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# DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

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## Topics Covered

- GDP Growth , Pg-1
- Cyclone Ditwah, Pg-1
- Nominated Governor , Pg-6
- India's Disaster Response , Pg-6
- Tense Matters, Pg-6
- Samudrayaan, Pg-10
- Fertility Care, Pg-10

Page-1

# India posts 8.2% Q2 GDP growth, tops six quarters

Manufacturing and services sectors record strong performance; GDP growth in first half of FY26 stands at 8%; Cong. questions the data, noting irony after the IMF again gave Indian statistics a 'C'

**T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan**  
NEW DELHI

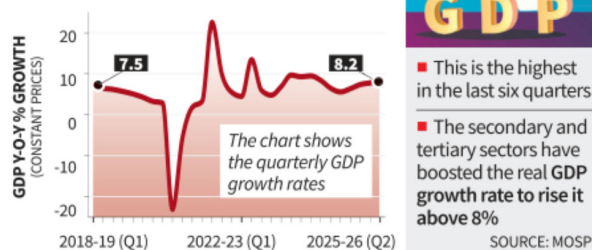
India's GDP grew at a six-quarter high of 8.2% in the second quarter (July-September) of the financial year 2025-26, buoyed by a relatively strong performance of the manufacturing and services sectors, official data showed.

Data released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation on Friday showed that the last time India's GDP grew faster was in the quarter ending March 2024, the final quarter of 2023-24.

The growth in Q2 of 2025-26 was significantly faster than the 5.6% growth recorded in the corresponding quarter last year, and even faster than the 7.8% in Q1 of this year.

## Growth accelerates

India's GDP grew at 8.2% in the second quarter of the current financial year



Taken together, growth in the first half of this financial year stands at 8%.

## PM's praise

"The 8.2% GDP growth in Q2 of 2025-26 is very encouraging," Prime Minister Narendra Modi posted on X. It reflects the impact of pro-growth policies and reforms, and the hard work of people, he said.

However, economists say that while the real GDP growth rate – which removes the inflation effect – has been higher than expected, the relatively low nominal growth rate of 8.7% shows economic activity is still subdued. "The sharply higher than expected 2QFY26 GDP was broad based but comes on the back of a very low de-

flator," Upasna Bhardwaj, chief economist at Kotak Mahindra Bank, said. "The single digit nominal GDP growth continues to signal tepid underlying activity."

According to Bank of Baroda chief economist Madan Sabnavis, this lower nominal GDP growth would make it more difficult for the government to achieve its fiscal deficit target of 4.4%, which had been pegged to a nominal growth of 10.1%.

The Congress hit out, pointing out the irony of the data being released days after the IMF gave India's national accounts the second-lowest rating of 'C'. The IMF had kept the grade unchanged from the previous year.

**CONTINUED ON**  
» PAGE 8



# Nearly 100 killed as Cyclone Ditwah batters Sri Lanka

**Meera Srinivasan**  
COLOMBO

Nearly 100 people have been reported dead and dozens are missing in Sri Lanka, as of Friday evening, amid incessant rain and strong winds, as Cyclone Ditwah appears to be moving north and north-west towards the coast of Tamil Nadu.

The island has been experiencing torrential downpour over the last couple of days, with several districts recording unprecedented levels of rainfall. According to the Department of Meteorology and the Disaster Management Centre, 20 out of Sri Lanka's 25 districts are badly hit, with over 60,000 families and 2,00,000 people directly affected amid an island-wide "red alert" issued by authorities.

Reports indicate that the impact of the extreme

weather conditions is especially severe along the east coast – in Ampara, Batticaloa, and Trincomalee – as well as in the Central Province, home to Kandy and Nuwara Eliya, both popular tourist destinations, and Matale, and Uva Province's Badulla district. Several areas remain heavily flooded, while roads remain inundated and inaccessible in the hill country – where some of Sri Lanka's poorest communities, such as the Malayaha Tamil tea and rubber estate workers, reside.

President Anura Kumara Dissanayake urged MPs from both the government and the Opposition to visit their districts and help with relief distribution while urgently ensuring public safety.

**CONTINUED ON**

» **PAGE 8**

**OPERATION SAGAR BANDHU**

» **PAGE 8**



**Rain fury:** People move through a flooded road after heavy rainfall in Kaduwela, on the outskirts of Colombo, on Friday. Torrential rain over the past few days has hit normal life in several districts of Sri Lanka. AFP

**Page-6**

## The 'impartiality' of a nominated Governor

**T**he Supreme Court of India judgment on the role of Governors and the subsequent advisory given by the Supreme Court Constitutional Bench on the 16th Presidential reference have sparked a debate on the letter and spirit of the Constitution. The words that found a place in the final draft adopted by the Constituent Assembly reflected the spirit of the debates that the august House had witnessed. Incidentally, it was on November 26, 1949, that the Constitution was adopted.

The debate on the role of Governors in the Assembly was one of quality and substance. Many questions were raised about the office, the role and the powers of a Governor in an independent India. At every turn, Babasaheb Dr. B.R. Ambedkar intervened and clarified the carefully thought-out ideas that had gone into the draft.

Doubts were expressed by members about the impartiality of a nominated Governor. They argued that as a nominee of the central government, and not elected by the people, he would be 'remote-controlled' and 'no different from the old provincial governors under the Government of India Act, 1935'. They wanted the office-holder to be above suspicion and feared that they might become a 'replica of the Viceroy's nominees'.

**'A purely constitutional Governor'**  
Replying to these apprehensions raised by the members in 1947, and later in 1949, before the adoption of the Constitution, Dr. Ambedkar said, "Some members have expressed fear that a nominated Governor will be a nominee of the Centre and not of the Province. I have no doubt that the Governor is required to act on the advice of his Ministers. He is not intended to be an agent of the Centre." And further, "It must be emphatically stated that the Governor under the Constitution is a purely constitutional Governor. He is there to make the parliamentary system work, not to rival the elected Ministry."

The next major debate that took place was on the discretionary powers of the Governor. Once again, many members participating in the debate voiced their opposition to such provisions. They said that these reminded them of the 1935 Act, to which Dr. Ambedkar once again responded: "It is wrong to say that by this provision we are reviving the ghosts of 1935. That Constitution gave



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The discussion on the power of Governors is even more relevant today in the context of past debate

the Governor a general overriding power. Our Constitution does not." He was even more categorical as members persisted with their objections: "I hope members will not read into the Constitution more than what is contained in it. The Governor is not to be an interfering authority. His discretion is a very limited discretion." By 'limited discretion', he meant matters such as the selection of a Chief Minister for the formation of a new government after elections or other issues explicitly mentioned in the Constitution. More importantly, he did not envisage a Governor acting as an 'interfering authority' – as many present-day Governors in Opposition-ruled States often do.

**A relevant discussion today**

The discussion on the power of Governors to withhold assent to Bills is even more relevant today. Again, members referred to the 1935 Act. N.G. Ranga made his point succinctly: "A Bill passed by an elected Legislature should not be at the mercy of a nominated Governor. This is dangerous. It is giving the Governor discretionary power under another guise." Rohini Kumar Chaudhuri also joined the issue: "Sir, the Governor's power to reserve a Bill for the President is a direct affront to the elected Legislature. It is nothing but the residue of the old powers exercised by the British Governors who were agents of the Viceroy... We have been told many times that the Governor is not to be an interfering authority. But if you give him this power, he becomes exactly that."

Dr. Ambedkar again allayed the fears expressed by the members: "There seems to be some misunderstanding regarding the nature of this power. The reservation of Bills for the consideration of the President is not a discretionary power to be exercised by the Governor in his own right... It would be a mistake to suppose that the Governor has been given a general overriding authority. He has absolutely none... The reservation of Bills is required only in a limited class of cases – those Bills which may endanger the position of the Centre, or violate fundamental constitutional provisions."

He made this even clearer when he said: "I want to assure the House that the Governor is not expected to sit in judgment over Bills passed by the Legislature. His functions are formal... Where the Constitution says he shall act on advice, he

must act on advice. Where it says he shall act in his discretion, only then may he do so... The Constitution must be read as a whole. No power of discretion is to be inferred unless expressly provided." He emphatically reiterated, "There is no ground for fear that the Governor will become a rival authority."

According to Dr. Ambedkar, a Governor in the constitutional scheme does not enjoy any special powers even during an emergency. Governors must act on the advice of the Council of Ministers even in such situations. In fact, he was so confident about the limited role of Governors that he remarked: "The powers of the Governor were so limited, so nominal, his position so ornamental... that I think that very few would come forward to stand for election."

Such was the understanding of the framers of the Constitution about the powers of the Governor and his role in state administration. They had the foresight to draft a Constitution that still resonates with the realities of our country. But alas, they could not have envisaged a day when a few prejudiced individuals would come to occupy such an 'exalted' constitutional office. And they appear determined to prove how misplaced Dr. Ambedkar's optimism is.

Here, it would not be out of context to refer to the question posed by former President K.R. Narayanan on the 50th anniversary of the Republic: "We have to consider whether it is the Constitution that has failed us or whether it is we who have failed the Constitution."

**Correct 'vileness'**

In the current debate on the role of Governors, it is certainly the individuals concerned who are failing the Constitution. The phrase in the Constitution requiring Governors to declare their decision 'as soon as possible' is now being interpreted in a contrary manner – 'as late as possible'. This is precisely where the courts were expected to intervene, correctly interpret the spirit of the Constitution and give meaningful effect to its words in the context of India today. Unfortunately, the Court too did not adequately consider Dr. Ambedkar's observation that "if things go wrong under the new Constitution... what we will have to say is that, Man was vile". The courts would be failing in their duty if they do not act to correct such vileness.







## Tense waters

China and Japan must de-escalate and focus on economic cooperation

**T**he recent escalation of tensions between China and Japan has become one of the most serious diplomatic crises between the two Asian giants. The trigger was Japan's new Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's November 7 statement that any Chinese military actions against Taiwan could pose a threat to Japan's survival, implying that Tokyo might intervene militarily. This was the first time a sitting Japanese Prime Minister made an explicit remark about Japan's stance on a potential Chinese military action in Taiwan, marking a sharp departure from the cautious strategic ambiguity that Tokyo had long maintained. An enraged China has demanded that Ms. Takaichi retract her remarks, and has banned Japanese seafood imports and issued travel advisories to its citizens to avoid Japan. China has also claimed that Japan is planning to deploy missiles on Yonaguni island near Taiwan, calling it "an extremely dangerous move". Chinese Coast Guard vessels are also patrolling the waters around the disputed Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea, actions Japan says violate its territorial waters. Beijing has warned that any Japanese military intervention in Taiwan would be treated as an act of aggression.

China's anger is not entirely unfounded. Japan's colonial legacy still casts a long shadow over the region. From 1895 to 1945, Taiwan lived under Japanese occupation following the Treaty of Shimonoseki. Japan's brutal occupation of parts of China left wounds that are still raw in Chinese collective memory. Taiwan was returned to Chinese control after Japan was defeated in the Second World War, but became a separate administrative entity when the Kuomintang retreated there following the communist revolution of 1949. Although Taiwan has been self-ruled ever since, China considers it as a core sovereignty issue, a position acknowledged by most countries, including the U.S., through their adherence to the One-China policy. For decades, the status quo helped preserve the Taiwan Strait. Despite the deep mistrust, China and Japan remain economically intertwined – bilateral trade exceeds \$300 billion annually. But the election of Ms. Takaichi, a hardline nationalist, and her provocative rhetoric, coupled with China's forceful response, now threaten to usher in an era of full-spectrum hostility in East Asia. An immediate solution to the Taiwan issue is unlikely. For peace and stability to endure, especially amid global conflicts, the status quo – shaped by China's claims, Taiwan's self-rule, America's strategic ambiguity and restraint on all sides – must be preserved. China and Japan should de-escalate and refocus on strengthening economic cooperation. The U.S., Japan's treaty ally, must balance its security commitments with diplomatic efforts that are aimed at preventing miscalculation.

## India's disaster response, a slippery slope for federalism

**T**he inter-governmental transfer of resources for disaster response reveals a growing asymmetry between the Union and the States of India, reflected in the widening gap between assessed needs and actual disbursements. This imbalance, seen most recently in the Centre's release of funds to Kerala after the Wayanad landslides, raises a critical question. Is India's fiscal federal structure shifting from a cooperative to a more conditional and centralised model of disaster-risk finance?

The tragedy in Wayanad, in July 2024, which claimed nearly 300 lives and destroyed thousands of homes, brought sharp focus to this issue. Against Kerala's loss of ₹2,200 crore, the Union approved only ₹260 crore, barely 11% (₹1,2 lakh crore is the estimated loss while ₹2,200 crore is sought by the State in the memorandum for recovery). This mismatch, not unique to Kerala, signals an erosion of cooperative federalism. Disasters today are fiscal stress tests for States, and as climate shocks intensify, India's disaster-financing framework is showing visible strain.

### There is a drift

India's disaster-response financing framework, established under the Disaster Management Act, 2005, rests on a two-tier structure. The State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF), financed jointly by the Centre and States in a 75:25 ratio, 90:10 for Himalayan and north-eastern States, provides immediate relief for shelter, food, medical care and compensation. The National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF), fully funded by the Union government, supplements this when a calamity is classified as severe. In principle, the design appears balanced, but in practice, it has drifted towards central control.

First, relief norms are outdated and rigid. Compensation ceilings, ₹4 lakh for each life lost and ₹1.2 lakh for a fully damaged house have barely changed in a decade. These amounts meet subsistence needs but not reconstruction costs, leaving States fiscally exposed after every disaster.

Second, ambiguity in classification invites



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There is evidence of a more conditional and centralised model of a disaster response financing system

discretion. The Act does not define what constitutes a 'severe' disaster, giving wide latitude to decide eligibility for NDRF aid.

Third, aid releases are procedural, not automatic. Unlike systems where objective indicators trigger support, India's process depends on sequential clearances, State memoranda, central assessment, and high-level approval which cause delays when urgency matters the most.

Finally, the Finance Commission's allocation criteria are weak. Using population and total geographical area to gauge exposure ignores actual hazard patterns. Further, the disaster vulnerability is proxied by poverty rather than a robust disaster-risk index, producing allocations that are misaligned with people's real exposure to floods, landslides or cyclones.

The Wayanad episode exposed deep institutional flaws. The Centre cited Kerala's unspent SDRF balance of ₹780 crore and an earlier ₹529 crore interest-free loan under the Capital Investment Scheme to justify the cutting of aid. Yet, these balances often reflect committed works, not idle funds. SDRF instalments arrive late in the fiscal year, while disasters are seasonal, making temporary balances inevitable. Moreover, SDRF rules restrict spending to immediate relief, not reconstruction or livelihood restoration, forcing States to retain reserves for liquidity.

Further, the Centre delayed classifying the Wayanad landslides as a severe disaster, limiting Kerala's access to higher NDRF support. States such as Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Assam received larger packages for comparable calamities. Similar mismatches marked Tamil Nadu after Cyclone Gaja (2018) and Karnataka during the 2019 floods. Across cases, procedural rigidity, slow approvals, and widening gaps between losses and aid reveal a system where cooperative federalism has yielded to bureaucratic negotiation.

### Learning from global practices

Many countries now use data-driven, transparent disaster financing. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) of the United States

applies per capita damage thresholds. Mexico's former FONDEN (fund for natural disasters) released funds automatically when rainfall or wind limits were exceeded. The Philippines triggers quick-response funds through rainfall and fatality indices, while African and Caribbean insurance facilities use satellite data for rapid payouts. Australia links federal aid to a state's relief spending relative to revenue. These systems replace discretion with clear rules, proving that relief can be swift and accountable. India could adopt similar objective triggers such as rainfall intensity, fatalities per million, or loss-to-GSDP ratio to reduce delay, discretion, and restore trust in federal transfers.

### Rebuilding the federal spirit

The Sixteenth Finance Commission has an opportunity to reframe this architecture. It can update relief norms to reflect current costs, revise allocation criteria using a comprehensive vulnerability index, and ensure that disaster assistance remains grant-based rather than debt-based. States must have operational control over their disaster funds, with the Union's role confined to post-audit verification instead of prior approval. This reform is not about weakening central oversight but about strengthening federal functionality. A system that enables quick, rules-based responses will serve both tiers of government and, most importantly, citizens far better than one that is mired in procedural red tape.

Disasters expose not only physical vulnerabilities but also institutional ones. When relief turns into negotiation instead of solidarity, fiscal federalism itself comes under strain. India's disaster-financing system must evolve from procedural charity to a rules-based partnership.

The next flood or landslide should not leave States pleading for what the Constitution already guarantees a cooperative, equitable, and timely response. If federalism falters in crisis, it fails when it matters most. The Wayanad tragedy is a warning. Before the next storm arrives, India needs to rebuild the fiscal foundations of its disaster relief.



## India launches 'Operation Sagar Bandhu' to provide relief supplies to Sri Lanka

**Press Trust of India**  
NEW DELHI

India on Friday delivered essential relief supplies to cyclone-battered Sri Lanka with Prime Minister Narendra Modi conveying to the island nation that New Delhi stands ready to provide more aid to it to deal with the situation.

New Delhi launched "Operation Sagar Bandhu" to assist Sri Lanka in its hour of crisis and the first tranche of relief materials were handed after the consignments were transported by Indian Navy's aircraft carrier *INS Vikrant* and frontline ship *INS Udaygiri*.

"My heartfelt condolences to the people of Sri Lanka who have lost their loved ones due to Cyclone Dityah. I pray for the safety, comfort and swift recovery of all affected families," Mr. Modi said on social media. "Guided by India's



Navy officers handing over humanitarian aid from India to Sri Lanka as part of 'Operation Sagar Bandhu' in Colombo. PTI

Neighbourhood First policy and Vision MAHASAGAR, India continues to stand firmly with Sri Lanka in its hour of need," he added.

Mr. Modi announced the MAHASAGAR (Mutual And Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions) vision for India's engagement with the Global South during his visit to Mauritius in March.

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said that Op-

eration Sagar Bandhu had commenced and further steps were under way.

India's first indigenous aircraft carrier *INS Vikrant*, and latest indigenous stealth frigate *INS Udaygiri* are in Sri Lanka to participate at a three-day International Fleet Review (IFR) that began on Thursday.

Sri Lankan defence officials said *INS Vikrant* was formally requested for use of its aircraft for relief operations.

## Delay in getting syntactic foam hits Samudrayaan

India plans to send a manned submersible 6,000 metres into the ocean, a mission that is crucial to future explorations; a syntactic foam cladding will give the submersible buoyancy, help it float

**Jacob Koshy**  
NEW DELHI

A crucial set of tests on the Samudrayaan, India's first manned submersible dive into the ocean, is likely only mid-next year following a delay in the procurement of syntactic foam cladding from France.

The Samudrayaan consists of a sphere capable of plunging to a depth of 6,000 metres into the ocean. Only a handful of countries have dived to comparable depths. A crew of three will man this submersible, which will descend to the ocean floor, scour it, and collect soil and rock samples. The mission is deemed as pivotal to India's future exploration plans to mine precious metals from the high seas.

As a prelude to this, scientists from the National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT), Chennai, who are leading the project, have built a steel replica of the submersible that is to be used as a simulator prior to the final mission. Though simulations have been conducted on this



A prototype of the MATSYA 6000, a submersible made by the National Institute of Ocean Technology in Chennai. The final version is expected to undertake a journey to a depth of 6,000 metres. R. RAJENDRAN

sphere to depths of 100 metres, a final set of trials – that involves sending the submersible down to 500 metres – is on the anvil. It was originally scheduled for December 2024.

"Before the 500-metre dive, the (steel) submersible has to be fitted with syntactic foam, which is what gives the submersible buoyancy and allows it to float. This is developed in France and being tested in Norway and after that will

be fitted onto our submersible," M. Ravichandran, Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences, told *The Hindu*. The Ministry is the parent body of NIOT. "Hopefully, it should be delivered by the end of the year."

Once these tests are done, the final titanium hull – that will be the one to make the final 6,000-metre dive – will be sent to Russia where it will be tested, in a laboratory, for its

ability to withstand the pressure of the ocean at 6,000 metres. "We have already accounted for this but this test is required," he added. The same syntactic foam will be fitted onto the titanium sphere.

The Indian Space Research Organisation is making two titanium hulls for NIOT. "Once these tests are done, we hope to conduct the 500-metre dive by April next year," Mr. Ravichandran added.

# WHO calls on countries to make fertility care safer and affordable

**Bindu Shajan Perappadan**  
NEW DELHI

The World Health Organization (WHO) has called on countries to make fertility care safer, fairer, and more affordable for all in its first-ever global guideline for the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of infertility.

The guideline includes 40 recommendations that seek to strengthen the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of infertility. It promotes cost-effective options at every stage, while advocating for the integration of fertility care into national health strategies, services, and financing. It stresses the need to tackle leading risk factors for infertility, including untreated sexually transmitted infections and tobacco use. Lifestyle interventions, such as healthy diet, physical activity, and tobacco



The WHO notes that while demand for infertility treatments are rising worldwide, access to care remains severely limited.

cessation, are recommended for individuals and couples planning or attempting pregnancy. Informing people about fertility and infertility early can assist them in making reproductive plans.

## Limited access

The WHO notes that while demand for services is rising worldwide, access to care remains severely limited.

ed. "In many countries, tests and treatments for infertility are largely funded out-of-pocket – often resulting in catastrophic financial expenditures. In some settings, even a single round of in vitro fertilization (IVF) can cost double the average annual household income," said a release issued by the organization on Friday.

The guidelines also provide

guidance on steps for effective clinical management of infertility and call for increased investment in prevention measures, including dissemination of information on fertility and infertility in schools, primary healthcare, and reproductive health facilities.

The guidelines suggest how to progressively advance treatment options from simpler management strategies to more complex treatment courses such as intrauterine insemination or IVF. Recognising the emotional toll of infertility, which can lead to depression and anxiety, the guidelines emphasise the need to ensure ongoing access to psychosocial support for all those affected.

The WHO is encouraging countries to adapt the recommendations to their local contexts and to monitor progress.