

INDIA'S 2030 BID

India's proposal to host the 2030 Commonwealth Games signals a significant and timely assertion of its growing stature on the global sporting stage. As the country emerges as an economic powerhouse and a hub for international events, hosting the Commonwealth Games would not only celebrate its sporting potential but also catalyse infrastructural development, youth engagement, and international diplomacy.

The Commonwealth Games, often dubbed the "Friendly Games," are a powerful symbol of unity, diversity, and athletic excellence among member nations. India's previous hosting of the 2010 edition in New Delhi left behind a lasting legacy - both in terms of infrastructure and sporting culture. Now, with over a decade of experience and vastly improved sporting facilities across multiple cities, India is more than ready to take the leap once again.

The proposal to host the 2030 Games offers an opportunity to correct past shortcomings and present a modern, inclusive, and sustainable version of the Games. The successful organisation of events such as the G20 Summit, Chess Olympiad, Hockey World Cup, and IPL showcase India's growing expertise in managing large-scale international events. Hosting the Commonwealth Games would be a natural progression and a platform to promote India's rich heritage, technological capabilities, and sporting ambition.

Moreover, the Games could serve as a catalyst for youth empowerment, especially in tier-2 and tier-3 cities. If India opts for a multi-city model - as is increasingly common in global sporting events - the benefits of infrastructure, investment, and employment will reach far beyond the metropolitan centres. It would also promote regional sports hubs and build a broader sporting ecosystem in the country.

The 2030 Commonwealth Games could mark a defining moment for India - not just in sports, but in global diplomacy, cultural outreach, and national pride. A successful bid and execution would reflect a confident, capable India on the world stage - one that honours its past, embraces the present, and inspires future generations.

GST 2.0 Kick-Off: A Record-Smashing Day One as Navratri and Tax Cuts Spark Consumer Frenzy

A date that will be etched in the memory of shopkeepers, auto dealers, and every Indian household as the day GST 2.0 took off with thunderous applause from consumers. As the first pooja of Navratri rang out across India, the Modi government rolled out GST 2.0; the real Diwali gift to the people of India. Arriving in perfect sync with the first day of Navratri, the reformed tax regime gave the common man a direct reason to rejoice, lower prices, simplified slabs, and immediate relief on daily essentials.

PM Modi called GST 2.0 "a reform dedicated to the people of India", and true to his words, it felt less like a dry policy change and more like a festive bonanza. Car showrooms witnessed serpentine queues, online carts overflowed with orders and buzzed with record-breaking festive sales.

Record Breaking Automobile Sector

The automobile sector stole the spotlight with historic numbers. Under the new GST structure, smaller sub-4 metre cars were moved into the 18% slab, while the compensation cess on automobiles was completely removed.

On Day 1 of GST 2.0, Maruti recorded 80,000 enquiries and delivered 30,000 cars, its highest single-day performance in 35 years. Bookings for small cars surged 50% compared to usual festival season rates.

Dealer billings for Hyundai also shot up, 11,000 on that single day, representing its



best performance in five years.

Tata motors also recorded 10,000 car deliveries and over 25,000 enquiries on the first day of Navaratri, marking a strong start to the festive season, with a noticeable increase in showroom walk-ins, higher conversions, and a growing order book.

For countless families, GST 2.0 transformed long-postponed dreams into reality. Automobiles became not just more accessible, but a true festive purchase.

e-Commerce Carts Filled Online

The excitement extended to the digital mar-

ketplace, where shoppers rushed to stock up on fashion, home essentials, and festive must-haves.

Flipkart and Amazon kicked off their festive sale events on Monday for loyalty programme users, with sellers and brands reporting strong early traction boosted by the GST cut.

Fashion brand "The Pant Project" saw a 15-20% jump over last year, while Shadow Etail, a seller on both marketplaces, saw traffic in the home essentials segment surge 151% from last week.

Fashion brands like Snitch reported 40%

jump in online orders.

ACs and TVs Fly Off Shelves Under GST 2.0

Electronics turned into another big success story under GST 2.0, with households taking advantage of reduced prices on high-demand products. While prices of split ACs have come down by Rs 3,000-5,000, high-end TVs have seen a price cut of up to Rs 85,000.

On 22 September, companies like Haier reported almost 2X the sales compared to a typical Monday, with many pre-bookings even before the new rates came into effect.

Blue Star estimated that GST 2.0 Day 1 sales were around 20% higher compared to the same day last year.

TV sales also surged, especially in the 43-inch and 55-inch segments. Companies like Super Plastronics Pvt Ltd, selling largely through Flipkart, reported 30-35% growth in sales.

The Real Diwali Gift

GST 2.0 delivered instant relief and sparked consumer joy from Day One. It reduced household expenses, revived demand across industries, and ignited the festive season with record-breaking sales. From cars and electronics to groceries and fashion, every sector felt the surge.

This was more than tax reform. It was a festival of savings, a boost to demand, and the real Diwali gift from PM Modi to the people of India.

Taste the Future

■ CHIRAG PASWAN

My first World Food India (WFI) as Union Minister in September 2024 was a defining experience. In those four days, I witnessed the entire farm-to-fork ecosystem converge: state pavilions with global buyers, FPOs and SHGs beside technology showcases, and policy dialogues alongside investment announcements. It affirmed WFI's role as a strategic platform aligned with Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's vision for India to become a global food basket.

That experience shaped the blueprint for 2025. Travels to food-processing units, dialogues with industry leaders, and engagements at global platforms like Gulfood and WEF strengthened my conviction that the world must see India's agri-food diversity and capabilities as never before. We resolved to make the next edition bolder and more outcome-focused, turning innovation into investment and establishing India as a trusted global food hub.

This ambition is reinforced by policy tailwinds, most notably the Next-Generation GST reforms. By placing most processed food items to five or zero percent, these reforms have cre-

ated a conducive and competitive environment for the sector.

With this background, we are ready to host WFI 2025 from 25th to 28th September, to be inaugurated by the Hon'ble Prime Minister, signalling the government's high priority for this sector. This edition will feature New Zealand and Saudi Arabia as Partner Countries, with Japan, the UAE, Vietnam, and Russia as Focus Countries. A powerful example of cooperative federalism, 21 states and union territories will enrich the event with pavilions highlighting regional strengths. Alongside major exhibitions and B2B forums, WFI will host the 3rd Global Food Regulators Summit by FSSAI and the 24th India International Seafood Show by SEAI.

WFI runs on a whole-of-government engine. While our Ministry leads, we work shoulder-to-shoulder with Ministries across the value chain like Animal Husbandry & Dairying, Fisheries, Commerce, DPIIT, Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare, and Health & Family Welfare, AYUSH, DoNER and agencies under them so that production, standards, trade, and investment move in sync.



WFI's agenda rests on five core pillars: Sustainability and Net-Zero Food Processing; India as a Global Food Processing Hub; Frontiers in Food Processing, Products, and Packaging Technologies; Processed Food for Nutrition and Health and Livestock and Marine Products Accelerating Rural Economy. Each pillar is mapped to curate sessions, B2B meetings, and adoption pathways so participation moves from discussion to deployment.

The remarkable success of PMFME micro-entrepreneurs demonstrates WFI's impact. Free

stalls place them at the heart of the event, enabling connections with domestic as well as global giants. Their participation has led to trade orders worth crores and lasting partnerships. Many return this year as we proudly continue to ensure a level-playing field for India's smallest food entrepreneurs.

A key highlight of WFI is the CEO Round Table, where industry leaders, investors, and policymakers engage in strategic dialogue to foster collaboration and resolve sectoral challenges. Notably, GST-related issues raised here in 2024 led to the Next-Gen GST

Reforms, reflecting our Government's consultative and responsive approach.

To be truly comprehensive, WFI engages the full spectrum of stakeholders, including the HoReCa and Aleobev sectors, spurring innovation across all sub-sectors. We are also spotlighting our North-Eastern region, rich in organic and sustainable products. Its pavilion will showcase everything from Assam's teas to Meghalaya's turmeric, highlighting the Prime Minister's vision of the North-East as a launchpad for Indian organic brands globally.

WFI's credibility rests on delivery. Since 2017, it has grounded over Rs 38,000 crores in investments. The 2024 edition saw over 1,500 exhibitors and 20 country pavilions, generating USD 93 million in trade orders. More than 50 new processing units were inaugurated, 25,000 micro-enterprises received subsidies, and Rs 245 crore in seed capital supported 70,000 women from SHGs. A wall featuring over 1,100 QR-coded pickle varieties, a record in itself, varieties showcased direct market access for small producers. These milestones highlight WFI as a continuous engine for investment, innovation, and inclusive growth.

The strongest endorsement for WFI comes from the industry itself. Net exhibition area booked has surged 43%, from 70 thousand square meters to 1 lakh square meters in a year, signalling immense market confidence to harness this platform for growth and partnership.

World Food India 2025 embodies a simple logic: when innovation meets investment and standards, prosperity follows. It is where a start-up can pitch to a global investor, an SHG can find buyers for organic pickles, and States can attract multinational plants. As the Prime Minister has observed, India's food diversity is a dividend for every global investor. Food processing is the link that turns this potential into jobs, higher farmer incomes, and a more value-added export basket.

To all readers, stakeholders, and well-wishers: Join us at World Food India 2025 to witness how a 1.4 billion-strong nation is "processing for prosperity" with technology, innovation, and heart. Fasten your seatbelts for an unforgettable event where bold visions and vibrant flavours converge to inspire a world of possibilities.

(The author is Union Minister for Food Processing Industries)

Problems and Opportunities in Rural-Urban Linkages

■ DR. BANARSI LAL

Rural-urban linkages are defined as the cultural, economic, social, environmental and political connections between communities on the rural and urban divide. This concept is significant to poverty alleviation work and the efforts for achieving wider equality made by many development organisations. Rural and urban development interacts through the flow of people, energy, materials, goods, capital, information etc. Meeting the globally growing demand of food, especially in the urban areas and the conservation of ecosystems and their services are contingent on a thriving sustainable agriculture and the development of rural areas. Studies on rural-urban linkages are focused on multiple issues such as migration, remittances, social services including health, education, climate change, nutrition and food security. Without building strong urban-rural linkages development is not possible. Achieving sustainable development needs customized policy prioritization and implementation in both urban and rural areas. The world is rapidly urbanising. According to the UN, by 2050 about 66 per cent of the world's population is expected to live in urban areas. Keeping the rapid urbanisation in view, there is need to pay more attention towards the rural areas in the years ahead. There is need to stress on the rural-urban linkages to eliminate the poverty and promote the sustainable development. Strong linkages between the rural-urban areas can contribute in improving the living standards of rural people and creating the job opportunities for them. In India around 31 per cent of population lives in the rural areas which is expected to reach 50 per cent by 2050. Urbanisation comes with challenges to agriculture and nutrition. Rapid urbanisation brings opportunities for diversified and increased food production that can contribute to improve the farmers' livelihoods. To take the advantage of these opportunities, strong rural-urban linkages are must. Rural-urban linkages are the physical, economic, political and social connections that link rural areas to urban areas. With strong links, village farmers can sell their farm produce in urban areas and labourers can get the seasonal work.

As per 2011 Census India is having 6, 40,867 villages and 7,935 towns/urban centers. Rural population in India accounts for 68.84 per cent and urban population 31.16 per cent. There exists a close linkage between rural and urban areas. Both rural and urban areas coexist along a continuum with multiple types of flows such as people, information, money, goods, capital and interactions. The rural-urban linkage has been mutually reinforcing and its potential can profitably be harnessed to ensure development of rural-urban economy in general and enable the poor and vulnerable rural and urban people in particular. Both rural and urban investment policies, programmes and strategies have a strong influence

on socio-economic development and transformations. Investments in rural and urban areas have often been perceived as mutually exclusive and competing. Investments in rural areas assist to provide the basic amenities, facilities and services almost at par with urban areas but with major objective to reduce rural-to-urban migration while urban areas receive significant public investment, attract substantial private investments that bring state-of-the-art technology to express full development potential. Rapid urbanisation is almost inevitable and there is no historical evidence of policies and programmes to successfully prevent rural to urban migration. Educated rural work-force having aspirations and adequate resources certainly like to seek employment in secondary and tertiary sectors of the economy in urban areas.

There appears to be a dynamic synergy between agriculture in rural areas and micro, small and medium enterprises in urban areas which is a key to the development for the country as a whole. There is dire need to substantially minimize the rural-urban divide and simultaneously strengthen the rural-urban linkage so as to assure food-security, employment, reduce incidence of poverty, hunger and malnourishment and increase the income of rural and urban people in particular. Rural life is the principal pivot around which whole of the Indian social life revolves. India is a land of agriculture. The village is the primary unit of rural society. Rural society is the basic foundation of human life, the keystone of the developmental process and the basic unit of social structure. The rural communities are less voluminous and less densely populated. Caste stands as a pivot of rural social structure. It acts as the most powerful determinant of individual behaviour and social order in rural unity. The religious customs and practices in Indian village society vary in different parts of the country, depending upon their cultures and lifestyles. Fairs and festivals have always been an integral part of Indian village society. Rural areas are potentially endowed with resources to develop farm and non-farm growth. Migration is one of the potential avenues open to poor rural people to increase their income and employment. Urban centers have better institutional infrastructure to cater services to rural households such as markets for their purchases and sales, banking and credit, government offices, medium and higher educational institutes, health services, transport and communication etc. Rural-urban areas are inter-connected together. Rural areas are the centers of production of agricultural and allied sector commodities and urban centers provide flourishing markets for the consumption, processing and export of these commodities. These commodities include food grains, vegetables, fruits, sugarcane, cotton, jute, plantation crops, spices, milk, meat, eggs etc. Production of agro-inputs such as

seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, farm equipments, machineries etc. move from urban areas to rural areas in order to increase farm output so that needs of rural households can be mitigated. It has been observed that large scale development of agro food-processing industries is a major key to strengthen rural-urban linkages. Rural to urban migration has been increasing because of rapid industrialisation opening vast employment opportunities in urban areas in construction and manufacturing, different businesses and services. This improves rural economy as remittances from urban to rural areas help families of migrants to meet their family expenses. Mostly, marginal and small farmers, tenant farmers, share croppers, landless labourers migrate temporarily in urban areas when they do not find employment in rural areas due to various reasons. Rural migration creates pressure on existing population and infrastructure of urban areas to sustain the well-being. This has been manifested in the form of increasing rate of unemployment, homelessness, growth of squatter and slum settlements and inadequate infrastructure and services in the urban areas.

Rural people often visit urban areas either regularly or occasionally for their various requirements such as purchases, contacting government offices or agencies, hospitals whereas traders visit rural areas for business purpose and government officials or agencies visit rural areas for their assigned duties. It has been observed that some rural people also settle down temporarily or permanently in urban areas for business purposes or for employment in government and private services. Tourism usually refers to movement of people away from their residences for recreation during holidays and leisure hours, although many people sometimes combine it with conferences, visiting relatives and business trips. It is worth noting that these categories are not mutually exclusive. With the progressive institutionalisation of banking and credit institutions and their increasing presence in rural areas, rural-urban linkage help rural people avail various types of financial services such as remittances, savings, credit, insurance, payment of pension and other benefits under the government's schemes. Substantial amount of savings mobilised from rural areas is moving to urban areas for providing credit and long-term investment in manufacturing and business sectors. Therefore, idle capital lying in one place is productively utilised in other areas for socioeconomic development of the community, geographical area and the country. The development of Information and Communication Technologies [ICTs] in recent years strengthened the rural-urban linkage. Access to information by the rural people about government's programmes has facilitated significant improvement in the development of farm and non-farm sector. ICTs help rural people to avail employment opportunities in certain centers. Some rural areas have indeed wit-

nessed sea change in the socio-economic transformation. Print and electronic media are playing a significant role in this case. Environmental degradation and pollution both in rural and urban areas have been progressively increasing at a faster rate as farmers in their efforts to substantially increase farm production indiscriminately use agro-chemicals and urban areas have been adding profuse amount of industrial wastes apart from carbon emission. Even infrastructure is under heavy pressure to sustain well-being of population. Urbanisation and industrialisation progressively expand their geographical boundaries extending to adjoining rural areas occupying arable land thereby polluting rural environment by letting out urban and industrial waste. This constitutes rural-urban linkage with many management implications.

Rural-urban linkage can significantly be strengthened by creating various infrastructure facilities. Efforts need to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the existing infrastructure such as all weather road connectivity, bridges on rivers and canals, efficient and affordable transport facilities, availability of electricity, telecommunication network comprising radio, community radio, television, telephone, cellphones, social media network, internet etc., print media such as newspapers, folders, leaflets, improving literacy rates among poor people, capacity building of local level primary institutions, banking institutions, post offices and business correspondents to deliver services, empowering farmers' clubs, women Self Help-Groups (SHGs) and Joint Liability Groups (JLGs) to widen and deepen development through credit and banking. There are certain critical elements to change the rural scenario such as progressive increase in the output of agriculture, livestock, fisheries, forestry and increase in trade business of farm goods and services. Rural households access to Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) provide technical services to develop agriculture in particular and rural economy in general. Emphasis should be given on increased decentralized governance structure at village/tehsil/district level and focus on transparency and accountability while planning and implementing the growth and development oriented projects and programmes funded by the state and central government. Both rural and urban areas should not be treated as different and competing development spaces. Both areas should be considered as a whole contributing to the integrated economic development of the country and linkages between rural and urban should be strengthened. There is need to promote effective rural-urban linkages for the sustainable development.

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