VENTURE CAPITAL NEWS Page 3

GeM ‘Startup Runway’ Integrates National Single Window System (NSWS) to Expand Government Procurement Access

GeM Startup Runway's integration with NSWS gives startups easier access to ₹34 lakh crore government tenders, EMD exemptions, streamlined compliance, and growth opportunities.

STARTUP Page 6

SPICe+ and MCA21 AI Acceleration Transform India's Ease of Doing Business Ecosystem

India’s $3.92 trillion economy, infrastructure investments, and logistics modernization are driving growth opportunities for startups, consumers, and investors.

FINANCIAL Page 8

Global AI Infrastructure Push Accelerates Enterprise AI Adoption

TCS and Google Cloud are expanding Gemini Experience Centers globally, accelerating enterprise AI adoption, innovation, productivity, and digital transformation.

StartupTimes

Saturday, August 15, 2026 NEW DELHI, 10 PAGES

Startup Recognition Cap Doubled to ₹200 Crore

The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) has revised the eligibility criteria for startup recognition, raising the annual turnover limit from ₹100 crore to ₹200 crore. This significant policy change is aimed at supporting high-growth startups and scaleups that are expanding rapidly and require continued access to government-backed benefits.

Under the updated framework, startups with annual turnover of up to ₹200 crore can continue to retain their DPIIT-recognized startup status. This allows eligible companies to keep availing various incentives, including income tax exemptions under Section 80-IAC, easier compliance requirements, self-certification benefits under labor and environmental laws, and access to government procurement opportunities.

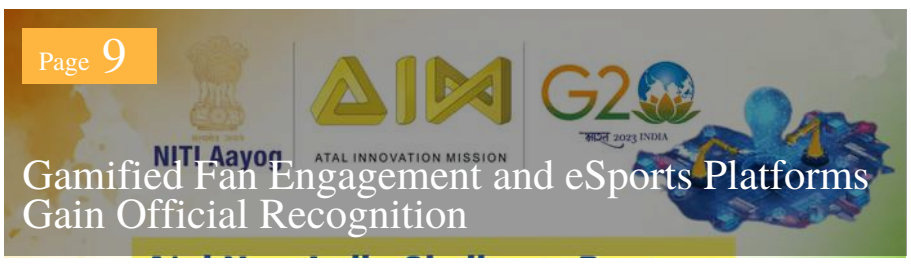
The move is expected to particularly benefit startups operating in capital-intensive sectors such as fintech, deeptech, SaaS, manufacturing, climate technology, and healthtech, where revenues often scale quickly before businesses achieve long-term profitability. Previously, companies crossing the turnover threshold risked losing startup status despite still being in growth and expansion phases.

Industry experts believe the revised limit better reflects the current startup ecosystem, where successful ventures can achieve substantial revenue growth within a few years of operation. By extending support to larger scaleups, the government aims to encourage innovation, job creation, and global competitiveness among Indian startups.

Fund of Funds 2.0 (FFS) Deploys ₹10,000 Crore Corpus

The SIDBI-managed Fund of Funds for Startups (FFS) 2.0 has accelerated the deployment of its ₹10,000 crore corpus to support India's innovation-driven startup ecosystem. The initiative channels capital through SEBI-registered Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs), enabling venture funds to invest in high-potential startups across emerging sectors. A major focus of FFS 2.0 is deep-tech, semiconductor manufacturing, electronics, hardware innovation, artificial intelligence, and advanced technologies critical to India's long-term economic growth.

Page 9



Gamified Fan Engagement and eSports Platforms Gain Official Recognition

Credit Guarantee Scheme for Startups Expands Collateral-Free Loan Support

India's expanded CGSS offers collateral-free loans up to ₹20 crore with enhanced guarantee coverage, improving startup access to debt financing, growth capital, innovation, and job creation.

The Government of India has strengthened the Credit Guarantee Scheme for Startups (CGSS) by expanding guarantee coverage and increasing access to collateral-free financing for innovative businesses. Under the revised framework, startups can now avail loans with guarantee coverage for amounts up to ₹20 crore, providing a significant boost to companies seeking growth capital without the burden of pledging assets.

One of the most impactful features of the updated scheme is the enhanced guarantee support for smaller loan amounts. Loans up to ₹10 crore are eligible for guarantee coverage of up to 85%, substantially reducing the risk for lending institutions. This increased protection is expected to encourage banks, non-banking financial companies (NBFCs), and other financial institutions to extend credit to startups that may not possess sufficient collateral or long operating histories.

Access to debt financing has traditionally been a challenge for startups, particularly in sectors that require significant upfront investment. Deep-tech companies, manufacturing ventures, clean energy startups, biotech firms, hardware innovators, and infrastructure-focused businesses often need substantial capital to develop products, build facilities, conduct research, and scale operations. However, many of these businesses struggle to secure loans because they lack tangible assets that can be offered as collateral.

The expanded CGSS seeks to address this gap by sharing credit risk between lenders and the government. With a large portion of the loan guaranteed, financial institutions can confidently support promising startups based on their business potential rather than solely on asset ownership. This shift is expected to improve credit flow to innovation-driven enterprises and reduce dependence on equity financing.

Industry stakeholders have welcomed the move, noting that easier access to debt capital can help founders avoid excessive dilution of ownership. Venture capital and angel investments remain important funding sources, but debt financing provides startups with an additional avenue to fund expansion while retaining greater control over their businesses. This is especially valuable for startups that have established revenue streams and are seeking working capital, equipment financing, or expansion funds.

The revised scheme also aligns with the government's broader objective of promoting entrepreneurship, innovation, and job creation across the country. By enabling startups to access larger pools of capital, policymakers aim to accelerate the commercialization of new technologies, strengthen domestic manufacturing capabilities, and support the growth of globally competitive enterprises.

Experts believe the expanded loan guarantee coverage will be particularly beneficial for startups operating in strategic sectors such as semiconductors, artificial intelligence, electric mobility, aerospace, climate technology, healthcare, and advanced manufacturing. These industries often require long development cycles and substantial investments before generating significant revenue.

Overall, the enhancement of the Credit Guarantee Scheme for Startups represents a major step toward improving the financing ecosystem for Indian entrepreneurs. By reducing lending risks and increasing the availability of collateral-free credit, the initiative is expected to unlock growth opportunities for thousands of startups, strengthen investor confidence, and contribute to India's emergence as a leading global innovation hub.

GeM 'Startup Runway' Integrates National Single Window System (NSWS) to Expand Government Procurement Access

The Government of India has taken another significant step toward strengthening the startup ecosystem by integrating the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) Startup Runway platform with the National Single Window System (NSWS). This integration is designed to simplify and accelerate access to government procurement opportunities for startups, enabling them to participate more effectively in public sector tenders and contracts.

The move opens the door for startups to explore procurement opportunities linked to a government purchasing ecosystem valued at more than ₹34 lakh crore. Through the integration, entrepreneurs can discover, evaluate, and participate in public procurement opportunities from a single digital interface, reducing administrative complexity and improving transparency.

GeM Startup Runway was initially launched to provide startups with a dedicated platform to showcase innovative products and services to government buyers. Over time, it has evolved into an important bridge between emerging businesses and government departments seeking innovative solutions. By connecting Startup Runway with the NSWS platform, the government aims to further streamline access to procurement opportunities while reducing procedural barriers that often discourage young companies from participating.

One of the most important advantages available to startups under this framework is the exemption from Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) requirements in many government tenders. Traditionally, businesses bidding for public contracts are required to submit an EMD as a security deposit, which can create financial strain for startups with limited working capital. EMD exemptions significantly lower the cost of participation and make government procurement more accessible to smaller, innovation-driven enterprises.

The integration also simplifies the registration and application process. Instead of navigating multiple portals and compliance requirements, startups can access various government services, approvals, and procurement opportunities through a unified digital ecosystem. This reduces paperwork, shortens processing timelines, and enables founders to focus more on business growth and product development rather than administrative procedures.

For government departments and public sector organizations, the integration expands access to a larger pool of innovative suppliers. Startups often bring cutting-edge technologies, agile business models, and specialized solutions that can improve public service delivery. Whether in artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, healthcare, education technology, agriculture, clean energy, mobility, or digital governance, startups can now more easily connect with government buyers looking for modern solutions to complex challenges.

Industry experts view the initiative as an important step toward strengthening demand-side support for startups. While funding programs, incubators, and tax incentives help entrepreneurs build businesses, access to customers remains a critical factor for long-term success. Government procurement represents one of the largest and most reliable markets in the country, and enabling startups to participate in this market can significantly accelerate revenue generation and business expansion.

The integration is also expected to support the broader goals of Startup India, Digital India, and Atmanirbhar Bharat by encouraging domestic innovation and reducing dependence on imported technologies. As government agencies increasingly seek locally developed solutions, startups have an opportunity to scale their operations while contributing to national priorities.

In addition, easier participation in government procurement can help startups build credibility and attract private-sector customers and investors. Securing government contracts often serves as a strong validation of a company's products, technology, and execution capabilities.

Overall, the integration of GeM Startup Runway with the National Single Window System marks a major advancement in India's startup support framework. By providing simplified access to government tenders worth over ₹34 lakh crore, offering EMD exemptions, and creating a more seamless procurement experience, the initiative is expected to unlock new growth opportunities for startups across sectors. The reform reinforces the government's commitment to fostering innovation, supporting entrepreneurship, and creating an enabling environment where startups can scale efficiently while contributing to India's economic development and technological progress.

DPIIT Startup Registrations Cross 2.47 Lakh Milestone

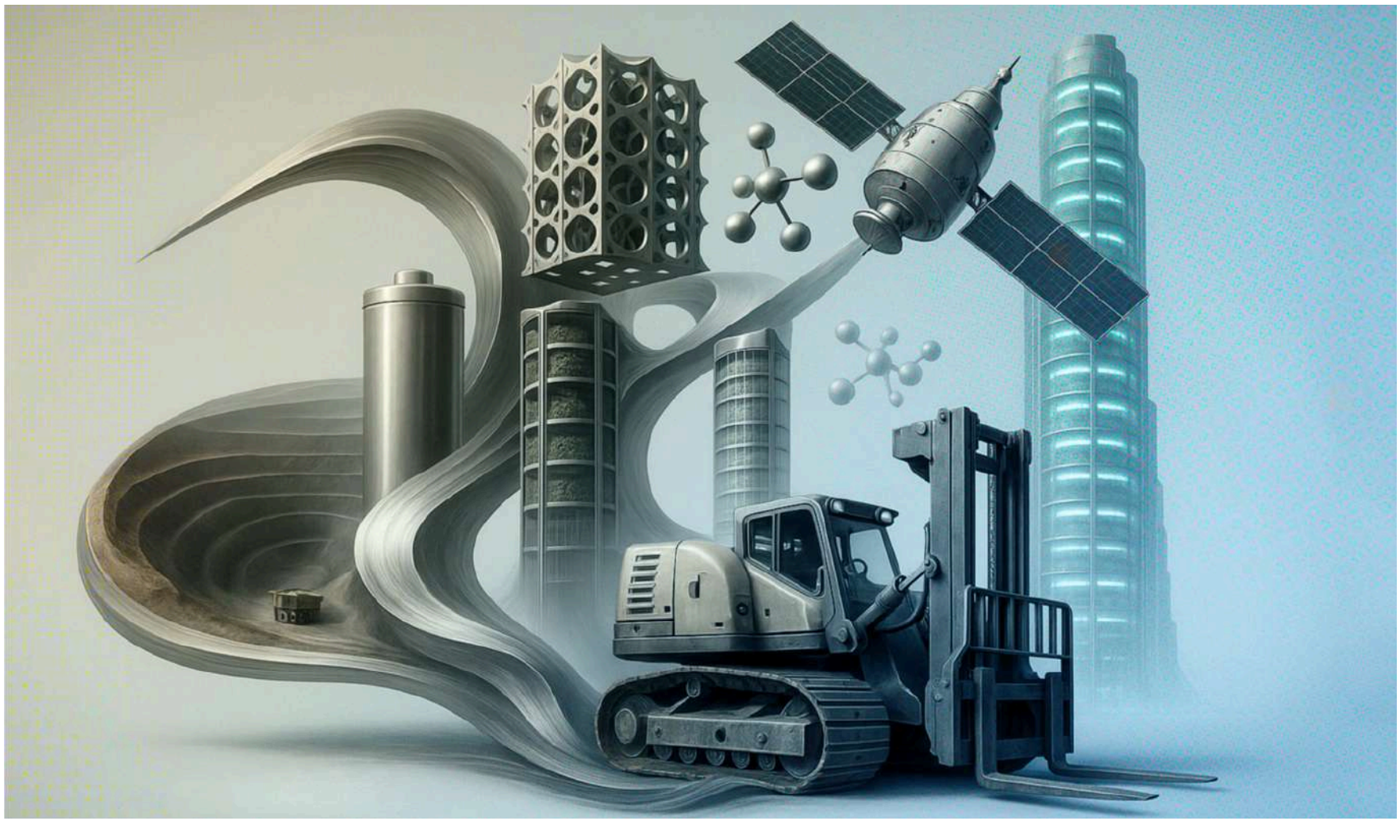
India's startup ecosystem has achieved another significant milestone, with the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) reporting more than 2.47 lakh officially recognized startups across the country. According to government factsheets released ahead of Independence Day, these startups have collectively generated over 22 lakh direct jobs, highlighting the growing contribution of entrepreneurship to India's economic development.

The achievement reflects the rapid expansion of the Startup India initiative, which has played a key role in fostering innovation, encouraging investment, and supporting new business creation across sectors. Recognized startups now operate in diverse industries including fintech, healthtech, edtech, agritech, artificial intelligence, deep-tech, clean energy, e-commerce, and manufacturing.

The growth in startup registrations demonstrates increasing entrepreneurial activity not only in major metropolitan cities but also in Tier-2 and Tier-3 regions. Improved access to funding, incubation support, digital infrastructure, and government-backed incentives has enabled founders from across the country to launch and scale innovative ventures.

Beyond job creation, startups are contributing to technological advancement, productivity improvements, and the development of solutions tailored to local and global challenges. Policymakers view the milestone as evidence of India's emergence as one of the world's most dynamic startup ecosystems.

As the number of recognized startups continues to rise, the sector is expected to play an increasingly important role in driving innovation, employment generation, economic growth, and India's long-term global competitiveness.



DeepTech & Physical AI Secure Major VC Funding as Investors Shift Focus to Industrial Innovation

India's DeepTech sector is attracting strong venture capital interest, with startups like Aliment and Ayati Devices securing funding for AI-powered hardware, diagnostics, and automation solutions. Growing investor confidence in Physical AI, industrial innovation, and MedTech is accelerating technological advancement and startup growth.

India's deep-tech ecosystem is witnessing a new wave of investor interest as venture capital firms increasingly back startups building advanced hardware, artificial intelligence-powered systems, and next-generation industrial technologies. Recent funding rounds secured by emerging companies such as Aliment and Ayati Devices highlight a broader shift in investor sentiment toward DeepTech and Physical AI solutions that address real-world challenges across manufacturing, healthcare, automation, and diagnostics.

Unlike traditional software startups that primarily focus on digital services, DeepTech companies are built around significant scientific, engineering, and technological innovation. These ventures often require extensive research and development, specialized talent, and longer commercialization cycles. However, they also create highly differentiated products with strong intellectual property and substantial long-term market potential.

Physical AI, one of the fastest-growing segments within DeepTech, combines artificial intelligence with hardware systems such as sensors, robotics, medical devices, autonomous machines, and industrial equipment. By integrating AI into physical products, startups can automate complex tasks, improve operational efficiency, and generate actionable insights from real-world environments.

The recent funding activity reflects growing confidence among investors that the next generation of high-value technology companies will emerge from sectors beyond conventional software. Startups developing intelligent manufacturing systems, robotics platforms, precision healthcare devices, semiconductor technologies, and advanced diagnostic tools are increasingly attracting venture capital attention.

Healthcare technology remains one of the most promising areas for DeepTech investment. Companies such as Ayati Devices are focusing on innovative diagnostic solutions that leverage advanced engineering and AI capabilities to improve disease detection, patient monitoring, and healthcare accessibility. As healthcare systems worldwide seek cost-effective and scalable solutions, MedTech startups are positioned to play a critical role in transforming patient care.

Similarly, industrial automation is becoming a major investment theme. Manufacturing companies are under increasing pressure to improve productivity, reduce costs, and optimize operations. Physical AI solutions can help achieve these goals through predictive maintenance, intelligent robotics, machine vision systems, and real-time process optimization. Startups operating in this space are creating technologies that enhance efficiency while addressing labor shortages and operational challenges.

Industry experts note that investors are becoming more willing to support hardware-focused ventures despite their longer development timelines. Improvements in India's startup infrastructure, access to engineering talent, government support for innovation, and growing demand for indigenous technology solutions have strengthened confidence in the sector. Initiatives promoting electronics manufacturing, semiconductor development, and advanced research have also created a favorable environment for DeepTech entrepreneurship.

The increased flow of capital into DeepTech aligns with broader global trends. Around the world, venture capital firms are seeking opportunities in sectors where artificial intelligence can be applied to physical systems, creating tangible economic value. Areas such as robotics, healthcare diagnostics, smart factories, autonomous technologies, and scientific computing are attracting significant attention from both domestic and international investors.

For startups, the availability of fresh capital provides resources to accelerate product development, expand research capabilities, strengthen intellectual property portfolios, and scale commercial operations. It also enables companies to move from prototype stages to large-scale deployment, which is often a critical challenge for hardware and engineering-driven businesses.

Overall, the successful funding rounds raised by startups such as Aliment and Ayati Devices underscore the growing maturity of India's DeepTech ecosystem.

Cross-Border Fintech Platforms Hit Record Volumes as Global Demand Accelerates

India's cross-border fintech sector is expanding rapidly, with platforms like Skydo surpassing $1 billion in annualized payment volume. Driven by growing SaaS exports, international trade, and digital services, fintech companies are simplifying global payments, reducing transaction costs, and enabling startups, SMEs, and exporters to scale efficiently in global markets.

> India's cross-border fintech sector is scaling rapidly, with platforms like Skydo surpassing $1 billion in annualized payment volume. By enabling faster, cost-effective international transactions, these companies are empowering SaaS firms, exporters, and global businesses while strengthening India's position as a leading hub for fintech innovation and digital trade.

India's cross-border fintech sector is experiencing remarkable growth, with payment infrastructure platforms such as Skydo surpassing $1 billion in annualized payment volume. The milestone highlights the increasing role of Indian fintech startups in simplifying international transactions for businesses, freelancers, exporters, and software companies operating in global markets.

As international trade and digital services continue to expand, businesses increasingly require fast, cost-effective, and transparent payment solutions. Traditional cross-border payment systems often involve multiple intermediaries, higher transaction fees, unfavorable exchange rates, and longer settlement periods. Fintech companies are addressing these challenges by building modern payment infrastructure that enables seamless movement of money across countries and currencies.

The rapid growth of platforms like Skydo reflects the rising global footprint of Indian startups, particularly those operating in the Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) sector. Indian SaaS companies now serve customers across North America, Europe, the Middle East, and Asia-Pacific, generating significant international revenue. Efficient payment infrastructure has become essential for these businesses to receive payments quickly, manage foreign exchange exposure, and improve cash flow management.

Exporter-focused startups are also benefiting from advancements in cross-border financial technology. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), independent professionals, consultants, and digital service providers increasingly rely on fintech platforms to receive payments from overseas clients. By reducing transaction costs and simplifying compliance processes, these platforms enable businesses to operate more competitively in international markets.

Industry experts note that India's emergence as a global technology and services hub has created strong demand for specialized financial solutions. As more businesses expand internationally, cross-border payment providers are developing products that offer real-time tracking, automated invoicing, foreign exchange management, compliance support, and multi-currency payment capabilities. These services help companies streamline operations while reducing administrative burdens.

The sector has also benefited from the broader digital transformation of financial services. Improvements in cloud infrastructure, API-based banking, digital identity systems, and regulatory technology have enabled fintech firms to build scalable platforms capable of serving global customers. At the same time, increasing adoption of digital payments worldwide has accelerated demand for innovative cross-border transaction solutions.

Investors have taken note of these developments, directing significant capital toward fintech startups focused on international payments and financial infrastructure. Venture capital firms view the segment as a high-growth opportunity due to the massive size of the global cross-border payments market, which continues to expand alongside international trade and digital commerce.

For Indian startups, the growth of cross-border fintech infrastructure represents more than just payment efficiency.

ECONOMY & MACRO

SPICe+ and MCA21 AI Acceleration Transform India's Ease of Doing Business Ecosystem

India has reaffirmed its position as one of the world's largest and fastest-growing economies, with government data confirming the country's nominal Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at approximately $3.92 trillion. The milestone reflects the strength of India's economic fundamentals, rising domestic consumption, expanding industrial activity, and sustained public investment in infrastructure development. As the country continues its growth trajectory, policymakers are increasingly shifting their focus toward industrial scale, manufacturing competitiveness, and logistics modernization to support long-term economic expansion.

A key driver of this momentum is the government's continued emphasis on capital expenditure. Significant investments are being directed toward highways, railways, ports, airports, industrial corridors, urban infrastructure, and green logistics networks. These projects are designed to improve connectivity, reduce transportation costs, increase supply chain efficiency, and strengthen India's ability to attract domestic and international investment.

The focus on green logistics is particularly noteworthy. As sustainability becomes a global priority, India is investing in cleaner transportation systems, multimodal logistics hubs, electric mobility infrastructure, and environmentally responsible supply chain solutions. These developments are expected to improve operational efficiency while supporting the country's broader climate and sustainability objectives.

The growing scale of the Indian economy is creating substantial opportunities for businesses and startups across multiple sectors. Rising incomes, increasing urbanization, expanding internet penetration, and greater digital adoption are contributing to a deeper and more dynamic consumer market. This creates favorable conditions for startups targeting large-scale consumer demand.

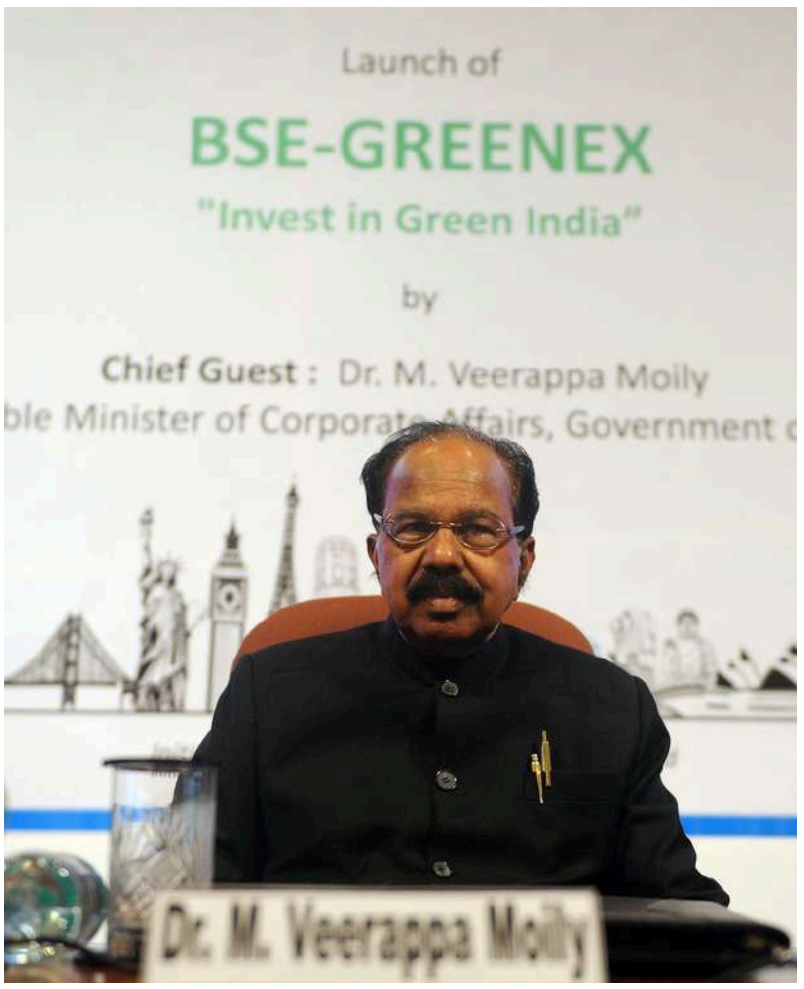
B2C startups stand to benefit significantly from these economic trends. As consumer spending power increases, demand for digital services, online retail, financial technology solutions, health-tech platforms, education technology, and consumer-focused applications continues to grow. Startups that can offer convenience, affordability, and personalized experiences are likely to find strong market opportunities in both urban and emerging markets.

The quick-commerce sector is another major beneficiary of India's expanding economy. Consumers increasingly expect faster delivery times, greater product availability, and seamless digital experiences. Quick-commerce platforms are responding by expanding fulfillment networks, optimizing inventory management, and improving last-mile delivery capabilities. The growing middle class and rising demand for convenience-based services are expected to further accelerate growth in this segment.

Logistics technology startups are also positioned for strong growth. As economic activity expands and supply chains become more sophisticated, businesses require advanced logistics solutions to manage transportation, warehousing, inventory, and distribution more efficiently. Startups specializing in warehouse automation, route optimization, fleet management, predictive analytics, and supply chain intelligence can play a critical role in supporting India's industrial and commercial expansion.

Investors view India's economic scale as a major advantage for the startup ecosystem. A large domestic market provides startups with the ability to achieve significant scale without relying solely on international expansion. This improves business sustainability, attracts venture capital investment, and creates opportunities for long-term value creation.

Furthermore, infrastructure improvements are expected to lower operational costs for businesses while increasing market accessibility across Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities.



Ketan Dave: Hospitality Consultant Behind McCafe Asia and Mr. Idli's IPO Journey

Ketan Dave is a hospitality industry veteran whose experience spans McDonald's, ITC, global cruise operations, and Mr. Idli. Known for scaling McCafe across Asia and expanding Mr. Idli internationally, he now advises hospitality brands on operations, franchising, growth strategy, and sustainable expansion through his independent consulting practice.

> Ketan Dave is a seasoned hospitality leader with experience across McDonald's, ITC, global cruise operations, and Mr. Idli. From launching McCafe across Asia to scaling Mr. Idli internationally, he now advises restaurants, hotels, and franchise brands on operations, expansion, profitability, and sustainable growth through his independent consulting practice.

There is a particular kind of hospitality professional who never puts their own name on a building, yet has quietly shaped how an entire generation of Indian brands look, taste and run. Ketan Dave is one of them. As an independent hospitality consultant in India, he has spent fifteen years inside the biggest names in global food and hospitality, McDonald's, ITC, a cruise line the size of a small city, and now works with the founders who need someone who has actually done the job, not just advised on it.

Today he runs his own restaurant and hotel consulting practice out of India, and the résumé behind it reads less like a career and more like a tour of how hospitality gets built at scale.

A Foundation Built Far From Home

Dave's grounding in hospitality did not begin in India. It began in Las Vegas, where he trained in hotel management inside one of the most demanding and competitive hospitality markets on the planet. Vegas does not forgive sloppy operations, every property on the strip is fighting for the same guest, and the standards Dave picked up there, on speed, consistency and guest experience, became the backbone of everything he built afterward.

From Las Vegas he moved into an entirely different kind of scale challenge: Food and Beverage Director at Carlene Cruise, the world's largest cruise line operator. Feeding thousands of guests a day, across multiple restaurants, on a vessel that cannot simply restock from the nearest supplier, forces a different kind of operational discipline. It is hospitality without margin for error, and it shaped how Dave thinks about systems long before he ever built one of his own.

The Youngest GM to Bring Coffee Culture to Asia

Dave's next chapter is the one most people recognise, even if they do not know his name. At McDonald's, he became the youngest General Manager for Asia, and was handed a mandate that would go on to change how the region drinks coffee: launch and scale McCafe across the continent.

Building a premium coffee vertical inside the world's largest fast-food brand meant balancing two things that rarely sit comfortably together, McDonald's global consistency and the wildly different coffee habits of markets from Tokyo to Jakarta. Dave built the playbooks that made it work, and McCafe went from a pilot idea to a continent-wide fixture of Asian QSR consulting case studies. It remains one of the clearest examples of what happens when a global system is adapted with genuine local intelligence, rather than simply copied and pasted.

Luxury Hospitality Standards, South Indian Reality

From fast food to fine hospitality, Dave then headed south India operations for ITC Group's hospitality wing, one of India's most respected conglomerates. The brief here was different again: hold luxury service standards at properties across South India while keeping commercial performance sharp. Anyone who has worked in luxury hotel consulting knows how easily those two goals pull against each other. Dave's time at ITC deepened his understanding of what premium Indian hospitality looks like when it is done at real scale, and that understanding shows up in how he advises hotel clients today.

Global AI Infrastructure Push Accelerates Enterprise AI Adoption

The global artificial intelligence ecosystem is witnessing a major infrastructure expansion as technology leaders such as Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) and Google Cloud strengthen their investments in enterprise AI capabilities. A key part of this strategy is the launch of specialized Gemini Experience Centers across multiple regions, including new facilities in Latin America, aimed at helping businesses develop and deploy enterprise-ready contextual AI agents.

These centers serve as innovation hubs where enterprises can explore practical applications of generative AI, test industry-specific use cases, and accelerate the adoption of advanced AI solutions. By combining Google's Gemini models with TCS's domain expertise and implementation capabilities, organizations can build intelligent systems tailored to their operational needs.

The initiative reflects growing demand for contextual AI agents capable of understanding business processes, analyzing large volumes of data, and delivering personalized responses in real-time. Unlike traditional automation tools, these AI-powered agents can support decision-making, improve customer engagement, streamline workflows, and enhance productivity across industries.

The expansion into emerging regions such as Latin America highlights the increasing global demand for enterprise AI infrastructure. Businesses in sectors including banking, healthcare, manufacturing, retail, telecommunications, and logistics are actively seeking AI solutions that can improve efficiency while maintaining security and regulatory compliance.

Industry experts believe that dedicated AI experience centers will play a crucial role in bridging the gap between experimentation and large-scale deployment. By providing access to advanced tools, technical expertise, and implementation support, these facilities can help enterprises move from pilot projects to production-ready AI applications more quickly.

Global Central Banks Signal Capital Easing, Boosting Venture Capital Flows

A growing number of central banks across major economies are signaling a shift toward more accommodative monetary policies, creating favorable conditions for global investment activity. As inflation pressures gradually moderate and economic growth remains a priority, several policymakers have begun adjusting interest rate strategies, improving liquidity conditions in financial markets and encouraging greater risk-taking among institutional investors.

This evolving monetary environment is expected to have significant implications for the global venture capital ecosystem. Lower borrowing costs and improved market liquidity generally increase the availability of capital for investment funds, pension institutions, sovereign wealth funds, insurance companies, and other limited partners (LPs) that allocate resources to venture capital and private equity firms. As these investors regain confidence, capital commitments to innovation-focused funds are expected to rise.

Emerging market technology ecosystems stand to benefit considerably from this trend. Countries such as India, Brazil, Indonesia, Vietnam, and several Middle Eastern innovation hubs have witnessed growing startup activity in recent years. Increased venture liquidity can provide startups in these markets with greater access to growth capital, enabling them to scale operations, expand internationally, invest in research and development, and strengthen technological capabilities.

Industry analysts note that venture funding cycles are often closely linked to broader monetary conditions. During periods of high interest rates, investors tend to prioritize safer assets such as government bonds and fixed-income instruments. However, when monetary policy becomes more supportive, investors are generally more willing to allocate capital toward higher-growth opportunities, including technology startups and innovation-driven businesses.

Streamlined Cross-Border SaaS Tax Agreements Simplify Global Expansion`

Updated international digital service trade framework agreements are helping startups navigate cross-border taxation more efficiently, reducing compliance burdens for companies exporting software and digital services. The reforms are particularly beneficial for Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) businesses operating across North America and Southeast Asia, where growing digital trade has increased the need for clearer and more predictable tax structures.

One of the key advantages of the updated agreements is the reduction of double-taxation complexities. Previously, startups often faced uncertainty regarding where income should be taxed, leading to higher compliance costs and administrative challenges. The new frameworks provide clearer guidelines on tax obligations, helping businesses avoid being taxed multiple times on the same revenue stream.

For Indian SaaS startups and digital exporters, the changes create a more favorable environment for international growth. Companies can now focus more resources on product development, customer acquisition, and market expansion rather than navigating complicated tax regulations across multiple jurisdictions.

Industry experts believe these reforms will encourage greater participation in global digital trade by improving transparency and reducing operational friction. Startups serving international clients can benefit from simplified reporting requirements, improved tax certainty, and more efficient financial planning.

SPORTS

Atal New India Challenge Grants Support Climate-Resilient AgriTech and Water Innovation

NITI Aayog's Atal New India Challenge is awarding ₹1 crore grants to startups developing climate-resilient agriculture and water-management solutions. The initiative supports innovation, sustainability, resource efficiency, and commercialization of technologies that address food security, water conservation, and climate-related challenges across India.

The Atal New India Challenge (ANIC), an initiative under the Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) of NITI Aayog, continues to play a vital role in promoting innovation-driven entrepreneurship across India. As part of its efforts to address critical national challenges, the program has awarded grants of up to ₹1 crore to promising startups developing solutions in climate-resilient agriculture and water management. The initiative reflects the government's commitment to leveraging technology and innovation to strengthen sustainability, improve resource efficiency, and support long-term economic development.

India's agriculture sector faces increasing pressure from climate change, unpredictable weather patterns, water scarcity, soil degradation, and rising food demand. These challenges require innovative solutions that can help farmers improve productivity while using resources more efficiently. Through the ANIC program, startups are being encouraged to develop technologies that address these issues and contribute to a more resilient agricultural ecosystem.

The grants provide critical financial support for startups working on advanced agricultural technologies such as precision farming, climate-smart crop management, smart irrigation systems, soil health monitoring, farm automation, agricultural analytics, and AI-powered decision-support platforms. By enabling entrepreneurs to test, validate, and scale their innovations, the program helps bridge the gap between research and commercial deployment.

Water management has emerged as another priority area under the initiative. Growing urbanization, industrial demand, and changing climate conditions have intensified concerns regarding water availability and conservation. Startups receiving ANIC support are developing innovative solutions in water monitoring, efficient irrigation, wastewater treatment, groundwater management, rainwater harvesting, leak detection systems, and digital water infrastructure.

One of the key objectives of the Atal New India Challenge is to encourage market-ready innovations that can create measurable social and economic impact. Unlike traditional research grants, ANIC focuses on supporting solutions with strong commercialization potential and real-world applicability. This approach helps ensure that innovative technologies can move beyond pilot projects and reach larger markets where they can generate meaningful outcomes.

Industry experts view such grant programs as an important component of India's innovation ecosystem. Early-stage startups often face difficulties securing capital, particularly when developing solutions for sectors such as agriculture and water management that may require longer development cycles. Non-dilutive funding through government grants allows founders to advance product development without sacrificing equity ownership.

The initiative also aligns with broader national priorities related to food security, climate resilience, environmental sustainability, and rural development. By supporting technologies that improve agricultural productivity and optimize water usage, the program contributes to building stronger and more sustainable communities across the country.

In addition to financial assistance, startups selected under the program often benefit from mentorship, industry connections, ecosystem support, and opportunities to collaborate with government agencies and research institutions.

Commercial Fleet EV Adoption Reaches Record Levels Across Logistics Hubs

India's commercial EV sector is achieving record adoption, driven by battery-swapping infrastructure, connected fleet software, and supportive policies. Logistics, delivery, and mobility operators are increasingly transitioning to electric vehicles to reduce costs, improve efficiency, and meet sustainability goals, accelerating the country's shift toward cleaner and smarter transportation.

India's commercial electric vehicle (EV) ecosystem is witnessing unprecedented growth as fleet operators increasingly adopt electric mobility solutions for logistics, delivery, and transportation services. Supported by advances in battery-swapping infrastructure, connected fleet management software, and favorable policy initiatives, commercial EV adoption has crossed important milestones across major metropolitan logistics hubs.

One of the primary drivers of this growth has been the expansion of battery-swapping standards and networks. Traditional charging methods often require vehicles to remain idle for extended periods, creating operational challenges for businesses that depend on high vehicle utilization. Battery-swapping technology addresses this issue by allowing drivers to replace depleted batteries with fully charged ones within minutes, significantly reducing downtime and improving operational efficiency.

The establishment of standardized battery-swapping frameworks has further strengthened confidence among fleet operators, vehicle manufacturers, and infrastructure providers. Standardization improves interoperability, encourages wider adoption, and helps create a more scalable ecosystem capable of supporting growing demand for electric mobility solutions.

Connected EV fleet software has also emerged as a critical enabler of commercial electrification. Modern fleet management platforms provide real-time monitoring of vehicle performance, battery health, route optimization, charging schedules, and energy consumption. These digital tools enable fleet operators to improve efficiency, reduce operating costs, and maximize vehicle productivity.

Logistics companies, e-commerce delivery providers, last-mile transportation services, and urban mobility operators are among the largest adopters of commercial EVs. Rising fuel costs, increasing environmental awareness, and corporate sustainability commitments have encouraged businesses to transition from conventional internal combustion engine vehicles to electric alternatives.

Industry experts note that commercial fleets represent one of the most promising segments for EV adoption due to predictable operating routes and high daily vehicle utilization. The economic benefits of lower maintenance requirements, reduced fuel expenses, and improved energy efficiency make electric vehicles particularly attractive for fleet applications.

Key Highlights

- **Commercial EV adoption in India has reached record levels across major logistics and delivery hubs.**
- **Battery-swapping infrastructure is reducing vehicle downtime and improving operational efficiency.**
- **Standardized battery-swapping frameworks are boosting industry confidence and scalability.**
- **Connected fleet management software enables real-time monitoring, route optimization, and battery management.**
- **Logistics, e-commerce, last-mile delivery, and urban mobility companies are leading EV adoption.**
- **Lower fuel and maintenance costs make EVs financially attractive for fleet operators.**