

**REGION 2**



**DDA APPROVES MAJOR CHANGES TO SLUM AND JJ POLICY TO ENHANCE HOUSING FOR DELHI'S URBAN POOR**

**Govt Investing ₹1,435 Crore to Make PAN Single Unified Digital Identifier**

**NEW DELHI:** In a significant move towards digital governance, the Indian government has approved the PAN 2.0 Project, a comprehensive initiative aimed at transforming taxpayer registration services through technological innovation. The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has sanctioned a financial investment of Rs 1,435 crore for this groundbreaking project. The project seeks to elevate the Permanent Account Number (PAN) into a unified digital identifier across multiple government agency systems, aligning with the Digital India vision. Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw highlighted



Federation of Indian Micro and Small & Medium Enterprises (FISME), Neeraj Kedia terms the development business friendly in principle. "A single identity for all the regulatory and tax compliances could definitely result into ease of doing business. The multiplicity of identities for PAN, TIN, DIN, CIN etc. along with PF and ESI regulations is a nightmare for MSME owners," he added. The project represents a comprehensive re-engineering of PAN/TAN services, upgrading the current ecosystem to provide an enhanced digital experience for taxpayers. Currently, approximately 78 crore PANs have been issued, with 98 per cent allocated to individuals.

**Delhi Cabinet extends Electric Vehicle Policy till March 31, 2025**

**NEW DELHI:** The Delhi Cabinet on Thursday announced the revival of the Delhi Electric Vehicle Policy, extending it until March 31, 2025, Chief Minister Atishi said. AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal, in a post on X, said, "Congratulations to the people of Delhi. The Delhi Electric Vehicle Policy is being restarted. Now, subsidies for electric vehicles bought



after January 1, 2024, will be transferred directly to buyers' accounts. Some people conspired to stop this too, but we have successfully restarted it." Atishi criticised the opposition for failing to implement electric vehicle (EV) policies in their own states, claiming they conspired to prevent the

policy in Delhi by imprisoning Kejriwal and halting its progress for months. "Due to this conspiracy, EV buyers missed out on subsidies, and road tax exemptions were not granted," she said. She assured that subsidies for electric vehicles sold after January 1, 2024, would be transferred to buyers' accounts, and road tax exemptions would be provided to future EV buyers.

**BANKING & FINANCE 6**



**RBI GOVERNOR SHAKTIKANTA DAS HOSPITALISED, RBI SAYS 'NO CAUSE FOR CONCERN'**

**Kejriwal and Sisodia slam BJP over Delhi's deteriorating law and order**

**OUR CORRESPONDENT New Delhi**

In a sharp attack on the BJP-led central government, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal accused the party of failing to address the city's worsening law and order situation. Speaking on Friday during the Delhi Assembly's final session before elections, Kejriwal expressed grave concern over the increasing crime rates and the growing influence of gangs in the capital.



Kejriwal pointed out the alarming frequency of shootouts across the city, stating that such incidents were now happening openly every day. "Delhi feels like it's being run by gangs. Businesspeople live in constant fear of extortion calls, followed by violent attacks on their shops and showrooms," he said. He highlighted specific areas like Kabir Nagar, West Vihar, Naraina, and Sonia Vihar, where gang-related violence has become a common occurrence.

Sisodia Criticizes BJP, Calls Delhi a 'Shootout Capital' Former Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia also took aim at the BJP, accusing them of turning Delhi into the "shootout capital" of the country. He pointed out the daily occurrences of shootings and other violent incidents, emphasizing that gangsters now operated with impunity in every part of the city. "This government has failed to ensure the safety of Delhi's citizens," he said.

Kejriwal also raised the issue of notorious gangster Lawrence Bishnoi, alleging that he is running extortion rackets from within jail with the support of powerful figures. "Who is Lawrence Bishnoi, and why is he allowed to operate with impunity? Is he being

protected by the BJP? How else could he be running these criminal operations?" Kejriwal demanded, holding the central government accountable for the deteriorating safety in the capital. He accused Union Home Minister Amit Shah of neglecting his responsibilities and warned that Delhi residents were losing trust in the authorities. "Amit Shah needs to wake up. If he doesn't act now, Delhi will be left vulnerable and helpless," Kejriwal said.

This was the first day of the last session of the current Delhi Assembly, as elections are set for February. The session was held amid heightened tensions following a recent bomb blast in Rohini, which had further alarmed the city.

BJP Boycotts Session Over Question Hour During the session, AAP MLA Kuldeep Kumar raised the issue of bus marshals, blaming the BJP for blocking their employment despite ongoing discussions. He ac-

used BJP leaders of using the issue for photo ops but failing to make any real progress in hiring marshals for women's safety. In response, the BJP strongly protested the government's refusal to hold the Question Hour for the past year, claiming it had prevented them from raising issues from their constituencies. Tensions escalated when the Speaker ordered that the BJP's raised issues be considered as "read" without being read aloud, prompting the opposition to walk out in protest. Satyendra Jain Returns to Assembly After Bail

In another significant development, AAP MLA Satyendra Jain attended the Assembly for the first time after being granted bail. His return was met with a round of applause from both sides of the house. However, three AAP legislators, whose tickets were revoked recently, were absent from the session, as was Kailash Gahlot, who resigned from the party earlier.

As the session continues, it is expected to be a heated political debate with both the ruling AAP and the opposition BJP sparring over various issues, especially law and order, ahead of the upcoming elections.

**Innovative Financial Solutions needed for MSME growth: ASSOCHAM & Egrow Foundation**



**NEW DELHI:** ASSOCHAM in collaboration with Egrow Foundation conducted an in-depth study on "MSMEs Facing Challenges in Doing Business". The study marked the culmination of a series of detailed interviews with members of various state units of ASSOCHAM. These interactions provided valuable insights into the region-specific challenges faced by MSMEs, particularly concerning their unique products, market dynamics and business environments. By combining quantitative data of 150+ companies from the survey with qualitative feedback from around 120 industry stakeholders, the study offered a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted issues MSMEs faced.

This study underscored the need for innovative financial solutions, urging banks to improve transparency in loan approval processes and eliminate unused credit charges. Introduction of MSME-specific bonds and mutual funds to enhance financial liquidity, promotion of mobile banks to serve informal micro-enterprises as well as the expansion of Small Finance Banks (SFBs) to better serve rural and semi-urban areas are among other suggestions.

Sharing key recommendations of the study, ASSOCHAM President Sanjay Nayyar said, "the report lays out a strategic plan and roadmap for the MSMEs on India's path to become a developed country by 2047. The recommendations will serve as a valuable resource in making informed and strategic policy decisions. Our strong base of formal and informal entrepreneurs would need strategic support from the government - Centre and states, banks and conglomerates to be a critical partner in realising the national aspirations. With the right ecosystem and collaboration, MSMEs can become the foundation of a resilient and globally competitive Indian economy".

The study further recommends that the corporate income tax rate for MSMEs should be reduced from 25% to 15%, an ASSOCHAM-EGROW study has said, further suggesting a simplified Goods and Services Tax (GST) system to ease procedures for compliance. The study, listing a roadmap for the role of MSMEs in Viksit Bharat, has also suggested alleviating the TDS (Tax Deducted at Source) burden by limiting tax deductions to essential payments and implementing a unified tax system based on turnover for certain MSMEs.

**'All PMs have offered chadar', Ashok Gehlot criticises BJP over Ajmer dargah issue**



**JAIPUR:** Congress leader and former Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot has criticised the BJP after a petition filed in an Ajmer court claimed that a Shiva temple exists within the dargah premises.

"People from across the country offer prayers at the Ajmer Dargah. Even all the Prime Ministers, including PM Modi, have offered 'chadar' at the dargah. On one hand, chadar is being offered, while on the other, members of their party are approaching courts and creating confusion. What kind of message is being sent?", Gehlot said.

Gehlot further said, "Where there is unrest, there can't be development."

He reiterated that as per the law, religious places established before August 15, 1947, should remain as they are and should not be questioned. Highlighting the dargah's historical significance, Gehlot said, "The Ajmer Dargah is 800 years old. It has been a place of worship for people worldwide, including Hindus and Muslims. Since the time of Pandit Nehru, it has been customary for Prime Ministers - whether from Congress, BJP or any other party - to offer chadar at the dargah. Offering a chadar carries its own meaning and significance. However, while doing so, members of the ruling party are also filing cases that create confusion. What kind of thinking does this reflect?"

Gehlot accused the ruling party of exploiting religious sentiments for electoral gains, stating, "Whether it's the Maharashtra elections, Haryana elections, or Parliament elections, victories are being achieved through polarization. Tickets are openly distributed on the basis of religion. The situation in the country is serious and demands introspection from those in power." He stressed that questioning religious sites established before Independence was unwarranted and divisive.

**Bangladesh freezes bank accounts of arrested Hindu leader Chinmoy Krishna Das & 16 others**



**NEW DELHI:** Bangladesh's authorities have ordered freezing for 30 days the bank accounts of 17 people associated with ISKCON, including its former member Chinmoy Krishna Das arrested this week on sedition charges, media reports said on Friday.

The move comes after the Bangladesh High Court rejected a petition seeking a ban on International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), following the killing of a lawyer in a clash between the Hindu leader's supporters and security personnel.

The Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU) sent these directives to different banks and financial institutions on Thursday, suspending all types of transactions related to these accounts for a month, newspaper Prothom Alo said.

The financial intelligence agency under the central Bangladesh Bank asked the banks and financial institutions to send information, including updated transaction statements of accounts related all businesses owned by these 17 individuals, within the next three working days, it said.

On October 30, a sedition case was filed against 19 people, including Das, at Chattogram's Kotwali Police Station, accusing them of disrespecting Bangladesh's national flag in Chattogram's New Market area during a rally of the Hindu community.

Das, a spokesperson for the Bangladesh Sammilita Sanatani Jagran Jote, was arrested from Dhaka's Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport on Monday for alleged sedition.

**S&P Lowers India' GDP Growth Projections for 2025-27 to 6.8%**

**NEW DELHI:** S&P Global Ratings on Monday maintained its forecast for India's GDP growth at 6.8 per cent for the current fiscal year (2024-25) but revised down its projections for the next two years.

The rating agency now expects the country's GDP to grow at 6.7 per cent in 2025-26 and 6.8 per cent in 2026-27, marking a reduction of 20 basis points from previous estimates. For 2027-28, India's GDP is projected to expand at 7 per cent.

The rating agency cited high interest rates and a lower fiscal impulse as key factors contributing to a moderation in growth. While India's Purchasing Manager Indices (PMIs) remain



firmly in expansion territory, high-frequency indicators signal a temporary slowdown. This is especially evident in the construction sector, which took a hit during the September quarter.

Despite these concerns, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) remains optimistic. The RBI, in its latest bulletin, stated that the economic slowdown observed in the second quarter of 2024-25

**EV Manufacturing in India gets a Boost with revised Incentive Plan**

**NEW DELHI:** India is set to broaden its electric vehicle (EV) incentives, extending benefits to automakers utilising existing factories instead of limiting them to those building new plants, a move aimed at accelerating EV adoption and investment.



The revised policy, currently under finalisation, marks a departure from its initial design, which sought to attract new market entrants like Tesla but faced setbacks earlier this year.

The updated approach reflects India's pragmatic stance in leveraging existing automotive infrastructure. Automakers such

as Toyota and Hyundai have expressed interest in tapping into these incentives, highlighting the potential for a broader industry shift toward EV production.

According to meeting minutes from the Ministry of Heavy Industries, the government aims to accommodate investments in separate EV production lines at existing facilities, provided they meet local sourcing criteria. The incentives remain sub-

stantial. Automakers investing at least USD 500 million in EV production with 50 per cent locally sourced components are eligible for significant import tax reductions - from up to 100 per cent to 15 per cent for up to 8,000 EVs annually.

However, the revised policy ensures equitable treatment, requiring manufacturers to meet defined EV revenue targets. The policy also introduces

flexibility for investments in machinery and tools for dual-use (EVs and other vehicles) at new facilities. This reflects an understanding of the capital-intensive nature of EV production and aims to attract diverse stakeholders, including global players like Volkswagen, which seeks adjustments in investment timelines and supplier contributions. Notably, automakers have raised critical questions during consultations. Toyota queried the inclusion of separate EV assembly lines and charging infrastructure within the investment threshold.

**Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge calls for "harsh decisions" at CWC meet, also questions ECI duty**

**KAVITA SHARMA New Delhi**

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge today called for "harsh decisions" in view of some recent electoral setbacks after encouraging performance in the parliamentary elections.

In his opening remarks at the Congress Working Committee (CWC) meeting in New Delhi, Kharge also referred to questions being raised whether the Election Commission of India was performing its constitutional duty. Kharge warned that the Congress cannot let the fascist forces deepen and strengthen their roots and that is why it was important and necessary for the party to win elections and defeat these forces. Asserting that the Congress



has to defeat the divisive forces, he said, "we have to defeat the divisive forces ruling the country at all costs and restore peace, progress, brotherhood and harmony." "We have built a beautiful and a glorious nation and people of the country are ready to repose their faith in us...they are waiting for us and we cannot disappoint

them" he added. Kharge also accused the BJP government of trying to divert the attention of people from its repeated failures. Referring to violence in Manipur and Sambhal, he said there were so many sensitive and serious issues country was facing.

Kharge said that during the last eleven years of the BJP rule

at the centre a huge section of "have-nots" has come up in the country which has been hit by massive unemployment, inflation and grave economic disparities. "We have to become their voice", he noted, adding, "it is also important for the Congress party to form the government so that the agenda for progress of the country and the deprived people is pursued and implemented".

Assuring that there was no need to feel desperate or dejected, he said, there was a need for complete change from the grassroots level to block, district and the AICC levels. "We will have to bring in the changes according to the changing times", he said, while asserting, "we have successfully faced the challenges in the past and we will face these challenges in future also and move ahead".

**Minister Piyush Goyal Launches Innovative Business Portal to Enhance Regulatory Processes**

**NEW DELHI:** In a significant move to improve the business ecosystem, Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal unveiled the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) Ease of Doing Business (EoDB) and Regulatory Affairs portal on November 28.



The launch took place during the second DPIIT-CII National Conference on Ease of Doing Business held in Delhi, marking a pivotal moment for streamlining business processes in India.

The newly introduced portal is designed to provide comprehensive insights into the current business environment and establish a robust mechanism for receiving and tracking suggestions for continuous improvement.

Minister Goyal emphasised the government's commitment to cooperative federalism, highlighting the administration's dedicated efforts to create a more conducive environment for businesses and citizens. During his address, Goyal stressed the critical importance of the National Single Window System (NSWS), urging industry stakeholders to actively engage with the platform. He candidly expressed that without substantial industry participation, input,

and utilisation, the initiative risks potential abandonment. The minister underscored the necessity of industry feedback to refine and optimise the system, particularly in relation to investor approvals and industrial land bank development.

Technological modernisation emerged as a key theme of Goyal's speech. He called for comprehensive upgradation of both state and central government portals, advocating for more agile, faster, and contemporary digital infrastructure. Additionally, the minister emphasised the need to combat misinformation and encouraged stakeholders to identify and implement impactful changes with nationwide implications.

# DDA approves major changes to slum and JJ Policy to enhance housing for Delhi's Urban Poor

OUR CORRESPONDENT  
New Delhi

In a significant move aimed at improving the living conditions of slum dwellers in Delhi, the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) approved key revisions to its slum and JJ (Jhuggi-Jhopri) policy. The decision was made during a meeting chaired by Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena, who also serves as the Chairman of the DDA.

The updated policy focuses on making the "Jahan Jhuggi Wahin Makaan" scheme, envisioned by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, more effective and sustainable. The primary goal of these changes is to facilitate in-situ rehabilitation, allowing slum dwellers to remain in their current locations while benefiting from modern housing and amenities.

Key changes approved by the DDA include the relaxation of density norms, revised land apportionment for residential and commercial



use, and an increase in the Floor Area Ratio (FAR). The FAR for both residential and remunerative components in in-situ rehabilitation projects has been raised to 500 for plots of 2,000 square meters or more. This is a significant jump from the previous FAR of 300 for commercial use and 400 for rehabilitation, which is expected to make redevelopment projects financially more viable for developers.

The new policy mandates that at least 40% of the plot area must be allocated for residential purposes, with the remaining space designated for commercial or remunerative use. An added benefit for developers is the ability to transfer any unused FAR from the rehabilitation portion to the commercial areas, which will help increase the number of residential units for slum dwellers while also creating

more commercial space. Additionally, the policy allows the clubbing of slum clusters within a 5-kilometer radius for redevelopment. In such cases, developers can create modern multi-storey complexes for slum rehabilitation on one site, while the other can be used for residential or commercial development.

The revised guidelines aim to provide slum dwellers with dignified housing and ownership titles, fostering a sense of security and stability. The initiative is also part of a broader effort to integrate informal slum communities into the formal urban fabric, offering them improved infrastructure, public amenities, and opportunities for social mobility.

The proposal, which marks a significant step toward the social empowerment of Delhi's urban poor, will now be sent to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs for final approval and notification.

# Delhi government expands old-age pension scheme, adding 80,000 new beneficiaries

OUR CORRESPONDENT  
New Delhi

Aam Aadmi Party Chief Arvind Kejriwal announced on Monday that an additional 80,000 individuals are now eligible for the old-age pension scheme, bringing the total number of beneficiaries to 5.3 lakh. The decision, which follows a Cabinet approval on Sunday, demonstrates the Delhi government's continued commitment to social welfare, Kejriwal said during a press conference.

Kejriwal highlighted that the new initiative is part of the government's efforts to enhance financial support for senior citizens. He also pointed out that a new portal has been launched to allow elderly residents to apply for pensions. According to Kejriwal, the portal has already received over 10,000 applications.

"It is a sin to stop the pensions of elderly people," Kejriwal remarked, accusing the BJP of halting the pension scheme during his imprisonment. He



Kejriwal highlighted that the new initiative is part of the government's efforts to enhance financial support for senior citizens. He also pointed out that a new portal has been launched to allow elderly residents to apply for pensions

emphasized that upon his release, not only were the pensions resumed, but the government also increased the number of beneficiaries by adding 80,000 new pensioners.

The Chief Minister further shared that Delhi offers the highest pension rates in the country. Individuals aged 60-

69 will receive Rs 2,000 per month, while those aged 70 and above will get Rs 2,500. This move, Kejriwal stated, is in line with the government's goal to provide financial security to the elderly.

In addition to the old-age pension, Delhi's Social Welfare Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj announced plans to extend a Rs 5,000 monthly pension to differently-abled individuals. Delhi's Deputy Chief Minister Atishi, who was also present at the press conference, reiterated the government's commitment to serving the people and ensuring welfare for all citizens.

Here is how you can apply online for this scheme: Beneficiaries can avail the scheme either online on e-District portal www.edistrict.delhigovt.nic.in or by approaching the District Social Welfare Office.

One must note that, Aadhaar number is mandatory for filling up the application. Apart from Aadhaar, there are other documents that are required including Residence proof, bank details, and more.

# It's a political conspiracy: Bajrang Punia reacts to the four-year ban on him by NADA



NEW DELHI: Tokyo Olympic Games bronze medallist wrestler Bajrang Punia has said that the four-year ban imposed on him by the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) is the result of "personal animosity and a political conspiracy" against him and accused the national doping body of "operating under the government's influence."

Punia has been suspended for four years for refusing to provide a urine sample for anti-doping testing during the trials for the national team in March 2024. Afterwards, the United World Wrestling (UWW) has also put the World and Olympic medallist wrestler under suspension until December 31, 2024.

"This four-year ban is the result of personal animosity and a political conspiracy against me. This action has been taken as revenge for the movement we led in support of women wrestlers. In that movement, we raised our voices against injustice and exploitation," Punia wrote in a long post on X.

"I want to make it clear that I never refused to undergo a doping test. When the NADA team came to test me, the doping kit they had was expired. This was a serious lapse, and I simply requested that the test be conducted with a valid and certified kit. This was essential for ensuring both my health and the security of my career. However, this issue was deliberately used as a weapon against me," he added.

The 30-year-old, who was one of the leading faces of the wrestlers' protest against the then Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) president Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, further accused the WFI and the ruling government of conspiring against him for his involvement in the protests against its former WFI chief.

"The BJP government and the federation have conspired to trap me and destroy my career. This decision is not fair but rather an attempt to silence me and other athletes like me," he wrote.

Earlier this year in July, Punia had also accused NADA of targeting him for pointing out flaws in their system. "NADA's actions have proven that they have no regard for impartiality. Such institutions are operating entirely under the government's influence. The real motive behind this ban is to silence me and stop me from raising my voice against injustice."

"Let me make it clear that even if I am suspended for life, I will not stop raising my voice against injustice. This fight is not just mine; it belongs to every athlete who has been silenced by the system. I will appeal against this decision and continue to fight for my rights until my last breath," the post concluded.

# Three held for duping nearly 35000 people of Rs 18 crore in investment scam by 2 companies



SATISH HANDA  
Rohtak

Haryana police busted a gang of two companies 'PCL' and 'Money Earn 24' allegedly involved in fraud in the name of making money online sitting at home. They used to get people to register on their website of these two companies being run on line by Johnny and Rohit, both residents of Rohtak, having one office at Sheela Bypass in Rohtak while the other office was in Patna, Bihar. Initially, people were charged a registration fee of Rs 5000 by the company on the websites of these two companies. For this, the person had to upload his identity card like Aadhaar card, ration card etc. along with other information on the company's website. After this, the person had to fill the captcha given on the company's website. A person could fill only 90 captchas in a day with one ID website for a sum of 1000 rupees and then entice them to earn money by filling captcha on the company's website. Profits were being made in dollars by selling captcha filled by the company to foreign companies.

# Haryana- Korea Business Connect Programme: Korean entrepreneurs to invest in Haryana

SATISH HANDA  
Gurugram

Minister of Industry and Commerce and Foreign Cooperation in Haryana, Rao Narbir Singh asked entrepreneurs from Korea to invest in Haryana state for which the Haryana government will provide full support to the investors. While addressing a gathering of more than 70 delegates from Korea at the Haryana-Korea Business Connect dinner programme on Tuesday hosted by Korea Herald in Gurugram, Rao added that Haryana brings adjacent to the capital Delhi on three sides the possibilities of progress of any kind of business are the highest here. He said, the state is also going to contribute the most to realise the vision



of Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the year 2027 including options like Global City in Gurugram, industrial townships like IMT in Sohna and Manesar near the town there are several options for investment in Gurugram. Rao said that Gurugram is connected to Delhi-Jaipur Expressway, Delhi-Mumbai Expressway and Alwar Ex-

pressway situated within a radius of 60 kilometres from Delhi, besides the world's oldest mountain range Aravalli is also near Delhi. He said that Korean entrepreneurs will get every kind of facility to do business in Haryana and if Korean businessmen come here and establish their enterprises, then both Haryana in India and Korea will benefit from

it. Minister said, Haryana has a better environment for setting up enterprises and doing business and we will work to provide all kinds of facilities to entrepreneurs through a single window system where all facilities will be available under a roof keeping in mind the development of the state. Korea Housing Builders Association Chairman Jung Won Joo, who was leading the Korean delegation said that Korea is very serious about business relations and housing builders are also having the idea of bringing their projects here. He said that no one can stop the development of Haryana, the development of India and Korea's partnership in this development because they are interconnected and have similar cultures.

# CM Flying Team raided a hospital running without license & a dental clinic illegally



SATISH HANDA  
Charkhi Dabri/Fridabad

CM Flying team along with the health department team raided a fake hospital in Charkhi Dabri. Investigation revealed that this hospital was being run without a license. Special beds were provided to patients in another building attached to the hospital. After the raid and investigation, the CM Flying team arrested the lady doctor present there and confiscated medicines and other documents. CM Flying Team had received secret information about the hospital. A surprise raid was made on Friday evening under the leadership of Sub Inspector Karambir Singh of CM flying squad team, health department, drug controller, intelligence and local Police jointly, and took action on the hospital Meenu Chikitsalya running at Jhade Chowk in Dabri.

During interrogation, the team asked for documents and the license from the lady doctor present on the spot; she failed to give any suitable reply as well as any documents. At the time of the raid, two female patients who were present at the hospital were found having their treatment and one patient was also admitted in the special ward in the adjoining building. The team interrogated the patients and also recorded their statements. Later, the team took the female doctor along with them for investigation and seized the medicines, medical equipment

and other documents available from the spot.

Meanwhile, in another case reported at Faridabad on Friday, the team of the Chief Ministers Flying Squad busted a dental clinic run by a quack doctor on the Old Chungi Road from Thakurwada in Old Faridabad police station area in the name of Saini Dental Clinic. A case was registered against the accused doctor at the police station. The team also recovered a large amount of medicines and medical equipment from the accused's dental clinic. According to DSP Rajdeep Mor of the Chief Ministers Flying Squad, information was received about running an illegal clinic in the name of Saini Dental Clinic located on the old Chungi Road from Thakurwada. The joint team comprising Inspector Jagdish, Sub Inspector Satbir Singh, Dr. Tarun Sharma and Dr. Rajbir from the CMO office conducted the raid.

During the surprise inspection of Saini Dental Clinic having a board of Saini Dental Clinic installed outside the clinic, on which Visiting Dr. Sunil Lohia BDS was written by the joint team accompanied by local police, when some patients were found sitting inside the clinic and a person was treating the root canal of a patient as a doctor, identified himself as Mool Chand Saini when was asked to present a valid degree for treating patients could not present any valid degree on the spot.

# SGPC President condemns incident of stopping Sikh from entering Delhi Metro Station with kirpan

JAGMOHAN SINGH  
Amritsar

The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) President Harjinder Singh Dhama, while taking notice of the incident of stopping an Amritdhari (initiated) Sikh from entering Delhi's Jhilmil Metro Station with his kirpan, said that this is a violation of the country's constitution. In a statement issued here today, He said that repeated cases of hurting the religious sentiments of Sikhs are coming to light in the country and it is unfortunate that governments are not taking any exemplary action against those who do so.

He said that under the Constitution of India, every citizen of the country has the freedom to protect his religious beliefs. An initiated Sikh must wear the



five kakaars (symbols of faith) and the Constitution of India also allows this. Dhama said that recently the Ministry of Civil Aviation's Bureau of Civil Aviation Security had also issued a notification prohibiting initiated Sikh employees from wearing kirpan at the Indian

# BJP Government's policies are anti-farmer & exploitative: Selja

PARVESH HANDA  
New Delhi



The General Secretary of the All India Congress Committee, former Union Minister, and MP from Sirsa, Kumari Selja said that farmers were agitating earlier and continue to do so today, but the BJP government has not lived up to its promises. The truth is that farmers are the most neglected in the BJP government. Even today, farmers stand in lines for fertilizers, seeds, and other facilities. Farmers are wandering for DAP and other fertilizers for sowing potatoes, wheat, and other crops. The government should solve their problems through dialogue by gaining the farmers' trust. Kumari Selja condemned the arrest of farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal before he began a fast unto death at the Khanauri border of Haryana-Punjab, saying that if the government does not change its attitude, one day the country's farmers will change the government itself.

In a statement released to the media, Kumari Selja said that if the BJP government is talking about doubling figures based on its own statistics, isn't that an injustice and betrayal to the farmers? The situation is such that it is difficult for a farmer to get by even for a month, and he does not know what he will do next month or five months from now. Farmers know that the BJP government is a government of empty promises. Due to the dictatorship of the central government, farmers, the food providers, are surrounded by crises from all sides. This government is completely indifferent to the problems of the farmers.

# Three including a doctor involved in fetal sex determination arrested, ultrasound machine seized

SATISH HANDA  
Rohtak

Haryana health department team raided a private Maa Savitri Hospital in Shamli and caught three people including a woman doctor red handed while conducting fetal sex determination illegally. A man and woman had brought the pregnant woman from Rohtak for fetal sex determination. The team also recovered Rs 52,000 from the spot, out of which, the health department team itself had given Rs 24,000 to the pregnant woman brought for conducting sex determination test of the foetus to find the sex of the unborn child in the womb. The man and woman who had brought the pregnant woman from Rohtak for fetal sex determination were taken into custody.

The raiding team sealed the ultrasound machine, instruments and other items. Rohtak's Pre-Natal Diagnostic Technique (PNNT) nodal

# Odisha : Mining controversy erupts

ARABINDA MOHAPATRA  
Bhubaneswar

There is a controversy surrounding Adani groups' purchase of land near the bauxite-rich Gandhamardan hills. The hills are spread across Bolangir and Bargarh district. Adani group subsidiary Mahanadi Mines and Minerals has purchased nearly 50 acres of land in and around the hills purportedly for compensatory afforestation. However, given the fact that the hills have a rich bauxite stock and the company is also into mining the purchase has raised suspicion.

The land has been purchased in a phased manner during the last one year and the company is in the process of acquiring more land in Bolangir and Bargarh districts. Opposition leaders feel that it is a covert attempt by the Adani group to enter Gandhamardan Hill area in future for the exploration of bauxite. The Opposition Biju Janata Dal (BJD) has demanded a clarification from the BJP government led by Mohan Charan



Majhi on the issue. It wants the government to clarify whether the company would go for the exploration of bauxite and other minerals like manganese and graphites in the Gandhamardan hill area and its surroundings. The BJP has accused the BJD of indulging politics over the issue, ignoring the interests of the state.

Former BJD MP from Bolangir and the current MLA from Bolangir assembly constituency Kalikesh Singh Deo has alleged that Adani group has purchased the land around Gandhamardan hill in Bolangir and Bargarh districts. He sought to know the purpose of the purchase and alleged that it was a tactics to enter the Gandhamardan area. He demanded a statement from the government.

# World is moving forward, but Kharge ji wants to take the country back to the Stone Age: Anil Vij

AAP should not even attempt to pronounce the word 'Constitution'

SATISH HANDA  
Chandigarh/New Delhi/  
Ambala:

Haryana's Energy, Transport, and Labor Minister Anil Vij took a dig at Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge, saying, «The world is advancing, and Kharge ji wants to take the country back to the Stone Age. Decisions in the Stone Age were made with stones. Kharge ji is talking about regressing.» He also mocked the Aam Aadmi Party, stating, «They have their own set of rules, and they should not even attempt to pronounce the word 'constitution.'» Vij's remarks came in response to media questions about Mallikarjun Kharge's statement on Constitution Day, where Kharge had said,



«We don't want EVMs; we want voting through ballot papers.» Vij sharply reacted to this, pointing out Kharge's preference for outdated methods.

When asked about farmers' renewed plans to march to Delhi and Bhupinder Singh Hooda's statement of support, Vij remarked, «Hooda only incites and misleads. Not once has he visited the farmers to inquire about their situation. In Punjab, the INDI alliance is in power, yet neither the Chief Minister of Punjab nor Bhupinder Singh Hooda

has visited the farmers. They have made no effort to explain things to the farmers. Meanwhile, the public is suffering greatly. If they had resolved the issue, the roads would have been cleared, and the public would not be inconvenienced.»

Regarding Punjab Police detaining farmer leader Dallewal and Surjit Singh Hardeo going on a hunger strike, Vij commented, «That's a matter for the Punjab Police. Let's see what they do next.» Reacting to Arvind Kejriwal's statement, «When God realized that the Constitution was in danger, He created the Aam Aadmi Party on Constitution Day.» Vij criticized, saying, «Kejriwal's party neither respects the Constitution nor the courts nor autonomous bodies. They have their own set of rules and should not even try to pronounce the word 'constitution.'»

## Priyanka Gandhi takes oath as Lok Sabha MP

On arrival at Parliament House she said, 'I am very happy today'

**NEW DELHI:** It is another milestone for the Nehru-Gandhi family as Priyanka Gandhi Vadra took the oath of affirmation as a member in the Lok Sabha on Thursday.

Wearing an off-white saree with a golden border and holding the Constitution booklet, which has become a familiar sight in this Parliament session after Rahul Gandhi and other MPs of the INDIA bloc started carrying it, Priyanka Gandhi was greeted with loud cheers and chants of Bharat Jodo as she took the oath. Earlier, she was accompanied by her mother Sonia Gandhi, brother Rahul Gandhi and Congress MPs when she reached the Parliament House, saying, "I am very happy today". Her resounding victory in the Wayanad bypoll is not only her successful electoral debut but another big achievement for the family as for the first time, three members of the Nehru-Gandhi family are simultaneously in the Parliament. Her brother Rahul Gandhi - the former Wayanad MP - is pres-



ent as the MP from the family through Rae Bareilly, which he chose to retain after winning both in the Lok Sabha elections this year. Their mother Sonia Gandhi is a member of the Rajya Sabha. This marks a significant step for Priyanka Gandhi, aligning her political journey with her mother Sonia Gandhi and brother Rahul Gandhi, both pivotal figures in the Congress party.

The bypoll in Wayanad was necessitated after Rahul Gandhi vacated the seat. The only talking point during the campaign was whether Priyanka Gandhi could surpass her brother's impressive 2019 victory margin of 4.30 lakh votes. Although she fell slightly

short, she still achieved a remarkable win, securing the seat with a margin of over 4.10 lakh votes. Her dynamic campaign, focused on grassroots issues, underscored her growing influence within the Congress. Her debut into the electoral fray comes 20 years after she campaigned for Sonia Gandhi in Rae Bareilly and Rahul Gandhi in Amethi during the 2004 Lok Sabha elections.

Priyanka Gandhi initially stayed away from direct involvement in politics, focusing on her family and personal life. However, her deep bond with the Congress party saw her finally take the political plunge. And she soon became a key figure in

the party's campaigns.

Though she had been actively campaigning for her mother and brother, it wasn't until 2019 that she took on a formal role when she was appointed party General Secretary for Uttar Pradesh. However, her stint as UP in-charge did not yield any positive result and the party has not been able to even sustain itself independently in the state. Priyanka Gandhi's parliamentary debut comes at a critical juncture for Congress, as it grapples with the political dominance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

However, her presence in the Lok Sabha adds a new dimension to the party's strategy, particularly in the South. Critics may reignite debates over dynastic politics, but her supporters highlight her strong public connect and articulate advocacy of grassroots issues. Her entry signals a renewed hope for Congress in regions where its campaigns have recently shown promise.

For Wayanad, Priyanka Gandhi's victory is more than a win; it symbolizes a fresh opportunity to bolster Congress' position in the South, amplifying her political journey on a national stage.

## JMM raises doubts on EVMs, claims party would have got more seats through ballot papers



**RANCHI:** The Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) has stirred a debate over the credibility of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), claiming that elections conducted via ballot papers would have resulted in more seats for the INDIA bloc, which would have got 75 out of 81 seats in Jharkhand.

The party made this assertion in a post on its official handle on the social media platform X, which was also shared by Acting Chief Minister Hemant Soren.

In the post, the JMM stated: "There is immense anger among the people of Jharkhand against the 11 years of BJP's dictatorial rule, which the BJP fails to grasp. If they wish to regain

Jharkhand's trust, they should first return the Rs 1.36 lakh crore dues owed to the people of this state."

In the recent state elections, the JMM-Congress-RJD-CPI(ML) alliance secured a historic victory, winning 56 seats - 34 by the JMM, 16 by the Congress, 4 by the RJD, and 2 by the CPI-ML-L.

This marks a record-breaking performance by any coalition in Jharkhand's 24-year history.

Despite this success, Hemant Soren and other JMM leaders have consistently expressed concerns over the reliability of EVMs, a sentiment echoed by Congress leaders.

During the campaign, JMM

## Centre Govt. spent Rs 3,623 cr on steps to curb burning of crop stubble



**NEWDELHI:** The Centre has spent Rs 3,623.45 crore on crop residue management, since 2018, in Delhi, Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh, Union Minister of State for Environment, Forest and Climate Change Kirti Vardhan Singh informed in the Lok Sabha.

Punjab has been allocated the highest amount of Rs 1,681.45 crore, followed by Haryana with Rs 1,081.71 crore. Uttar Pradesh was allocated Rs 763.67 crore, NCT of Delhi Rs 6.05 crore, and the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) got Rs 83.35 crore, according to the figures tabled in the Lower House.

The funds have been used to subsidise crop residue management machinery and set up custom hiring centres (CHCs) to curb stubble burning and promote sustainable practices, the minister told the Lower House.

Over three lakh machines have been distributed, including 4,500 balers and rakes for collecting paddy straw for ex-situ utilisation, he said.

The government has also committed to up to Rs 1.4 crore for pelletisation plants and up to Rs 2.8 crore for torrefaction plants, depending on the plant's capacity. So far, 17 applications for such plants have been approved, with 15 of them expected to process up to 2.70 lakh tonnes of paddy straw annually, the minister stated.

In 2018, the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare launched a scheme aimed at supporting the purchase of crop residue management machinery and the establishment of CHCs in NCT of Delhi, Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh for in-situ management of paddy straw. In 2023, the Ministry revised the scheme's guidelines to enhance support for establishing a crop residue/paddy straw supply chain, providing financial assistance for the capital cost of machinery and equipment.

## Congress demands Adani's arrest for defaming India



KAVITA SHARMA  
New Delhi

The Congress demanded immediate arrest of Gautam Adani for defaming India across the world and eroding the credibility of governance.

It also asked the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, its leaders, ministers and MPs to stop defending the man because of whom, the credibility of India's corporate governance had come under questioning. The Chairperson of the Social Media and Digital Platforms, Supriya Shrinete pointed out, after US's Department of Justice brought charges against Adani, his projects are being cancelled, halted or reviewed in almost all the countries where these are in operation.

She also wondered as to why the investigating agencies like the ED, the CBI, the SEBI, Income Tax and Revenue Intelligence had turned their back on the issue. She said, in fact the SEBI was duty bound to probe the charges against the Adani since it has a mutual bilateral agreement with the US Securities Exchange Commission about such matters. Shrinete pointed out, ever since warrants have been issued by the US agencies, the Adani group has been in a state of panic. Total Energies' of France has decided that it will not make any fresh investments in the Adani group. Total Energies, one of the top seven energy companies in the world, has a 20% stake in Adani Green.

She said US agencies are also reviewing whether the funding should be allowed or should not be allowed for the Sri Lankan port that has been allotted to Adani. She said, Sri Lanka itself is reviewing the Adani power deal, one that was facilitated by Prime Minister Modi.

Similarly, she added, the Kenya government has already cancelled an airport, and a power deal. Bangladesh court has ordered a probe into the Adani power deal. Australia has seen rampant charges of corruption and rampant protests all across the country against Adani. Switzerland has frozen about 2,617 crore rupees connected to Adani on charges of misdeeds.

The Congress spokesperson pointed out that rating agencies like Moody's, and Fitch have downgraded Adani stocks and have kept the outlook as negative. The rating agencies have also said it is unlikely that the outlook will be revised to positive; it is very likely that it will be downgraded further. Shrinete took a dig at the senior lawyer who sought to defend Adani suggesting that the Department of Justice order does not name Adani.

## Entire system against country's 90% population says Rahul Gandhi

KAVITA SHARMA  
New Delhi

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi said that the entire system was working against the 90 percent population in the country.

He said, that is why 'caste census' was important, which will mark a paradigm shift in the development process of the nation.

Addressing the 'Samvidhan Rakshak Abhiyan' function at the Talkatora Stadium in New Delhi Rahul said, no matter how hard the BJP and the RSS try against it, the caste census will be carried out in the country and the fifty percent bar on reservations will be removed.

The senior Congress leader accused the BJP/RSS of trying to make the "fifty percent" wall against reservation stronger. He said, although the UPA government tried its best, it still could not achieve the desired results of "weakening the wall", which he said, was a barrier for progress



of the "90 percent population" of the country. But, he added, the RSS and the BJP were only cementing it further.

Pointing towards Rohit Vemula's picture on the stage, Gandhi said he wanted to speak but his voice was gagged. "Every day in India, the Adivasi youth, the Dalit youth, the OBC youth dream of becoming engineers, doctors, lawyers or want to join the media or the IAS, but the reality is that the entire system in the country is up against the Adivasis, the Dalits and the Backward Classes", he observed.

He pointed out, twenty-first century is the age of data. He said, the caste census will provide the data about the exact number of dalits, adivasis and OBCs. "The day we get the data, the paradigm of development will shift and there will be a new approach towards development in the country", he said.

Referring to the Telangana state's caste census, he said, the party's policy will be based on the caste census data. He said the BJP was scared of it as it wants 4-5 percent people and a few billionaires to con-

trol India. He said, this control can be taken away from them by two ways; caste census and removing the fifty percent bar on reservations.

"Whatever the BJP and RSS do, caste census will be done and fifty percent reservation barrier will be removed", he said, adding, "I have promised it in the Lok Sabha that we will get the caste census passed in the same Lok Sabha. We want to protect the constitution".

Rahul Gandhi appealed to the people present at the function to spread the message of need for the caste census and removing the fifty percent bar on reservations in every nook and corner of the country. "Your message should be only that in this country, 90 percent people are subjected to injustice every day", he told the gathering.

Taking a dig at the BJP and the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Gandhi said that he could say with guarantee that Narendra Modi has not read the constitution.

## Constitution Day: Mallikarjun Kharge calls for renewed commitment to constitutional ideals

**NEW DELHI:** Congress National President Mallikarjun Kharge on Tuesday extended warm wishes to the nation as India marked the 75th year of the adoption of its Constitution.

Known as Samvidhan Divas, Constitution Day celebrates the adoption of the Indian Constitution by the Constituent Assembly on November 26, 1949. The Constitution officially came into effect on January 26, 1950.

Declared an observance in 2015, Constitution Day honours the foundational principles of justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity that underpin India's democracy.

"The 75th year of adoption of the Constitution has begun today. I extend my warmest wishes to all Indians on this historic occasion," Kharge wrote on X.

He emphasised that the Constitution, meticulously crafted by the visionaries of the Constituent Assembly, is the "lifeblood of our nation," guaranteeing social, economic, and political rights to every citizen. "It constitutes India into a sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic republic," he added.

Kharge reiterated the enduring relevance of the Constitution's core values, stating, "Justice, Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity are not just ideals or ideas, they are the way of life for us - 140 crore Indians."

He paid tribute to the remarkable efforts of the Constituent Assembly, saying, "Today, we recall the tremendous contribution of the Constituent Assembly and its prolific members. We are forever indebted



to their vision and wisdom."

Highlighting the contributions of key figures, Kharge mentioned, "Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Babasaheb Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, K.M. Munshi, Sarojini Naidu, Alladi Krishnaswamy Ayyar, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, and several eminent personalities are not just revered national icons for us; they are inspiring personalities who become the torchbearers of hope for generations together."

He also acknowledged the role of women in shaping the Constitution, stating, "No mention of the Constituent Assembly should be complete without recalling the contribution of the 15 women members who provided equally important inputs for an inclusive India."

Kharge underscored the participatory nature of the Constitution's drafting process, noting, "We must also not forget that the Constituent Assembly received uncount-

able suggestions from ordinary citizens, which are a matter of record."

Referencing historic milestones in the Assembly's deliberations, he remarked, "The Objectives Resolution moved by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Babasaheb Dr Ambedkar's momentous last speech to the Constituent Assembly form the Magna Carta in protecting the tenets of the Constitution."

The Congress leader urged all citizens to actively uphold and defend the Constitution, saying, "We, the patriotic citizens of India, now have the onerous task of protecting the ethos of the Constitution. We, the people of India, should therefore come together to protect each and every thought expressed in the Constitution."

Calling for a renewed commitment to the nation's foundational values, he concluded, "In the 75th year of adoption, the struggle to defend India's inherent philosophy must be reinvigorated and reignited, just like the era of the National Movement."

## Plea in Supreme Court for probe into US indictment of Adani



**NEW DELHI:** A fresh plea has been filed in the Supreme Court seeking a probe into the indictment of billionaire industrialist Gautam Adani who has been charged in the US for alleged bribery and fraud, saying the move "unveiled malpractices carried out by the conglomerate". The plea has been filed by advocate Vishal Tiwari as an interlocutory application in the batch of pleas in the Adani-Hindenburg row over the allegations of stock price manipulation by the Indian corporate giant. The US Department of Justice has accused Adani of being part of an elaborate scheme to pay \$265 million (about Rs 2,200 crore) bribe to Indian officials in exchange for favourable terms for solar power contracts in four states. The Adani Group has denied the charge, saying the allegations levelled by the US prosecutors are baseless and that the conglomerate is compliant with all laws. It also vowed to pursue all possible legal recourse. In his plea before the apex court, Tiwari contended the allegations against Adani were of "serious nature" and should be investigated by the Indian authorities. "SEBI has to inspire confidence by concluding the investigations and placing on record the report and conclusion of the probes. As there were allegations of short-selling in the SEBI investigation and the present allegations levelled by the foreign authorities might have connection or may not have, but SEBI's investigation report should clear this so that the investors may not lose confidence," the plea said.

## Centre sanctions Rs 1,000 crore outlay for disaster mitigation projects in 15 states

**NEW DELHI:** The Centre has approved an outlay of Rs 1,000 crore for various disaster mitigation and capacity-building projects to tackle natural calamities in 15 states, according to an official statement.

A sum of Rs 139 crore each was approved for Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, Rs 100 crore for Maharashtra, Rs 72 crore each for Karnataka and Kerala, Rs 50 crore each for Tamil Nadu and West Bengal, and Rs 378 crore for the eight Northeastern states - Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Tripura.

The decision was taken by a high-level committee headed by Home Minister Amit Shah with Union Ministers for finance and agriculture and the vice chairman of the NITI Aayog as members. They



considered the proposal to mitigate landslide risk in 15 states for funding from the National Disaster Mitigation Fund (NDMF).

The committee also gave the go-ahead to a project for training and capacity building of civil defence volunteers in all states and union territories at a total outlay of Rs 115.67 crore. The funding window of

the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) will be used to finance the project.

Earlier, the committee approved Urban Flood Risk Mitigation Projects in seven cities at a total outlay of Rs 3,075.65 crore and Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF) risk management projects in four states at a total outlay of Rs 150 crore from the NDMF.

## Mann Ki Baat: PM Modi highlights India's maritime history

**NEW DELHI:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasised the significance of Lothal in India's maritime history during the 116th episode of his monthly radio programme Mann Ki Baat on Sunday.

Known as the site of the world's first dockyard, Lothal situated on the Gujarat coast, is now witnessing the construction of the National Maritime Heritage Complex (NMHC), under the Union Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, a grand museum dedicated to showcasing India's 5000-year-old maritime history that began with the Harappan civilisation.

Speaking on the initiative, PM Modi said, "Lothal is a proud symbol of India's maritime brilliance and ancient



trading capabilities. The museum being developed here will become a global hub for learning and appreciating our rich seafaring heritage. I urge everyone to contribute by preserving and sharing manuscripts, historical documents, or artefacts with the National

Archives of India." The Prime Minister further highlighted the Oral History Project, which documents the experiences of Partition survivors. With only a few witnesses of the Partition era remaining, this initiative aims to preserve their stories for future generations.

## Billionaires, bribes & the rule of law

The allegations by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) that bribes were offered to officials across Indian states in connection with deals involving the Adani Group demand a clear-eyed response from Indian authorities. While the Adani Group, on November 27, 2024, stated that its chairman Gautam Adani, nephew Sagar Adani, and senior executive Vneet Jaain have not been charged with violations of the U.S. Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA), the need for a domestic investigation remains undiminished. Adani Green, a key firm in this controversy, has labeled media reports linking its leadership to bribery as “incorrect,” as per its latest stock exchange filing. However, these denials, no matter how emphatic, do not obviate the necessity for accountability. India cannot afford to remain complacent. The Modi government’s consistent reluctance to investigate the Adani Group, even after the Hindenburg Research revelations and now the U.S. DOJ indictment, raises troubling questions. Calls for a joint parliamentary committee probe have been brushed aside, with sporadic probes by domestic agencies yielding little by way of resolution. This lack of action risks being seen as a tacit shield for the billionaire’s corporate interests. At the center of the allegations is Rs 2,029 crore (\$265 million) purportedly earmarked as bribes, including Rs 1,750 crore allegedly meant for a ‘foreign official’ in Andhra Pradesh. State governments, including Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, have denied direct links to the Adani Group, pointing instead to the Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI). Yet, internal communications cited in the indictment suggest concerted efforts to influence discoms. The truth must be brought to light through an impartial investigation. While the Adani Group insists on its innocence, the issue transcends individual fortunes. It concerns the credibility of India’s governance and its institutions. Shielding one individual or entity undermines the rule of law. A transparent probe is not merely desirable — it is imperative.

### LETTERBOX

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The struggle you’re in today is developing the strength you need for tomorrow. Don’t give up.

— Robert Tew

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ZUBAIR NAZEER EXPLAINS WHY FOSTERING EXPERTS WITHIN ENSURES RESILIENT, EFFECTIVE CIVIL SERVICE

## Civil service requires domain experts

In August 2024, the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) initiated the recruitment process through the lateral entry scheme by issuing a notification for the recruitment of 45 Joint Secretaries, Directors, and Deputy Secretaries as specialists in government departments. The initiative faced significant opposition from various groups, particularly political parties, which argued that the scheme compromised the reservation rights of Other Backward Classes (OBCs), Scheduled Castes (SCs), and Scheduled Tribes (STs). The strong opposition compelled the government to shelve the plan. This was not the first time that the Union Government has recruited specialists through the lateral entry scheme. In 2018, 63 specialists were appointed through lateral entry in various ministries. Currently, around 57 specialists are working with the government. Even then, recruitment through the lateral entry scheme was excluded from the reservation system. The decision to withdraw the notification has reignited the debate on the need for domain experts within the civil service and highlights the necessity of developing an appropriate approach to civil service reform.

### Need for domain experts

It has long been recognised that specialised skills are much needed in the civil service. In fact, the Second Administrative Reforms Commission (2005) recommended the need for lateral entry into the higher echelons of the government to bring in specialised knowledge and skills, though it did not specify a method of recruitment. The ongoing representation issues of SCs and STs within the civil service further complicate the narrative. Despite existing reservations, the number of SC and ST officers in higher positions remains low. SCs and STs constitute only around 4% and 4.9% of top bureaucratic positions in the Union government at the level of Deputy



Secretaries, Directors, Joint Secretaries, and beyond. One reason is that the entry age of officers during the recruitment process is often higher than that of general category candidates, and these officers frequently retire before reaching the top positions.

The lateral entry scheme is likely to further limit the representation of these marginalised communities, as the scheme is unlikely to attract domain experts from these communities due to their limited access to such positions in the private sector. For better or worse, the lateral entry debate has been politicised. With caste-based reservations being significant factors in elections, the government is unlikely to reignite this debate, as doing so could have substantial political repercussions. For now, the discussion around lateral entry appears to have reached an impasse.

But there is no denying the reality that there is a need for domain experts in the public sector, as each sector is becoming specialised, requiring close collaboration with technical experts. Civil servants are generally generalists, not specialists. Lateral entry, with or without reservation as it existed, was essentially a short-term solution. The need is for domain

experts within the civil service itself. It is these domain experts who would cultivate a resilient and effective civil service. To realise this objective, there is a need to develop long-term strategies that prioritise academic-industry-civil service collaboration, capacity building, and institutional development.

### Integrated model for domain expertise

In order to effectively develop domain expertise within the civil service in India and address the ever more complex needs of governance, a collaborative framework that brings together civil service, academia, and industry is needed. This collaboration would facilitate the exchange of knowledge and best practices, allowing civil servants to engage with the latest developments in their respective fields and develop much-needed domain expertise. Civil servants with public sector experience and decision-making capabilities would imbibe insights from academia and industry about emerging trends, skills, and technologies. But this collaboration must differ from the current refresher and mid-career training offered to civil servants. These training programmes for civil servants often act as temporary fixes. Even though such programmes inculcate valuable skills, they fail to create a robust framework for domain expertise. Domain expertise, unlike training programmes, is not an isolated event but must be an integral part of a civil servant’s career trajectory. For domain expertise, an integrated model that aligns with individual career paths and areas of interest is essential.

The critical components of an integrated model for developing domain expertise among civil servants include strategic planning, memoranda of understanding (MoUs) with institutions, a rigorous selection process, and specialised postings with fixed tenures.

### Strategic planning

Domain expertise starts with the drafting of a strategic plan to create efficient public policy analysts within the civil service, with locus in the public sector and focus on skills and knowledge from the private sector/industry, facilitated by academia. The objective is to enhance the capacity of civil servants in terms of technical expertise and strategic vision to formulate and implement policies efficiently and effectively in specific sectors, contributing to good governance and improved public service delivery.

Strategic planning represents a long-term vision for the civil service and requires identifying the number of sector-specific domain experts needed for better alignment of resources and priorities. Academic institutions must be involved in the strategic planning at the initial stages only. This integrated model has significant advantages for academic institutions as well, as they would receive fresh impetus and motivation to contribute richly to public service delivery. One critical aspect of domain expertise is staying focused on ever-changing innovations and technologies in industry and incorporating these into the public sector. Strategic planning would include an element of circular response planning, with feedback and adjustments continuously incorporated. This element promotes flexibility and adaptability in the face of changing circumstances.

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ABHIJIT SINGH EXPLORES HOW INDIA’S BIODIVERSITY DEAL SIGNING FACES STRUCTURAL CHALLENGES AHEAD

## Between hope and hurdles on the high seas

India’s recent signing of the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement — better known as the High Seas Treaty — has drawn both praise and scepticism from maritime observers. Hailed as a landmark step in ocean governance, the treaty seeks to protect marine ecosystems and promote the sustainable use of resources in areas beyond national jurisdiction. However, despite its laudable intentions to address critical gaps in international maritime regulation, the pact’s structural complexities and potential challenges warrant closer examination.

As the third implementing agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the BBNJ treaty follows earlier accords on deep-sea mining and fisheries management. Its provisions focus on three objectives: conserving marine biodiversity, ensuring equitable sharing of benefits from marine genetic resources, and mandating environmental impact assessments for harmful activities. Yet, like many ambitious multilateral agreements, it risks faltering against geopolitical rivalries, jurisdictional overlap, and weak enforcement mechanisms.

### A framework fraught with challenges

The treaty’s ambitious goals are tempered by its lack of a clear implementation roadmap. With only 14 of its 104 signatories having ratified the agreement, it remains far from the required threshold of 60 needed to come into force. Much of the hesitation stems from disputes over maritime territories, particularly



in regions such as the South China Sea, where overlapping claims complicate consensus on Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). Southeast Asian nations remain divided on whether high-seas “national parks” could affect territorial claims or limit economic opportunities for coastal communities that depend on marine resources. Similar apprehensions about MPAs affecting livelihoods and resource access are echoed by states bordering the Bay of Bengal, underscoring the broader regional hesitations surrounding the treaty’s implementation.

One of the treaty’s most contentious provisions involves marine genetic resources. The treaty obligates nations to share the profits derived from exploiting these resources through a global fund. However, without robust accountability measures, this provision risks being undermined by wealthier nations underreporting their activities. The

pact also risks conflicting with regimes like the Convention on Biological Diversity, potentially disadvantaging smaller states and fragmenting enforcement.

Capacity-building and technology transfers present yet another challenge for low and middle-income countries. The treaty calls for equitable partnerships in ocean science, but lacks enforceable mechanisms, leaving less capable nations vulnerable to being sidelined. Asymmetry threatens to perpetuate inequalities in maritime research and governance.

### A narrow focus

The treaty’s focus on the high seas overlooks the interconnectedness of marine ecosystems, where harmful activities in EEZs often spill over into international waters. While the BBNJ Agreement aspires to reshape global ocean governance, its potential hinges on bridging the gap between ambition and action. Its greatest limitation lies in failing to reconcile high-seas governance with coastal regulations, assuming international waters can be managed in isolation despite the impact of pollution, overfishing, and habitat destruction in EEZs.

More troubling is the reluctance of coastal states to assume greater responsibility for activities within their waters. While the treaty mandates environmental

impact assessments (EIAs) for planned activities, it remains silent on the damaging harms during oil and gas exploration — that the pact does not cover — which constitutes an important economic interest of states. This gap, compounded by the disinclination of states to accept an international review of EIAs, exposes the inherent weaknesses in the treaty’s enforcement framework, particularly in regions with weak institutional capacity and conflicting domestic and international legal standards.

### Bridging the divide

For the High Seas Treaty to succeed, it must overcome its structural and political limitations. This requires a radical shift in maritime governance — one that integrates high-seas and coastal regulations into a cohesive framework. Coastal states, particularly those in the Global South, need incentives to align their domestic laws with international norms, while wealthier nations must commit to providing technical and financial support to ensure the treaty’s benefits are equitably shared.

The treaty’s success ultimately hinges on fostering a collective commitment among nations to safeguard the oceans as a shared global resource. Without political consensus, clear strategies, and enforceable mechanisms, the BBNJ risks becoming an ineffective instrument — an outcome the oceans, already under immense stress, cannot afford.

*Abhijit Singh is Head of the Maritime Policy Initiative at ORF, New Delhi. Views are personal.*

### BOOKS: REVIEW

## From passion to profits: A tale of cricket’s ethical decline

Ravi Mandrekar’s *Bouncer* lands as a hard-hitting exposé on the alleged corruption within the Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA), shedding light on the underbelly of one of India’s most celebrated cricketing institutions. As a former office bearer of the MCA and president of the Hindu Gymkhana Club, Mandrekar brings an insider’s perspective to the table, unearthing troubling irregularities that challenge the integrity of cricket’s governance in Mumbai.

The MCA, a permanent member of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) and home to its headquarters at the iconic Wankhede Stadium, boasts a rich cricketing legacy. Founded in 1930, the MCA is the cornerstone of Indian cricket history, having produced nearly 70 Test cricketers and dominated the Ranji Trophy with a staggering 41 wins. However, Mandrekar’s narrative reveals a steep decline in

the institution’s sporting and ethical standards, reflecting broader concerns about corruption in Indian cricket.

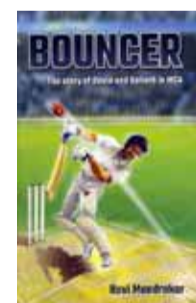
Mandrekar meticulously dissects the MCA’s governance, focusing on the distribution of complimentary passes for high-profile matches like the 2019 India-West Indies game. Through data-driven analysis—complete with charts, graphs, and detailed break-ups of ticket allocations—he highlights discrepancies in the issuance and auditing of tickets. These irregularities, he alleges, extend to the printing of tickets, raising questions about transparency and accountability. This granular examination of stadium operations serves as a microcosm of the systemic issues plaguing the MCA.

The book does not shy away from critiquing the culture that enables such corruption. Mandrekar recounts scenes of elite members discussing accountability over drinks but failing to take

substantive action. This critique extends to the broader ecosystem of cricket administration, where political influence, nepotism, and a lack of professionalism have created fiefdoms that prioritize profits over the game’s values.

One of the book’s most striking elements is its juxtaposition of past and present. Mandrekar recalls an era when Mumbai cricket was managed by middle-class enthusiasts driven by their love for the game. Figures like M.V. Chandgadkar, a professor and former BCCI secretary, embodied the spirit of dedication and integrity. In contrast, today’s cricketing administration, Mandrekar argues, has succumbed to commercialism and cronyism, epitomized by the Indian Premier League’s (IPL) mammoth financial clout.

The narrative gains depth from Mandrekar’s personal anecdotes, including his resistance to under-valuing the Wankhede Stadium’s facilities during Pepsi’s promotional events in the 1990s. These



*Bouncer: The Story of David and Goliath in MCA* by Ravi Mandrekar Granthali 386 pages; Rs 400

moments underscore his commitment to preserving cricket’s dignity amid mounting external pressures.

While the book focuses on the MCA, its implications are far-reaching. Mandrekar’s critique resonates with broader concerns about the governance of cricket in India. The message is clear: the sport has become a lucrative business devoid of the professionalism required to sustain its integrity. Mandrekar urges cricketing bodies to revisit their roots, emphasizing the importance of character, excellence, and the people who uphold these values.

*Bouncer* is not just an exposé; it’s a call to action. Mandrekar’s writing combines investigative rigor with a deep love for the sport, making the book both a critical analysis and a lament for

what has been lost. His argument for greater accountability and transparency in cricket administration is compelling, and his call for similar books on other cricketing associations is both timely and necessary.

The book serves as a wake-up call for cricket lovers, administrators, and policymakers alike. It questions the erosion of ethical standards in sports and challenges the reader to imagine a cricketing ecosystem that values integrity as much as performance. Mandrekar’s passion for the game shines through, and his insights make *Bouncer* a must-read for anyone interested in the intersection of sports, governance, and ethics.

In conclusion, *Bouncer* stands as an essential critique of the commercialization of cricket and a tribute to the values that once defined the game. It is a powerful reminder that sports, at its core, is about more than just money and power—it is about people, their character, and their pursuit of excellence. Mandrekar’s work, while focused on the MCA, opens a broader conversation about the state of cricket in India, making it a vital contribution to the discourse on sports governance.

# Vyapar Mandal Claims 48% of MSMEs Shut Down in 7 Years

**NEW DELHI:** In a concerning revelation, Bajrang Garg, the national chief general secretary of the All-India Vyapar Mandal, stated that nearly half of the country's Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) have ceased operations over the past seven years.

Citing data from global institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and corroborating figures from the Ministry of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises, Garg highlighted a steep decline in the number of small industries.

"In 2016, India had 6.25 crore MSMEs, but now, this number has plummeted to just 3.25 crore units—a drastic reduction of 48%," he said. Garg attributed this alarming trend to frequent policy shifts, overly complicated regulations, and what he termed "misguided government deci-



form the backbone of India's economy, are still struggling to recover," Garg asserted. He also emphasised that inconsistent policies have created an unstable environment for businesses, further accelerating closures. Garg's comments come amidst growing concerns over the resilience of India's small business sector,

which employs millions and significantly contributes to the country's GDP.

While government initiatives like the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) were launched to support MSMEs during the COVID-19 pandemic, industry leaders argue that such measures have fallen short of addressing systemic challenges.

Experts warn that the decline of MSMEs could have cascading effects on employment and the overall economy, urging policymakers to prioritize simplification of tax structures, enhanced financial aid, and long-term policy stability.

This report adds to the ongoing debate about the impact of government policies on economic growth, particularly in sectors dependent on local entrepreneurship and small-scale manufacturing.

# India Clocks Double-Digit Surge in Steel Consumption amid Global Slowdown



**NEW DELHI:** India is the only large economy showing robust growth in the consumption of steel with a double-digit jump of 13.5 per cent in the first half of 2024-25, according to a statement of the Ministry of Steel issued on Wednesday.

Even with a conservative demand growth of 10 per cent, the country will need 300 million tonnes of capacity by the year 2030 to cater to about 265 million tonnes of demand. If adequate domestic steel pro-

duction capacity is not created, the country will become a net importer of steel and will depend on imports of steel for its infrastructure creation, the statement pointed out.

As per the National Steel Policy, the country aims to achieve 300 million tonnes of steel production capacity by the year 2030 with the present capacity at about 180 million tonnes. This means an additional capacity creation of 120 million tonnes, which corresponds to

investment of estimated \$120 billion or over Rs 10 lakh crore.

This is possible only if the steel industry, both large and small, has adequate capital investment capacity and low steel prices, due to dumping of steel in the international market, will adversely impact the capacity creation objective of the country, the statement said.

India's steel imports have increased significantly for the first half of 2024-25 as compared to the same period last year.

While the steel imports for the first half of 2023-24 were 3.32 million tonnes, the imports have increased to 4.73 million tonnes this year, a 41.3 per cent increase.

While the overall volume of steel imports, as compared to total consumption in the country, is not significant, cheaper imports lead to depression of domestic steel prices and affect steel producers, both large and small, the statement explained.

# CII Calls for 40% Internship Quota in MSMEs to Boost Inclusive Growth



**NEW DELHI:** The pilot phase of the Prime Minister's Internship Scheme concluded on November 15, 2024, with 6.5 lakh applications for 1.27 lakh internship positions.

While the scheme aims to provide one crore internships over five years, industry leaders stress that its success hinges on expanding opportunities to micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs).

MSMEs, often referred to as the backbone of India's economy, employ over 11 crore people and contribute significantly to GDP.

Experts believe these enterprises hold the key to overcoming several challenges plaguing the scheme, such as limited scalability, insufficient absorption of interns into the job market, and the economic strain of migration without sustainable income.

M Ponnuswami, Chairman of the CII Southern Region MSME, has strongly advocated for integrating MSMEs into the initiative.

"CII recommends that the government allots at least a 40 per cent reservation—40 lakh internships—to MSMEs over the next five years to ensure inclusive growth," he said.

This measure, he argued, would not only address regional disparities but also strengthen local economies by distributing opportunities beyond urban centres.

Under the current framework, the scheme is open to youth aged 21 to 24 who are not enrolled in full-time education or employment.

Eligible applicants include high school and higher secondary graduates, polytechnic diploma holders, ITI certificate holders, and undergraduate degree holders in fields like arts, science, and commerce. The internships, lasting 12 months, aim to enhance employability through practical skill-building.

However, experts contend that focusing heavily on large industries and urban placements limits the program's reach. MSMEs, with their presence in rural and semi-urban areas, could create a decentralised and sustainable internship ecosystem, bridging the urban-rural divide while addressing talent shortages in smaller enterprises.

# FISME-IPFC Starts Operations to Assist MSMEs with IPR Reimbursement and Filing Support



**NEW DELHI:** The Steering Committee of Intellectual Property Facilitation Centre (IPFC) under the Federation of Indian Micro and Small and Medium Enterprises (FISME) and Chairmanship of R.K. Bharti, Director, MSME-DFO has officially become operational, marking a significant step in supporting MSMEs in India.

The centre is now ready to assist MSMEs in securing reimbursement for their Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) filings, providing critical financial support and guidance to help them navigate the complexities of IPR.

The FISME-IPFC aims to enhance the competitiveness of MSMEs by equipping them with the necessary tools and knowledge to protect their intellectual property and compete in the global market.

The centre will focus on raising awareness among MSMEs regarding IPR issues and offer detailed guidance on the creation, ownership, and protection of intellectual property.

It will assist businesses with filing patents, trademarks, and designs, ensuring they have the resources needed to protect their innovations.

# Mobile broadband market in Asia-Pacific to reach \$296 billion in 2029

**NEW DELHI:** Driven by 5G service expansions, the mobile broadband services revenue in the Asia-Pacific region is likely to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 5.2 per cent from \$229.6 billion in 2024 to \$296.2 billion in 2029, according to a new report.

It will mainly be driven by the growing availability and adoption of 5G services across several countries, according to GlobalData, a leading data and analytics company. The unique mobile user penetration of the population in Asia-Pacific will reach 82.9 per cent in 2029, driven by mobile network coverage expansions, particularly in underserved countries and promotional/discounted plans



offered by operators to drive subscriber growth.

According to the report, in developed Asia, the number of mobile users will increase at a sluggish CAGR of 0.4 per cent, due to saturated nature of these markets. In emerging Asia, on the contrary, the number of mobile users will grow at a faster rate,

supported by the growing availability of affordable handsets and local governments' efforts to improve and extend mobile networks coverage. "With 5G services already available in most of the developed countries like China, Japan, Australia, Hong Kong, India, and Korea, and set to be launched soon in emerging mar-

kets like Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, revenue prospects for the mobile data segment will remain strong throughout the forecast period," said Sarwat Zeeshan, telecom analyst at GlobalData. Government support for 5G expansion will also strengthen the mobile data services market in the region. Taiwan, Singapore, China, South Korea, and Japan are the key 5G markets in terms of 5G subscriptions as a percentage of total subscriptions. Taiwan will have 94.6 per cent of mobile subscribers on 5G by 2029, thanks to the government's efforts to promote 5G technology in the country. "APAC has also become the centre of a technological race for 5G+ supremacy," said Zeeshan.

# Godrej Enterprises Group unveils new colour brand

**DOMINICK RODRIGUES**  
*Mumbai*

Godrej Enterprises Group (GEG), a leading diversified engineering and design-led conglomerate, unveiled here recently a refreshed Purple colour brand identity aimed at 'unlocking new worlds for customers and other stakeholders.'

"The new visual identity honours GEG's rich legacy, which embodies its commitment to actively participate in the building of a Viksit Bharat by 2047 through design-led innovation - enhancing consumer experience and shaping preferences for sustainable choices," said Jamsheed Godrej, Chairman



& Managing Director, GEG.

Noting that the key to GEG's sustained growth is its ability to remain relevant in India's development needs, he said the company aspired to unlock greater value for customers by delivering solutions and experiences that positively impacted lives, while also its core remained rooted in high quality and complex engineering with the brand remaining dynamic.

# Hettich India Receives Prestigious 'Great Place to Work' Certification

**MUMBAI:** Pioneering furniture fittings solutions brand Hettich India is proud to announce that it has been officially certified as a Great Place to Work, a recognition that celebrates the company's unwavering commitment to creating an ecosystem where everybody thrives.

This honor is especially meaningful, with an overwhelming 95% participation from employees, helping Hettich India. It reflects a shared commitment to creating a family-like environment where professional growth and personal well-being go hand in hand.

"At Hettich, we believe the magic isn't just in the interiors we



create. Being certified as a Great Place to Work is a testament to our continuous efforts in building a high-performance ecosystem where trust, collaboration, and growth thrive," said Amit Prasad, Chief Human Resources Officer. "At Hettich India, we remain committed to fostering a culture that empowers our people to excel and succeed together," added Prasad.

# India turning into world's Deep Tech Hub as reforms reverse brain drain: Hardeep Singh Puri



**NEW DELHI:** India's image as the 'IT Outsourcing Centre' has now transformed into a new identity as a 'Deep Tech Hub' due to the reforms undertaken by the government to promote innovation, Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said on November 24.

"As a result of the dedicated focus of PM Modi making India a hub for innovation, even the most cutting edge, deep tech & frontier tech startups, led by Indian students with PhDs from major global universities are now taking root in India," the minister said in a post on X.

Instead of just being proud of working for MNCs, Indians are now daring to create their own multinational companies in a defining change which will fuel our next stage of economic growth, Puri said.

"For the past many decades, while Indian engineers & scientists were recognised for their talent and dedication in global technology companies and universities, they couldn't dare to incubate their tech startups in India, owing to our onerous patents framework,

lack of funding, crumbling infrastructure and lack of government support," he added.

These new developments, of a reversal in the brain drain, are part of a larger fabric of technological innovation in India. A gradual journey of reforms and schemes to promote the entrepreneurial spirit in the early years of the Modi Govt has resulted in a technological boom, the minister pointed out.

He said that this transformation is visible in the energy sector too. The India Energy Week began in 2023 as a novel initiative to leverage this increasing prominence of India in the global energy landscape through collaborative dialogue and opening up the horizon for India's talented young professionals.

Puri pointed out that in the Green Hydrogen segment, several Indian PSUs showcased new electrolyser technologies. At the same time, start-ups have demonstrated their membrane-less electrolyser for green hydrogen. Other firms have focused on building CCUS technologies, including direct air capture and enhanced oil recovery methods. There was also considerable progress made in advanced battery storage solutions, including solid-state batteries, lithium-ion improvements, and flow batteries, which promise better efficiency, longevity, and reduced costs. All eyes are now on the future as it takes shape in India.

# Indian Pharmaceutical Industry in Consolidation Mode



**DR. ANIL KUMAR ANGRISH**

In economic literature, it has been observed that fragmented industries consolidate as they mature. Deans et al. (2002) in their paper titled, 'The Consolidation Curve' published in Harvard Business Review had stated that once an industry forms or is deregulated, that industry will move through four stages of consolidation. With emergence of a single start-up or monopoly, competitors come up thereby affecting the concentration. To defend first mover advantage, industry players go in for consolidation. This is opted to build scale, to create global footprint, and to establish entry barriers. 2<sup>nd</sup> stage of consolidation is mainly for building scale. In third stage, companies focus on expanding their core business and attempt to outgrow the competition. In the 4<sup>th</sup> stage, the growth becomes challenging so large companies may form alliances with their peers.

1<sup>st</sup> stage of consolidation was observed in e-Pharmacy. NetMeds became the first player in this space as NetMeds.com was founded in 2015. The Dadha family as founders had many firsts to their credit. Sri Lalchand

Dadha founded the group and ran pharmaceutical business. In 1926, he was instrumental in the formation of the Chemists & Druggist Federation that became All India Organization of Chemists & Druggists (AIOCD). It was M/s Dadha & Co. which was known as Tamil Nadu's first registered importers of drugs, pharmaceuticals and patented medicines from different parts of the world. Another first to their credit was the import of penicillin. Img was also founded in 2015. Within interval of few months, Dhaval Shah and Dharmil Sheth founded PharmEasy. Medlife was another prominent player specializing in the healthtech sector that was established by Ananth Narayanan, Prashanth Singh and Tushar Kumar.

Then came the wave of consolidation in the sector. In August 2020, Reliance Retail Ventures Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of Reliance Industries Limited acquired a majority equity stake in Vitalic Health and 100% direct equity ownership of its subsidiaries. Subsidiaries included Tresara Health Private Limited, Netmeds Market Place Limited and Dadha Pharma Distribution Pvt. Limited. Medlife was acquired by PharmEasy in May 2021. In June 2021, PharmEasy also acquired majority stake in diagnostics chain - Thyrocare. In June



2021 itself, Tata Digital Limited, a 100% subsidiary of Tata Sons, had entered into an agreement to acquire majority stake in IMG Technologies Private Limited. By September 2023, Tata Img had a 31 per cent market share whereas in October 2022, market share of Tata Img was 19 per cent. In contrast to this, market share of PharmEasy went down to 15 per cent in September 2023 from almost 33 per cent in October 2022.

Recent trends in Indian Pharmaceutical Industry reveal that the industry is in consolidation mode. As on May 29, 2020 there were 8,532 pharmaceutical units present in States and Union Territories in India. Gujarat was the leading state with 3,332 pharmaceutical units followed by Maharashtra with 929 pharma units. Other states which had

pharma units in three units included Himachal Pradesh (555), Telangana (523), Tamil Nadu (514), Uttar Pradesh (408), Karnataka (376), Madhya Pradesh (267), Andhra Pradesh (261), Uttarakhand (220), West Bengal (180), Punjab (156), Rajasthan (128), and Kerala (100). It is widely cited that India has more than 3,000 pharma companies with over 10,500 manufacturing facilities (Invest India). This shows that industry is highly fragmented. No single player holds market share of Indian pharmaceutical industry in two digits.

Most recent example pointing towards consolidation is of Mankind Pharma that completed acquisition of 100 per cent stake in Bharat Serums and Vaccines Limited for an enterprise value of about Rs. 13,630 crore (Press release of

Mankind Pharma dated July 25, 2024) thereby establishing Mankind Pharma as a market leader in Indian women's health and fertility segment. In March 2024, Nirma completed the acquisition of a 75 per cent stake in Glenmark Life Sciences (GLS). Through this acquisition, Nirma strengthened presence in the pharmaceuticals and life sciences sector as GLS was the manufacturer of active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs).

There are many examples from similar transactions in recent years which signal consolidation in the pharmaceutical industry in India, e.g., in May 2022, Eris Lifesciences acquired 100 per cent stake in Oaknet Healthcare, and Oaknet Healthcare became a wholly owned subsidiary of Eris Lifesciences. In September 2022, Torrent Pharmaceuticals entered into definitive agreements to acquire 100% of Curatio Healthcare for Rs. 2,000 crores. Curatio had a strong presence in the cosmetic dermatology segment with a portfolio of over 50 brands. Dermatology accounted for 82 per cent of Curatio's revenue. In February 2024, Novartis announced strategic review of Novartis India, its listed entity in India. In September of 2024, Alkem Labs was said to be in talks to acquire Novartis India. Prior to that, Dr. Reddy's Laboratories was

also said to be in fray for acquisition of 70.6 per cent stake in Novartis India from Novartis AG. As per media reports, private equity firms such as Apollo Global Management, Kedaara Capital, ChrysCapital and Multiples Equity were also evaluating acquisition of Novartis India's stake.

The failure of small and medium pharma enterprises to meet quality management systems is an important development that can have impact on consolidation of pharmaceutical industry. This includes lack of documentation, and validation processes, or absence of quality control laboratories to name a few. Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises consider quality management systems as a part of entry barriers. In June 2024, while the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) was speaking at Global Pharmaceutical Quality Summit, 2024 conducted by the Indian Pharmaceutical Alliance, the DCGI stated that about 400 pharmaceutical units were inspected and nearly 36 per cent had to be closed as those units failed to meet the standards. Further, he stated that of those units which had to temporarily shut down, around 10 per cent of the units were permanently moved out of the system. Units which came back had put in place corrective and preventive action plans. Indirectly, it

lowered the count of the sub-standard facilities. But it has implications for the industry consolidation given the fact that about 80 per cent of about 10,500 manufacturing units, are micro-small and medium-scale facilities.

Since December 2022, risk-based inspections of manufacturing facilities were initiated by the Central Drug Standards Control Organization (CDSCO). More than 300 measures which included production halt order, suspension, cancellation of licences/products licences among others, were ordered based on the risk-based assessment of the drug firms by the State Licensing Authorities and the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization. It is pertinent to understand the background that 'Good Manufacturing Practices and Requirements of Premises, Plant and Equipment for Pharmaceutical Products' rules were announced in July 2023 and these rules were notified on December 28, 2023. As per these rules, drugmakers termed as 'larger manufacturers' with an annual turnover of more than ₹250 Cr. had to compulsorily follow these rules within six months. Drugmakers with turnover less than ₹250 crore termed as small and medium manufacturers, were expected to follow these rules within a 12-month

period. The revised version of the Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) was more comprehensive and stringent. Pharma industry associations from different states appealed to the government for extending the deadline to meet the revised Schedule M norms of GMP. Their key argument was regarding investment only as it was felt that there was need for securing additional financing for the required upgrades. Industry associations feared the closure of numerous small units in absence of extension of deadline for SMEs.

Indian Pharmaceutical Industry has a wide range of therapeutic categories and has numerous players. Consolidation in the industry has implications for stakeholders such as the patient as end-user, Competition Commission of India (CCI) due to impact on competition intensity, and regulatory bodies. Product market concentration, pace of consolidation, merger & acquisition deals, stringent enforcement of GMP norms for SMEs, are going to be key drivers for consolidation.

**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.**

## RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das Hospitalised, RBI Says 'No Cause for Concern'

CHENNAI: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das was hospitalised here earlier in the day with a minor health issue. The Central Bank said that "there is no cause for concern".

According to the RBI, Das "experienced acidity" and was admitted to the Apollo Hospital in the state capital.

"Reserve Bank of India Governor Shaktikanta Das experienced acidity and was admitted in Apollo Hospital, Chennai for observation," said an RBI spokesperson.

"He is now doing fine and discharged after 2-3 hours. There is no cause for concern," the spokesperson added, assuring that his condition is stable.

Apollo Hospital was yet to issue the latest health update on Das.

Last week, Das 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.

India's inflation rose to 6.2 per cent in October from 5.5 per cent in September because of food inflation, he said.

Referring to inflation as an elephant in the room, Das remarked: "Now the elephant has gone out of the room for a walk, then it will go back to the forest."

## SBI Funds Management Ltd. appoints Nand Kishore as Managing Director & CEO

MUMBAI: SBI Funds Management Limited, a joint venture between State Bank of India and Amundi, Europe's largest asset manager, today announced the appointment of Nand Kishore as Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer. Nand Kishore, Deputy



Managing Director of State Bank of India, takes over as the Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer of SBI Funds Management Limited from Shamsher Singh. Nand Kishore has more than 34 years of rich experience working with State Bank of India across major banking verticals such as Branch Banking, International Operations, Treasury Operations & Investment Banking, Corporate Banking and Retail Operations. He began his career at the State Bank of India as a Probationary Officer in 1990 and moved up the ranks to become Deputy Managing Director, demonstrating effective leadership across various domains.

## India Takes Concrete Steps to Regulate Fintech Industry in Line with FATF Recommendations

NEW DELHI: India is making significant strides in regulating its fintech industry, as part of efforts to align with global standards set by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) to combat money laundering and terrorist financing.

Vivek Agrawal, Additional Secretary in the Ministry of Finance, highlighted these efforts during the ongoing 41st plenary meeting of the Eurasian Group (EAG) in Indore on Wednesday.

Agrawal, who is also the head of India's delegation and Director of the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU), emphasised that India is among the few nations actively working to implement FATF's recommendations, which aim to ensure robust oversight of financial technologies. "The development of financial technology is crucial for the growth of digital payment systems, but the potential misuse of this technology can lead to cybercrimes and financial frauds," he said.



As part of these measures, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has issued detailed guidelines to regulate payment aggregators and payment gateways, helping to ensure the integrity of digital transactions. Furthermore, virtual asset service providers (VASPs) are now required to register with the FIU, a move designed to enhance monitoring and traceability. Agrawal also underscored India's commitment to fostering innovation within fintech, ensuring that regulations are designed to support the sector's growth while addressing security concerns.

"We want regulation to be done in such a way that it does not hamper the growth of the industry, enhances ease of doing business, and keeps India at the forefront of global digital technology," he added.

The EAG meeting, which will run until November 29, brings together about 200 foreign and 60 Indian delegates, including representatives from the International Monetary Fund and the Asian Development Bank.

## India's Real Estate Sector to Cross \$4.8 Trillion by 2047: Report



NEW DELHI: The Indian real estate sector is set to cross \$4.8 trillion in market size by 2047, contributing over 18 per cent to the projected \$26 trillion GDP target for the year, according to a joint report by real estate body CREDAI and Ernst & Young released on Tuesday.

The report expects PropTech to grow at a sustained rate to touch \$600 billion in market size by 2047, comprising approximately 12-13 per cent of the entire real estate industry. The study backs the ongoing and projected technological revolution in real estate, given that currently, PropTech makes up less than 5 per cent of the \$300 billion real estate sector.

The report highlights how innovations like Artificial Intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), and Building Information Modelling (BIM) are revolutionising operations, enhancing efficiency, and ensuring transparency across the real estate value chain. This transformation supports India's projected \$26 trillion GDP by 2047, with the real estate sector projected to contribute over 18 per cent, up from its current 7 per cent share of the GDP.

Employing over 77 million people — approximately 14-15 per cent of India's entire workforce — India's real estate sector has consistently been a key economic pillar and is set to grow in prominence over the next decade, the report states.

Macro-level Infrastructure initiatives, including the National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP) and PM Gati Shakti, are closely linked to this growth. The NIP aims for targeted investments of \$1.4 trillion over the next decade in transport, energy, communication and social infrastructure. These projects, spanning roads, railways, airports, and ports, are unlocking opportunities in adjacent real estate markets, according to the report.

## Govt's Bank Guarantee Waiver to Cut Financial Burden on Telcos, Boost Digital Infra: Industry

NEW DELHI: Hailing the government's landmark decision to waive bank guarantees for telecom spectrum acquired before 2022, industry players on Tuesday said such supportive policy measures are instrumental in creating an enabling environment for technological innovation and boost digital infrastructure, especially in rural areas.

The decision is expected to offer significant relief to leading telecom companies, especially Vodafone Idea, which collectively owe over Rs 30,000 crore in bank guarantees to the government. "We welcome the Union Cabinet's move and thank the government on approving the waiving of bank guarantee for telecom operators on spectrum purchased before 2022. This landmark decision will significantly help reduce the financial burden on the telecom operators in the country," said Lt Gen Dr SP Kochhar, Director General, Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI).



The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) had earlier proposed the move, responding to industry demands for relief. Telecom companies had written to the DoT, urging the removal of bank guarantee requirements for pre-2022 spectrum acquisitions. This decision builds on the 2021 Cabinet reforms, which waived the need for bank guarantees on spectrum acquired prospectively. "While we are studying the details of the decision and will be able to have a more substantial view of the same, we feel positive that this decision will enhance cash flow, free up capital and enable capital investments in network expansion and technology upgrades, ensuring a stronger and robust rollout of telecom networks in the future," said COAI.

## Share Market Opens in Green, Media and Pharma Stocks Shine

MUMBAI: The Indian stock market opened in green on Friday as buying was seen in the Media and Pharma sector in early trade.

At around 09.44 a.m., the Sensex was trading at 79,369.57 after gaining 325.83 points or 0.41 per cent, while the Nifty was trading at 24,019 after rising 104.85 points or 0.44 per cent.

The market trend remained positive. On the National Stock Exchange (NSE), 1345 stocks were trading in the green, while 876 stocks were in the red. Nifty Bank was up 224.45 points or 0.43 per cent at 52,131.30. Nifty Midcap 100 index was trading at 56,397.95 after gaining 97.20 points or 0.17 per cent. Nifty Smallcap 100 index was at 18,585.40 after gaining 73.85 points or 0.40 per cent.

According to market experts, "It is better for investors to wait and watch. Lots of stock-specific actions are likely starting today



in response to the inclusion of 45 new stocks to the F&O list."

Buy on dips strategy may not yield short-term gains in this market. However, this strategy can be applied by investors with a medium to long-term time horizon. Large Caps in financials, IT, capital goods and telecom are ideal for accumulation from a medium to long-term perspective," they said.

In the Sensex pack, Sun Pharma, Adani Ports, M&M, Bharti Airtel, L&T, Bajaj Finance, Titan and HCL Tech were the top gainers. Power

Grid, ITC, TCS, Maruti, Tata Steel and Tech Mahindra were the top losers.

In Asian markets, the markets of China and Hong Kong were trading in green. Whereas, the markets of Bangkok, Jakarta, Seoul and Japan were trading in red. The US stock markets closed in red on the previous trading day.

Mandar Bhojane, Research Analyst of Choice Broking said, "In the Nifty 50, the daily chart shows a bearish candle, reflecting profit booking after a pull-back from key support levels.

## Caution save being cheated in UPI Transactions



SATISH SINGH

According to the Ministry, the payments being made through Unified Payments Interface (UPI), developed by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), are increasing significantly every year. In November 2024 alone, Rs 200 lakh crore was paid through UPI and the number of UPI transactions crossed 10 thousand crores. In the current financial year, during the period from April to July, transactions worth Rs.81 lakh crore were done through UPI, which is 37 percent more than the transactions done in the same period last year. Also, it is more than the digital transactions done in major countries of the world.

With the help of UPI, India is continuously setting an example in the world in terms of digital payments. UPI is being used not only in cities but also in remote villages or remote areas. Most importantly, it is very popular in rural and remote areas. The main reason for its popularity is the simple & secure method of its use.

To use UPI, the user needs a smart phone, SIM card, internet and bank account and to make a transaction, the user has to link his phone number to the bank account. Thereafter, the user can transfer money to anyone in real time with the help of phone number and QR code from Google Pay, Phone-Pe, Bhim App etc.

Today, illiterate, farmers, laborers, clerks, officers, bureaucrats, police, judges, doctors, engineers, leaders and actors are all making payments through UPI, but due to the increase in the incidents of fraud in this digital

medium, fear is increasing in the minds of the people. In the last two and a half years, more than 27 lakh frauds were committed in UPI transactions, in which people lost Rs 2,145 crore. At the same time, during the 6 months of the current financial year i.e. April to September, people had to lose Rs 485 crore in 6.32 lakh fraud cases committed through UPI, while during the financial year 2022-23, people lost Rs 573 crore in 7.32 lakh cases of fraud.

To prevent fraud, the Reserve Bank of India launched the facility of Central Payment Fraud Information Registry in March 2020. All the units working under the control of the Reserve Bank have to share the information about fraud in digital transactions with the Reserve Bank, so that the central bank can curb the incidents of fraud with the help of an effective strategy.

In the financial year 2022-23, a total of 8,371 crore transactions were done through UPI, in which Rs 139.15 lakh crore was paid. At the same time, during the financial year 2023-24, 13,112 crore transactions were done, in which a total of Rs 199.96 lakh crore was paid, while in the current financial year, 8,566 crore transactions were done through UPI, in which Rs 122.05 lakh crore has been paid. However, there was a significant increase in cases of fraud during this period. During the financial year 2022-23, 7.25 lakh fraud incidents occurred, in which UPI users suffered a total loss of Rs 573 crore, while in the financial year 2023-24, 13.42 lakh fraud incidents occurred, in which UPI users suffered a loss of Rs 1,087 crore, while in the current financial year 2024-25, during the months of April to September, 6.32 lakh fraud incidents occurred, in which UPI users suffered



a loss of Rs 485 crore.

Today, a large number of digital transactions are being done through UPI in countries like Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines, Vietnam, Hong Kong, South Korea, Japan, France, United Kingdom, Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland etc. and due to its popularity, other countries of the world also want to buy this technology from India.

According to the global payment centre "Pay-Secure", 3,729 transactions were processed every second through UPI in September 2024, which was 2,348 in 2022. If UPI transactions processed between the period 2022 and September 2024 are compared, then there was an increase of 58 percent during this period. In terms of digital transactions, India's UPI has surpassed China's Alipay, PayPal and Brazil's PIX. According to "Pay-Secure", UPI processed 1,176 crore transactions in 2023, which was the highest in the world. At the same time, in July 2024, UPI processed transactions worth Rs 20.6 lakh crore, which is the highest monthly transaction value till date. Not only this, the monthly value of transactions has been consistently more than Rs 20 lakh since the month of May.

Currently 40 percent of payments in India are being made through digital means,

most of which are being made through UPI. According to a report by PwC India, an organization working on monitor the digital payments in India, UPI transactions will increase 3 times from 13,100 crores in 2023-24 to 43,900 crores in 2028-29, which will be 91 percent of digital retail transactions. It is clear from these figures that in the coming days, all digital transactions will be done through UPI.

Even though UPI users are being cheated, it is a very secure payment technology. UPI is considered safe for digital transactions due to its advanced encryption. Sensitive information such as bank account details and personal identification number, called "PIN", is protected in it. Also, every UPI transaction requires authentication through a PIN, which comes on the user's mobile in the form of OTP. Only then the transaction is executed. Even after these strong layers of security, if fraud is happening, then the reason for this is our lack of vigilance. In the current environment, it is very easy for cyber fraudsters to get the mobile number and personal details of the user, because people keep sharing phone numbers and personal information at places like e-shopping, restaurants, malls, parking lots, etc., which makes cyber fraud easy. UPI ID can also be hacked through phish-

ing or malware attack. Apart from this, users often share their UPI credentials or devices with others, which also increases the chances of UPI ID being hacked.

To avoid cyber fraud, it is very important to keep UPI credentials safe and not share them with anyone. The Central Government and the Reserve Bank of India are also working continuously to prevent online fraud, but they cannot be called expected.

In the past years, banking transactions have undergone a radical change, especially on the digital front. Today digital transactions are being done through many mediums such as Internet Banking, YONO, Cards, etc., but after the introduction of UPI, the use of other means of digital transactions has decreased significantly, because it is very easy to transact through UPI. Today, illiterate, unorganized sector workers, vendors of vegetables, fruits, clothes, toys etc. on carts and on footpath, taxi and rickshaw drivers, laborers, farmers, etc. are transacting through it in large numbers, but when cheated, they are unable to recover their money.

In short, it can be said that the most effective way to avoid digital fraud is to be cautious during digital transactions, not to share UPI credentials with anyone else and to always remain alert. Generally, people from the underprivileged sections are not aware of the ways to avoid fraud. Therefore, banks and other financial institutions, media, police, other related government departments etc. should keep making everyone aware in this matter, only then the incidents of fraud in UPI transactions can be reduced.

Satish Singh, Ahmedabad Based Senior Columnist, views are personal

## SEBI Intervenes in C2C Advanced Systems' SME IPO Listing

NEW DELHI: C2C Advanced Systems, a prominent defence and aerospace systems developer, has temporarily deferred its initial public offering (IPO) following regulatory intervention from the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI).

The company has extended an unprecedented opportunity for investors to withdraw their applications from the ongoing small and medium enterprise (SME) IPO.

In a formal notice, C2C Advanced Systems announced that investors, excluding anchor investors, can withdraw their bids from November 26 to November 28.

The withdrawal windows are strategically timed: qualified institutional buyers (QIB) and non-institutional investors (NII) can withdraw until 4:00 pm, while retail investors have until 5:00 pm on the first day, with similar timings available on the subsequent two days.

Prior to SEBI's intervention, the IPO had garnered exceptional market interest,



being oversubscribed nearly 96 times. Priced between Rs 214 and Rs 226 per unit, the issue was set to close for subscription on Tuesday.

SEBI has reportedly requested the company to appoint independent auditors and obtain an independent financial audit report.

The listing schedule has been adjusted, with the IPO now expected to list on or before December 3. The company anticipates finalising share allotment by November 29.

Additionally, the National Stock Exchange (NSE) will establish a monitoring agency to oversee fund utilisation post-listing.

This incident mirrors a previous regulatory action earlier this year when SEBI halted the listing of Trafiksol ITS Technologies due to concerns about potential fund misuse.

Such interventions underscore the regulatory body's commitment to protecting investor interests and maintaining market integrity.

## Sales under Telecom PLI reach Rs 65,320 Crore, Exports at Rs 12,384 Crore

NEW DELHI: The production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme for telecom and networking products has seen 42 applicant companies (including 28 MSMEs) with a cumulative investment of Rs 3,925 crore and exports reaching Rs 12,384 crore (till September 30), the government informed the Parliament on Wednesday.

This PLI scheme was launched in June 2021 with a total financial outlay of Rs 12,195 crore.



Till September, the applicant companies had clocked

networking products, incentives ranging from 4 to 7 per cent, an additional 1 per cent incentive for MSMEs for the first 3 years, and an additional 1 per cent incentive for products 'Designed in India'. The minister informed that to bolster local manufacturing, the Telecom Technology Development Fund (TTDF) scheme was launched in 2022 with the aim of funding research and development of technologies, products and services for providing telecom services in rural and remote areas.

Salient features of the scheme are 33 telecom and

# INTERNATIONAL

## India and China move closer to resolving border standoff: Beijing

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and his Chinese counterpart Admiral Dong Jun had a positive and constructive meeting in Vientiane on the sidelines of a regional security conclave.

New Delhi: The militaries of China and India are making "great progress" in implementing the disengagement agreement to end over four-year-long standoff in eastern Ladakh, China's Defence Ministry said Thursday.

"We also look forward to harmonious dance between the Chinese dragon and Indian Elephant with concerted steps," Defence Ministry spokesperson Sr Col Wu Qian said while addressing the monthly media briefing here.



He said Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and his Chinese counterpart Admiral Dong Jun had a positive and constructive meeting in Vientiane, the capital city of Laos, on the sidelines of a regional security conclave, last week.

The two sides are implementing the settlement reached between the two countries, he said, answering a question on the progress of the execution of the agreement reached between the two countries last month to end the standoff in eastern

Ladakh. "Now, we are making great progress," he said. The two ministers agreed to implement the important consensus reached between the top leaders and promote stable relations between the two countries, the spokesman said. Wu said the two militaries should strictly abide by the recent common understandings reached by the two sides to de-escalate tensions at the border areas, make efforts to bring down the tensions and focus on enhancing mutual trust and exchanges between the two countries.

"We hope the two sides can seize the opportunity and build new momentum to make new progress in the military-to-military relations," he said.

## Mexico to stop flow of illegal immigrants into US: Trump



President-elect Donald Trump on Thursday said Mexico has agreed to immediately stop illegal immigrants from going to his border with the US.

This comes days after Trump threatened to impose a 25 per cent tariff on all imports from Mexico and Canada for their inability to stop the flow of illegal immigrants into the United States. In a post on his Truth

Mexico will stop people from going to our Southern Border, effective immediately. This will go a long way toward stopping the illegal invasion of the USA"

Social platform, Trump said he spoke to Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum Pardo on the phone and the two had a productive conversation.

"Mexico will stop people from going to our Southern Border, effective immediately. This will go a long way toward stopping the illegal invasion of the USA. Thank you," Trump said in his post.

## UN Secretary-General Calls for Urgent Action to End Violence Against Women



UNITED NATIONS: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has made a strong appeal for immediate action to end violence against women and girls, describing it as an "epidemic that shames humanity." The call was made on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, observed on November 25.

Guterres highlighted alarming statistics, noting that on average, 140 women and girls are killed daily by family members, and about one in three women experiences physical or sexual violence. This situation, he warned, is worsening due to crises including conflict, climate change, and hunger, which exacerbate existing inequalities. He further noted the use of sexual violence as a weapon in war, underscoring the severity of the issue. The UN's Spotlight Initiative and the UNiTE to End Violence against Women by 2030 initiative are both mobilizing efforts to address and eradicate violence against women and girls. Guterres urged global cooperation and emphasized the need for justice, accountability, and advocacy to address this crisis. Reflecting on the nearly three-decade-old Beijing Declaration, which pledged to eliminate violence against women, he stated, "It's beyond time to deliver."

## Nine Killed, 40 Houses Buried by Landslides in Uganda



KAMPALA: Nine bodies have been recovered, and more fatalities are feared following landslides in Uganda's eastern district of Bulambuli, an official said on Thursday.

Ramazan Twalla, the assistant chief administrative officer for Bulambuli, told Xinhua over the phone that the landslides swept through three sub-counties on Wednesday night, burying around 40 houses.

"I can confirm that nine bodies have so far been recovered this morning. The residents are still digging the soil and we expect to recover more bodies because many houses were buried," Twalla said.

"We expect the government to send in official search and rescue teams as well as humanitarian assistance in the form of food and temporary shelters," he added, Xinhua news agency reported.

The landslides were triggered by days of heavy downpour in the mountainous region, said Twalla.

## Australia Passes World-First Social Media Ban for Under-16s

CANBERRA: Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese announced that social media companies now hold a social responsibility to protect children, following the passage of groundbreaking legislation that bans anyone under the age of 16 from using social media platforms.

Legislation Overview

The Senate passed the legislation late Thursday night, with final approval from the House of Representatives on Friday morning. The new law is set to take effect in 12 months. Social media companies that fail to prevent under-16s from accessing their platforms will face fines of up to 50 million Australian dollars (\$32.5 million).



Albanese's Remarks

Albanese emphasized the importance of safeguarding young Australians, stating: "Platforms now have a social responsibility to ensure the safety of our kids is a priority for them." Acknowledging potential enforcement challenges, he added: "We don't argue that its implementation will be perfect, just like the alcohol ban for under 18s doesn't mean that someone under 18 never has access, but we know that it's the right thing to do."

Industry Concerns- Meta, the parent company of Facebook and Instagram, expressed concern over the rapid progression of the legislation, stating: "We are concerned about the process which rushed the legislation through while failing to properly consider the evidence, what industry already does to ensure age-appropriate experiences, and the voices of young people."

Next Steps- A government-funded trial of age verification technologies is expected to determine how the law will be enforced, aiming to balance security with usability while ensuring children's safety online.

## US Customs Seizes Over 3,000 Fake Gibson Guitars Worth \$18 Million

LOS ANGELES: In the largest counterfeit musical instrument bust on record, US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers have seized over 3,000 fake Gibson electric guitars at the Los Angeles/Long Beach Seaport. If authentic, the guitars would have had an estimated retail value of \$18 million, according to CBP officials.

Gibson, an iconic American guitar manufacturer founded in 1902 in Kalamazoo, Michigan, produces all its instruments in the US. Genuine Gibson guitars typically retail from \$500 to over \$10,000, depending on the model.

The counterfeit guitars, destined for e-commerce platforms,



were flagged for using inferior materials that could pose health risks, as well as faulty electrical components that increase the likelihood of fires.

"This seizure is a critical reminder of the dangers associated with buying fraudulent products from unverified sources," said Port Director Africa Bell. "These knockoffs are part of a massive scheme to deceive American consumers."

## Spain and Germany Join DHL Plane Crash Investigation in Lithuania

VILNIUS: Investigators from Spain and Germany will assist Lithuanian authorities in determining the cause of a DHL plane crash near Vilnius airport. Laurynas Naujokaitis, Director of the Lithuanian Justice Ministry's Transport Accident and Incident Investigation Division, confirmed the involvement of international experts.

Germany's aviation safety authority has dispatched four investigators to Lithuania, while Spain is sending two experts. The investigation, which will prioritize aviation safety, is expected to take at least a year. The US aviation administration has also been



notified since the crashed Boeing 737-476 (SF) was manufactured in the United States.

The plane, owned by Spanish airline Swift Air, was operating on behalf of German shipping company DHL. It crashed into a residential area near Vilnius airport while flying from Leipzig, Germany, resulting in the death of a pilot and injuries to three others.

## World Bank Appoints Judith Green as New Country Manager for Malaysia to Boost Development

NEW DELHI: The World Bank Group has appointed Judith Green as the new country manager for Malaysia, a move aimed at enhancing the organization's support for Malaysia's public and private sector priorities. This role, which consolidates World Bank Group leadership at the country level, aims to improve coordination and access to the organization's full range of products and services, enabling quicker and more impactful support for Malaysia's development goals.

Green, a Jamaican national, brings experience from her recent position as country manager for the Pacific Islands, Papua New Guinea, Australia, and New Zealand with the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the private-sector arm of



the World Bank Group. In her role there, she focused on driving private-sector investments to create jobs and foster growth.

Her appointment aligns with Malaysia's economic diversification efforts, which have shifted the country from an agriculture and commodity-based economy to one increasingly driven by manufacturing and services.

## Russia Bans Entry for 30 British Nationals amid Rising Tensions

MOSCOW: In a retaliatory move, Russia's Foreign Ministry has imposed entry bans on 30 British nationals, citing "hostile actions" by the UK government. The list includes senior political figures such as Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner, Chancellor of the Exchequer Rachel Reeves, and Home Secretary Yvette Cooper, along with officials from military, high-tech sectors, and media outlets.

This decision comes on the heels of escalating diplomatic tensions. Earlier on Tuesday, Russia summoned the British ambassador to lodge a formal protest and expelled a British



diplomat, Wilkes Edward Prior, accusing him of espionage and sabotage activities. According to Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB), Prior must leave the country within 48 hours.

Moscow criticized London for what it described as foster-

ing "aggressive anti-Russian rhetoric," "imposing" "illegitimate sanctions," "and supporting Ukraine's government, which Russia labeled as a "neo-Nazi Kyiv regime."

In response, the UK Foreign Office rejected the accusations as "malicious and baseless" and promised to retaliate. "This is not the first time Russia has made such accusations against our staff. We will respond in due course," a Foreign Office spokesperson said.

Russia has warned that it may expand the sanctions list further in response to ongoing tensions with the British authorities.

### INFLUENCED BY MUSK AND RAMASWAMY

## India Seeks Dismantling of Top-Heavy Bureaucracy, Reduction of Political Cost

GOPAL MISRA

It is being increasingly asked in India, whether the PM Narendra Modi's policies could really usher in a transparent people-friendly cost-effective system of governance. A series of informal exchanges of ideas among academicians, top civil servants, both working and also have superannuated reveal that his administration despite having a stable political system continues to be in an election mode indulging in false narratives of Modi's successes.

The cost of the administration has gone up in the past 10 years, and so the black money; it has mushroomed through the shell companies, including the huge funds being siphoned off to the accounts in the Swiss Banks, and recently it has recorded unprecedented deposits from Indians.

Interestingly, this disquiet has recently been noticed crystallizing among the non-political, but experienced people having a thorough knowledge of the governance and the geopolitics. These mute voices seldom vocal on the media and public platforms, expect that being a parliamentary democracy, the opposition parties should have picked up the gauntlet for challenging the government for bet-

ter governance, but instead they have been indulging in accusations without offering substantial evidences against the government as well as the prime minister personally.

On the other hand, the President-elect, Donald Trump, has already usher in live debates for stopping wasteful expenditures in different departments of the Federal government, even two months before his formal inauguration as the President scheduled on January 20, 2025. During this on-going period of transition, Trump's team of DOGE (Department of Government Efficiency) comprising have already seen working for restructuring federal agencies slashing wasteful spending and cut down excess regulations.

The National Taxpayers Union Foundation of the US has noticed that the unnecessary expenditures coast 546 billion USD per year, almost two percent of the country's gross domestic product. It is a voluntary organization, but in India, the statutory role of the Public Accounts Committee is being undermined. Meanwhile, Vivek Ramaswamy has stated that "the slapping the bureaucracy on the wrist won't solve the problems, the only right answer is a massive downsizing."

Public Accounts Committee or PAC

The Indian constitution has



provided an impartial auditing system of the government under the Competent and Auditor General of India, who submits his reports to Parliament through the Public Accounts Committee. Interestingly, its present chairman, K.V. Venugopal, a leader of the Congress Party, but it is not known whether he has made any substantial contribution in disciplining government expenditures in recent years.

It, naturally has caused dismay in the civil society. A senior bureaucrat has recently confided to *The Financial World* (FW) that a sense of helplessness has percolated even within the ruling establishment comprising the BJP and its allies. It has disrupted the fragile sensitive balance of power within the members of Parliament in the ruling party. It was witnessed, when for his third Modi got himself leader of the National Democratic Alliance and later the docile MPs of the ruling party endorsed the PM for his third term; according to the established parliamentary procedure, he should have been endorsed for the coveted post only after being chosen by his own party. Thus, the role of selecting the new prime minister was denied to the newly elected BJP MPs.

In this denial process, the party leaders like the Defense Minister, Rajnath Singh, and other cabinet ministers, including the Lok Sabha speaker, Om Birla, were seen functioning like a deputy secretary in the PMO. It appeared that before the meeting of the parliamentary party, they were handed over the text to adhere to from the powers-that-be to toe the political line, as prescribed to them. Thus, there is little hope for any improvement from the honorable members of parliament.

System Hijacked

In the American system, both Elon Musk and Vivek

Ramaswamy are established billionaires and they oppose crony capitalism i.e. offering level playing ground to all competitors, but in the present Modi regime, the company for road building or a powerhouse is often chosen before the government invites tenders. The top bureaucrats assigned to regulate the system are being emasculated, who have little option but to obey the diktat from the above.

The tax collectors are being used to serve the political interests in India; recently, the income tax authorities issued notice to a senior bank official, because her husband, a former secretary in the Union Finance Ministry, later elevated as the member of the Election Commission, had dared to unearth the web of the black money being used by the ruling party. Instead, he finally decided to quit the Election Commission. His wife, however, was exonerated only after the ruling party's bigwigs were told that the details regarding their financial bungling and parking of the country's funds abroad would soon be released on the international media. It had the desired effect. The income tax notice was finally withdrawn.

It is difficult to ascertain the possible impact of the personal chemistry between Modi and Mukesh Ambani on the country's governance.

Most of the political observers in India as well as abroad were stunned, when during the oath-taking ceremony Ambani expressed his appreciation for Modi by keeping his hand on the shoulders of the prime minister, indeed a friendly gesture. Since 1947, no businessman ever dared to violate the established protocol and norms towards the head of the government.

Another reason that few can even debate the policies of the present regime is due to the fact that there is no political challenge from the disparate outfits being run like a family business from Tamil Nadu to UP and Bihar. In this context, if any policy shift for introducing economy in the governance, it has to come from Narendra Modi himself. Few can teach him the art of governance to his all-knowing establishment, he, however, continues to enjoy his decade old rhetoric of ushering in a corruption-free regime, and Indian economy is poised to supersede China soon. The situation is alarming, because the Modi establishment has started believing in its own propaganda.

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

## Trump Cabinet Nominees Targeted by Bomb Threats and Swatting Incidents



WASHINGTON: Several nominees and appointees of US President-elect Donald Trump have been targeted by bomb threats and "swatting" attacks, according to a statement from Trump transition spokeswoman Karoline Leavitt.

"Last night and this morning, several of President Trump's Cabinet nominees and administration appointees were subjected to violent, un-American threats to their lives and the safety of those living with them," Leavitt said on Wednesday.

Nature of the Threats- The incidents include Bomb threats directed at Cabinet nominees.

Swatting attacks—false emergency reports intended to provoke a heavily armed police response.

Targeted Officials

According to CBS News, the following individuals were among those targeted:

- Susie Wiles, senior Trump adviser.
- Pam Bondi, Trump's incoming White House chief of staff and former Florida attorney general, who has been nominated as the next US Attorney General.
- Congresswoman Elise Stefanik, nominee for US Ambassador to the United Nations.
- Howard Lutnick, nominee for Secretary of Commerce.
- Brooke Rollins, nominee for Secretary of Agriculture.
- Law Enforcement Response
- Authorities responded swiftly to secure the safety of the affected individuals and their families. Investigations are ongoing, and law enforcement agencies are coordinating efforts to identify and apprehend those responsible for the threats.
- Swatting incidents are particularly dangerous as they can escalate quickly and put innocent lives at risk due to the involvement of heavily armed Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) teams.
- These attacks come amid heightened tensions surrounding the upcoming transition of power, with security concerns growing for Trump's incoming administration.

## Bitcoin Scam Probe: ED Raids 15 Premises of Raj Kundra, Others in Mumbai, UP

**MUMBAI:** The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday swooped on the homes and offices of businessman Raj Kundra and others in Mumbai and Uttar Pradesh, in connection with ongoing investigations into the bitcoin scam case, official sources said here.

Among those raided include Ripu Sudan Kundra alias Raj Kundra - the husband of Bollywood actress Shilpa Shetty - and a few of his associates, with the ED teams searching some 15 locations in the two states.

The latest action is purportedly linked to a money-laundering probe arising out of the bitcoin scam in which Kundra and others had allegedly collected around Rs 6,600 crore in 2017 from the public with tall promises of a 10 per



cent/month return in the form of Crypto assets.

In April 2024, the ED had raided and attached multiple assets of Kundra and Shetty worth Rs 97 crore, under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act

(PMLA).

Following multiple complaints and FIRs registered in Maharashtra and Delhi in 2019 and later in 2024, the central probe agency had launched the investigations against Kundra and his other

associates.

The attachment orders included Kundra's flat in the tony Juhu suburb, a bungalow in the Lonavala hill station (Pune district), and various kinds of investments in stocks plus other assets - which the couple had challenged in the Bombay High Court last month.

Almost five years ago, the controversial Kundra was earlier accused of the production, distribution and uploading of pornographic content through certain mobile Apps, with some international strands.

The Mumbai Police, which laid bare the sensational scam in 2021, had nabbed Kundra and other co-accused. He was jailed in July 2021 and granted bail in September that year.

## Cold wave grips Jammu and Kashmir and Leh-Ladakh

**FW DESK**  
Jammu

A severe cold wave continues to sweep across Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, with Nyoma in Ladakh recording a bone-chilling -14.2°C, according to the Meteorological Department (MeT). South Kashmir's Shopian emerged as the coldest area in the valley, registering -5.5°C.

Sub-zero temperatures were reported across the region, including Pahalgam at -5.0°C and Srinagar at -2.1°C, marking the coldest night of the season in the summer capital. Other locations in South Kashmir, such as Anantnag (-5.1°C) and Pulwama (-4.8°C), also recorded freezing conditions, while Kulgam remained steady at 0°C for the third consecutive day. In North Kashmir, Kupwara saw a low



of -2.3°C, with Bandipora and Baramulla at -3.3°C and -3.2°C, respectively. Central Kashmir towns like Budgam (-3.6°C) and Ganderbal (-2.1°C) were similarly affected by the cold.

The Jammu division experienced comparatively milder temperatures, with Baderwah recording the lowest at 1.2°C. Jammu city reported 10.1°C, while Katra and Kathua recorded 9.2°C and 10.2°C, respective-

ly. In Ladakh, besides Nyoma's extreme low, Stakna registered -13.4°C, Tangste -12.8°C, and Drass -12.2°C. Leh and Kargil recorded -8.8°C and -8.3°C, respectively. The MeT department has predicted clear skies for Thursday but expects moderate rain in parts of the Kashmir Valley between November 29 and December 3. Isolated rainfall is also forecasted for Jammu on December 2 and 3.

## Zarina Wahab Says She Wants Prabhas as Her Son in Her Next Life



**MUMBAI:** Veteran actress Zarina Wahab has heaped praise on star Prabhas and said that she wants him as a son in her next life.

In a conversation on Lehren TV, Zarina shared that she is doing a film titled 'Raja Sahab' with Prabhas and then went on to praise the star. 'I'm doing one film with Prabhas also. Raja Sahab. You must see that movie. Abhishek Kishore, he's releasing the film in April. But let me tell you one thing about a person like Prabhas... There's no one like him. He's such a nice person. I say, I want two sons in my next birth. One Prabhas and one Suraj. Such a nice person. Such a lovely person.' She revealed that Prabhas 'doesn't have any ego.' 'He'll come on set, there are three heroines in this film. Then there are character artists also. But after the pack-up, he'll say bye to everyone. He'll say bye to everyone after the pack-up. What's the need to say bye to him? And the work is done. In the next scene, he's not there. He will not go to his van.' The star said that he will call his home to order food for people on set.

'He'll sit in the corner. If you say, I'm hungry. He'll call home and order food for 40-50 people. Not just you, I'll feed everyone. No, I'll feed everyone. Really? I can't tell you how nice a person he is. May God give him a long life and good health. He's such a darling.' 'He's such a lovely person. I never thought I'd work with Prabhas. He made me so comfortable on the first day. Not only me. There were new heroines. I spoke to them nicely. He's got a smiling face. We've done seven schedules. I've never seen him misbehaving. I've never seen him talking loudly. Excellent person he is.'

## Canara Bank celebrates Kannada Rajyotsava 2024

**FW DESK**  
Bengaluru

Canara Bank celebrated Kannada Rajyotsava 2024 with great enthusiasm and fervor at its Head Office located at 112, J.C. Road, Bengaluru. The event highlighted the rich heritage of Kannada culture, language, and art.

The celebration was graced by the presence of the renowned quiz master, Dr. N. Someshwar, as the Chief Guest. The event was presided over by K. Satyanarayana Raju, Managing Director & CEO of the Bank. The occasion was also attended by Ashok Chandra, Executive Director, along with Chief General Managers, General Managers, Deputy General Managers, and other senior officials.

Dr. N. Someshwar inaugurated the event by lighting the ceremonial lamp and delivered an enlightening address on the history of Kannada, its art, and



to understand and appreciate the regional language.

The event concluded with a closing address by General Manager, Rama Naik K, who emphasized the importance

of celebrating cultural heritage and expressed gratitude to all participants for their contributions to making the event a resounding success. The celebration also featured vibrant cultural performances by the Bank's employees and officers, reflecting the essence of Kannada traditions and culture. The enthusiastic participation of staff and their creative presentations made the occasion memorable. Canara Bank remains committed to preserving and promoting regional languages and culture as part of its ethos and values.

literature. Engaging with the audience, he conducted an interactive quiz session and honored the winners with Kannada books, promoting the language and its literary treasures. Speaking on the occasion, Executive Director Ashok Chandra highlighted Canara Bank's initiative to encourage employees from non-Karnataka regions to learn Kannada. He mentioned the successful implementation of the in-house publication 'Nimma Pradeshika Bashe Kaliyiri', which serves as a learning guide for employees

of celebrating cultural heritage and expressed gratitude to all participants for their contributions to making the event a resounding success. The celebration also featured vibrant cultural performances by the Bank's employees and officers, reflecting the essence of Kannada traditions and culture. The enthusiastic participation of staff and their creative presentations made the occasion memorable. Canara Bank remains committed to preserving and promoting regional languages and culture as part of its ethos and values.

## Harmful effects of smog on youths, aged and even unborn child

**SATISH HANDA**  
Rohtak

The entire North is in the grip of severe smog leaving an ill effect on the health of youngsters, old people, newborns and unborn children in the womb causing suffocation, heart attack and brain stroke. The level of pollution in North India has become dangerous, having a very bad effect on people's health. Experts of Rohtak's PGIMS say that due to smog, the pollution particles present in the air are getting mixed in the blood, due to which people's memory is decreasing and through women, poisonous air is also reaching the fetus growing in the womb as such not only the children are at greater risk from air pollution in Haryana and Delhi, smog is most dangerous for pregnant women also. While talking to media persons expressing concern Dr. Dhruv Chaudhary, Dean Academic Affairs of PGIMS Rohtak said that the danger is increasing due to the presence of pollution particles in the blood and around 130 cases related to lungs are coming every day in OPD at the hospital. He said there is a 35 percent increase in respiratory patients.

Dr Chaudhary said that because of smog, the pollution particles present in the



air are getting mixed in the blood. People from young to old are losing their memory. The poisonous air is also reaching the fetus in the womb through women. He said the number of patients suffering from respiratory and brain related problems due to smog is the highest, as such many times new born children have to be kept on oxygen for two to three days after birth, the cases of premature delivery are also increasing, at the same time, the OPD of patients affected by smog has reached eight thousand at present.

According to Dr Chaudhary, patients with high blood pressure are at risk of brain stroke (paralysis) and asthma patients are at risk of heart attack. The poisonous mixture of smog reaches the eyes and lungs through breathing. The most poisonous gas in smog is sulphur dioxide as well as carbon monoxide in high quantities which directly enters the body through breathing, which mixes with the blood and starts expelling oxygen and takes in carbon dioxide. This causes

a lack of oxygen in the body and then it directly affects the brain, increasing the risk of brain hemorrhage and heart attack. He said, if the brain does not get oxygen for even a few moments, the person can go into a coma. There is also a risk of losing memory and cases of memory loss are coming to PGIMS.

According to Dr. Garima Narwal, Chest and TB Specialist of PGI, the highest number of respiratory patients coming to the Emergency, has reached from 60 to 130. This includes most people above 50 years of age. Dr Garima said, «If the treatment is not done on time, the risk of infection increases. On an average, a person's brain needs about 49 milliliters of oxygen per minute, which is about 20 percent of the total oxygen of the body, whereas the brain contains only two percent of the body's weight. Glucose is needed to power neurons in the brain, without oxygen, brain cells cannot metabolize glucose. Due to lack of oxygen in the brain, brain cells do not get energy and brain cells gradually start dying, causing headache, fatigue, dizziness, weakening memory and can also cause changes in DNA which is very dangerous for pregnant women and children due to lack of oxygen to the brain.»

## Aptech Virtual Production Academy students bag global film award

**DOMINICK RODRIGUES**  
Mumbai

Aptech, India's first holistic end-to-end virtual production academy, is highlighting the Virtual Production Academy as part of 'Skill India' to equip the next generation of filmmakers for success, according to Atul Jain, Managing Director & CEO. Showcasing state-of-the-art technology, Jain revealed here recently how modern, innovative tools are revolutionizing the world of animation and VFX, where ICVFX (In Camera Visual Effects) enables real-time integration of virtual environments, allowing actors to perform within digital



settings. Expressing optimism about virtual production and its training unlocking a vast array of career opportunities for students and professionals in India and globally, he described how Aptech students acted in - and made --an inhouse horror film titled 'The Gift Box' in barely 48 hours, and which won them the 2nd prize in the MSI AI Award at

the VIVE Mars Global Virtual Production Short Film Competition 2024.

'Through collaborative projects, students get the opportunity to use their skills in real-world scenarios in working on their own virtual production projects and receive a micro-credential with direct access to employment opportunities,' he said while noting that Aptech - a public-listed company - has churned out over 75 lakh students since 1986 alongside making films production through Virtual Production Academy become a matter of reality in hours and days instead of years like in the past.

## J&K CM Omar Abdullah, Dr Farooq Abdullah in Saudi Arabia to perform pilgrimage

**SRINAGAR:** Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, father Dr Farooq Abdullah and the other senior leaders of the ruling National Conference (NC) are in Saudi Arabia to perform pilgrimage.

Other National Conference leaders include Nasir Wani, Javed Dar, Tanvir Sadiq, and Mushtaq Guroo. They are visiting the two holy cities of Madina and Mecca as part of their spiritual journey.



Upon their arrival in Madina, the leaders visited Masjid-e-Nabawi, the second holiest site in Islam, where they offered prayers, seeking divine guidance, and peace for the people of Jammu and Kashmir. «Alhamdulillah, we

have arrived in the blessed city of Madina. Prayed at Masjid-e-Nabawi, seeking guidance, mercy, and peace for all.» senior National Conference leader Tanvir Sadiq posted on Twitter.

Omar Abdullah had also taken to Twitter to announce his pilgrimage, his first since taking over as the J&K chief minister. Earlier, in January also, Omar along with Dr Farooq Abdullah had performed Umrah.

## Impact of Electronic Media on Language and Culture

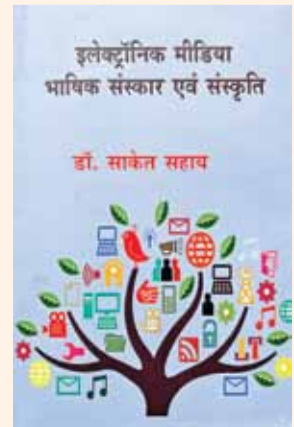
**SATISH SINGH**

The author, Saket Sahay has studied journalism. He has been doing freelance writing for a long time and is an official language officer in a nationalized bank. It shows that the author is well aware of the various aspects of journalism, electronic media and the state and direction of the Hindi language.

Being a Hindi devotee and sensitive towards the purity of the language, the author

has expressed deep concern in his book about the tampering with the language in the electronic media. Even though Hindi has not become the national language in India, it has the pride of being a folk language. It is the language of the masses. Therefore, it is necessary that the purity of the language is maintained.

The media plays an important role in the promotion and propagation of language and in maintaining and increasing its dignity. From this point of view, the importance of electronic media is incomparable, because its reach is global.



Electronic media is a group of digital devices and techniques,

which are used to store and disseminate information.

Many books have been written on electronic media before, but this is the first book in which emphasis has been laid on keeping the purity of language intact in the media of communication and at the same time the presence of linguistic ceremonies in the media has been described as necessary, because there is a synthetic relationship between language and culture. Language being the medium of expression of emotions is a part of our culture and represents it too. Therefore, the

development of language and literature is a major factor in the development of culture.

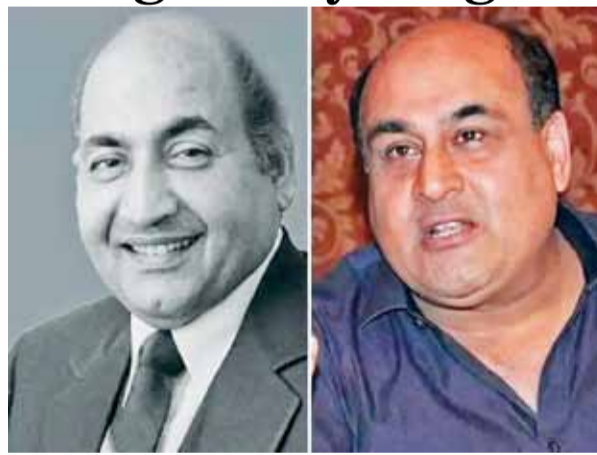
This book also sheds light on the history of communication media, importance of electronic journalism, impact of electronic media on society and democracy, its global reach etc. The discussion of electronic media is incomplete without mentioning social media, because it has become an important part of digital media and people have access to it, due to which it has a wide impact on politics and society.

There is a constant change in the means of communication, in which the pace of change in electronic media is the fastest. The author has expounded to explain the role of electronic media to the readers in a new perspective, in which he seems to be 100 percent successful.

Book- 'Electronic Media Bhashik Sanskar and Sanskriti' Language-Hindi/Price-350/- Publisher-Manav Prakashan, Chittaranjan Avenue, Kolkata First Edition-2018

Reviewer-Satish Singh, Ahmedabad, Mobile-8294586892

## Mohammad Rafi's Son Shahid Announces Biopic on Legendary Singer



**MUMBAI:** Music icon Mohammad Rafi's son Shahid Rafi has announced a biopic on his iconic father.

Shahid also shared that filmmaker Umesh Shukla, known for making films such as 'OMG-Oh My God!' and 'Dhoondte Reh Jaaoq', is in talks for helming the upcoming movie.

The biopic will officially be announced next month, as December 24, 2024 will mark Rafi's 100th birthday.

Known for crooning classics such as 'Likhe Je Khat Tujhe', 'DardE Dil DardE Jigar', 'Aaj Mausam Bada Beimaan', 'Main Zindagi Ka Saath Nibhata Chala Gaya', 'Kaun Hai Jo Sapnon Mein Aaya', 'Aaja Aaja', 'Parda Hai Parda', 'Gulabi Aankhein' and 'Kya Se Kya Ho Gaya', the legendary singer in his illustrious career has lent his vocals to over 1,000 films across Indian and foreign languages.

It was at the ongoing International Film Festival of India (IFFI), where a tribute was paid to Rafi along with several personalities including Raj Kapoor, Tapan Sinha and Akkineni Nageshwar Rao.

His son Shahid shared during the session titled 'Aasmaan Se Aaya Farishta - Mohammad Rafi - The King of Mel-

ody, that Umesh Shukla are in a conversation for the yet-untitled upcoming biography.

Shahid shared: 'The announcement will be made in December. I am making a biopic on Rafi sahab.... It is going to be the life story of Rafi sahab. Songs will also be part of the biopic.'

'We have made a contract with Umesh Shukla, director of 'OMG - Oh My God!' and '102 Not Out'. It will be a full-fledged feature film,' he added. Also present at the event were veteran actor Sharmila Tagore, singers Sonu Nigam, Anuradha Paudwal, and filmmaker Subhash Ghai.

Sharmila joined singer Sonu to croon the 1967 number 'Aasmaan Se Aaya Farishta' to pay a tribute to legendary singer Mohammed Rafi at the 55th edition of the International Film Festival of India (IFFI).

At the event, which commenced on November 20, paid a tribute to Rafi for his contribution to Hindi cinema. Several of his old classics were presented on the stage. Sonu and Sharmila were seen singing the song, which is from the film 'An Evening In Paris'. The track is originally picturised on Shamma Kapoor and the veteran star.