

Toxic air will drive away skilled expats: Assocham

Asks Centre, States to formulate strategy to aggressively tackle air pollution

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NEW DELHI

Expressing anxiety over the dangerous air quality levels in the National Capital Region (NCR), apex industry body Assocham on Friday urged the Centre and the governments of Delhi, Haryana, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh to establish a clear strategy to aggressively tackle air pollution.

SOS message

"Ministries, departments, universities and research institutions must come together to chart out a roadmap for tackling air pollution and curbing its causes," said Assocham in a SOS message sent to the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF) and the governments of Delhi, Haryana, Punjab and UP.

"Delhi is facing an emergency situation but there is hardly any intention or commitment seen to address the problem with in-



Missing clarity: Smog engulfs Dwarka in New Delhi on Friday. ■ V. V. KRISHNAN

novative solutions such as using mist cannons, and creating a special force to check construction activities, vehicular pollution and rubbish burning," said ASSOCHAM secretary general D. S. Rawat.

Urban economy

"Increasing air pollution

can take a toll on the urban economy by cutting the lifespan of citizens and increasing healthcare costs to the government. It can also drive away top executives and talent to other cities, negatively affect Delhi's ability to attract highly-skilled expatriates, and severely impact inflow of invest-

ments," said Mr. Rawat.

"Promoting use of more efficient and less polluting energy sources, restricting growing number of vehicles and stringent enforcement of pollution laws will help smooth the transition to a more environment-friendly economy in the long term," Mr. Rawat added.

Delhi pollution may hit tourism now

Foreign visitors prefer green tourism, domestic tourists also staying away

PTI

NEW DELHI, 10 NOVEMBER

The alarming level of pollution in Delhi-NCR may hit tourism in the region as November and December are the peak months for foreign travellers to visit India and majority of them opt for the Golden Triangle tourist circuit - Delhi, Agra and Jaipur, ASSOCHAM said on Friday.

The industry chamber interacted with 350 tour operators and based its findings on their feedback.

"International tourists are quite particular about their health and safety and with such negative developments Delhi is bound to drop off from the map of international tourists who will pick 'cleaner' South Asian destinations.

"Even domestic tourists are avoiding Delhi. In comparison, international tourists are more sensitive about green tourism," said the industry body.

It said the feedback from tour operators and hoteliers



Smog covers Delhi's skyline as pollution remains at a high level on Friday.

SUBRATA DUTTA

clearly points out a deep concern over the negative impact pollution can cause to the economy.

"Along with tourism, transportation linked to the sector would also take a hit if investment and tourists traffic gets a setback. The trans-

portation is one of the key contributors to the national economy in the services sector. Transportation and tourism are highly employment-oriented and jobs may be a casualty of the pollution," said ASSOCHAM.

However, the chamber

noted that currently, no major cancellation has been recorded as money is paid in advance, adding, however, that during the peak tourist season, foreigners who are still in the planning stage will become skeptical about visiting Delhi.

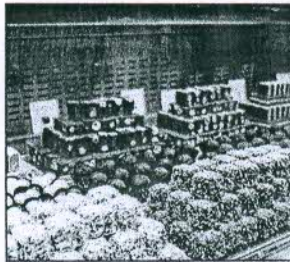
Industry upbeat, says rate cut will revive biz sentiment

New Delhi: India Inc. on Friday welcomed the decision of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council to reduce rates on 178 items of mass consumption and extension of tax filing timelines.

Industry body Assocham's secretary general DS Rawat said that the "big changes in GST rates" will lead to a pickup in consumer demand and significantly revive the business sentiment.

"The increase in the composition scheme threshold would make life much easier for the small business entities," Rawat said. He added that the impact of these changes would be positively felt in the next few months.

On Friday, finance minister Arun Jaitley announced that the GST Council has de-



GST on chocolate has been reduced from 28% to 18%

ecided to slash tax slabs for 178 items from 28% to 18%.

According to Divyesh Lapsiwala, Tax Partner, EY India: "Rate reduction for 200 plus goods and services may be suggestive of the fact that there is good buoyancy in tax collections, promoting a rate rationalisation."

"Breather for compliances

will provide the much needed settling in period to taxpayers. Increase in threshold of composition is a significant move, will foster easier compliance for B2C businesses and provide options to a larger list of small B2B suppliers."

However, on a sector-specific basis, S Chouksey, president, Cement Manufacturers' Association, pointed out that the industry finds itself retained in the 28% GST bracket, along with luxury items such as washing machines and air conditioners.

"Cement is integral to the government's key schemes such as 'Housing for All', 'Swachh Bharat' and building of other infrastructure projects that are fundamental for building an India for the future," Chouksey said. IANS

Industry welcomes GST reduction in over 200 items

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Traders' body CAIT on Friday said the move to cut GST rates on over 200 items, saying the relief granted to businesses and consumers will be a game changer in simplifying the tax regime and encourage its wider adoption. In a statement, the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) said 'in the wake of current situation where traders are a depressed lot, such relief were much awaited.'

"It is estimated that by reducing tax and likely increase in composition limit, the Government will suffer a loss of about 34,000 crore rupees. If

traders are taken in confidence and various procedures are eased, the trading community will ensure compensation of such losses by making all efforts to widen the tax net base," CAIT said.

Industry body ASSOCHAM said the decision of the GST Council would lead to a pick-up in consumer demand and significantly revive the business sentiment. ASSOCHAM Secretary General DS Rawat said, "The increase in the composition scheme threshold would make life much easier for the small business entities." He added that the impact of these changes would be positively felt



THE INCREASE IN THE COMPOSITION SCHEME THRESHOLD WOULD MAKE LIFE MUCH EASIER FOR THE SMALL BUSINESS ENTITIES. THE IMPACT OF THESE CHANGES WOULD BE POSITIVELY FELT IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS, SAYS ASSOCHAM SECRETARY GENERAL DS RAWAT

in the next few months.

As many as 178 items of daily use were shifted from top tax bracket of 28 per cent to 18

per cent, while a uniform 5 per cent tax was prescribed for all restaurants, both air-conditioned and non-AC, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said. Currently, 12 per cent GST on food bill is levied in non-AC restaurants and 18 per cent GST for AC restaurants. All these got input tax credit, a facility to set off tax paid on inputs with final tax.

The traders' body, CAIT, further said these measures will mitigate practical difficulties for smooth execution and adoption of goods and services tax (GST) by small traders. It said the move which will help the trading community tide over the ini-

tial teething problems that are being faced in the aftermath of the transition to the GST regime.

CAIT further said that there are issues with the non-performance of the GST portal which need to be taken up on immediate priority. The all-powerful GST Council pruned the list of items in the top 28 per cent Goods and Services Tax (GST) slab to just 50 from current 228.

So, only luxury and sins goods are now only in highest tax bracket and items of daily use are shifted to 18 per cent.

Chewing gum, chocolates, coffee, custard power, marble and granite, dental hygiene products, polishes and creams, sani-

tary ware, leather clothing, artificial fur, wigs, cookers, stoves, after-shave, deodorant, detergent and washing power, razors and blades, cutlery, storage water heater, batteries, goggles, wrist watches and mattress are among the products on which tax rate has been cut from 28 per cent to 18 per cent.

The top tax rate is now restricted to luxury and demerit goods like pan masala, aerated water and beverages, cigars and cigarettes, tobacco products, cement, paints, perfumes, A/Cs, dish washing machine, washing machine, refrigerators, vacuum cleaners, cars and two-wheelers, aircrafts and yachts.

