcasing advancements in medical devices, pharmaceuticals, diagnostics, digital health solutions, wellness products, hospital infrastructure, and healthcare services.

ASSOCHAM's participation enabled Indian enterprises to gain substantial international exposure and facilitated meaningful interactions with global stakeholders. The India Pavilion featured a wide range of healthcare solutions, including medical devices, pharmaceutical products, diagnostic technologies, digital health platforms, wellness solutions, hospital infrastructure, and integrated healthcare services. These

offerings received strong interest from international buyers, industry leaders, and potential collaborators, reflecting the growing confidence in India's healthcare capabilities.

By focusing on innovation, quality, and affordability, ASSOCHAM positioned India as a reliable global healthcare partner. The Pavilion also provided a platform for Indian companies—particularly small and medium enterprises and emerging innovators—to explore export opportunities, strategic partnerships, and technology collaborations in international markets.

ASSOCHAM's first participation at WHX Dubai 2026 underscores its continued commitment to promoting Indian industry on global platforms and supporting the internationalisation of India's healthcare sector. The successful presence at the expo not only enhanced India's visibility in the global healthcare landscape but also reinforced the country's role as a key contributor to affordable, innovative, and sustainable healthcare solutions worldwide.





Ms Ditte Juul Jørgensen, Director-General, DG Energy, European Commission – EU Lead Discussant, Shri Santosh Kumar Sarangi, Secretary, Ministry of New and Renewable Energy- Indian Lead Discussant, Mr. Vineet Agarwal, Past President- ASSOCHAM & MD, TCIL, Mr. Isaac Valero, Head of Unit- International Relations, European Commission

## India–EU Business Summit Strengthens Strategic Economic Partnership in New Delhi

The India–EU Business Summit was held on 27 January 2026 at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, bringing together senior policymakers, business leaders, and industry stakeholders from India and the European Union to deepen economic cooperation and advance shared strategic priorities. The Summit focused on strengthening investments, resilient supply chains, advanced manufacturing, clean technologies, and opportunities emerging from the proposed India–EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

The Summit commenced with **Part I: Business Roundtables**, beginning with a sectoral interaction over a working lunch. The first roundtable, **Session A1 on “Investments & Resilient Supply Chains,”** was moderated by Ms. Monalisa Panda, Managing Director, Sai Biocare Private Limited. The discussion featured Ms. Kerstin Jorna, Director-General, DG Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs,



Mr. Vineet Agarwal, Past President- ASSOCHAM & MD, TCIL, Mr. Isaac Valero, Head of Unit- International Relations, European Commission, Mr. Nirmal K Minda, ASSOCHAM President and Chairman UNO Minda, Ms Ditte Juul Jørgensen, Director-General, DG Energy, European Commission – EU Lead Discussant

European Commission, as the EU lead discussant, and Shri Amardeep Singh Bhatia, Secretary, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), as the Indian lead. Industry representatives from both sides, including leaders from Continental Devices India, Nucleus Software, Pixxel, Fagor Automation, Peters Group, and Airbus, highlighted the importance of supply chain

diversification, technology-led investments, and long-term industrial partnerships.

This was followed by **Session A2 on “Technologies in Advanced Manufacturing including Clean Tech,”** which was led by ASSOCHAM and moderated by Mr. Vineet Agarwal, Managing Director, Transport Corporation

of India Limited. The session was anchored by Ms. Ditte Juul Jørgensen, Director-General, DG Energy, European Commission, and Shri Santosh Kumar Sarangi, Secretary, Ministry of New and Renewable Energy. Industry leaders from Suzlon, Nurture Xcel, Deki Electronics, Evonik Industries, NKT, and the Swedish Business Federation discussed clean energy transition, advanced manufacturing technologies, and collaborative innovation ecosystems.

The final roundtable, **Session B on “Opportunities Arising from the FTA,”** was moderated by Mr. Narayan Sethuramon, Managing Director, Sanmar Matrix Metals Limited. The session featured key remarks by Mr. Fredrik Persson, President of BusinessEurope, Ms. Sabine Weyand, Director-General, DG Trade & Economic Security, European Commission, and Shri Rajesh Agrawal, Commerce Secretary, Government of India. Senior executives from Airbus, Deutsche



Bank, Hanseatic Connect, RELX, EaseMyTrip, Jyoti CNC Automation, Kitek, and Torrent Power shared perspectives on market access, regulatory cooperation, and trade facilitation.

**Part II: Session with Leaders** included a photo opportunity with the Prime Minister of India and the President of the European Commission, followed by opening remarks from Shri Piyush Goyal, Union Minister of Commerce & Industry, Government of India, and Mr. Maroš Šefčovič, European Commissioner for Trade and

Economic Security. Report-back sessions from the three thematic areas reflected strong alignment between Indian and European industry on trade, investment, and technology collaboration.

The Summit concluded with keynote addresses by H.E. Mrs. Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, and Shri Narendra Modi, Hon’ble Prime Minister of India, reaffirming a shared commitment to building a resilient, future-oriented India–EU strategic economic partnership.





Meeting with Dr. Sumit Seth, Ambassador of India to Panama, Costa Rica, and Nicaragua on the right and Leader of the Delegation Mr. Paramjit Singh Makani

## Indian Business Delegation to International Economic Forum

The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) successfully organised an Indian business delegation for participation in the International Economic Forum on Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) 2026, held in Panama City from 27 to 30 January 2026. The high-level Forum served as a premier platform for dialogue on economic cooperation, investment opportunities, and strategic partnerships between Latin America, the Caribbean, and global stakeholders.

The Forum witnessed the presence of several distinguished dignitaries, including the Presidents of Brazil, Ecuador, and Panama, and the Vice President of Colombia. It also saw participation from Foreign Ministers, Ministers of Commerce, and Ministers of Economy from across the Latin American region, reflecting the strong political commitment to regional and international economic engagement. Senior representatives from leading global and regional corporations such as Vale, Codelco, and BTG Pactual participated alongside major private banks including Itaú. Key industry players from the aviation sector, including Embraer, Avianca, and Copa Airlines, as well as prominent law firms and business associations



Plenary Session: International Economic Forum on Latin America and the Caribbean 2026

from across Latin America, were also present.

A key highlight of the Forum was a dedicated panel discussion on “LAC–Asia: Opportunities for a New-Generation Strategic Agenda.” The panel deliberated on emerging areas of collaboration between Latin America and Asia, with a strong focus on productive investments, integration into regional and global value chains, and the growing importance of the digital economy. Discussions also underscored opportunities in various sectors and risk-mitigation mechanisms to facilitate smoother cross-border trade and investment.

On the sidelines of the Forum, the Indian Mission in Panama hosted an interactive luncheon for the ASSOCHAM delegation. Dr. Sumit Seth, Ambassador of India to Panama, Costa Rica, and Nicaragua, engaged with Indian industry representatives and shared valuable insights on expanding India–Latin America trade and investment ties. He highlighted opportunities for Indian businesses across sectors and emphasized the importance of strengthening institutional collaboration, enhancing market access, and fostering long-term partnerships with the Latin American region.



ASSOCHAM delegation led by Mr. Nirmal Kumar Minda, President, ASSOCHAM met Mr. Piyush Goyal, Minister of Commerce and Industry, Government of India and Mr. Jitin Prasada, Minister of State for Commerce and Industry and Electronics and IT today. The discussions focused around the FTAs signed with the EU and the US and the opportunities they present.



Mr. Nirmal Kumar Minda, President, ASSOCHAM, and Col. Saurabh Sanyal, Secretary General, met with Shri Rajesh Agrawal, IAS, Secretary Commerce, Ministry of Commerce & Industry.



ASSOCHAM had a productive meeting with Sh. Aditya Dhaiya, IAS, Managing Director, HSIIDC



ASSOCHAM had the privilege of meeting Sh. Yash Garg, IAS, Director General, MSME & Industries, Govt of Haryana



ASSOCHAM Uttar Pradesh Development Council engaged with the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG), Lucknow, to present ground-level GST compliance challenges faced by MSMEs, small businesses and artisans.



ASSOCHAM had the honour of meeting Hon'ble Minister for Industry & Commerce, Government of Haryana, Shri Rao Narbir Singh ji

# In the News

## 'Reform express' gains momentum

The Budget's sustained investment push reflects the government's belief in infrastructure as a growth multiplier



NIRMAL K. MINDA

There is a familiar proverb that says, "The journey matters as much as the destination." The Budget 2026-27 reflects this philosophy well. It is not merely a collection of announcements, but a continuation of a reform journey that is aptly described as the reform express, steadily moving India from aspiration to achievement and from potential to performance.

This Budget can be viewed through five key pillars identified by ASSOCHAM — Make in India, Ease of Doing Business, MSME Growth, Digital Economy, and Sustainability & Environment. Importantly, the Budget delivers meaningfully across each of these pillars, reflecting a constructive alignment between policy priorities and industry feedback.

At a time when the global economic environment is marked by uncertainty, fragmented supply chains and rising geopolitical risks, the Budget sends a reassuring signal of stability, continuity and confidence, reaffirming the government's commitment to growth through public investment, structural reforms and inclusive development.

**MAKE IN INDIA**  
One of the strongest pillars of the Budget is the continued emphasis on public capital expenditure as the backbone of the 'Make in India' strategy. Over the past

decade, public capex has increased more than fivefold, rising from around ₹2 lakh crore in 2014-15 to ₹11.2 lakh crore in 2025-26. This has been further raised to ₹12.2 lakh crore in this Budget.

The sustained investment push reflects the government's belief in infrastructure as a growth multiplier. Allocations across transport, urban development, power and logistics-linked infrastructure underscore the role of public spending in crowding in private investment, creating jobs and improving productivity.

**EASE OF DOING BUSINESS**  
The Budget highlights that over 350 reforms have been undertaken in recent years, spanning GST simplification, labour codes, quality standards and compliance rationalisation. It builds on this momentum rather than resetting the agenda.

Incremental but meaningful reforms continue through simplification of tax laws, time-bound dispute resolution mechanisms, and reduced compliance friction. The move towards a new income tax framework, faster advance pricing agreements and rationalisation of transaction-related taxes reflects industry feedback on the need for certainty and efficiency.

Such reforms are critical in translating entrepreneurial intent into executable business decisions. The reform express is clearly not slowing down, it is, in fact, gathering pace.

**MSME GROWTH**  
The Budget lays emphasis on MSMEs as engines of growth, exports and employment. A key announcement is the ₹10,000



The Budget places strong emphasis on MSMEs as engines of growth, exports and employment

crore SME Growth Fund, aimed at supporting scale-up and job creation.

Equally important is the Budget's three-pronged MSME approach of equity support, liquidity support and professional support, recognising that sustainable MSME growth requires more than access to credit alone.

Liquidity measures include further strengthening of the Trade Receivables Discounting System (TRDS), mandating its use for CFSE purchases, providing credit guarantee support for invoice securitisation of receivables. These steps directly address working capital constraints and delayed payments which are

long-standing concerns raised by the industry.

**DIGITAL ECONOMY**  
The Budget reinforces the role of the digital economy as a driver of productivity, services-led growth and employment. The proposed Education-to-Employment and Enterprises Committee seeks to align skills with emerging market needs, particularly in services and technology-enabled sectors.

A significant industry-positive measure under this pillar is the tax holiday extended till 2047 for foreign companies offering global cloud services using Indian data centres. This provides a strong incentive for investment in digital infrastructure.

growth framework. The ₹20,000-crore Carbon Capture, Utilisation and Storage (CCUS) programme targets hard-to-abate sectors such as power, steel, cement and chemicals, enabling emissions reduction while supporting industrial activity.

Complemented by continued investments in clean energy, efficient transport systems and green infrastructure, the Budget reflects a balanced approach, recognising that economic expansion and environmental responsibility must progress together.

**LISTENING TO INDUSTRY**  
Overall, the Budget reflects a constructive policy dialogue between government and stakeholders. Several ASSOCHAM recommendations have found resonance in the Budget's design and priorities. However, this does not imply that all challenges have been resolved. Execution, coordination across levels of government and timely implementation will determine outcomes. Still, the policy direction is clear and aligned with the needs of a growing economy.

**REFORM WITH RESOLVE**  
The Budget reinforces the idea that reform is a journey, not a destination. By delivering across the five ASSOCHAM identified pillars, the Budget seeks to convert India's vast potential into measurable performance.

With this Budget, the reform express is firmly on track, carrying India from aspiration to achievement and from promise to performance.

The writer is President, ASSOCHAM

## आयात में कमी लाने के लिए बजट में लाई जाए प्रोत्साहन योजना

जगमग बुरो, नई दिल्ली : उद्योग संगठन एसोचैम के प्रेसिडेंट निर्मल कुमार मिश्रा ने सरकार से बजट में आयात को कम करने के लिए प्रोत्साहन योजना लाने की मांग की है। उनका कहना है कि अंधो बूट सररे उत्पादों के निर्यात के लिए विभिन्न प्रकार के कच्चे माल का आयात किया जाता है। इस आयात में कमी लाकर निर्माण करने वाले उद्योगियों को सरकार को प्रोत्साहन देना चाहिए। आयात को कम करने के लिए ऐसे उत्पादों को परचन करने चाहिए जिनका उत्पादन परले स्तर पर किया जा सकता है। इससे मेक इन इंडिया को प्रोत्साहन मिलेगा और आयात बिल भी कम होगा।



निर्मल मिश्रा

एसोचैम के प्रेसिडेंट ने कहा, निजी क्षेत्र के लिए बने औद्योगिक इलाके

मिश्रा बोले - सरकार को बजट में और बेहतर शिक्षा व रवायथ पर फोकस करना चाहिए

उद्योगी सिर्फ शूलक देकर उत्पादन शुरू कर सकता है। विगतमम और इंडोमेरिया में इस प्रकार के माडल से मेन्फैक्चरिंग हो रही है। इससे एम्प्लॉयमेंट को निर्माण विस्तार में मदद मिलेगी। किसी भी वस्तु के निर्माण में 40 प्रतिशत लागत जमीन व पवन को होती है। अगर जमीन व पवन इन्फ्रैस्ट्रक्चर पर मिलेगी तो उनकी लागत कम होगी।

## Textiles, leather, seafood gain in big export focus

**Exporters' optimism**  
NEW DELHI: Indian textile and leather industries such as textiles, footwear, leather and leather goods are expected to benefit from the budget proposals that the government has announced for the fiscal year 2026-27.



High quality leather for women for export use for packaging is a major focus for the industry

Union Finance Minister Nirmal Kumar Mishra said in his budget speech that the government will continue to support the export-led growth strategy. He said that the government will continue to support the export-led growth strategy. He said that the government will continue to support the export-led growth strategy.

High quality leather for women for export use for packaging is a major focus for the industry

Minister Nirmal Kumar Mishra said in his budget speech that the government will continue to support the export-led growth strategy. He said that the government will continue to support the export-led growth strategy. He said that the government will continue to support the export-led growth strategy.

**India has achieved a major breakthrough in its trade relations with the United States with the reduction of tariff rates by US on Indian exports to 18%.**

Nirmal K. Minda  
President, ASSOCHAM

fortuneIndia.com

## Assocham for easing tax measures to spur investor confidence

MONIKA YADAV  
New Delhi, 30 October



The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) has sought a series of direct tax measures aimed at boosting investor confidence, particularly in digital infrastructure, and calling for simplifying compliance and reducing litigation, in its pre-Budget submission to the revenue secretary.

- Budget wishlist**
- Calls for simplifying compliance and reducing litigation
  - Wants safe harbour regime for digital investors
  - Seeks tax neutrality for fast-track mergers
  - Urges revival of 15% concessional tax for manufacturing
  - Proposes higher salary limit for hiring incentives

A key demand relates to tax certainty for global data centre players looking to invest in India.

The chamber said the government should ensure that foreign entities availing data centre services from India are not treated as having a business connection, significant economic presence (SEP) or permanent establishment in the country.

"Setting up an approved data centre requires significant long-term investment. Given the size and scale, availability of land/necessary resources, there is a huge opportunity for India to attract investments from large digital players to set up data centres in India through their subsidiaries/affiliates," it said, warning that lack of clarity could deter multinational investment.

It added that Indian subsidiaries providing such services should get a safe harbour regime with prescribed margins, given the long gestation period for data centre projects.

Safe harbour should be effective from the date of operationalisation and applicable for at least 15 years, the chamber argued. It added that costs related to foreign affiliates' technology or data stored in India should be excluded while computing margins. On existing business rules for digital firms, ASSOCHAM sought removal of non-digital transactions such as import of goods from the scope of SEP.

It said the provision currently could force Indian businesses to deduct tax even where the non-resident has no physical or digital presence in India. It urged the government to issue attribution guidelines and exempt taxpayers eligible for treaty benefits from SEP reporting.

Indian resident who makes payments to non-residents who have SEP in India may be obligated to withhold tax prior to making payment, to such non-residents" which creates uncertainty.

To support domestic reorganisation, the chamber said fast-track mergers and demergers under the Companies Act be granted tax neutrality.

It added that a blanket denial compels companies to avail the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) route only and the fast-track route will be futile. It also pushed for expanding tax-neutral treatment to all forms of entity conversions and for allowing loss carry-forward under such restructurings.

These should be simplified and expanded so as to enable businesses and investors to optimise their operations and holdings without facing tax costs, it said. On manufacturing, ASSOCHAM urged the government to revive the 15 per cent concessional corporate tax regime for new units to sustain investments.

This will enable India to remain attractive for making fresh capital investment, provide a boost to the domestic economy and also encourage exports, it argued.

## कर ढांचा सरल करे सरकार: एसोचैम

नई दिल्ली, एअरसी। उद्योग मंडल एसोचैम ने गुरुवार को आगामी आम बजट के लिए केंद्र सरकार को कर सरलीकरण एवं युक्तिकरण जैसे कई सुझाव दिए ताकि कारोबारी सुगमता बढ़ने के साथ देश में निवेश को और प्रोत्साहन मिल सके।

एसोचैम के प्रतिनिधियों ने राजस्व सचिव अरविंद श्रवास्तव से मुलाकात कर प्रत्यक्ष एवं अप्रत्यक्ष करों से संबंधित अपने सुझावों का ज्ञापन सौंपा। उद्योग मंडल ने नए विनिर्माण उपकरणों के लिए 15 प्रतिशत की रियायती कर दर को फिर से लागू करने का प्रस्ताव

## 15 प्रतिशत की रियायती कर दर फिर लागू करने पर विचार हो

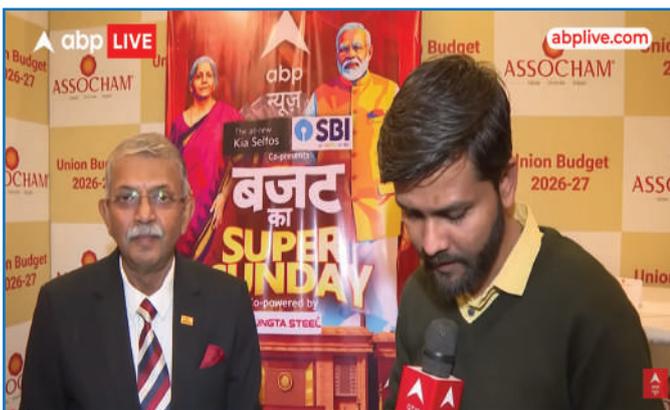
रखा है। आयकर अधिनियम की धारा 115बीएवी को हटाने मार्च, 2024 तक पंजीकृत कंपनियों को यह सुविधा पहले भी उपलब्ध थी। इसके अलावा, एसोचैम ने विवाला एवं जगमोहन अक्षमता सहिता (आईबीसी) के तहत ऋण माफ़ी को कर-व्यय आय न मानने का सुझाव भी दिया। संगठन का कहना है कि ऐसा कदम समाधान प्रक्रिया को सुगम बनाएगा।

## 'FY27 Budget should focus on consumption demand, boosting income'

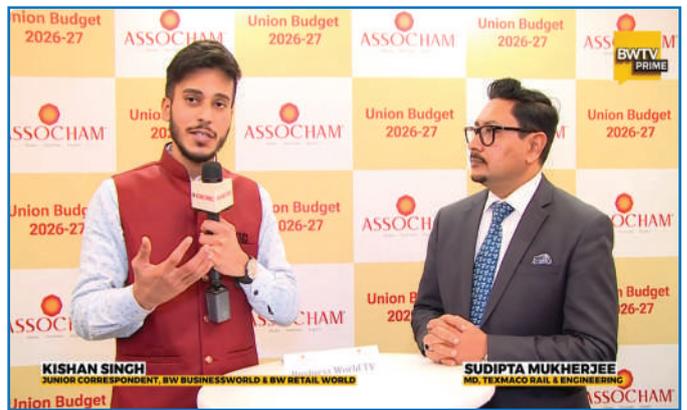
Q: Budget 2026-27 focuses on consumption demand, boosting income' and 'growth through consumption demand, boosting income' and 'growth through consumption demand, boosting income'.

On Inflation: THE WAGES SHOULD BE INCREASED IN STEPS, NOT ALL AT ONCE. THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD TAKE STEPS TO INCREASE WAGES IN STEPS, NOT ALL AT ONCE.

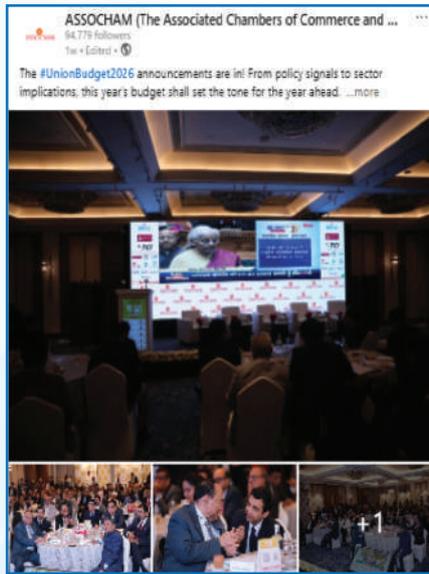
# In the News



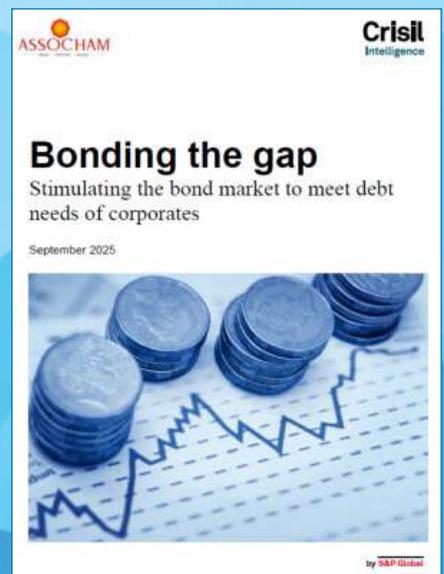
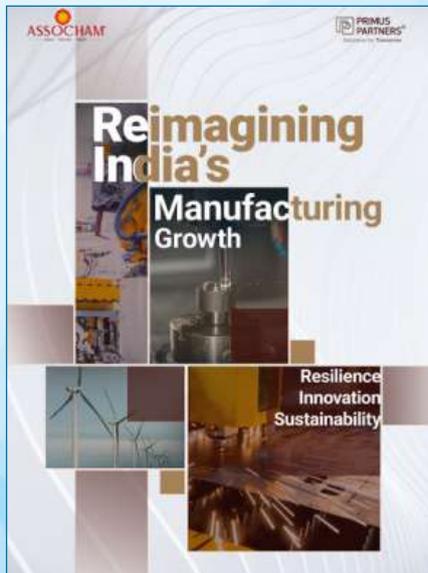
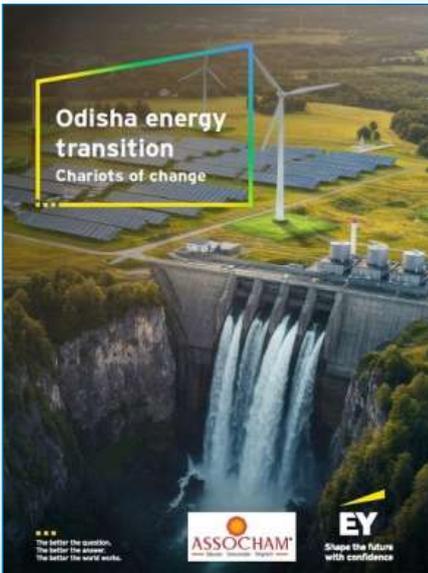
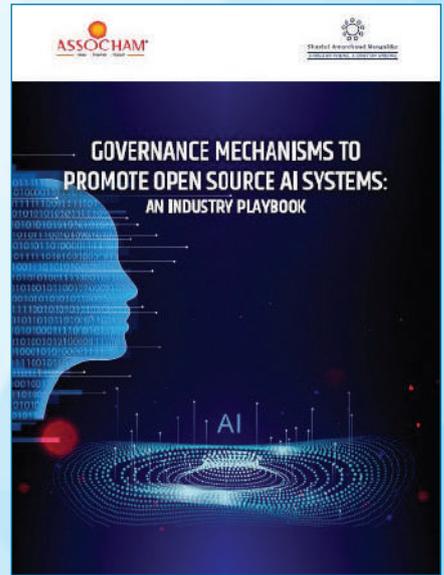
# In the News



# In Social Media



# Latest Publications 2025



## Forthcoming Events

- |                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>17 Feb 2026:</b>   | AI Summit, New Delhi   |
| <b>19 Feb 2026:</b>   | Industry Interactive Session, Gujarat  |
| <b>20 Feb 2026:</b>   | 3 <sup>rd</sup> Edition HBW Symposium, Chandigarh  |
| <b>26 Feb 2026:</b>   | 3 <sup>rd</sup> Agri Logistics Conclave, Nashik  |
| <b>9 March 2026:</b>  | Women's Day Event, New Delhi   |
| <b>13 March 2026:</b> | India Mines and Minerals Conclave, Odisha  |
| <b>17 March 2026:</b> | 2 <sup>nd</sup> Bharat Legal Conclave, New Delhi   |
| <b>18 March 2026:</b> | 12 <sup>th</sup> Global SME Conclave & Excellence Awards, Delhi                          |
| <b>18 March 2026:</b> | 20 <sup>th</sup> Banking & Financial Annual Conclave for Transformation (B-FACT), Mumbai |

## EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION AWARDS

To celebrate cross-functional teamwork in conceptualising and successfully implementing an initiative of our Foundation Day on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2025, marking the completion of 105 years of ASSOCHAM.



**Perminder Jeet Kaur**  
Senior Director



**Manju R S Negi**  
Senior Director



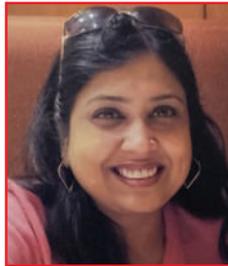
**Varun Aggarwal**  
Senior Director



**Deepti Pant**  
Senior Director



**Varun Mathur**  
Director



**Kavita Sharma**  
Director



**Mili Chadha**  
Director



**Abhay Yadav**  
Additional Director



**Raj**  
Additional Director



**Tanuja Adhikari**  
Additional Director



**Vartika Singh**  
Additional Director



**Alankrita Soni**  
Additional Director



**Sumita Sharma**  
Joint Director



**Yatika Gupta**  
Joint Director



**Kavita Sharma**  
Deputy Director



**Rahul Bhasin**  
Deputy Director



**Neha Pathak**  
Assistant Director



**Gunjan Seth**  
Senior Executive



**Anoop Negi**  
Senior Executive

## ASSOCHAM Thanks

the Hon'ble Prime Minister  
on conclusion of the landmark  
India-US trade deal, a watershed  
moment in bilateral economic  
relations.



"When two large economies and the world's largest democracies work together, it benefits our people and unlocks immense opportunities for mutually beneficial cooperation. Delighted that Made in India products will now have a reduced tariff of 18%."

—Narendra Modi, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India

## Congratulations, India!

Under the visionary leadership of PM Modi **The India-US trade deal** marks a defining milestone in our strategic economic partnership. It reinforces resilient supply chains and supports India's vision of **Viksit Bharat** through sustainable, inclusive, and future-ready industrial growth.



"The India-US trade agreement opens a new chapter in economic cooperation, anchored in trust, market access, and technology-led growth. It creates a stable framework for industry, boosts investor confidence, and positions India as a reliable partner in global value chains. //

—Nirmal Minda

President ASSOCHAM and Chairman, Uno Minda Group

### ASSOCHAM leadership stands committed to India-US partnership



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Senior Vice President,  
ASSOCHAM and Managing  
Director & CEO, Axis Bank



**Sanjay Nayar**  
Immediate Past President,  
ASSOCHAM and Founder &  
Chairman, Sorin Investment  
Fund



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