

REGION

2



**NEED CENTRAL GOVERNMENT ACTION ON POLLUTION NOT POLITICS: CM ATISHI**

BANKING & FINANCE

6



**MARKETS STAGE SHARP RECOVERY; SENSEX RECLAIMS 79,000 LEVEL, NIFTY SURGES 557.35 POINTS**

POTPOURRI

8



**KASHMIR VALLEY SHIVERS AS TEMPERATURES DIP BELOW FREEZING POINT**

## Kejriwal launches 'Revdī Par Charcha' campaign ahead of Delhi assembly elections

OUR CORRESPONDENT  
New Delhi



Delhi Chief Minister and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convenor Arvind Kejriwal launched the party's extensive public outreach campaign, Revdi Par Charcha, on Friday, marking a significant push ahead of the upcoming Delhi Assembly elections.

The campaign aims to engage voters through 65,000 meetings across the national capital, where party workers will distribute pamphlets highlighting the free services—dubbed *revdis*—provided by the AAP government.

Kejriwal, addressing supporters, emphasized that the initiative will educate people about the party's social welfare schemes and why only

AAP can deliver such services. "Our workers will hold 65,000 meetings across Delhi to make people understand the significance of these free services and how only AAP can provide them," Kejriwal said.

The AAP government in Delhi has been providing several free services, including electricity, water,

healthcare, education, and bus rides for women. A new initiative—1,000 monthly financial assistance for women—will also be introduced soon. Kejriwal also pointed to the Tirth Yatra Yojana, a pilgrimage program for senior citizens, as a key feature of AAP's welfare agenda.

Taking a swipe at the

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Kejriwal criticized the party for failing to implement similar initiatives in states where it holds power. "Three days ago, one of their leaders said, 'Vote for us, and we will do everything Kejriwal is doing.' If they want to replicate our work, why not vote for the original instead of the duplicate?" he remarked.

Kejriwal also reaffirmed Delhi's unique political status as a "half-state" with power shared between the Delhi government, the Centre, and the Lieutenant Governor. He questioned the BJP's ability to govern fully, stating, "Our half-government has achieved so much in 10 years. What has their half-government done? If they couldn't deliver as a half-government, how can people trust them with full power?"

## Arvind Kejriwal, Bhagwant Mann shielding 'goon' Bibhav Kumar, says Swati Maliwal

NEW DELHI: Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal on Thursday launched a scathing attack on former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, accusing them of promoting and rewarding Bibhav Kumar, whom she referred to as a "goon".

In a post on X on Thursday, Maliwal claimed, "For beating me up, Arvind Kejriwal ji has given huge rewards to his beloved goon Bibhav Kumar. He now occupies the top administrative post in Punjab as Chief Advisor to the Chief Minister."

She added that Kumar, out on bail for allegedly assaulting her, has been given a position where senior officials, including the Punjab Director General of Police (DGP) and Chief Secretary, report to him.

Maliwal criticized Punjab's AAP leadership, alleging that CM Bhagwant Mann has be-



come a "rubber stamp" under Kejriwal's influence.

She lamented, "The talented youth of Punjab are leaving the country while goons are being showered with salaries in lakhs, luxury cars, bungalows, and servants." She claimed that senior MP N.D. Gupta was evicted from his official bungalow at 10, Feroz Shah Road, alleging that the property was illegally handed over to Kumar. "This goon is living in Gupta ji's house, forcibly taken from him at his age. How can a person labeled a goon by the Supreme Court be given such privileges, violating his bail conditions? Just

imagine how many secrets this man must be hiding," Maliwal questioned.

The MP further raised concerns over the safety of women in Punjab under Kumar's alleged influence, stating, "If goons run the Punjab government, how will women in the state feel secure? Bhagwant Mann ji, you too have sisters and daughters at home. A Chief Minister must not allow himself to be reduced to a mere rubber stamp."

Bibhav Kumar is Arvind Kejriwal's close aide and manager, both personal and political and is accused of assaulting Maliwal at the CM's residence on May 13. He was arrested on May 18 and produced late that night before a local court which sent him to five days under police custody. The Supreme Court later granted him bail after over 100 days in judicial custody.

## GDP growth may slip to 6.5%: ICRA



NEW DELHI: Domestic rating agency ICRA on Wednesday said India's real GDP growth for the September quarter is likely to decline to 6.5 per cent due to heavy rains and weaker corporate performance.

The agency, however, maintained its FY25 growth estimate at 7 per cent on expectations of a pick up in economic activity in the second half of the fiscal. The estimates and commentary on the outlook come at a time when there are concerns around the growth slowdown on a slew of factors like slowing down urban demand.

The RBI is sticking to its estimate of 7.2 per cent growth for the fiscal, but a majority of watchers expect it to be under the 7 per cent figure and many have been revising down in the last few weeks. Official data for the Q2 economic activity is expected to be published on November 30. In Q1, the GDP expansion had come at 6.7 per cent.

ICRA said the dip in Q2 will be due to factors like heavy rains and weak corporate margins. "While government spending and kharif sowing have shown positive trends, the industrial sector, particularly mining and electricity, is expected to slow down," it said. The services sector is projected to improve, and a back-ended recovery is anticipated, leading to a full-year GDP growth of 7 per cent, it added.

"Q2 FY2025 saw tailwinds in terms of a pick-up in capex after the Parliamentary Elections as well as healthy expansion in sowing of major kharif crops. Several sectors faced headwinds on account of heavy rainfall, which affected mining activity, electricity demand and retail footfalls, and a contraction in merchandise exports," its chief economist Aditi Nayar said. She said benefits of the healthy monsoons lie ahead, with upbeat kharif output and replenished reservoirs likely to lead to a sustained improvement in rural sentiment.

There is considerable headroom for the GoI's capital expenditure, which needs to expand by 52 per cent in Y-o-Y terms in H2 FY2025 to meet the budget estimate for the full year, Nayar added.

## Delhi air quality remains in 'very poor' category



NEW DELHI: The air quality in Delhi-NCR on Friday morning was reported to be in the 'very poor' category with a thin layer of smog engulfing the region.

According to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), the average air quality index (AQI) in Delhi till 7.15 a.m. remained at 371. In other cities of the NCR, the AQI was 263 in Faridabad, 281 in Gurugram, 274 in Ghaziabad, 234 in Greater Noida and 272 in Noida. In seven areas of Delhi, the AQI level remained above 400 and between 450. It was 410 in Anand Vihar, 411 in Bawana, 426 in Jhangeripuri, 402 in Mundka, 410 in Nehru Nagar, 402 in Shadipur, and 413 in Wazirpur. The levels were in the 'very poor' category in most of the other parts of Delhi -- 389 in Alipur, 395 in Ashok Vihar, 369 in Aya Nagar, 369 in Burari Crossing, 369 in Chandni Chowk, 333 in Mathura Road, 373 in Dr Karni Singh Shooting Range, 357 in IGI Airport, 320 in Dilshad Garden, 344 in ITO and Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium had AQI of 342.

## US charges against Adani, 7 others could lead to arrest warrants; extradition bid: Attorney

NEW DELHI: With the US filing civil and criminal charges against billionaire Gautam Adani and seven others over a multi-million-dollar bribery scheme, a prominent attorney here has said that the case could escalate significantly, potentially leading to arrest warrants and even extradition attempts.

Adani, India's second-richest man, and seven others, including his nephew Sagar Adani, have been charged by the US Department of Justice with paying bribes to unidentified officials of state governments in Andhra Pradesh and Odisha to buy expensive solar power, potentially earning more than US\$ 2 billion in profit over 20 years. Adani Group, however, de-



negated the charges saying the allegations by US prosecutors are "baseless" and the conglomerate is "compliant with all laws". "US Attorney Breon Peace has the right to get arrest warrants issued against Adani and seven others indicted and serve them on the nations where they

reside," Indian-American attorney Ravi Batra told PTI on Thursday. He further said, "If that nation, as India does, has an extradition treaty then according to the bilateral contract between sovereign nations, the resident nation must turn over the person extradited by the United States. There is a process that the resident nation must comply with, consistent with its laws." Batra noted that ultimately, extradition occurs "absent the rarest of circumstances", as in the case of former Chilean president Augusto Pinochet. The United Kingdom did not extradite him solely on humanitarian grounds. "It's hard to see the Pinochet precedent apply to this case involving Adani and

seven others," he said.

The India-US Extradition Treaty was signed in 1997.

Peace, the US Attorney for the Eastern District of New York, has announced a five-count criminal indictment against 62-year-old Adani, his nephew Sagar, an executive director at the conglomerate's renewable energy arm Adani Green Energy Ltd, and its former CEO Vneet S Jaain.

The indictment charged them with conspiracies to commit securities and wire fraud and substantive securities fraud for their roles in a multi-billion-dollar scheme to obtain funds from US investors and global financial institutions based on false and misleading statements.

## India to Roll out Legal Framework for Data Privacy, Boost Tech Collaboration with UK

NEW DELHI: India is set to introduce a new legal framework aimed at ensuring data privacy while fostering the free flow of data among trusted partners, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal announced on Thursday.

Speaking at the UK-India Business Council's 'UK-India Technology Futures Conference', Goyal emphasised the importance of promoting innovation and technology investment in India. Highlighting potential areas



for collaboration, the Minister mentioned that both India and the UK have opportunities to work together in fields such as artificial intelligence (AI), telemedicine, climate modelling,

precision agriculture, and various industries including organic chemicals, electronics, and food.

Goyal noted that these technological partnerships would be crucial in addressing sustainability challenges, particularly as digital systems and data processing consume more energy.

India's energy infrastructure is uniquely positioned to support such a technological revolution, Goyal explained. The country's interconnected grid—set to expand to a thousand-gigawatt capacity by 2030—will incorporate both traditional and renewable energy sources.

This energy mix will provide unprecedented reliability and sustainability, especially for data centers, making India an attractive destination for global investors, he added.

## Punjabi singer Shubh roped in as global climate brand ambassador for UN

NEW DELHI: Renowned Punjabi musician Shubh has been named as the Global Ambassador for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Digital Climate Library.

The announcement was made by the UNFCCC at the UN climate conference in Baku, Azerbaijan, a press release said.

As the Global Ambassador, the Canada-based rapper and singer-songwriter will engage audiences to raise awareness about climate change and promote sustainable solutions.

Through his appointment, the 28-year-old artist will empower young people to become agents of change and address the issue of climate change.

"Through this role, I hope to use my platform to bring attention to the issue, share knowledge, and be part of a movement that pushes for a better future, not just for all of us, but for future generations as well. I hope our combined efforts create a positive impact in addressing global warming and fostering sustainable living for all species on our planet," Shubh said. The artist rose to fame in 2021 with his single 'We Rollin' and has built a discography that includes hits like 'Cheques', 'Baller', 'No Love', 'Be



Mine' and 'One Love'.

Jingwen Yang, Information Management Officer at the UNFCCC, said Shubh exemplifies the power of art to raise awareness about the importance of preserving endangered archival collections documenting the history and legacy of the climate change process. "His commitment aligns seamlessly with the mission of the Digital Climate Library, ensuring this invaluable knowledge remains available to inspire and guide global action. We are honoured to have him join us in this vital initiative and look forward to the transformative impact his involvement will bring," he added. Globally, celebrities such as Leonardo DiCaprio, David Beckham, Coldplay, BTS, Billie Eilish, Don Cheadle, Shailene Woodley, Prince Harry and Meghan Markle work with the UNFCCC on climate change initiatives.

## Congress sensationalising Manipur situation, encouraging anti-India forces: BJP chief Nadda

NEW DELHI: BJP President J.P. Nadda has accused the Congress of "sensationalising the situation" in Manipur, trying to set up a particular narrative and encouraging anti-India forces.

In a letter to Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge, Nadda said, "Having witnessed firsthand the disrespectful and irresponsible manner in which you and your party walked out when Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi was addressing the issue of violence in Manipur earlier this year, it was surprising for me to see your letter on the issue addressed to the Hon'ble President."

The November 21 letter comes in response to Kharge after he wrote to President Droupadi Murmu about the violence in Manipur.

"...I feel compelled to respond to the incorrect, false and politically motivated narrative which your words fail to camouflage. It appears that you as well as your party seem to have conveniently forgotten the complete failure of gov-

ernment machinery and the ill-advised strategies adopted by Congress governments both at the centre and state during similar incidents in the early 90s and during the UPA era. I bring your party's infamous neglect of critical local issues to your notice because the repercussions of the Congress' abject failure are being felt in Manipur even today," Nadda wrote in the letter.

While listing the steps taken in the last ten years for the development of the northeast region, the BJP president seeks to demolish the contentions of the Congress in his letter.

"...Yet, ignoring these developments you and your party have chosen to use the Northeast and its people to rake up political mileage and peddle your nefarious agendas. I wish to remind you that under Congress rule, Manipur witnessed one of the bloodiest periods in history. In addition to the black period of the 90s when thousands were killed and lakhs displaced due to rampant violence, in 2011 alone Manipur witnessed a



complete blockade for more than 120 days. Petrol prices and LPG process were nearly four-times higher than the rest of the country and losses of crores of were being suffered by the exchequer every day," the letter mentions.

"It was during this time that the Congress government failed to even escalate the issue to appropriate levels at the centre while the State administration engaged in thousands of fake encounters," Nadda said.

The BJP chief said, "In contrast, with the first incidence of violence that was reported, our government - both at the

Centre as well as State was immediately working to stabilise the situation and protect the people. Throughout this period and even today, the entire focus of our government has been on maintaining law and order and bringing normalcy to the state. From resources to personnel and provisions the entire government machinery is devoted to bringing back peace and harmony to Manipur. Our commitment to resolving the situation as soon as possible is evident when you consider that investigations are being carried out by the NIA, one of the most efficient agencies

in the country."

Nadda accused the Congress-led previous UPA governments at the Centre of failing the country's security challenges. "What is shocking is how repeated attempts are being made by the Congress party to sensationalise the situation in Manipur. It appears that you have forgotten that not only did your government legitimise the illegal migration of foreign militants to India, Mr P Chidambaram - the erstwhile Home Minister - had signed treaties with them! Furthermore, these known militant leaders fleeing their country to avoid arrest were wholeheartedly endorsed and encouraged to carry on their destabilising efforts. This complete failure of India's security and administrative protocols under your government is one of the major reasons why militant and habitually violent organisations are attempting to destroy the hard-won peace in Manipur and push it back several decades into the age of Anarchy."

OUR CORRESPONDENT  
New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Friday pulled up the Delhi Police and the Delhi government for their failure to fully comply with the measures under Stage IV of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) aimed at tackling Delhi's severe air pollution. Expressing dissatisfaction, the court noted significant lapses in the implementation of curbs, particularly regarding the entry of diesel and polluting trucks into the national capital.

Hearing a petition on Delhi's air quality crisis, a bench comprising Justice Abhay S. Oka and Justice Augustine George Masih observed that despite the restrictions, trucks were entering the city unchecked. The Amicus Curiae informed the court that while there are 113 entry points to Delhi, only 13 are equipped with CCTV cameras. This has led to unregulated entry at over 100 points.

"We are not satisfied with the compliance so far," the court stated in its order. "The Delhi government has not provided clarity on the presence of offi-



cers at all entry points to enforce GRAP-IV measures." The bench directed the Delhi government and police to immediately set up checkpoints at all 113 entry points. Additionally, it ordered the submission of CCTV footage from the 13 monitored points, emphasizing the need for urgent corrective measures.

Lawyers Appointed as Court Commissioners

In a proactive step, the Supreme Court appointed 13 young lawyers as court commissioners to monitor the enforcement of GRAP-IV at Delhi's entry points. The bench directed that these lawyers be provided with necessary security and facilities to carry out their inspections.

"We are grateful to the lawyers

who have volunteered. This will help ensure transparency and accountability," the bench remarked.

Trucks Entering with Bribes: Allegations Surface

Senior advocate Gopal Shankar Narayan raised serious allegations during the hearing, citing media reports that trucks were entering Delhi after paying bribes. The court took note of the claim and underscored the importance of stringent enforcement at all checkpoints.

GRAP Stage-IV mandates a complete ban on the entry of non-essential trucks into Delhi. However, the Delhi government's response failed to clarify the number of functional checkpoints established to prevent violations.



# AAP releases first list of 11 candidates for Delhi Assembly elections

**NEW DELHI:** The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Thursday released its first list of candidates for the Delhi Assembly elections to be held early next year, naming 11 contenders while dropping three sitting MLAs.

The candidates include Anil Jha, a former BJP leader who recently joined the party, and Veer Singh Dhingra, a former Congress leader inducted into the party last week.

Jha, a two-time BJP MLA will contest from Kirari, replacing sitting MLA Rituraj Jha. Dhingra, who previously served as a Congress MLA, has been fielded from Seemapuri, taking over from sitting MLA Rajendra Pal Gautam.

Brahm Singh Tanwar is the candidate from Chhatarpur in South Delhi, Deepak Singla will contest from Vishwas Nagar in the Shahdara region, while Sarita Singh has been



chosen to contest from Rohtas Nagar.

Other candidates include B.B. Tyagi from Laxmi Nagar, Ram Singh Netaji from Badarpur, Zubair Chaudhary from Seelampur, replacing sitting

MLA Abdul Rehman, while Gaurav Sharma, Manoj Tyagi, and Somesh Shaukeen will contest from Ghonda, Karawal

Nagar, and Matiala seats, respectively.

Shaukeen replaces Gulab Singh Yadav in Matiala.

AAP's Political Affairs Committee (PAC) met on Thursday in Delhi to finalise the candidates list. The meeting involved discussions on election strategies and the selection of candidates as the party

seeks its third straight victory in the national capital.

Senior party leaders emphasised the importance of fresh faces to strengthen the AAP's position in the Assembly elections.

Earlier, AAP convenor and former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had said that tickets will be distributed on the basis of work done by the candidates, public opinion about them and the winnability of the probable candidates.

Kejriwal also likened the upcoming Delhi Assembly elections to a 'dharma yudh' (righteous war), akin to the one in the Mahabharata. He had said that the divine forces are on AAP's side, citing the party's victory in the mayoral elections.

In the 2020 Assembly elections, the AAP had won 62 out of the 70 seats in Delhi.

# Need Central Govt action on Pollution not Politics: CM Atishi

**NEW DELHI:** As the air in Delhi turned toxic on Monday, Delhi Chief Minister Atishi hit out at the Central government's alleged inaction and uncontrolled stubble burning in Madhya Pradesh and other neighbouring states of Uttar Pradesh and Haryana for pushing the entire North India, including the national Capital, into a state of medical emergency.

Addressing mediapersons, the Delhi Chief Minister asked the Centre to stop indulging in politics and take concrete steps to address the problem that has impacted all north Indian states, including those ruled by the BJP. Looking to shift the blame for the city's toxic air on the BJP-led central government, she said, "I want the Central government to tell the people if it has taken even a single step in the last seven years to control the menace of stubble burning." "What steps has the Central government taken in the past seven years to check stubble burning in Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh," she said.



To prove her point that the problem was not limited to Delhi, CM Atishi read out information from a Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) report indicating that since Sunday evening cities like Ghaziabad, Noida, Hapur and Bulandshahr in Uttar Pradesh, Gurugram, Hisar, Dharuhera and Bahadurgarh in Haryana and even Churu in Rajasthan, have been battling bad air. She credited Punjab, another AAP ruled state, for containing crop residue burning but alleged all other states

in the north have failed to do so. "If the Punjab government can reduce stubble burning, why are these incidents increasing in other states?" asked Atishi, claiming that in Punjab this year 8,404 farm fires were reported, as compared to 36,650 fires in 2023 and 71,300 fires in 2021.

Training her guns on the Madhya Pradesh government, she said between September 15 and September 17 about 9,600 stubble burning incidents took place there. "Over 700 incidents of stubble burning are occurring daily in Madhya Pradesh, which is contributing to severe air quality. If you look at the air quality in other cities, it has also reached very poor and severe levels," she said. "The Central government has to take the lead and adopt a collective approach for tackling the problem as the toxic air impacts elderly and children from all parties in all states," she said, calling for an end to politics over the issue and an early solution.

# BJP slams Kejriwal, Bhagwant Mann for appointing Bibhav Kumar to top post in Punjab



**NEW DELHI:** BJP National General Secretary Tarun Chugh launched a scathing attack on former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Thursday for appointing Bibhav Kumar on a top administrative post, even though he has been accused of assaulting former Delhi Commissioner for Women (DCW) Chairperson Swati Maliwal.

Chugh's remarks came in response to Maliwal's post on social media platform X, in which she claimed that Kejriwal had rewarded Kumar by appointing him as the Chief Advisor to Punjab's Chief Minister.

Maliwal claimed that the assault, which allegedly took place at Kejriwal's residence on May 13, was followed by Kumar's promotion to a top administrative position in Punjab, highlighting the 'true face' of the AAP in its treatment of women. She criticised Kejriwal and accused him of "rewarding Kumar", despite the Supreme Court labelling him a 'goon'.

Talking to media, Chugh condemned the actions of the AAP leaders, calling them indicative of their mindset. "Bibhav Kumar, who assaulted Swati Maliwal, now holds a senior position in Punjab. This is how the AAP treats women. The fact that the police and Punjab's DGP will report to him is deeply troubling," Chugh said.

He urged for the safety of women and children in Punjab, stating, "Please God save our women and children from such individuals."

The controversy surrounds Kumar's role as a close aide and Personal Assistant to Arvind Kejriwal when the latter was the Chief Minister of Delhi. Kumar was arrested on May 18 for the alleged assault and was later granted bail by the Supreme Court after spending over 100 days in judicial custody. Chugh also responded to Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha's recent statement on internal security, reiterating the BJP's stance on zero tolerance for terrorism. "Under PM Modi's leadership, we will ensure strong borders and internal security. We are determined to make J&K terrorism free as we are committed towards it," he affirmed.

# Haryana Police arrests 11 accused involved in cyber fraud worth Rs 33.50 crore



SATISH HANDA Gurugram

Manesar cyber police in Gurugram arrested 11 accused allegedly committed cyber frauds for amount worth Rs 33.50 crores across the country in which the fraud victims had lodged nearly 9226 complaints in various police stations across the country as per date collected from Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre in which 388 cases were registered by the police. Assistant Commissioner of Police Cyber Crime Priyanshu Diwan said Gurugram police succeeded in arresting 11 cyber fraudsters identified as Rajendra Parihar, Dharmendra Parihar, Eric Khes, Deepak and Amarendra alias Ami, Arpit Singh resident of Tughlakabad Delhi, Lokesh resident of Vikrampur District Sitamarhi (Bihar), Kailash Devi and Sanjay, Ashutosh and Ashok from whom nine mobile phones were recovered.

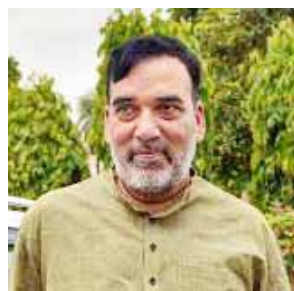
During the investigation, it was revealed that 9226 complaints and 388 cases of fraud of amount Rs 33 crore 50 lakh are registered against the accused across the country, which included 19 cases registered by police in Haryana, out of which 3 cases are registered in Police Station Cyber Crime East Gurugram, 2 cases in Police Station Cyber Crime Manesar and 2 cases in Police Station Cyber Crime South.

# Delhi Govt to implement work from home for 50 pc govt staff amid severe air pollution

**NEW DELHI:** Delhi's Environment Minister Gopal Rai on Wednesday shared plans to implement anti-pollution measures like work from home for government employees, and odd-even vehicle scheme, as Delhi-NCR recorded air pollution more than 17 times above the acceptable levels.

As worsening smog triggered curbs on trucking and shuttered construction sites and schools, on Wednesday, the AAP-led government in Delhi has decided to instruct 50 per cent of government employees to work remotely.

"To reduce pollution, the Delhi government decided to implement work from home in government offices. 50 per cent of employees will work from home. For its implementation, a meeting will be held with the officials today in the Secretariat," Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai said



Gopal Rai

in a post on X on Wednesday. Speaking to IANS, Rai said, "A meeting has been scheduled with Delhi officials today to discuss immediate measures. We plan to implement work from home while ensuring that essential services, including emergency services, continue uninterrupted."

Gopal Rai emphasised that the AAP government's focus would be on reducing Delhi's contribution to the pollution levels in the National Capital Region while maintaining

critical operations.

Gopal Rai further talked about the ongoing conversation about implementing the odd-even scheme in the national Capital, which aims to curb vehicle emissions.

He criticised the BJP for its lack of urgency in tackling the pollution crisis in North India, despite the party's governments in the neighbouring states of Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan and at the Centre.

"The responsibility of the BJP is five times greater than that of the AAP in Delhi. BJP-led governments in Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Haryana, and the Centre must also take action," he stressed.

The Environment Minister expressed his frustration over the Central government's inaction, stating that the Delhi government has yet to receive any response regarding the emer-

gency meeting they requested with the Union government over the pollution emergency in the region.

"We regret having to write letters to request a meeting, but still, there has been no response," Rai added.

He called on the BJP to end its "inactivity and negligence" and swiftly convene a meeting to take decisive action in the fight against Delhi-NCR's escalating pollution crisis.

Meanwhile, Delhi's 24-hour average air quality stood at 424 in the 'severe' category as of 9 A.M on Wednesday, according to data from the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). On Tuesday at 4 P.M. it was recorded at 460, also in the 'severe' range.

The AQI in Haryana's Gurugram is 384 and Faridabad is 268, in Uttar Pradesh's Ghaziabad it is 352, Greater Noida 344 and in Noida it is 316.

# Online gambling call centre busted with 9 arrests



SATISH HANDA Gurugram

Cyber Police Station busted an illegal call centre which was running betting through an online app, leading to the arrest of nine accused from GLS Home residential society on Sohna Road on the information and under the direction of Priyanshu Diwan, Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) Cyber Crime, Gurugram. The police recovered three laptops, 38 mobile phones, 25 bank account kits and 22 ATM cards from their possession during a raid in a flat on Tuesday night. He said, police received information on Tuesday regarding fraud committed by some people in a flat by running a call centre running games and betting (playing satta) through an online gaming app and transferring money to banks. The police raided GLS Home Society flat at Sohna where nine persons were found playing online games and arrested the accused.

The arrested accused were identified as Manish resident of Sonapat, Toshan Kumar resident of Kangra (H.P.), Mohit Gera resident of Fatehabad, Rakesh resident of Fatehabad, Anmol Gillhota resident of Lajpat Nagar New Delhi, Bablu resident of Unnao (U.P.), Sanyam resident of New Delhi and Sagar resident of Hisar who was king pin in the gang. The accused were found playing online gambling/betting and a case was registered against them under Section 318(4) BNS, Gambling Act and relevant sections of IT Act at Cyber Crime Police Station (West), Gurugram. All arrested were being paid salary by the mastermind Sagar of about 20 thousand rupees and 5 per cent commission for doing this work, allegedly used to make people deposit money and play online games/betting through online apps providing bank accounts to deposit money as well as to commit fraud through online gaming.

# Women Commission ordered investigation as regard 'Tantrik' did immoral act with female

**In Bhiwani, Haryana, a 'tantrik' asked an Anganwadi worker to get naked and perform a puja with him. According to the woman, the tantrik told her that her daughter is possessed by many evil spirits and he will perform a puja at night to relieve her daughter from evil spirits. Beware of such cheats.....**

SATISH HANDA Bhiwani

Haryana State Women Commission's Vice President Sonia Agarwal heard the cases related to women in the DRDA Conference on Monday, in which a woman accused a 'Tantrik' of immoral acts. As



Sonia Agarwal

many as five cases were presented before the Commission's Vice President, of these two cases were resolved on the spot and remaining cases were referred to the police as well as court, can also seek help from the commission to resolve matter at any time in

case the police does not take any action against those whose cases, when the commission will take strict cognizance in such cases. Regarding the case of immoral acts by 'tantriks', the State Women Commission's Vice President said that it is very unfortunate that edu-

cated women are losing their dignity by believing in the words of so-called 'tantriks'. She said in such cases, the police should take prompt, stern action and send such people to jail. During the DRDA conference, DSP Aryan Chaudhary, POICDS Vaishali and many other officers were also present.

The 'tantrik' told the victim woman that her daughter is possessed by ghosts and he will have to perform puja at night. She alleged before the vice president of the women's commission that the 'tantrik' had told her that her daughter possessed by ghosts will have to sit naked and perform puja at night.

# Woman constable accuses CIA Sub Inspector of rape and blackmailing



SATISH HANDA Karnal

A woman police constable has accused a police Sub Inspector posted in CIA of rape and other charges. Ganga Ram Poonia SP Karnal said, Sadar police station has registered a case on the complaint of a female police employee and started investigation. The complainant woman in her complaint to the police alleged that she had met Sub Inspector Sumit and both developed intimate relations.

After this, the accused took her to a hotel in Chandigarh, where the accused made her drink with intoxicating pills and forcibly raped her without her consent when she was under the influence of intoxicating pills and she was compelled to do bad things with him. The complainant said that the alleged accused had also prepared her nude video and started exploiting her after this, and also deceived her by assuring to marry her in the court and when she refused to have sexual relationship with him. In the meantime she developed a pregnancy.

# Member of an interstate car theft gang arrested in a police encounter

Admitted 10 thefts in Delhi and 14 in Gurugram

SATISH HANDA Gurugram

Sector-10 crime branch arrested a miscreant of an interstate car theft gang after an encounter with a police team led by Pramod Kumar SI during police checking at Siddheshwar T-point of Sector-4/7. Police during the search recovered a stolen Hyundai car, an illegal pistol, two cartridges and car theft items from the arrested accused identified as Sonu, resident of village Jakholi in district Kaithal. During preliminary investigation the accused disclosed that he along with other accomplices had committed 10 thefts in Delhi and 14 thefts in Gurugram. A case of theft has already been registered against the accused in Gurugram.

ACP Varun Dahiya said that the team of SI Pramod, in-charge of Sector-10 Crime Branch was checking vehicles by setting up a barrier in the Chowk towards Sector-9 late last night when the police team signaled a car to stop. The driver did not stop the car and hit the barricade. When the police team tried to stop the car, the car driver fired a pistol at the police team and also injured a policeman by hitting him with the car, two shots were also fired by the police team and the accused driver was overpowered. The police arrested him, registered a case against the accused under the relevant sections in Sector-9 police station.



The police recovered a car, pistol, two cartridges, six ECMS, a key making device, a programming device, a mobile phone, a glass breaking device, 23 car keys, two dongles, a jammer, chipset, motherboard, eight nut opening keys, a cutter, a plier, a screwdriver, three scales from the accused. ACP Crime Varun Dahiya said that interrogation of the accused has revealed that he not only used to hack the central locking of the car using modern equipment, but also used to start the car by changing its software. He was using a walkie-talkie instead of a mobile to contact his companions. The arrested accused disclosed that if these people ever got caught, they kept weapons with them for their defense and during such a situation did not hesitate to fire. The ACP said that the accused has been produced in the court on Saturday and remanded to police custody. The Creta car in which the accused was riding was stolen by him along with his other accomplice from Safdarjung Enclave, New Delhi in the month of October. The pistol was brought by another accomplice.

# AAP replaces Kailash Gahlot with another Jat face in Delhi Cabinet

**NEWDELHI:** Raghuvinder Shokeen, the AAP legislator from Nangloi Jat, was inducted into the Delhi Cabinet on Monday, a day after another Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot resigned from the cabinet as well as the party, citing corruption issues.

Introducing Shokeen, 57, AAP leader Manish Sisodia said that the party convenor Arvind Kejriwal has hand-picked him to fill the vacancy created by Gahlot's exit. Shokeen's entry into the Cabinet appears to be AAP's attempt to keep Jat voters from rural Delhi happy by maintaining the community's representation in Chief Minister Atishi's team. Shokeen, a civil engineer who has served as MCD councillor twice, thanked AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal for the opportunity to serve the public as a minister and attacked the BJP for its anti-Jat actions during the farmers' protest and wrestlers' agitation.



ing the Jat community. In Haryana, the BJP fought the election on the plank of Jat versus others," he said, adding that the AAP always serves all communities.

Asked about Gahlot's decision to join the BJP, Sisodia said, "If he wishes to work with the BJP while maintaining that dignity, we cannot say anything. It is his decision. Where he wants to contest from or which party he wants to stay in — every person has their own choice."

In another development aimed at strengthening the AAP's connect with rural and Jat voters, Kejriwal inducted a Congress leader Sumesh Shokeen into the party on Monday. Kejriwal used the opportunity to highlight how vot-

ers in 'Delhi Dehat' did not feel being part of Delhi city under the previous Congress government. "After we came to power, we raised the crop compensation rate to Rs 20,000 per acre and fulfilled villagers' demands by building sewage treatment plants, playgrounds, stadium, schools, mohalla clinics, hospital, and roads." Aiming to woo rural voters ahead of the Assembly elections in February, the former Delhi Chief Minister said, "Under our government, tremendous amount of development has been carried out in rural areas."

Welcoming Sumesh Shokeen, Kejriwal said his induction into the party will add to AAP's popularity in rural areas. The AAP's decisions to elevate a Jat MLA to the post of Delhi Cabinet Minister and inducting another into the party from the Congress appear to be a part of strategy to undo the damage caused by the exit of Gahlot, who joined the BJP on Monday.

# Haryana to establish 10 Ultra-Modern Industrial Townships in 5 years: Governor Bandaru Dattatraya

PARVESH HANDA Chandigarh

Haryana will establish 10 ultra-modern industrial townships in the entire state on the lines of IMT Kharkhoda. In each such township, special incentives will be given to the entrepreneurs for giving employment to nearly 50,000 youths from nearby rural areas. Haryana Governor, Bandaru Dattatraya while addressing the first session of the State's 15th Vidhan Sabha on November 13 said that an EV Park in Rohtak, IT park and data centre in Panchkula and Faridabad, world-class logistics hub in Sonapat, an industrial model park in Palwal, footwear park in Jhajjar, an industrial cluster in Hisar, a modern sunflower oil mill in Kurukshetra and the country's largest mustard oil cooperative mill will be established in Rewari across the stat in the coming 5 years.



The Governor further said that apart from Mudra Yojana, the state government will bear the guarantee of a loan up to Rs. 25 lakh to the entrepreneurs from Other Backward Classes (OBC).

Bandaru Dattatraya said that as the industry is the basic foundation of our economy, therefore the present state government has created an ecosystem of ease of doing business to accelerate the industrial development of the state. He added the government has abolished many rules and procedures that created obstacles in granting certificates, licences and permissions available on single window system as a result,



# SC requests President to decide Balwant Singh Rajoana's Mercy Plea in two weeks

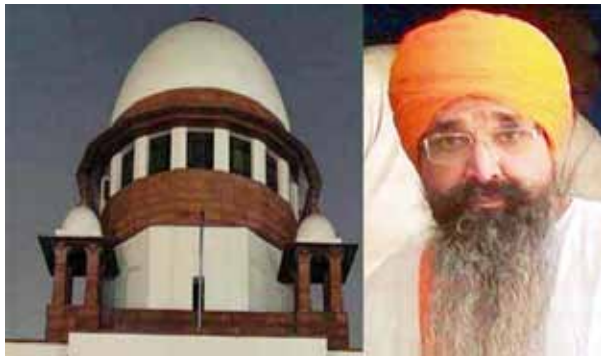
**NEW DELHI:** The Supreme Court on Monday asked the Secretary to the President of India to place before President Droupadi Murmu the mercy petition filed by Balwant Singh Rajoana, a death row convict in the 1995 assassination case of former Punjab Chief Minister Beant Singh.

A special bench headed by Justice B.R. Gavai requested President Murmu to consider Rajoana's mercy plea within two weeks.

The Bench, also comprising Justices P.K. Mishra and K.V. Viswanathan, was hearing a writ petition filed by Rajoana challenging a 12-year-long delay in deciding the mercy petition seeking commutation of his death penalty.

The apex court clarified that if Rajoana's mercy plea is not decided within two weeks, it will proceed to consider his application for interim release.

It expressed dismay over the non-filing of a response by the Union government in the matter and recorded that on the last



date, the plea was adjourned to enable the Solicitor General to obtain instructions from the President's office.

In the previous hearing, the top court had granted two more weeks to the government to file its response and told Rajoana's counsel that it was not inclined to grant him interim relief at this stage.

Before this, in May last year, the Supreme Court had turned down Rajoana's plea seeking commutation of his death penalty and had said, "It is within the domain of the executive to

take a call on such sensitive issues".

It was noted that the Rajoana himself never submitted any mercy petition and the alleged mercy petition of 2012, was filed by the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC).

Disposing of the plea, the apex court had directed that the competent authority, in due course of time, would again as

and when it is deemed necessary, deal with the mercy petition, and take a further decision. Former Punjab Chief Minis-

ter Beant Singh, along with 16 others, lost their lives while a dozen others were injured in a bomb blast in August 1995. Rajoana was arrested on January 27, 1996. Rajoana, along with eight others, who had hatched a conspiracy and had executed the bomb blast, were put to trial.

In July 2007, the trial court convicted Rajoana along with co-accused Jagtar Singh Hawara, Gurmeet Singh, Lakhwinder Singh, Shamsher Singh and Nasib Singh. The petitioner along with co-accused Jagtar Singh Hawara was awarded the death sentence.

In death reference, the high court vide judgment dated December 10, 2010, confirmed the conviction and sentence of the petitioner. However, while confirming the conviction of co-accused Jagtar Singh, it commuted the death sentence to life imprisonment.

The other co-accused preferred to appeal before the top court. However, Rajoana did not file any appeal after the judgment of the high court.

## AI is an essential tool but must be used optimally with responsible handling, says Union Minister



**AI is an essential tool but must be used optimally with responsible handling, says Union Minister Jitendra Singh at ASSOCHAM AI Leadership Meet 2024**

**FW DESK**  
**New Delhi**

"Artificial Intelligence (AI) is an essential tool but must be used optimally with responsible handling," stated Union Minister Jitendra Singh at the 7th Edition of the ASSOCHAM AI Leadership Meet 2024. The event, themed "AI for India: Advancing India's AI Development - Innovation, Ethics, and Governance," showcased India's strategic roadmap for harnessing the transformative potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI).

The Government headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has enabled initiation of AI driven programmes as also the launch of Quantum Missions.

In his address, the Minister emphasized the pivotal role of AI in reshaping various sectors, including governance, business, healthcare, education, and space exploration. He highlighted AI as the backbone of India's future development, capable of driving economic growth and addressing pressing challenges such as climate change, public service delivery, and national security.

A significant announcement made by Dr. Jitendra Singh was the introduction of India's first practical AI Data Bank. This initiative aims to accelerate technological growth and innovation by providing researchers, startups, and developers access to high-quality, diverse datasets essential for creating scalable and inclusive AI solutions. The Minister underscored the strategic importance of the AI Data Bank in enhancing national security through real-time analytics of satellite, drone, and IoT data. This step aligns with India's goal to utilize AI for predictive analytics in disaster management and cybersecurity.

India's National Strategy for AI is guided by a comprehensive approach focused on innovation, ethical governance, and global collaboration. The government is fostering partnerships between academia, private enterprises, and startups to propel AI applications in critical sectors such as healthcare, agriculture, smart cities, and space exploration.

Dr. Jitendra Singh reaffirmed India's commitment to ensuring transparent and fair AI systems, with robust governance frameworks being developed to address challenges like algorithmic bias and data privacy. He also emphasized the need for India to actively participate in global platforms such as the United Nations and

G20 to promote a rules-based AI framework.

The Minister highlighted the government's focus on using AI to empower citizens and ensure equitable access to the benefits of this transformative technology. He stated that AI must bridge divides rather than create them and must empower people without replacing them.

Dr. Jitendra Singh envisioned a promising future where India emerges as a global AI leader by 2047, emphasizing responsible and inclusive AI development. He called for collaborative efforts from all stakeholders to ensure AI's integration for sustainable and inclusive development.

The event served as a platform for thought leaders, policymakers, and industry experts to exchange insights and chart a responsible path for AI adoption in India.

Archana Vohra, MD, Commerce & Payments, Google and Co-Chair, ASSOCHAM AI Task Force said, the Indian government's collaborative and forward-looking approach to AI democratization is commendable - exemplified by initiatives such as the India AI mission, Project Bhashini, and the Startup India Seed Fund. These programs, with substantial funding and strategic partnerships, have empowered startups, fostered entrepreneurship, and broken-down language barriers. Google is proud to support these initiatives and believes that public-private partnerships are essential for accelerating research, creating shared resources, and supporting researchers across academia and civil society.

Manish Prasad, Chair, ASSOCHAM IT/ITeS Council said how Artificial Intelligence (AI) is reshaping global business practices and societal dynamics.

## BJP's "ek hain to safe hain" serves Modi-Adani duo interest says Rahul Gandhi



**KAVITA SHARMA**  
**Mumbai**

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi today said that the redevelopment of Dharavi will be decided by the stakeholders living and working there and not by one billionaire, Adani. He supported the stand of Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray who had said that once the MVA government is formed, the Dharavi tender will be cancelled. Addressing a press conference on the last day of the election campaign here today, Gandhi also demonstrated a 'safe' (cash chest), while explaining Modi's slogan "ek hain toh safe hain", taking out a poster of Adani and Modi along with a map of Dharavi. He remarked, Adani with Modi is always safe. He said, Modi's slogan of 'ek hain toh safe hain' fits Modi-Adani duo the most. The senior Congress leader said that everyone knows about the tendering process involving Adani and how ED, CBI and IT are used to help him. He said, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was handing over everything to a single man. He said, whether it is the Mumbai airport, ports, defence industry and now the Dharavi land - everything was given to a single person.

## After caste census, all classes in country will get justice: Rahul Gandhi



**RANCHI:** Congress MP and Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha (LoP), Rahul Gandhi, at a press conference here on Monday, said that the caste census will fundamentally change the country's politics and social systems and all classes in India will get justice. Describing the importance of data in today's time, Rahul Gandhi said that the census would reveal the extent of participation of Backward Classes, Dalits, and tribals in India's power structures and institutions. "Once we have accurate data, we can develop policies to ensure justice for all sections," he said. According to him, the current lack of data on Backward Classes hinders effective policymaking and equitable distribution. LoP Gandhi noted that Congress-led state governments, like those in Karnataka and Telangana, are already engaging with citizens to discuss what questions should be included in the caste census.

## India Positions Itself as Future Global Hydrogen Energy Leader: Hardeep Singh Puri



**NEW DELHI:** India is set to become a global leader in hydrogen energy production and exports, according to Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas Hardeep Singh Puri.

Speaking at the 6th South Asian Geoscience Conference and Exhibition, Puri highlighted initiatives including hydrogen blending in natural gas pipelines, localization of electrolyzer technologies, and bio-pathways for green hydrogen production as key drivers of this advancement.

The nation's energy consumption continues to surge, with daily oil consumption currently at 5.4 million barrels and projected to reach 7 million barrels by 2030.

Notably, India's fuel demand is growing at three times the global average, with daily petrol pump visits reaching 67 million people—equivalent to the combined population of the UK, France, and Italy.

India is expected to account for 25 percent of the global energy demand increase over the next two decades.

Minister Puri emphasised that the country is successfully managing the triple challenges of energy availability, affordability, and sustainability, supported by comprehensive exploration and production efforts. Despite being the world's third-largest crude oil consumer, India's exploration potential remains largely untapped.

The country possesses 651.8 million metric tons of recoverable crude oil reserves and 1138.6 billion cubic metres of recoverable natural gas reserves.

Exploration coverage of sedimentary basins has increased from 6 percent in 2014 to 10 percent currently, with plans to reach 16 percent by 2025 through Open Acreage Licensing Policy rounds.

The GEO India 2024 conference, expected to attract approximately 2,000 participants, will feature over 20 conference sessions, 4 plenary discussions, 200+ technical papers, and 50+ exhibition booths.

Minister Puri expressed confidence in geoscientists' innovative capabilities to drive India's energy revolution, aiming to ensure energy security for all citizens while addressing future challenges.

The government has set an ambitious target to expand India's exploration acreage to 1 million square kilometres by 2030.

## Supreme Court directs J&K to frame policy for premature prisoner release

**FW DESK**  
**New Delhi**

The Supreme Court of India has directed the Jammu and Kashmir administration to draft a policy for the premature release of prisoners, a report said.

The order came after a plea from a former security personnel, convicted in 2006 for killing three colleagues, sought early release after spending over 18 years in prison. The J&K government opposed the request, citing the absence of a policy governing premature



releases in the region

The court instructed the Union Territory to coordinate with the relevant authorities, develop the required policy, and submit a compliance re-

port.

Jammu and Kashmir, which was reorganized into a Union Territory in 2019, held its first election in 2024 to establish its union territory government.

## Rahul Gandhi asks Telangana CM to make effective law for gig workers

**HYDERABAD:** Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has asked Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy to make an effective law for gig workers by holding state-wide public consultations.

The Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha has written a letter to the Chief Minister, requesting him to conduct public consultation for the draft legislation for gig workers.

"Hearing from all parties will ensure that the law is robust, effective, and meaningful. The process can also help anchor future regulations for this sector," reads the letter dated November 11. Rahul Gandhi also offered to be part of this consultative process. He exuded confidence that Telangana will lead the way in building a sustainable gig economy for the future.

The Chief Minister posted the letter on the social media platform 'X' on Wednesday and assured Rahul Gandhi that the state government would make gig workers' policy comprehensive, inclusive, and fair in line with his vision.

"All of our work is inspired by your vision, ideas and work. It gives us more energy that the Telangana Caste Survey has



made you feel proud. We will make the Telangana State Gig Workers' Policy comprehensive, inclusive, fair, and pioneering, in line with your vision & promise," wrote the Chief Minister. In his letter, Rahul Gandhi mentioned that the Congress stands for the well-being of workers, especially in contractual roles.

"Our manifesto committed to framing a law to protect gig workers and enhance social security. The states we govern have taken several steps in this direction with the Congress government in Rajasthan becoming the first state to legislate the

welfare of gig workers. I am pleased that you too are moving forward with a draft law, honouring our guarantee to the people of Telangana, and offering a suggestion," wrote Rahul Gandhi, who had interacted with gig workers in Hyderabad during the Assembly elections campaign last year.

The Congress MP said during his recent visit to Hyderabad, he was impressed by the vibrant consultative process for the socio-economic, educational, employment, political and caste survey. It offers a valuable model to ensure lawmakers hear directly from the people, he

said while suggesting Revanth Reddy have similar consultations for the draft legislation for gig workers.

Rahul Gandhi noted that over the last decade, lakhs of workers have joined the gig economy.

"The relatively easy entry and flexibility offered opportunities, especially in low-skilled roles. The generous incentives in the early years also helped many acquire income-generating assets. It also offered workers a platform to tap into a much bigger market. The sector is replete with success stories of workers who found viable livelihood opportunities, particularly in the absence of alternative jobs."

The Congress leader mentioned that time and again, workers highlighted the vulnerabilities that arise due to their nature of employment.

"The absence of regulations further diminished their ability to negotiate or demand fair terms of work. Exploitative work conditions, predatory pricing and the lack of an effective grievance redressal mechanism must be addressed. Furthermore, workers grapple with social discrimination and inhumane conduct in their daily work," he added.

## NC-led J&K Government flaunts special status, statehood resolutions on completing one month in power

**SRINAGAR:** The resolutions calling for restoration of special constitutional status and statehood figured as top achievements as the National Conference-led J&K coalition government completed its first month in power on November 18.

Tanvir Sadiq, the party's chief spokesman said the two resolutions were the fulfillment of the party's manifesto.

"In line with our party's manifesto, Omar Abdullah-led government passed a resolution on special status in J&K Assembly and another on statehood in the cabinet in the first month itself," Sadiq said. "Omar Sahab went to Delhi to present the statehood resolution to prime minister Narendra Modi who has given a favourable response".

Other achievements that Sadiq outlined were the res-



toration of the annual exam session for Class 1-9 back in November and the relaxation in age eligibility to youth for applying for government jobs.

On November 6, the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly passed a resolution urging the central government to engage with regional representatives to restore the special status that was revoked in 2019.

The resolution, introduced by Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary, reasserted the significance of the former special provisions, emphasizing their role in preserving the region's identity, culture, and rights. The resolution also highlighted that any discussions on restoration should balance national unity with the legitimate aspirations of the people of Jammu and

Kashmir.

Earlier on October 18, the cabinet passed a resolution urging the central government to restore statehood for the union territory. Following day, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha cleared the resolution. The CM traveled to New Delhi to handover the draft of the resolution to the Prime Minister and urged him to reinstate statehood as it existed before August 4, 2019.

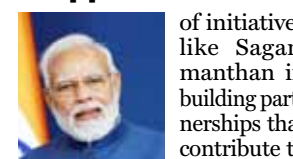
"I want to congratulate the people of J&K for their mandate they gave to the National Conference. Out of 12 guarantees and 26 promises, the government fulfilled 4 major promises which include resolution on special status in J&K Legislative Assembly, resolution on statehood in the cabinet meeting, reverse of academic session from March to November, and age relaxation," Sadiq said.

## India's Vision for a Free, Secure Maritime Network Gains Global Support: PM Modi

**NEW DELHI:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasized India's commitment to a "free, open, and secure maritime network" in a statement for 'Sagarmanthan, The Ocean's Dialogue', the country's inaugural maritime event. The Prime Minister highlighted that India's vision for the Indian Ocean and Indo-Pacific regions is resonating worldwide, fostering unity and cooperation among nations.

PM Modi expressed that the 'Indo Pacific Oceans Initiative' aims to position marine resources as crucial to economic growth. This dialogue, he noted, strengthens the rules-based global order while promoting peace, trust, and friendship across borders.

The Prime Minister, addressing the event remotely from Nigeria, emphasized the role



of initiatives like Sagarmanthan in building partnerships that contribute to a prosperous future. "As we strive to realise the vision of a Viksit Bharat by 2047, dialogues such as Sagarmanthan are invaluable to build consensus, partnerships, and most importantly, a prosperous future," he stated, expressing confidence that these discussions would have a lasting impact worldwide.

Reflecting on India's ancient maritime heritage, PM Modi cited the significance of historic port cities like Lothal and Dholavira, the maritime prowess of the Chola dynasty, and the contributions of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.

## Jamaat's All India Members Conclave passed Comprehensive Resolutions on important National, Community & International Issues

**HYDERABAD:** The All-India Members Conclave of Jamaat-e-Islami Hind (JIH) concluded successfully with the gathering passing comprehensive resolutions on some of the critical national, community, and international issues confronting the nation and the world. The three-day event, which drew together 15,000 JIH members, featured comprehensive discussions on



social, educational, and economic issues and covering areas such as spirituality, interfaith dialogue, human rights, academia, healthcare, and education.

## PDP chief Mehbooba tells party MLAs, fight for special status in J&K Assembly



**FW DESK**  
**Srinagar**

PDP president Mehbooba Mufti on Tuesday lauded three party legislators who raised the issue of abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A during the first session of Jammu and Kashmir Assembly

defending J&K's identity & dignity. Our MLAs have raised the people's deep concerns over the unilateral abrogation of Articles 370 & 35A. The fight for our rights continues in legislatures & public outreach," the PDP president said. Besides the three party MLAs — Waheed Para, Rafiq Naik and Mir Mohammad Fayaz, senior leaders like Nayeem Akhtar, Abdul Rehman Veeru, Ghulam Nabi Lone, Khurshed Alam, Basharat Bukhari, Asiya Naqash and Zahoor Mir attended the meeting. Talking to reporters after the meeting, PDP legislature party leader Waheed Para said the party MLAs will continue to remind the National Conference government of the promises the ruling party had made during the election campaign.



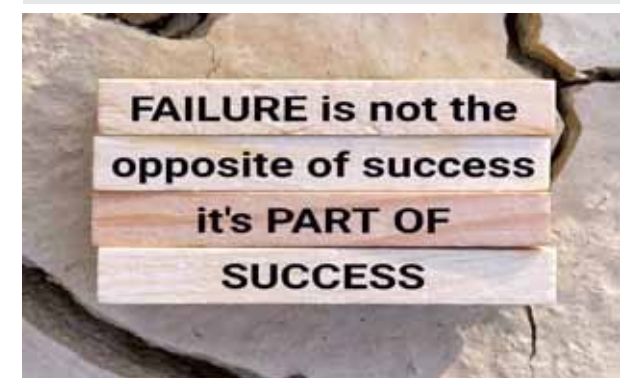


## Time for India to renew Global South strategy

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent diplomatic engagements, including his visit to Nigeria, participation in the G-20 summit in Brazil, and tour of Guyana, underscore India's commitment to deepening ties with the Global South. These efforts are not merely about bilateral relations but signify India's role as a leader among developing nations. In Abuja, Modi and Nigerian President Bola Ahmed Tinubu reaffirmed their strategic partnership, focusing on defense cooperation, counter-terrorism, and economic collaboration. Modi offered India's experience in agriculture, transportation, affordable medicine, renewable energy, and digital transformation to Nigeria, highlighting areas for potential cooperation. The conferment of Nigeria's 'Grand Commander of the Order of the Niger' on Modi, making him the second foreign dignitary to receive this honor, reflects the deep-rooted friendship between the two nations. India's longstanding contributions to Nigeria's development, including sending teachers and doctors post-independence and fostering a 60,000-strong diaspora, have strengthened this bond. Economically, India's \$27 billion investments across 200 companies in sectors like healthcare, energy, and agriculture demonstrate shared priorities in addressing poverty, pollution, and population challenges. Nigeria, as Africa's largest economy, offers a strategic partnership for India in a region where it has faced criticism for under-engagement. However, India's broader commitment to the Global South has sometimes lacked consistent follow-through. The India-Africa Forum Summit, last held in 2015, is overdue, and the "Voice of the Global South" (VoGS) conference has seen tepid participation. As the Foreign Secretary hints at a summit next year, this could be an opportunity to reinvigorate India's Africa policy with tangible outcomes and better coordination. As India pushes for reforms in global governance and addresses issues like food, health, and energy security, it must balance lofty ideals with concrete actions. Modi's recent travels exemplify India's intent. The challenge now lies in ensuring sustained, visible presence and delivering on promises to strengthen ties across the developing world effectively.

### LETTERBOX

Readers' feedback adds value to the newspaper. Please email comments on reports, features and columns to [fwletters@gmail.com](mailto:fwletters@gmail.com). We will publish them.



## THE FINANCIAL WORLD

RNI NO. DELENG/2011/38860

PRINTED & PUBLISHED BY SWINDER PAL SINGH BAJWA ON BEHALF OF FW MEDIA

PRINTED AT JAGJIT PUBLISHING CO. PVT LTD D-12, INDUSTRIAL AREA, PHASE-1, MOHALI, PUNJAB 160059

PRINTER & PUBLISHER SWINDER PAL SINGH BAJWA OWNER: FW MEDIA

PUBLISHED AT: BUILDING NO-23, NEHRU PLACE NEW DELHI 110019; PHONE: 9888040061

EDITOR\* ABDUL WASEY

(\*RESPONSIBLE FOR SELECTION OF NEWS UNDER THE PRB ACT)



RUCHI GUPTA EXPLAINS HOW POLITICAL STRUCTURE HINDERS SPECIALISED SCHOOL ESTABLISHMENT

## Education policy needs reform

Why is it that the world's largest democracy has yet to produce a world-class public policy institution? The United States and Europe boast of institutions such as the John F. Kennedy School of Government (Harvard Kennedy School) and the London School of Economics which train leaders who shape not only national but global governance. Yet, India, with its complex democratic structure and urgent developmental challenges, sends its finest to be trained abroad. This is not for lack of policy schools — India has many — but it has to do with the structure of India's political and institutional landscape.

### The executive has the reins

Public policy institutions thrive only when they influence power and decision-making. However, in India, there are limited access points for public policy commentators, academics, and civil society groups to influence policy. This is because much of the decision-making power is vested in the executive and operationalised primarily through the political elite, government officials and bureaucrats rather than through a deliberative legislative process. The oversight role of the legislature over the executive too is limited, leading to a fundamentally different policy ecosystem than in other major democracies.

In the U.S., Congress' power to craft legislation independently of the executive creates space for a thriving policy ecosystem based on analysis, debate, and expertise, with each public representative providing a possible entry point into the deliberative process. This decentralised process sustains a vibrant ecosystem of policy schools, think tanks, and advocacy groups, that can secure funding and find paying clients because their analysis and expertise can meaningfully influence lawmaking.



But in India, the centralisation of power within the executive — and of party leadership within political parties — diminishes the influence of these groups unless they have access to top leadership and are aligned with their political priorities. The weak formalisation of the Indian state further creates a disconnect between politics and policy, relegating policy discourse to a downstream role rather than making it constituent of the larger political platform. Consequently policy professionals lack the top-tier influence of other countries.

### The power factor and where the wind blows

Further, influence on decision-making is closely tied to who is in power. The executive's ability to realign the public sphere when power changes hands is more extreme in India than in more institutionalised democracies. This creates fragility in public life, where those central to decision-making can find themselves sidelined when regimes change. In more institutionalised democracies, think tanks, media and civil society groups can maintain relative influence re-

gardless of who is in power, which helps stabilise the policy ecosystem.

These factors are unique to India among other large democracies and demand a different approach to policy education. To create a top-tier public policy school in India, we must design an institution suited to our political reality — where power is informal, personalised, and heavily dependent on executive control. Such an institution must serve dual purposes: first, equipping students with both traditional policy expertise and an understanding of India's unique power dynamics; and second, facilitating a more stable policy ecosystem.

Unlike western policy schools that focus on formal institutions and assume straightforward paths to influence, an Indian institution must teach students to navigate a complex web of informal networks, regional power structures, and social dynamics. The curriculum must go beyond traditional policy education to map how power actually works — through relationships, caste hierarchies, regional elites, and grassroots movements. Students need to learn not just policy theory but also how to be effective in a system where power is opaque and unevenly distributed, where idealism must meet pragmatism and the ability to adapt to local conditions to create real change.

Most importantly, to truly train development leaders who want to do good for their country, the school must select for, and cultivate, empathy for the people of

our country. Too often, empathy for the lived reality of people's lives is overlooked and leads to top-down diktats that can wreak havoc in people's lives.

### The need for space

Finally, the current situation where political legitimacy and influence are tied too closely to the executive leads to sycophancy, opportunism and instability. A school focused on nation-building must thus facilitate a broad institutional space in which legitimacy and influence would be based on the depth and the quality of public interventions instead of proximity to power. At its deep end, this would require a series of structural reforms in our politics and governance, but a foundation could be built through diverse partnerships and the identification of nation-builders across the political spectrum and sectors. Such a network cutting across politics, bureaucracy, civil society, academia, think tanks, and media would provide depth as well as opportunities for influence and collaboration across all regimes.

By creating this non-partisan, yet politically aware, space, the institution could nurture development professionals who maintain relevance despite regime changes. This would create more stable channels for policy input, improving the quality of public debate and governance in India.

It is this dual role that would allow the school and its graduates to influence power instead of operating at lower levels. Such an institution would set an example for other developing nations and gain global prominence by demonstrating that effective policy education must arise from local realities rather than mirror western models.

Ruchi Gupta is Executive Director of the Future of India Foundation. Views are personal.



AS PANNEERSELVAN EXAMINES THE GUARDIAN'S DECISION TO LEAVE X AS A STEP TOWARD PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY

## Reimagining accountability in digital spaces

It is important to understand that the freedom of speech is not a laissez-faire act where anything goes, but a democratically enabling idea that shuns censorship and the curbing of ideas being debated in the public sphere. Recently, the British media outlet, The Guardian, took a decision to stop posting on the social media platform X (formerly Twitter), from its official handles.

The British legacy media organisation issued a statement that needs to be read carefully. It read: "This is something we have been considering for a while given the often-disturbing content promoted or found on the platform, including far-right conspiracy theories and racism. The U.S. presidential election campaign served only to underline what we have considered for a long time: that X is a toxic media platform and that its owner, Elon Musk, has been able to use its influence to shape political discourse."

### Not the first case

It is pertinent to remember that The Guardian is not the first major news organisation to leave the social media platform. In the United States, the NPR became the first major English-language news outlet to leave X in April 2023, in protest at Musk's ownership. Another public broadcaster PBS followed suit. A report in the Nieman Lab, based on an internal memo of the NPR, revealed that traffic had dropped by only a single percentage point as a result of leaving X. In September 2023, Mashable carried a report that explained how X is losing its daily active users under the leadership of Mr. Musk.



Why should we look at this development closely and unpack the arguments put forth by Mr. Musk? First, it is not just some of the legacy media organisations such as NPR, PBS and The Guardian that have left the social media platform due to its intrinsic toxic content. Hate speech watchdog, The Center for Countering Digital Hate, (CCDH), quit the platform citing concerns that "upcoming changes to the platform's terms of service could hinder the nonprofit's ability to prevail in court battles". Under the new terms, all legal disputes related to X will be brought exclusively in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Texas or state courts in Tarrant County, Texas. The CCDH's statement reveals the looming danger: "Now, the billionaire will be able to bring lawsuits to friendly courts against whoever disagrees with him on his platform. We made the decision to leave X because the platform has declined further."

These developments are happening

information, misinformation and chaos. Most of the retweets of Mr. Musk prioritise free speech over truth and social responsibility. The idea of reconciling freedom and responsibility is absent in his narrative.

### Democracy and credible information

There is an organic relationship between a vibrant democracy and a credible information ecology. This writer has written extensively elsewhere on the role played by the media in helping people make informed choices. The idea of choosing something based on evidence is central to legacy media; and the idea of pushing someone's whims and fancies through technological manipulations is the operative element of social media platforms. When we are talking about the pitfalls of the algorithm-driven social media, we are not whitewashing the failures of legacy media. The blinkers in the legacy media are manifold: the echo chamber, the

revenue crunch, the shift from extensive reporting to focus on opinions, and its strategic silences on key issues. The strategic silences vary for different countries: it can be Gaza for the western media and the dilution of Article 370 for the Indian media. But social media platforms do not provide an answer to these vexatious questions. On the other hand they tend to conflate issues, eradicate the space for reconciliation and healing, and valorise the aggrandisement of power at the cost of empowerment. It is indeed true that legacy media does get influenced by the immense reach of social media.

### Findings of a study

A study by Julia Cagé, Professor, Department of Economics, Sciences Po, Paris, and her team showed how X sets the agenda for the mainstream media and how journalists' reliance on X might distort the information they produce when compared to what citizens actually need. This study casts doubts on the business model of the legacy media as well as on the welfare effects of the platforms. It questioned whether citizens would be better informed in the absence of X, and whether social media may be harmful to both journalism and democracy. By weaponising social media as a vital symbol of freedom of speech, we are undermining a crucial aspect that governs our public sphere — accountability. The Guardian's decision may be a first step towards restoring accountability.

AS.Panneerselvam is a Fellow at Raja Muthiah Research Library, Chennai. Views are personal.

### BOOKS: REVIEW

## Roots of Environmentalism: A journey through green pioneers

Environmentalism is more than a philosophy or an ideology—it is an active pursuit, a call to engage with the world around us. This is the central message of Ramachandra Guha's latest work, *Speaking With Nature*, a fascinating exploration of ten individuals who shaped the contours of environmental thought in India. In this book, Guha shines a light on the lives and contributions of thinkers, naturalists, and writers, weaving a tapestry that illustrates how their insights remain deeply relevant in today's world of ecological challenges.

At first glance, the roster of personalities might catch the reader off guard. Instead of focusing solely on expected figures such as tribal leaders or professional conservationists, Guha opts for an eclectic group, including poet and philosopher Rabindranath Tagore, sociologist Radhakamal Mukherjee, Hindu-

va thinker K.M. Munshi, Gandhi follower Mira Behn, naturalist M. Krishnan, and anthropologist Verrier Elwin. By doing so, he emphasizes that environmentalism in India is not the domain of any single discipline or ideology. Instead, it is a multidimensional narrative that ties nature to economics, politics, culture, and spirituality.

### Environmentalism as a Social Idea

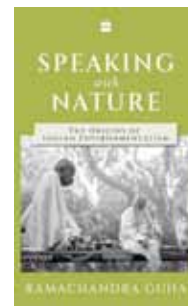
One of the book's most compelling themes is its challenge to the Western notion of "full-stomach environmentalism"—the idea that environmental consciousness emerges only from material prosperity. Guha dismantles this reductive view by presenting the Indian perspective, where the individuals he profiles linked environmental thought to broader social and political movements. By rooting environmentalism in India's diverse intellectual traditions, the book highlights a vision that extends beyond mere preserva-

tion to encompass justice, equity, and coexistence.

Each of the ten profiles offers unique insights, showcasing not only the individuals' perspectives but also the broader issues they engaged with. Guha's reliance on a wide variety of sources—letters, essays, speeches, and historical accounts—adds depth and authenticity to these narratives. The approach is reminiscent of Jairam Ramesh's *Indira Gandhi: A Life in Nature*, but Guha's work distinguishes itself by focusing on figures who might not traditionally be seen as environmentalists.

### Illuminating Portraits

Particularly intriguing is the chapter on Mira Behn, the only woman to receive a standalone profile in the book (the other woman, Gabrielle Howard, is featured alongside her husband in a joint narrative about ecological agriculture). Mira's concerns about the ecological degradation of the Himalayas—such as the intrusion of pine trees into native



Speaking With Nature By Ramachandra Guha, Fourth Estate, 440 pages, Rs 799.

oak forests and the disappearance of the Haldu tree—are as relevant today as they were in her time. Her critiques of the colonial forest department reflect broader systemic issues that persist in modern forest management.

Guha's treatment of other figures is equally illuminating. Tagore's description of cities as "parasites" resonates powerfully in the context of today's urban sprawl and environmental decay. Verrier Elwin's portrayal of Gond perceptions of nature as both beautiful and savage offers a poignant commentary on the complexities of human-nature relationships, particularly in an era of climate change. Meanwhile, naturalist M. Krishnan emerges as a deeply original thinker who eschewed Western labels for Indian

wildlife and celebrated the grandeur of both the common and the rare. Guha aptly dubs him "India's John Muir," drawing a parallel between Krishnan's advocacy for unspoiled nature and Muir's iconic legacy in American conservation.

### Bridging Disciplines

One of the book's greatest strengths is its interdisciplinary approach. Environmentalism, as framed by Guha, is not an abstract or aesthetic concept but a deeply practical one tied to agriculture, economics, and public policy. By situating his subjects within these broader contexts, Guha reminds readers of the urgent need for an ecological path to development—one that moves beyond token gestures and addresses the roots of environmental degradation.

The banyan tree, a recurring symbol in the book, underscores this integrative perspective. Both Tagore and Mukherjee admired the banyan for its coiling, interconnected branches—a metaphor for the interconnectedness of life and knowledge. This framing resonates with Guha's method of bringing diverse intellectual traditions into dialogue, creating a narrative that feels at once grounded and expansive.



## Net worth of Central PSEs shot up by 82 pc in 9 years: Hardeep Singh Puri

NEW DELHI: Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on November 14 highlighted the role of Public Sector Enterprises (PSEs) in driving India's remarkable growth story as the country is headed to become the third largest economy in the world.

Sharing key statistics to illustrate the remarkable performance, the minister said that the net worth of Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) has increased by 82 per cent, from Rs 9.5 lakh crore in FY14 to Rs 17.33 lakh crore in FY23.

Addressing the CII's PSE summit here, the minister said that the contribution of CPSEs to the national exchequer — through excise duties, taxes, and dividends — has more than doubled, rising from Rs 2.20 lakh crore in FY14 to Rs 4.58 lakh crore in FY23. He also highlighted that the net profit of profit-making CPSEs grew by 87 per cent, from Rs 1.29 lakh crore in FY14 to Rs 2.41 lakh crore in FY23. Furthermore, the



total market capitalisation of all 81 listed PSEs has grown by 225 per cent under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, outpacing both the PSE index and the BSE Sensex over the past decade.

The minister praised the resilience and performance of the PSEs over the last decade, noting that their contributions have been integral to India's economic stability and growth. "As we look to the future, the

next few years will be critical in laying the groundwork for India's next leap forward," he said. The Minister outlined a vision for India's energy sector, emphasising three key principles: availability, affordability, and sustainability. "Sustainability is the cornerstone of our energy strategy and aligns directly with our larger vision of transforming PSEs into engines of sustainable growth," he said. As an example of India's focus on sustainability,

Puri highlighted the significant progress in bioethanol blending. "From 1.53 per cent in 2014, ethanol blending has surged to 15 per cent in 2024, with the government advancing the target of 20 per cent blending to 2025 — five years ahead of schedule," he said.

The Minister also revealed that discussions have already started on developing a roadmap for the post-2025 phase i.e. after the attainment of the 20 per cent ethanol blending target, ensuring continued growth in the bioethanol sector, and advancing India's renewable energy goals. On the subject of fossil fuels, the Minister acknowledged that while India is steadily transitioning to cleaner energy sources, fossil fuels will continue to be part of the energy mix for the foreseeable future. He highlighted that the government's approach would be to balance the energy transition while ensuring energy security, stability, and affordability for all citizens.

## FISME and Korean Herald Media Join Forces to Facilitate Strategic SME Partnerships



NEWDELHI: The Federation of Indian Micro and Small & Medium Enterprises (FISME) and The Herald Media Group are set to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aimed at fostering strategic collaborations between Indian and Korean small and medium enterprises.

The landmark agreement, to be signed on November 22nd, 2024, represents a pivotal effort to bridge the economic corridors between India and South Korea by creating robust platforms for business interaction, information exchange, and mutual growth.

FISME President Sandeep Kishore Jain and The Herald Media Group CEO Choi Jinyoung will formalise the partnership, signalling a commitment to enhancing cross-border business opportunities.

Under the terms of the MoU, both organisations will work collaboratively to facilitate strategic partnerships, joint ventures, and business connections between Indian and Korean companies.

The initiative focuses on providing comprehensive support to small and medium enterprises, including matchmaking services, legal guidance, and networking opportunities across

both markets.

Key objectives of the partnership include establishing a comprehensive platform for connecting businesses, facilitating information exchange, and supporting SMEs in navigating international trade landscapes.

FISME will offer critical services such as hosting business delegations, organising B2B meetings, and assisting Korean companies in understanding India's regulatory environment.

Correspondingly, The Herald Group will leverage its extensive media network to share information about trade exhibitions, facilitate strategic partnerships, and create channels for Indian SMEs to engage with South Korean government and public institutions.

The memorandum emphasises mutual cooperation, with both parties agreeing to maintain transparent communication, exchange relevant content, and coordinate delegation visits to maximise potential business opportunities.

## ASSOCHAM seeks rate rationalization for TDS, in Budget for 2025-26



FW DESK  
New Delhi

Seeking rationalization of TDS rates, ASSOCHAM in its pre-Budget memorandum to the Finance Ministry has pressed for a single/ uniform rate of 1% or 2% for all payments made to resident assesses to avoid litigation on interpretational issues and ensure ease of tax compliance.

The suggestions in the presentation relating to direct taxes also sought decriminalisation of certain TDS (Tax Deduction at Source) defaults, as the provisions relating to the same are quite severe in nature. It said Section 276 B provides for imprisonment up to seven years if a person fails to ensure compliance with some of the TDS provisions.

"Criminal proceedings should apply only when the taxpayer has enriched himself at the expense of the Government, and not to cases where certain payments / benefits are made or provided without applying TDS. We expect tax reforms aimed at reducing litigation, easy and better compliance to be part of the Union Budget for 2025-26. Corporate India is giving some constructive recommendations in this regard. India Inc is also looking for measures which would boost both investment and consumption, said Sanjay Nayar President ASSOCHAM.

Modifications should be considered to enable taxpayers to make additional claims in the course of assessment proceedings. Similarly, taxpayers should be able to withdraw claims made in the return at the time of assessment, and such a withdrawal should result in an immunity from penalty.

Ease of tax compliance is one of the critical constituents of Ease of doing business. The ASSOCHAM pre-Budget memorandum makes several specific suggestions to the government to rationalise TDS rates and bring in flexible system of filing tax returns.

## India's Services Sector set to Overtake Merchandise Exports by 2030: GTRI

NEWDELHI: India stands on the cusp of a transformative economic milestone, with its services sector projected to surpass merchandise exports by fiscal year 2030, reaching an impressive USD 618 billion, according to a comprehensive report by the Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) released Wednesday.

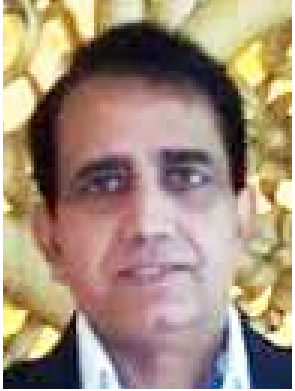
The trajectory of India's export landscape reveals a compelling narrative of growth and potential.

Between 2018-19 and 2023-24, merchandise exports experienced a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 5.8 percent, while services exports demonstrated remarkable momentum, expanding at a robust 10.5 percent CAGR.

This differential underscores the burgeoning strength of India's service-oriented economic strategy.

At the heart of this growth are two pivotal sectors: Software & IT services and Other Business Services (OBS).

These domains collectively represented 86.4 percent of the country's total exports in the previous fiscal year, highlighting their critical role in India's economic ecosystem.



OBS, encompassing diverse professional services such as legal, accounting, tax consultancy, and management consulting, generated USD 102.8 billion in 2023-24, constituting 33.2 percent of total services exports.

The software and IT services segment emerges as a particularly robust contributor, generating USD 190.7 billion in exports during 2023-24 and accounting for 56.2 percent of total services exports.

Notably, approximately 80 percent of these services are delivered digitally, reflecting the sector's technological sophistication and global reach.

## Smog Crisis Disrupts MSME Operations across Northern India



NEW DELHI: Northern India's micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) are bearing the brunt of the severe smog crisis engulfing Delhi-NCR and neighbouring states.

The dense haze has disrupted operations across 3.4 million MSMEs in Punjab, Haryana, and Delhi, impacting nearly 7 million workers, according to a report by the Economic Times.

The PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI) has flagged escalating costs and operational challenges for MSMEs as they struggle to cope with the hazardous air quality.

Hemant Jain, PHDCCI president, highlighted that enforcement of Stage IV of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) has halted construction and

demolition activities in the National Capital Region (NCR), further straining industrial operations. Former President of Federation of Indian Micro and Small & Medium Enterprises (FISME), Dr Animesh Saxena whose garment factory is located in Gurgaon, says that frequent breakdown in power during the season rubs the salt on the wound of most small units as they cannot afford gas based power generators.

"In spite of the recurring issue every year, the gas pipelines have not been laid across NCR and the MSMEs in these areas continue to suffer every year," he added. Another victim of the GRAP restrictions is on all construction activities.

"In factories expansion, erection, commission and installation of new machinery are ongoing exercises, but the GRAP prohibits all construction work affecting the normal functioning of industry," says Neeraj Kedia, Chairman of Banking and Finance Committee of FISME. Transportation bottlenecks caused by poor visibility and health-related absenteeism among workers have delayed supply chains and reduced productivity. Jain noted that industries have been forced to adopt expensive mitigation measures such as air purification systems, cleaner fuels, and protective masks to ensure continuity of operations. "Prolonged exposure to the smog is not only affecting workers' health but also extending production delays, pushing costs higher for small and medium businesses," said Jain.

The long-term outlook for MSMEs in the region is concerning, as poor air quality could deter potential investors and clients. Jaidev Aahuja, chairman of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) Delhi state, expressed fears that sustained pollution levels may undermine the region's competitiveness, discouraging multinational companies and start-ups from engaging with local businesses.

## India's Electronics Sector Set to Create 12 Million Jobs amid Skill Hunting: Report

NEW DELHI: As India's electronics industry witnesses unprecedented growth, it is set to create 12 million (1.2 crore) jobs at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 25-30 per cent, according to a report on Monday.

The projections indicate the creation of 12 million jobs, encompassing 3 million direct and 9 million indirect roles, according to a report by TeamLease Degree Apprenticeship.

However, a pressing deficit of 10 million trained professionals underscores the urgent need to bridge this gap to sustain and amplify India's growth in the electronics sector, it added.

The electronics manufacturing industry is surging, inspired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of making the country a \$500 billion electronics manufacturing hub by 2030.

As the industry diversifies into areas such as communication and broadcast electronics, consumer electronics, industrial electronics and aerospace and defence electronics, the demand for specialised skills has surged.

The growing requirements for components like semiconductors and electromechanical parts further intensify this challenge. India is on the cusp



of becoming a global leader in electronics manufacturing, with domestic production reaching \$101 billion in FY23, driven by segments such as mobile phones (43 per cent), consumer electronics (12 per cent), industrial electronics (12 per cent), and auto electronics (8 per cent).

"By FY 2027-28, the industry will require 12 million professionals — 3 million in direct roles and 9 million in indirect roles, yet a staggering skills gap of 10 million persists. Bridging this gap demands a robust focus on skill development, blending classroom learning with hands-on training through apprenticeships," said A.R. Ramesh, CEO of TeamLease Degree Apprenticeship. Scaling the apprenticeship ecosystem, currently growing at a 55 per cent CAGR and projected to reach 1 million apprentices by 2027 to 2 million apprentices, can create a steady talent pipeline to meet industry needs, he added.

### CULTIVATING INTRAPRENEURSHIP

# Lessons from Leading Pharmaceutical Companies

DR. ANIL KUMAR ANGRISH

Intrapreneurship is considered as an act of entrepreneurship within an organization. Across the sectors, firms have recognized the potential of intrapreneurship. Pharmaceutical sector is not an exception in this regard. Those companies which are leaders in their domain today, had their origin as a start-up so their founders understand that entrepreneurial mindset is required to keep the momentum. Promoters who are in the driving seat understand that professional managers are engrossed in day-to-day operations of organization or are reluctant to change the status quo. Therefore, to reignite the entrepreneurial spirit and nurture entrepreneurial mindset, founders/promoters take up intrapreneurial initiatives.

Intrapreneurship is distinctively recognized from terms such as 'Skunk Works', 'Bootlegging', and 'Moonlighting' as it is not a clandestine activity and it is not unbudgeted, unofficial or non-programmed, and it is not at the cost of the organization to benefit employees only. In September 2022, Wipro Chairman Rishad Premji said that his company fired 300 workers for moonlighting after it was found that they were working for competitors secretly. His tweet became the topic of debate when he said — There is a lot of chatter about people moonlighting in the tech industry. This is

cheating — plain and simple. Moonlighting had its proponents too, e.g., Tech Mahindra Managing Director & CEO C. P. Gurnami supported the idea when he said that he would introduce policies to enable employees to be more open about it. In contrast to this, bigger corporations support intrapreneurship through proper direction, space and support by allowing employees to spend part of their time, say 10%-20% on innovative ideas of their own along with providing resources and creating enabling environment. British Petroleum came up with Corporate Entrepreneurship model that asked for finding balance between constraints and chaos through proper 'direction', 'space', 'boundaries', and 'support'.

Pharmaceutical sector is capital-intensive in nature and is highly regulated at each step of the value chain. In that background, intrapreneurial initiatives which can be applied in other sectors, may not be suitable in pharmaceutical sector. Pharmaceutical companies which have sufficient resources to support intrapreneurial initiatives are well-positioned to take up these initiatives. Global pharmaceutical companies which figure among top 20 have taken up one or other type of intrapreneurial initiative, and their initiatives are not restricted to parent company's headquarters only, e.g., Novartis which is otherwise based in Switzerland had taken up Bottom of the Pyramid (BoP) initiative. An



initiative, 'Arogya Parivar' was launched as a pilot program in South India by Novartis way back in 2007. Similarly, Sanofi India took up 'Lakshya' Initiative in India.

Top global pharmaceutical companies have shown the ways to nurture intrapreneurship. Pfizer (USA) came up with PfizerWorks, AbbVie (USA) initiated AbbVie Innovation Center. Janssen which is an associate of Johnson & Johnson (USA) started Entrepreneurial Boot Camp, and JLABS. Eli Lilly (USA) had initiated 'InnoCentive' which became a standalone initiative later. Mylan, another prominent company from the USA, started 'Hackathons' and Lion's Den with specific focus on Innovation.

Many prominent pharmaceutical companies from Europe took intrapreneurial plunge. GSK (UK) pursued PULSE and Centres of Excellence for Drug Discovery (CEDDs). AstraZeneca, another prominent pharmaceutical company from UK came up with Innovative Medicines Units (iMeds). Bayer AG (Germany) initiated Triple-I where "I" stood for 'Inspiration, Ideas

and Innovation'. The company also came up with CATALYST fund. Boehringer Ingelheim (Germany) launched 'Making More Health' (MMH) initiative. Novo Nordisk (Denmark) pursued 'Innovation Culture Initiative'. UCB (Belgium) pursued Team of Accelerators for Innovative Solutions (TAXIS) initiative. Roche (Switzerland) came up with Genentech Research and early Development (gRED), Pharma Research and Early Development (pRED). Merck KGaA (Germany) pursued Innospire, a word composition from "Innovation" and "Inspiration".

Japanese pharmaceutical companies also recognized the potential of intrapreneurial initiatives. Takeda launched Dragon's Den and Technology Accelerator. Eisai (Japan) launched E-elite Program which stood for Eisai Emerging Leaders in Talent Evolution Program, and the key objective was to create intrapreneurs. Daiichi Sankyo (Japan) launched Venture Science Laboratories (VSL). Other notable pharmaceutical companies from Japan which took up intrapreneurial initia-

tives include Chugai Pharmaceuticals and Sumitomo Dainippon Pharma. Chugai Pharma came up with ACCEL 15 as a mid-term business plan besides Innovation Beyond Innovation 18 (IBI 18) as a new mid-term business plan. Sumitomo Dainippon had introduced Work-style Innovations.

Above examples point out that these pharmaceutical companies made a conscious effort to come up with an intrapreneurial initiative. Most of these initiatives have been taken up by these pharmaceutical companies in last two decades. Novartis came up with Arogya Parivar initiative in 2007. Pfizer initiated PfizerWorks in 2008, Roche implemented Genentech Research and Early Development which was renamed as gRED in 2009 post-acquisition of Genentech. Pharma Research and Early Development (pRED) of Roche came up in 2013. Lakshya initiative of Sanofi was launched in 2008. Innospire from Merck KGaA was initiated in late 2008 and could become operational in 2009. JLABS as the Incubator Division of J&J came up in January 2012 with first location in San Diego. Janssen Campus Office (JCO) came up little earlier in 2009 that had a specific emphasis on 'open innovation' and 'sustainability'.

Centres of Excellence for Drug Discovery (CEDDs) of GSK were formed in 2001 and PUSE initiative from GSK came up in 2009. Innovation Medicines units (iMeds) of

AstraZeneca came up in 2010. Triple-I of Bayer AG came up in 2010. Other initiatives from Bayer AG such as We-Solve and CATALYST fund came up in 2014 and 2017 respectively. Eli Lilly launched InnoCentive in 2001 which was later spun out of Eli Lilly in 2005. 'Making More Health' of Boehringer Ingelheim was launched in 2010 with specific focus on Innovation, Social Intrapreneurship and Back to Future — Ideas. Innovation Culture Initiative of Novo Nordisk came up in 2009 but it was abandoned in late 2012. Venture Science Laboratories (VSL) was set up as an in-house start-up organization by Daiichi Sankyo in 2013. TAXIS from UCB was initiated in 2017.

Dragon's Den and Shark Tank have left impact on pharmaceutical companies too as is evident from initiatives of Takeda and Mylan. 'The Tigers of Money' for which format is owned by Nippon TV originated in Japan in 2001. In contrast to this, Dragon's Den premiered on January 4, 2005 and Shark Tank premiered on August 9, 2009. Takeda (Japan) launched Dragon's Den initiative in 2015. Mylan came up with Hackathons and Lions' Den which was touted as an internal version of the TV show 'Shark Tank' by Michael Smith who served as Chief Information Officer, Mylan. On the lighter note, it seems that Indian companies in general and pharmaceutical companies in particular seem to be late entrants as

Shark Tank India premiered on December 20, 2021.

Focus of intrapreneurial initiatives in pharmaceutical companies was not uniform. PfizerWorks emphasized on outsourcing of non-core jobs related to R&D, strategic management, and other related areas. Novartis focused on marketing domain with specific emphasis on rural markets. Less than one-third companies out of top 20 comprising Roche, AbbVie, GSK, AstraZeneca, and Daiichi Sankyo focused on R&D with specific emphasis on R&D productivity. Higher emphasis of intrapreneurial initiatives was on innovation resulting into new products and new services as prominent pharmaceutical companies comprising Eisai, UCB, Novo Nordisk, Sumitomo Dainippon, Chugai Pharmaceuticals, Merck KGaA, and Bayer laid emphasis on these areas under their intrapreneurial initiative. Other areas of emphasis under intrapreneurial initiative comprised 'digitalization' (by Takeda and AbbVie), Crowd-sourcing and Open Innovation (by Eli Lilly), Development of Business Solutions (by Bayer, Merck KGaA), Cross-functional areas (by Sanofi), and Overall Business Plan by pharmaceutical companies like Janssen, J&J, Takeda, Boehringer Ingelheim and Mylan.

R&D intensive intrapreneurial initiatives of these pharmaceutical companies allowed scientists to pursue projects of their individual interest and at the same time,

help the pharmaceutical company to meet its R&D goals. CEDDs in GSK were focused on fostering innovative output by enabling accountability and creativity. Similarly, Innovative Medicine units (iMeds) of AstraZeneca encouraged early-stage research. Innovation-centric intrapreneurial initiatives encouraged employees to submit ideas for new products and develop business solutions. Entrepreneurial Boot Camps, e.g., JLABS of Janssen consisted of residential sessions and dealt with all aspects of successfully setting up a new business. Dragon's Den (Takeda) solicited digital 'patient-and customer-centric ideas' from the employees.

Indian pharmaceutical companies can take a leaf out of prominent global pharmaceutical companies' book for their intrapreneurial initiatives and learnings. This can be helpful for Indian pharmaceutical companies in improving R&D, innovation, launch of new products/services, and patient-and customer-centric ideas, digitalization, to name a few areas thereby contributing to their efficiency and effectiveness.

**Dr. Anil Kumar Angrish—Associate Professor (Finance and Accounting), Department of Pharmaceutical Management, NIPER S.A.S. Nagar (Mohali), DISCLAIMER: Views are personal and do not represent the views of the Institute.**



# Markets stage sharp recovery; Sensex reclaims 79,000 level, Nifty surges 557.35 points

MUMBAI: Benchmark equity indices rebounded sharply on Friday, with the Sensex climbing 2.54 per cent to reclaim the 79,000 level, driven by across-the-board rally and value buying at lower levels.



Strong buying by domestic institutional investors and a firm trend in the US markets also helped the indices, traders said.

The BSE benchmark Sensex jumped 1,961.32 points or 2.54 per cent to settle at 79,117.11. During the day, it surged 2,062.4 points or 2.67 per cent to 79,218.19.

The NSE Nifty soared 557.35 points or 2.39 per cent to 23,907.25.

All the 30 Sensex firms ended in the green. Hectic buying in blue chip counters like Reliance Industries and IT shares boosted

market sentiment.

State Bank of India, Tata Consultancy Services, Titan, ITC, Infosys, Larsen & Toubro, Reliance Industries and Bajaj Finance were the biggest gainers.

The majority of the listed Adani group firms ended higher, bouncing back from the previous day's sharp fall

after billionaire industrialist Gautam Adani was charged in the US for alleged bribery and fraud.

Ambuja Cements surged 3.50 per cent, ACC jumped 3.17 per cent, Adani Enterprises climbed 2.16 per cent, Adani Ports (2.05 per cent), Adani Total Gas (1.18 per cent) and NDTV (0.65 per cent) on

the BSE.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 5,320.68 crore on Thursday, while Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) bought shares worth Rs 4,200.16 crore, according to exchange data.

In Asian markets, Seoul and Tokyo settled in the positive territory while Shanghai and Hong Kong ended lower.

European markets were trading lower. The US markets ended higher on Thursday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.19 per cent to USD 74.37 a barrel.

On Thursday, the BSE benchmark tanked 422.59 points or 0.54 per cent to settle at 77,155.79 points. The Nifty slumped 168.60 points or 0.72 per cent to 23,349.90.

# Govt Challenges RBI's Higher Reserve Proposals for Banks



NEW DELHI: The Indian government is contesting two significant regulatory proposals from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) that would require banks to maintain higher reserves for infrastructure projects and digital deposits, according to a senior government source.

The RBI's May proposal mandates banks to allocate 5 per cent of loans for infrastructure projects under construction as reserves, reported Reuters.

This directive prompted banks to express concerns to the government about increased funding costs. In a separate July proposal, the central bank suggested banks should maintain an additional 5 per cent 'run-off' provision for retail deposits accessible through digital channels to manage potential mass withdrawal risks.

These measures would compel banks to hold more government securities as liquid assets,

potentially constraining their lending capacity.

This comes at a time when bank credit growth has reached approximately 14 per cent over the past year, with large segments of Asia's third-largest economy dependent on bank financing.

The federal finance ministry's banking division has reportedly addressed letters to the RBI on two occasions, requesting modifications to these guidelines, citing concerns about potential credit constraints in the economy. For infrastructure project financing, the ministry suggests implementing a sector-specific approach based on risk profiles, rather than applying uniform regulations. According to the government source, while high-risk sectors like real estate could maintain the proposed 5 per cent provisioning requirement, renewable energy and solar projects should be exempt from increased provisioning mandates.

# Bitcoin marches towards \$1,00,000 on optimism over Trump crypto plans



NEW DELHI: Bitcoin's march toward \$100,000 gathered pace on Thursday as investors bet a friendlier U.S. regulatory approach to cryptocurrencies under President-elect Donald Trump will unleash a boom era for the asset class.

Bitcoin prices topped \$98,000 for the first time during European trading, and were last up around 4% on the day.

The cryptocurrency's price has more than doubled this year and is up about 40% in the two weeks since Trump was voted in as the next U.S. president and a slew of pro-crypto lawmakers were elected to Congress.

"While it's now firmly into overbought territory, it is being drawn toward the \$100k level," said IG Markets analyst Tony Scyamore.

Trump embraced digital assets during his campaign, promising to make the United States the "crypto capital of the planet" and to accumulate a national stockpile of bitcoin.

More than \$4 billion has streamed into U.S. listed bitcoin exchange-traded funds since the election. This week, there was a strong debut for options on BlackRock's ETF,

with call options - bets on the price going up - more popular than puts. Crypto-related stocks have soared along with the bitcoin price and shares in bitcoin miner MARA Holdings were up nearly 14% overnight, while MicroStrategy, a loss-making software company that has been buying bitcoin, rose 10% to take its market capitalisation beyond \$100 billion.

"Many are wondering if this administration will bring the regulatory clarity the crypto community has been waiting for. It's likely too soon to say," said Will Peck, head of digital assets at WisdomTree, a global exchange-traded fund issuer.

"We see all of this excitement as bullish not only for bitcoin or crypto broadly, but the entire blockchain-enabled ecosystem that is growing today."

# Indian economy capable of handling global shocks says RBI Governor



NEW DELHI: Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das has said that the Indian economy is strong enough to handle any adverse fallout from global events. "Today, the growth of the Indian economy presents a picture of stability and strength," Das said while addressing an event at the launch of the Kochi International Foundation here. The country's external sector is also strong and the current account deficit (CAD) has remained within manageable limits as it presently stands at 1.1 per cent of GDP. Earlier, in 2010 and 2011, it was in the range of six to seven per cent, he added. The central bank chief also pointed out that India has one of the largest foreign exchange reserves in the world at about \$675 billion. He further stated that the country's inflation was expected to be moderate despite periodic humps.

# RBI Governor Pulls Banks for Ineffective Grievance Redressal

MUMBAI: Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das has raised serious concerns regarding the misreporting of customer grievances by private sector banks, criticising the practice of classifying complaints as mere queries.

In a keynote address at the Conference of Directors of Private Sector Banks in Mumbai, Das called on private lenders to adopt a more transparent and customer-centric approach, ensuring that genuine complaints are appropriately handled and escalated when necessary.

MSME bodies have been alluding to a dysfunctional grievance redressal mechanism in banks. Federation of Indian Micro and Small & Medium Enterprises (FISME), the national MSME body, has repeatedly raised the issue.

"It is not just private sector banks, in all commercial banks grievance redressal system is broken. There is no time bound grievance handling system and an escalation matrix displayed anywhere on websites. It is very frustrating to MSME clients," says Neeraj Kedia Chairman of Banking Committee of FISME. "It is disheartening to see complaints being misclassified, un-



dermining the very foundation of customer trust," said Das. He emphasised the importance of robust grievance redressal mechanisms, urging banks to properly escalate unresolved complaints to internal ombudsmen.

Highlighting instances where grievances were rejected without due escalation, he urged bank boards and customer service committees to scrutinise these practices, underscoring the need for a sincere commitment to customer-centricity. Das also expressed concern over the growing trend of banks viewing service charges and penalties

as profit avenues. He noted that when these charges are imposed without transparency or are part of forced product bundling, it risks eroding trust between the bank and its customers. "Boards should give a close look at service charges and penalties, particularly when they are treated as profit-making tools or when there is selective disclosure to customers," he cautioned. During the conference, which was attended by over 200 directors from private banks, including chairmen, managing directors, and CEOs, Das stressed that banks must move beyond a profit-driven mindset.

# India's Economic activity growth hits 8-month high in October at 10.1%



NEW DELHI: India's economic activity surged to an 8-month high of 10.1% growth in October, up from 6.6% in September, as reported by credit rating agency ICRA. This rise is attributed to the post-monsoon boost in sectors like mining and electricity, robust festive demand that spurred vehicle sales, fuel consumption, and air travel, along with a significant increase in exports. ICRA's 'Business Activity Monitor' reported a 9.9% month-on-month growth in October, marking the highest increase since March 2023. Key indicators such as vehicle registrations and electricity demand showed strong growth, with early November data also remaining positive due to continued festive demand. Non-oil exports increased substantially by 25.6%, driven by sectors including electronics, engineering, chemicals, and garments, indicating a projected uptick in GDP growth for Q3 FY2025 compared to the first half of the fiscal year.

# Tax Payers asked to Declare Foreign Income & Assets by December 31



NEW DELHI: The Chairman of the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT), Ravi Agarwal, has urged taxpayers to disclose their foreign income and assets in their Income Tax Returns (ITRs) by December 31.

This reminder comes as part of the income tax department's efforts to ensure compliance with disclosure requirements, according to a report by Business Standard.

Agarwal highlighted that the tax department receives detailed information on foreign assets through the automatic exchange of information agreements with various nations.

Speaking at the inauguration of the Taxpayers Lounge at the India International Trade Fair (IITF) in New Delhi, he stated, "The basic intent is to remind taxpayers to declare foreign assets. They can file revised

returns by December 31." The department is actively reaching out to individuals who have not disclosed high-value foreign assets or income, sending reminders via SMS and emails.

The types of foreign assets requiring disclosure include bank accounts held abroad, foreign cash value insurance, financial interests in overseas businesses or entities, immovable property outside India, foreign equity or debt interests, accounts where the individual has signing authority, and other capital assets located abroad.

This initiative follows a recent warning from the tax department, which cautioned that failing to disclose foreign assets or income earned abroad in ITR filings could attract a penalty of Rs 10 lakh under the anti-black money law.

# Impact of Trump on Indian Economy



SATISH SINGH Donald Trump's economic policies in his previous tenure were related to increasing trade volume, US-friendly trade agreements, positive import-export policies etc. and during his tenure, Trump focused on increasing economic cooperation between the US and India, strengthening business relations, encouraging investment in US-based technology companies, etc., which was largely beneficial for India. Due to this policy, Indian IT and technology professionals also got employment in the US. However, due to Trump's "US First" policy, high import duty was imposed on many Indian products, due to which India also suffered some losses.



The Federal Reserve Bank of US cut the policy rates by 50 basis points on 18 September 2024, so that investment could increase. It was necessary to do so due to the possible economic recession in US. The cut in interest rates has partially strengthened the dollar. On the other hand, Trump's return to power in US reduced policy level uncertainty in US, which increased investor confidence and increased the possibility of investment boom as well as strengthened the dollar.

The Modi government is looking at Trump's return positively. Therefore, both Sensex and Nifty saw a rise after Trump became president. However, the rupee weakened, and the dollar strengthened, but this is also natural, because US is the most powerful country in the world from both economic and strategic perspectives and the US dollar is the strongest currency in the world.

Anyways, the strengthening of the dollar has increased the possibility of increased investment in India because it is cheaper for investors to invest in rupees and everyone wants to get more returns with less investment. Therefore, there is a lot of scope that

foreign investors will invest more in the Indian market when the dollar strengthens. This will strengthen the Indian economy. However, the other side of such a situation can also be negative, for example, weakening of the rupee against the dollar can reduce capital flow in terms of portfolio investment.

When the dollar strengthens, the export of Indian products becomes more competitive, because their price decreases in the foreign market. Therefore, the strengthening of the dollar may increase investment in sectors which are dependent on exports, such as IT, pharmaceuticals, etc., but it increases the cost of loans taken in foreign currency in India, which increases the financial pressure on companies. Thus, it would be correct to say that the strengthening of the dollar will have a mixed impact on the Indian economy.

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) figures in India are continuously improving. Global rating agency Moody's has raised India's GDP growth forecast for calendar year 2024 to 7.1 percent, from 6.8 percent and 6.1 percent earlier. However, Moody's has kept India's GDP growth forecast for 2025 unchanged at 6.5 percent, while the GDP

growth forecast for 2026 is 6.6 percent. Even though Moody's has lowered the GDP growth rate forecast for calendar year 2025 and 2026 compared to calendar year 2024, these figures are better than many developed countries of the world. However, retail inflation rose to 6.21 percent in October, which is more than the tolerance limit of 6 percent set by the Reserve Bank of India. Vegetables have contributed the most to the increase in inflation in October, as their price has increased by 42.18 percent. The current rise in inflation cannot be called permanent, as both the crop and arrival of vegetables remain good in the winter season. Therefore, inflation may remain soft from November 2024 to March 2025.

At the domestic level, the Indian economy is continuously strengthening. The government has collected Rs 1.87 lakh crore from Goods and Services Tax (GST) in October 2024 and it has increased by 9 percent on an annual basis. This is the second largest tax collection ever from the point of view of overall tax collection. Earlier, the government had collected GST of Rs 2.10 lakh crore in April 2024 and Rs 1.87 lakh crore in April 2023. At the same time, last month in September, the government had collected Rs 1.73 lakh crore through GST. October is the eighth consecutive month when GST collection has been more than Rs 1.7 lakh crore. GST collection in the first half of FY 2024-25 was Rs 10.87 lakh crore, which is 9.5 percent more than the first half of FY 24. The central government has collected a net direct tax of Rs 11.25 lakh crore from April 1 to October 10. This

includes corporate tax of Rs 4.94 lakh crore and income tax of Rs 5.98 lakh crore. The Income Tax Department had collected direct tax of Rs 9.51 lakh crore during this period last year. Thus, there has been an increase of 18.35 percent on an annual basis.

According to the Reserve Bank of India, there was a slight stagnation in the loan uptake in the month of October, but it increased in the month of November. There was a sharp increase in the retail and construction sectors. Personal loans are expected to grow by 40 percent, while in the agricultural sector it is 24 percent. The demand for loans in the service sector and the infrastructure sector is also consistent and the loan uptake is accelerating economic activities.

At present, GDP is increasing, tax collection has also increased. Inflation has become a bit uncontrolled in the month of October, but from November 2024 to March 2025, it is expected to remain within the tolerance limit set by the Reserve Bank of India. The increase in loan uptake is accelerating economic activities, which is likely to continue in the coming months as well. The dollar is likely to strengthen and the US policies under Trump are likely to be favourable to India. In short, it can be said that with the Indian economy continuing to remain strong at the domestic level and Trump's economic policies being broadly favourable for India, the Indian economy will continue to remain booming in the coming months.

Satish Singh, Ahmedabad Based Senior Columnist, views are personal

# Direct Tax Collections Poised to Surpass Budget Target for 2024-25

NEW DELHI: The Income Tax Department expects to surpass the direct tax collection target of Rs 22.07 lakh crore fixed in the Union Budget for the current financial year, according to Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) chairman Ravi Agarwal.

Agarwal told journalists collections from corporate and non-corporate taxes have risen and the Income Tax Department believes that it will cross the budget target for the second year in a row. This reflects the strong fiscal position of the country driven by robust economic growth.

India's net direct tax collections, comprising corporate tax and personal income tax, shot up by a robust 15.4 per cent to Rs 12.1 lakh crore, from April 1 to November 10 during the cur-



rent financial year, according to the latest figures released by the CBDT. On a gross basis, direct taxes surged by over 21 per cent to Rs 15 lakh crore on a gross basis during the period. The government issued tax refunds of Rs 2.9 lakh crore which is a 53 per cent increase over the same period last year.

The government's target to collect Rs 22.07 lakh crore during the current financial year

comprises Rs 10.20 lakh crore from corporate tax and Rs 11.87 lakh from personal income tax, non-corporate tax and other taxes. The net direct tax collections for the financial year 2023-24 had also clocked a double-digit growth to exceed the Union Budget Estimates (BE) by Rs 1.35 lakh crore or 7.4 per cent reflecting the strong fiscal position of the country driven by robust economic growth.

# SEBI sends Rs 26 crore notice to Reliance Big Entertainment in RHFL fund case

MUMBAI: The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has fined Reliance Big Entertainment Rs 26 crore for failure to clear penalties imposed by the capital markets regulator.

The company earlier failed to pay penalties in a case pertaining to illegal diversion of funds. SEBI issued the demand notice after Reliance Big Entertainment failed to pay the Rs 25 crore fine imposed by the regulator in August this year.

SEBI has directed the entity to pay Rs 26 crore, including interest and recovery costs within 15 days. If Reliance Big Entertainment fails to make the payment within the stipulated deadline, the regulator can attach its assets, including bank accounts. In August this year, the markets regulator barred



industrialist Anil Ambani and 24 other entities for five years for diversion of funds from Reliance Home Finance Ltd (RHFL).

The SEBI also fined Ambani Rs 25 crore and prohibited him from holding any position in the securities market, including roles as a director or key managerial personnel in listed companies, for the same duration. In a 222-page order, SEBI said that Anil

Ambani, with the help of RHFL's key managerial personnel, orchestrated a fraudulent scheme to siphon off funds from RHFL by disguising them as loans to entities linked to him. "The Board of Directors of RHFL issued strong directives to stop such lending practices and reviewed corporate loans regularly but the company's management ignored these orders. This suggests a significant failure of governance, driven by certain key managerial personnel under the influence of Anil Ambani," it stated. The other 24 entities which have been barred include Amit Bapna, Ravindra Sudhalkar and Pinkesh R. Shah - former key officials of RHFL. The regulator levied a fine of Rs 27 crore on Bapna, Rs 26 crore on Sudhalkar, and Rs 21 crore on Shah.



# INTERNATIONAL

## PM Modi meets Caribbean leaders in Guyana, underscores deep ties that bind region with India

**GEORGETOWN:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on a historic trip to Guyana currently, met several Caribbean Community (CARICOM) leaders soon after his arrival in Georgetown Wednesday morning (India time), Guyanese President Mohamed Irfaan Ali has revealed.

In a special gesture, the President of Guyana - along with the Prime Minister of Guyana Brigadier (Retd.) Mark Anthony Phillips and over a dozen Cabinet Ministers - welcomed PM Modi at the airport as he arrived from Rio de Janeiro following the conclusion of the G20 Summit on what is the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister to the South American nation in 56 years.

"Later in the evening, at the Guyana Marriott Hotel in Georgetown, I had the pleasure of introducing Prime Minister Modi to several CARICOM leaders who are here for the 2nd India-CARICOM Summit. This meeting underscored the strengthening bonds between India and the Caribbean, built



on shared values and a vision for mutual progress," Guyanese President posted on X on the morning of the event (Wednesday evening, India time).

The Guyanese leader specifically mentioned that Prime Minister Modi also had the opportunity to connect with members of the vibrant Indian diaspora in Guyana.

"It was heartwarming to witness a cultural display under our 'One Guyana' initiative, celebrating unity in diversity and the deep ties that bind our

of Understanding (MoUs). This visit is a testament to the enduring partnership between Guyana and India, and I am confident it will lead to even greater collaboration in the future," Ali mentioned.

During his two-day visit to the energy-rich Caribbean nation with strong historic cultural links with India through a large diaspora, PM Modi is also scheduled to address a special session of Parliament besides co-chairing the India-CARICOM summit, underscoring India's role as the voice of the Global South that supports the political and economic aspirations of those countries.

"India is an important global actor. Our Member States are keen to meet Prime Minister Modi and develop deeper technical relationships, deepen the relationship in terms of advocacy for small states in the international arena, and strengthen people-to-people ties", CARICOM Assistant Secretary-General Elizabeth Solomon was quoted as saying by Antigua Newsroom.

## India Backs UK's Plan to Resume FTA Talks in early 2025



**NEW DELHI:** The Indian Department of Commerce has expressed support for British Prime Minister Keir Starmer's recent announcement to restart Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations between India and the United Kingdom in early 2025.

The announcement came after Starmer's bilateral meeting with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the G20 summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

In an official statement released Wednesday, the Department of Commerce emphasised its commitment to working closely with British

negotiators to address outstanding issues, highlighting the importance of achieving a balanced and mutually beneficial trade agreement.

The precise dates for these discussions will be determined through diplomatic channels in the near future, with negotiations expected to build upon previously established progress.

The bilateral trade relationship between India and the UK has shown significant growth, particularly evident in recent trade figures.

During the April-September 2024 period, India's exports to the UK grew by 12.38 percent, reaching USD 7.32 billion compared to USD 6.51 billion in the corresponding period of 2023.

Key export sectors including mineral fuels, machinery, precious stones, pharmaceuticals, apparel, iron and steel, and chemicals account for 68.72 percent of India's total exports to the UK.

The trade negotiations, which began in 2022, have already progressed through 13 rounds of talks.

The 14th round was postponed due to elections in both nations earlier this year. As India aims to achieve its ambitious export target of USD 1 trillion by FY30, the UK remains a priority market, with bilateral exports projected to reach USD 30 billion by 2029-30.

Both governments have demonstrated strong political commitment to finalising the agreement, which is expected to further strengthen their economic partnership.

## UNRWA Chief: Gaza a 'graveyard' for children amid Escalating Crisis



**UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini declared Gaza a "graveyard" for children, condemning the severe toll on young lives due to ongoing violence. Marking World Children's Day, Lazzarini highlighted the devastation faced by children in Gaza, who suffer from death, injury, displacement, and the loss of basic rights such as safety, education, and play. The crisis has left many children unable to attend school, leading to fears of a "lost generation." The Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Palestinian National Council called for global action, stressing the dire humanitarian conditions for children in Gaza and the West Bank. Children in Gaza endure severe shortages of essentials like food and clean water, while children in the West Bank face arbitrary detention and violations of their fundamental rights. The National Council's statement noted that since October 2023, Palestinian children have been disproportionately affected by conflict, with many killed, orphaned, or suffering from disease amid the ongoing blockade. The council criticized the global community for failing to address the crisis, which they describe as "genocide."**

## Australian govt to fine tech companies failing to enforce under-16 social media ban



**CANBERRA:** Social media companies that fail to prevent Australians younger than 16 from using their service will face fines worth tens of millions of dollars under world-first laws.

Australia's governing Labor Party on Thursday introduced legislation to parliament to introduce a minimum age limit of 16 years to use social media, Xinhua news agency reported.

Under the legislation, the onus to enforce the minimum age limit will fall on social media companies rather than children, parents, or guardians. Social media companies that systematically fail to enforce the age limit will face fines of up to Australian \$50 million (\$32.5 million). "This is about protecting young people, not punishing or isolating them, and letting parents know we're in their corner when it comes to supporting their children's health and wellbeing," Minister for Communications Michelle Rowland told parliament upon tabling the legislation. "This bill seeks to set a new normative value in society, that accessing social media is not the defining feature of growing up in Australia."

## Sri Lanka's New Cabinet Sworn In

**COLOMBO:** Twenty-one cabinet ministers were sworn in before Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake on Monday morning at the Presidential Secretariat in Colombo.

Deputy ministers will be sworn in later, it was announced at the event.

After Dissanayake won the September 21 presidential election, he governed with a cabinet composed of Harini Amarasuriya and Vijitha Herath.

The new cabinet ministers were chosen among the 159 members of parliament from the National People's Power (NPP) elected in the November 14 parliamentary election.



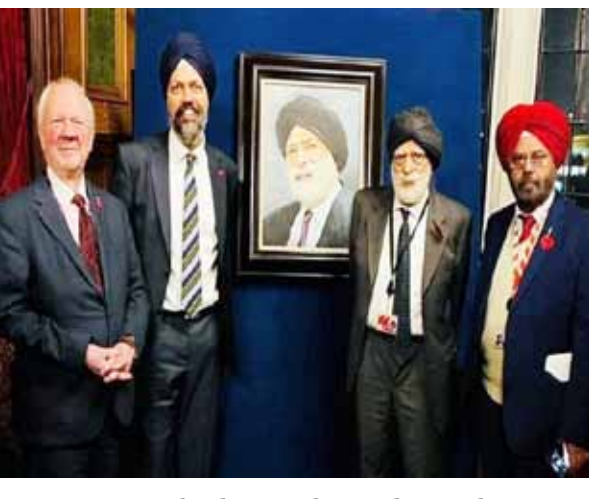
This is the first time a political party has won two-thirds of the majority in parliament since the introduction of the proportional representation system.

Amarasuriya continued to serve as prime minister in the new cabinet, and Herath was re-appointed as minister of foreign affairs, foreign employment and tourism.

## Portrait of Sikh MP Lord Indarjit Singh Installed in UK Parliament

Addressing the new cabinet, President Dissanayake said people have voted for the NPP twice, in September and November to change the political and economic trajectory of Sri Lanka, Xinhua news agency reported.

People have placed their trust in the NPP based on their policies and the integrity of party members, and from now on, the people will judge the NPP based on their performance as a government, he said. Dissanayake said Sri Lankan people have voted for them across ethnic and religious divides and that they are committed to protecting and enhancing the rights of the people.



**LONDON:** In a landmark moment for the Sikh community, the portrait of Lord Dr. Indarjit Singh, the first turbaned Sikh parliamentarian in the UK and Europe, has been installed in the Bishop's Corridor of the House of Lords at the British Parliament in Westminster, London.

This installation is the first time a Sikh's portrait has adorned the walls of the British Parliament, signifying recognition of Lord Singh's immense contributions to public service and interfaith understanding in the UK.

The unveiling ceremony brought together notable figures, including British Sikh MPs Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi, Lord Kuldeep Singh Sahota, Jas Athwal, and MP Richard Bacon, among others.

Lady Singh Dr. Kanwaljit Kaur OBE also attended, accompanied by family and friends.

Lord Speaker Faulkner, Chairman of the House of Lords Heritage Committee, honored Lord Singh's extensive contributions, stating he had "brought

## Trump names TV doctor Mehmet Oz to head healthcare programme

**WASHINGTON:** US President-elect Donald Trump named Mehmet Oz, a physician and a TV personality, to his team as his nominee to head the Medicaid and Medicare Services, the federal government's healthcare programme for the old and needy.

Oz used to host a popular TV show on health and ran unsuccessfully for the US Senate from Pennsylvania in 2022.

"I am very pleased to nominate Dr. Mehmet Oz to serve as the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Administrator," Trump said in an announcement on Tuesday.

"America is facing a Healthcare Crisis, and there may be no Physician more qualified and capable than Dr. Oz to Make America Healthy Again. He is an eminent physician, heart surgeon, inventor, and world-class communicator who has been at the forefront of healthy living for decades."

## Sydney Train Network to Shut Down for Four Days Due to Pay Dispute

**SYDNEY:** Sydney's entire train network will be closed for four days starting Thursday as rail workers prepare to strike over a pay dispute with the New South Wales (NSW) state government. The shutdown, lasting from Thursday through Sunday, is expected to impact millions of commuters, according to Transport Minister Jo Haylen.

Last-ditch negotiations between the Rail, Tram, and Bus Union (RTBU) and the government failed to prevent the strike. The union is demanding a 32% pay increase



over four years for Sydney's 14,000 rail employees, along with a commitment to operate 24-hour weekend services across all train lines. However, the government argues that such changes would strain the network, instead proposing limited 24-hour weekend services between western Sydney, the central business district, and northern suburbs—an offer rejected by the union.

"This will cause major disruption to the millions of people that rely on these services," Minister Haylen said, cautioning that all suburban and inter-city rail lines would be affected, impacting even those commuting from outside Sydney. In response, the government is exploring options to increase other public transport services to accommodate the anticipated demand. However, Transport NSW acknowledged that it would be unable to arrange special buses for all major events in the city during the shutdown period, potentially affecting weekend sporting and music events.

### G-20 CONCLUDES IN BRAZIL

## Fails to Censure Russia on Ukraine War, Biden allows Ukraine to Hit Russia with Deadlier Missiles

**GOPAL MISRA**

The contemporary world is simultaneously witnessing two conflicting narratives, the welfare of the mankind, and apprehension is that the world being also pushed towards an imminent nuclear catastrophe; interestingly both being endorsed by the outgoing US President, Joe Biden. The issue is whether a lame duck president should escalate the war, who will finally be demitting his office on January 20, 2025, or does he genuinely honor his commitment to a hassle-free transaction of power to the new incumbent.

At the 19th G-20 summit, Biden is seen being unanimous with the rest of the world leaders that sustainable development is essential for the mankind; however, at the same time, or could be within a few hours of this high-profile conference, he permits Ukraine to hit Russia with more fatal weapons and missiles. With Biden's consent, Ukrainian President, Vladimir Zelensky, has already embarked upon hitting Russian military stores with much deadlier missiles, on



November 20, thus expanding the war theatre; perhaps, intensifying nuclear threat; thus, pushing the mankind to an unprecedented disaster, if not annihilation.

There are also reports that the new Russian nuclear doctrine clearly says that if Ukraine is being directly supported by the nuclear-powered nations with new weapons escalating war to the Russian inlands, Russia might also hit them with much lethal missiles, including those having nuclear warheads.

The foreign and strategic affairs scholars and experts in New Delhi and Washington appear to be in unison that Biden's decision to allow Ukraine to expand the war to other areas could be a part of strategy to foil the much-trumpeted peace plans of the President-elect, Donald Trump. Trump and



the nominees of his cabinet like Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy are being frequently quoted for cutting federal expenditure; or in other words ending the avoidable conflicts in Eastern Europe and West Asia.

The declaration of world leaders at the G-20 at Rio-de-Janeiro has unanimously ratified the theme of the summit, "Building a Just Order and a Sustainable Planet." It concluded on November 18-19, promising a broad-spectrum approach towards the key issues for sustainable development, energy issues, social inclusion, but it did not focus on how to attain these goals, if the world continues to face conflicts across continents.

Instead, the Canadian Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, appeared to be unhappy that he could not use the international forum to condemn Russia.

Trudeau, who was present at the G-20 summit, however, tried to compensate the growing frustration of the West for its inability to condemn the Russian aggression by promising severe censure of Russia at G-7, which is scheduled to be hosted by his country next year. He, perhaps, was echoing the feeling of Biden, who had allowed the escalation of the conflict, just 48 hours before the summit allowing Ukraine to hit Russia with new weapons.

The Russian Defense Ministry has confirmed that six ATACMS ballistic missiles, which were used for the first time against Russia, hit its military areas; according to the Russian sources, while five of them were destroyed before they could hit the target, the sixth caused fire, but it was promptly extinguished. There

was no loss of life or property. However, it is quite amusing how an experienced person like Biden hopes to attain the development agenda of G-20, while escalating the war.

Even before the ink of the declaration could dry up, there are reports that two undersea fiber-optic cables in the Baltic Sea, including one 1200-kilometer link between Germany and Sweden, and 218-kilometer link between Lithuania and Sweden have suddenly been snapped. The immediate impact of the disconnection is being felt in the region on various trade and business activities. It is believed that either it could be the handiwork of those interested in delaying the peace process being repeated by the President-elect, Donald Trump, or some aggrieved by the Ukrainian's renewed attack hitting targets deep inside Russia. It is an ill omen for those interested in peace in the region; especially when the conflict is being aggravated on the 1000th day of this tragedy on November 20.

The two European powers, Germany and Sweden, have so far not made any accusation regarding the severance of the cables, which have brought the functioning of many ports to a sudden halt due to the communication disruption. They, however, have issued a joint statement condemning the mischief, but they did not make specific accusations. It is expected to take about a fortnight to reconnection the communications through the cables. The confusion and conflicts might be finally over when the new president finally assumes office in January; but the war games being played by a lame duck president could not only be disastrous for immediate peace, but might also adversely peace prospects in future.

*Gopal Misra has been associated with national and international media. His books on journalism and geo-politics have been well-appreciated. Views are personal.*

## Israel's economy sees recovery with 3.8 per cent growth



**JERUSALEM:** Israel's economy grew at a faster pace in the third quarter of 2024, with its gross domestic product (GDP) rising by an annualised 3.8 per cent, the Central Bureau of Statistics said in an initial estimate.

For the second quarter of 2024, the bureau revised the GDP growth to 0.7 per cent year-on-year in its second estimate in September, down from an initial 1.2 per cent reported a month ago, Xinhua news agency reported.

The overall growth is mainly driven by a year-on-year 8.6 per cent increase in consumer spending and a 21.8 per cent surge in investment in fixed assets, it showed.

Meanwhile, total exports of goods and services, excluding diamonds and start-up companies, and total imports of goods and services rose by 5.2 per cent and 9.8 per cent, respectively, on a yearly basis, whereas government spending dropped by 10.8 per cent, according to the estimate.

On October 9, Israel's central bank downgraded its growth forecast for the Israeli economy from 1.5 per cent to 0.5 per cent in 2024, citing lower-than-expected growth in the first half of this year and the economic fallout from the recent security deterioration.



# Kashmir Valley shivers as temperatures dip below freezing point

FW DESK  
Srinagar

The Kashmir Valley is reeling under intense cold as night temperatures in many areas have dropped below freezing. Srinagar recorded a minimum temperature of 2°C, while hill stations Gulmarg and Pahalgam witnessed minus 3°C and 2.6°C, respectively, according to the Meteorological (MeT) Department.

Kupwara experienced a low of 0.2°C, while temperatures in Jammu city stood at 11°C, with Katra at 11.2°C and Bhaderwah at 3.6°C. The Valley is embracing the onset of winter, marked by the shedding of crimson and



yellow Chinar leaves. Residents have begun preparing for the lean months ahead by storing dried vegetables and relying on traditional winter gear like 'Pherans' and the 'Kangri' (fire-pots) for warmth. Migratory birds from Siberia,

China, and Eastern Europe have started arriving in the region's water bodies, seeking refuge from harsher winters in their native habitats. With temperatures expected to drop further, the Valley braces itself for a prolonged spell of biting cold.

# Diljit Dosanjh directed to not sing songs promoting drugs at Hyderabad concert

HYDERABAD: The Telangana government has served a notice to Punjabi singer Diljit Dosanjh, directing him not to sing any song promoting alcohol, drugs, and violence during 'Dil-Luminati' concert, scheduled here on Friday.

Diljit has also been directed to not bring children on stage during his concert, which is set to be held at GMR Arena, Airport Approach Road. District welfare officer of the Department of Welfare of Women and Children, Rangareddy district, served the notice on November 7. The notice was issued after a complaint by a Chandigarh-



based Professor, Panditrao Dharenavar, against Dosanjh to prevent him from singing such songs at the live show. The complainant submitted

video evidence of Diljit singing songs promoting alcohol, drugs, and violence during the live show at Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium on October 26

and 27.

"We are issuing this notice in advance to deter promoting alcohol/drugs/violence through songs in your live show," the notice said.

The manager and organisers of the event have also been directed to ensure that peak sound pressure level does not exceed the permissible limit. "According to the World Health Organization, adults should not be exposed to sounds with a peak sound pressure level above 140 decibels. For children, the level is reduced to 120 decibels. Therefore, children should not be used on stage during your live show where peak sound

pressure is above 120 decibels," reads the notice.

The singer has also been directed not to bring children on stage. "Your concert guidelines say that children are allowed below 13 years of age. Concert guidelines also say that concerts may include loud sounds and flashing lights. Both loud music and flashing lights are harmful to children," the notice added.

Diljit landed in Hyderabad on Wednesday and posted videos of his city tour on social media. In a video on X, Diljit can be seen taking an auto-rickshaw ride in the old city and visiting the famous Charminar and a few places of worship.

# Amid Abhishek-Aishwarya Divorce Rumours, Amitabh Refutes 'Speculated Untruths'



MUMBAI: Amitabh Bachchan seems to have broken his silence over the ongoing divorce speculation surrounding his son Abhishek and daughter-in-law Aishwarya Rai.

In his latest blog post, Big B penned a note addressing his concerns about "information ending with question marks" and the negative impact it has on those involved. The veteran actor wrote, "It takes immense courage conviction and a sincerity to be different and believe in its presence in life... I rarely say much about family, because that is my domain and its privacy is maintained by me..."

Amitabh added, "Speculations are speculations... they are speculated untruths, with-

out verifications. Verifications are sought by the seekers to authenticate their business and commercials of the profession they be in... I shall not challenge their desire to be in the profession of their choice... and I shall appreciate their effort in serving society..."

The post further read, "But untruths .. or selected question marked information can be a legal safeguard for them that inform .. but the seed of suspected belief is sown with this most used emblem .. the question mark ..write express whatever you like .. but when you follow it up with a question mark, you are not only saying that the write may be questionable .. but also quite surreptitiously wanting the

reader to believe and expand on it, so that your write gets valued repeats .."

Bachchan went on to mention, "Your content is done , not just for that one moment, but for many moments ..the reader when they react to it gives content expansion ..the reaction could be in belief or in the negative ..anything that be, give credence to the write ..and that is the writes business .. his or her commerce dependence ..fill the World with untruth or questioned untruth and your job is over ..how it may have affected the subject individual or situation has been hand washed away from your hands..."

The actress' post comes amid reports of trouble in Abhishek and Aishwarya's marital paradise. Not to forget, Aishwarya recently gave a glimpse into her daughter Aaradhya's birthday celebrations by sharing a heart-felt photo dump on Instagram. The collection included candid moments with her daughter.

However, some netizens couldn't help but notice an odd absence. While Aishwarya's post was filled with warmth and family love, many were left puzzled by the absence of a birthday wish from Aaradhya's father, Abhishek Bachchan.

Reports are also circulating that the actress is living separately with her mother.



Indian cricketer-turned-politician, Senior Congress leader Navjot Singh Sidhu with his wife Navjot Kaur Sidhu addresses a press conference on his wife's cancer journey, at his residence on the outskirts of Amritsar on Thursday. PHOTOS-PRABHJOT GILL

# A. R. Rahman, Wife Saira Banu Parted Ways as Latter Issues Statement Over Divorce

MUMBAI: The Oscar and Grammy-winning composer A. R. Rahman and his wife Saira Banu are headed to splitsville.

After 29 years of staying together, the couple is reportedly parting ways. Rahman's wife, Saira has cited emotional strain as the cause behind the divorce. The strain has led to an insurmountable gap between the couple.

Saira's lawyer Vandana Shah has released an official statement with regards to the couple's decision to separate.

The statement reads, "After many years of marriage, Mrs Saira has made the difficult decision to separate from her husband Mr AR Rahman. This decision comes after significant



emotional strain in their relationship. Despite their deep love for each other, the couple has found that the tensions and difficulties have created an insurmountable gap between them, one that neither party feels able to bridge at this time."

"Mrs Saira emphasised that she has taken this decision out of pain and agony. Mrs Saira requests privacy and under-

standing from the public during this challenging time, as she navigates this difficult chapter in her life", it added.

Rahman and Saira tied the knot in 1995 through an arranged marriage. They are parents to daughters Khatija, Raheema, and son Ameen.

Rahman's son AR Ameen, who is also a singer, took to the Stories section of his Instagram, and requested everyone to respect their privacy.

He wrote, "We kindly request everyone to respect our privacy during this time. Thank you for your understanding".

# SRK death threat: Held lawyer 2nd superstar's security details online

MUMBAI: Raipur-based lawyer Faizan Khan - who was arrested in connection with the extortion-cum-death threat to Bollywood mega-star Shah Rukh Khan - had scoured online to get sensitive security details of the actor and his family members, investigations have revealed.

Prior to issuing the death threat and a demand for Rs 50 lakh as extortion money, Faizan Khan had carried out extensive online searches on Shah Rukh Khan and son Aryan Khan's security details and also their movements.

This was found after forensic analysis of Faizan Khan's second mobile phone that the Bandra Police probe team recovered, as the accused lawyer remains in judicial custody for the next ten days.

However, Faizan Khan has been giving evasive and misleading replies on the motives



behind collecting the information on the VIP star father-son duo's security set-up - who are accorded a Y-Plus level of protection.

On November 7, Faizan Khan set alarm bells ringing when he made the menacing call to the Bandra Police Station landline, which swung into action and registered a case against an unknown person. Faizan Khan reportedly said to the policeman who

picked up the phone, "Is not Shah Rukh Khan the same who lives in 'Mannat' (bunga-low)... a Bandstand-wala... If he doesn't pay up Rs 50 lakh, I will kill him."

When the on-duty cop asked for his identity, Faizan Khan said, "It doesn't matter, my name is Hindustani", and disconnected the call after the threat. The police immediately swung into action, filed the case, traced the number to the Chhattisgarh capital Raipur, deployed tech-intel, sought help from the local police and managed to zero in on Faizan.

He was finally nabbed on November 12 by a Mumbai Police team and brought here for the probe.

The accused was produced before a court that remanded him to police custody till November 18, and then he was given judicial custody for 14 days.

# AIIMS Research Study: The ability to conceive pregnancy in females between the age 31-34 years decreases

PARVESH HANDA  
New Delhi

A study by AIIMS New Delhi has revealed that the ovarian reserve of Indian women starts declining between the ages of 31 and 34, which affects their ability to conceive. The study by senior Dr Neena Malhotra of AIIMS Gynecology department said that women willing to become mother should be counseled to plan pregnancy before the age of 31 to 34 years, since the ability to become a mother starts decreasing from after age of 31-34 years, which came to light in a study



conducted by AIIMS on 3240 women, which determined the cutoff age for decreased ovarian reserve. This study of AIIMS has been published in the International Medical Journal recently. Study conducted by the Department of Gynecology

of AIIMS also revealed that the ovarian reserve (good quality eggs) starts decreasing in Indian women from the age of 31 to 34 years.

Dr. Neena Malhotra, Head of the Department of Gynecology, Delhi AIIMS said that the trend of getting married by females at late stage is fast increasing at present usually due to secure their future and to get a job, as such the problem of infert-

tility among females is fast increasing. Women come for IVF even at the age of 38 to 40 years. In view of this, this study was conducted to find out the cutoff age for low ovarian reserve in Indian women which revealed, the problem of infertility is increasing due to late marriage, in view of this, this study was conducted to find out the cutoff age for low ovarian reserve in Indian women, however women come for IVF even at the age of 38 to 40 years and even after this. Surprisingly, in the recent past couple of years, a woman of age around 68-69 in a Haryana

village became pregnant and gave birth to a healthy child.

Earlier, the cutoff age for decreasing ovarian reserve was not determined in Indian women. Through this study, for the first time, the cutoff age for decreasing ovarian reserve has been determined in women suffering from infertility and healthy fertile women.

This study was conducted on 3240 women, including 1902 women suffering from infertility. Apart from this, 1338 women were included who did not have the problem of infertility and had at least one pregnancy.

# Comparative Study of Civil Services in India, US & China

An Indian Scholar's Bid to Find the Key for Rescuing the Contemporary Seize in the American Governance

Dr. K.C. Sharma - (The reviewer is a political scientist and vice-president of the International Goodwill Society of India, an organization set up by Dr. Nagendra Singh, a jurist of international fame)

The impact of the contemporary geopolitics is being felt worldwide. It appears to have eclipsed, maybe for a time being, the much-cherished American dream. It may have been born just 250 or so years in 1780, but it is a light house and the symbol of a plural society committed to individual freedom accompanied by the possibility of human achievements. The sudden, surprising landslide victory of the Republican Party's presidential nominee, Donald Trump, has rekindled hopes for the revival of the American dream committed to rescue the

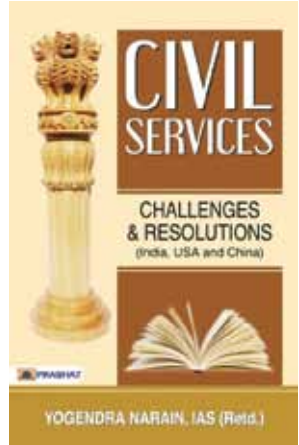
system under the seize.

In this context, it, perhaps, is the most opportune time to re-visit the document published in the year emphasizing the crucial role of the civil services being played in the stability, evolution and progress of any country in the 21st. century. The political success of Trump at the hustings has ushered in opportunities for undertaking massive corrections being suffered and faced by the earth's only superpower, but also an inbuilt challenge of undertaking corrections.

It may be noted that the challenges have crept in the American systems could be attributed to the end of the USSR during 1990s; but the opportunity was lost. In spite of the end of the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, the defense coalition, NATO, was retained. The US promoted China, which in recent years has become a formidable challenge to the US supremacy. Much to



the discomfiture of the US and its western allies, the Chinese have become too ambitious, but the solution, perhaps, lies in revamping the administrative structure. It has been well-documented in a book Civil Services-Challenges & Resolution: India, USA and China (Publishers: Prabhat Prakashan, New Delhi), and penned by Yogendra Narain, a weather-beaten civil servant having a thorough knowledge of the statecraft, the challenges of the governance, and how to in-



duct innovative approaches in a system having a tight regulatory regime that too at the higher echelons of the administration. The 232-page document offers a serious study of the evolution, contribution and the role of the civil services in India, China and the US. With the Republican Party having majority in the American Congress i.e. both

the Senate and the House of Representatives, the Trump Administration has not only to tackle key issues regarding the geo-politics, but to deliver better governance in a country, where the successive administrations have not cared to improve the country's highways systems and even the airports during the past three decades.

It is heartening that Vivek Ramaswamy and Elon Musk, both self-made billionaires, known to be important leaders of the Republican Party, have already stated that to cut the deadwoods in the top-heavy federal government institutions would be a priority of the new Administration scheduled to be inaugurated on January 20, 2025. Ramaswamy, if there were legal impediments in sacking non-performing government officials, the Trump Administration might not hesitate to dismantle the entire department. For Elon Musk, his agenda is clear that

the cost of the government administration has to be reduced. He is expected to be associated with the Department of Government Efficiency or DOGE.

The multi-dimensional challenges before the new rulers in Washington have to be tackled under a federal regime having a complete decentralization system that too under the well-defined provisions spelt in the basic law i.e. the American Constitution. In the Indian context, the author of this book, Yogendra Narain, who has served as the Secretary-General of the Rajya Sabha, the upper House of Indian Parliament, and the Defense Secretary, is credited for successful delivering the government's agenda despite having the colonial mindset under a written constitution. Therefore, in the USA, though its administrative structure is different, the targets m could be achieved by adopting innovative approaches within the boundar-

ies of the established laws. The book helps the system experts to accomplish targets, whether promoting a network of highways across India, or purchasing defense equipment worth billions the US dollars. Within the ambit of the draconian Official Secrets Act, the author and his peers could usher in a transparency regime under the Right to Information Act 2005. It, perhaps, will be in the interest of the Trump's Administration to seek the expertise of India's experienced hands, who could propel his agenda within the boundaries of the Constitution.

The Indian Experience - The Trump Administration's agenda, America First, is expected to be benefited by sharing the Indian experience, if not by really emulating it. Meanwhile, it has become imperative for the Americans, irrespective of their political ideologies to evolve a system, which could be empowered to counter the growing

threats of China. In recent decades, its successive rulers under the umbrella of the Communist Party of China, though rooted in the classical Marxist philosophy, have evolved a formidable capitalist system.

It is advised that the book may be revisited by the Indian and US scholars and policy makers, especially when the forthcoming Trump Administration finally prepares to assault the in-built policy paralysis in the American systems. Its closer study may enable us to understand that the civil services need to be re-invigorated for a clear agenda. Trump is for paradigm changes in the policies, but these efforts cannot be successful by adopting piecemeal approach. For example, the recent removal of an official engaged in the cyclone relief work for discriminating victims of the Gulf of Mexico does not offer any structural improvement in the system.