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**DELHI POLLS AN OPPORTUNITY TO CHOOSE BETWEEN AAP'S CORRUPTION AND BJP'S DEVELOPMENT, SAYS JP NADDA**



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## Delhi L-G Saxena issues gazette notification for Assembly elections



constituencies within Delhi to conduct elections for the Legislative Assembly.

"The Lieutenant Governor of the National Capital Territory of Delhi is hereby pleased to call upon all Assembly constituencies in the National Capital Territory of Delhi, to elect members to the Legislative Assembly of the National Capital Territory of Delhi, in accordance with the provisions of the said Act and of the rules and orders made thereunder," it added.

The Election Commission had announced the election schedule for the ninth Delhi Assembly election on January 7. Voting will occur on February 5 from 7 am to 6 pm and the results will be declared on February 8, while the election process will conclude by February 10. The current Assembly will stand dissolved on February 23, paving the way for the formation of a new government, the notification said further.

According to the official notification dated January 10, the election schedule had been announced in accordance with the Representation of the People Act, 1951. The notification read, "In

accordance with the provisions outlined in Section 15 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, and subsection (2) of the same section, the Lieutenant Governor has called upon all the Assembly

**NEW DELHI:** Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena on Friday issued a gazette notification for the Assembly elections in the Capital, following recommendations from the Election Commission (EC).

## India to Continue as Fastest-Growing Major Economy Globally: Report



**NEW DELHI:** India will continue to stand out as the fastest-growing major economy globally in the coming years with growth momentum to improve in 2025 as government spending is picking up again and consumer sentiment stays resilient, according to a Franklin Templeton report.

The structural growth outlook for India's economy remains very much intact, with various signs indicating that the slowdown in 2024 will be transitory, the report said. "All in all, we believe India can comfortably maintain its position as the world's fastest-growing major economy, with GDP growth of around 6.5 per cent until at least 2029. Income growth and the rise of the middle class will likely continue in tandem. We expect India's wealthy and middle-class populations to expand by 400 million people. In particular, the number of people in India's wealthiest class could grow three-fold,"

the report said.

"We also stay positive on India's vibrant digital economy and its beneficiaries, as well as the structural growth potential in the healthcare sector," it said.

India's economic growth slowed in 2024, with gross domestic product (GDP) year-on-year growth of just 5.4 per cent in the fiscal second quarter (July-September), the lowest in seven quarters. As a result, growth for the full fiscal year ending March 2025 will likely be 6.6 per cent, moderating from 8.2 per cent from a year earlier, based on Reserve Bank of India (RBI) forecasts.

The report said the slowdown is temporary, with deferred government spending in a general election year the primary cause. Heavy monsoon rainfall during the summer also proved disruptive to economic activities. Several high-frequency data points are showing improving underlying conditions for a recovery in growth.

Government spending has been picking up since September, suggesting that it is gradually ramping up its spending on priority initiatives, particularly infrastructure and rural development. Importantly, a pickup in government spending and activities should synergise capital expenditure (capex) growth in the private sector. For instance, faster approvals for construction and engineering projects will bolster company confidence to invest and hire more actively.

Private consumption is a major driver for India's economy and it is showing stronger growth momentum in the second half of this year. Consumer sentiment also remains resilient and year-ahead optimism has held firm, indicating a post-election recovery. Consumption growth should find further support if inflation cools in 2025. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation rate will moderate from 5.7 per cent in the October-December quarter of 2024 to 4 per cent in the July-September quarter of 2025, based on RBI forecasts, the report said.

The resumption of government spending, private sector capex growth and the resilience of domestic consumption, among other factors, may help India's economy return to normalcy in 2025. As growth accelerates again, the stage is set for earnings recovery, the report added.

DENSE FOG GRIPS DELHI-NCR

**IMD predicts light rain, temperature drop**



**NEW DELHI:** A thick layer of fog enveloped Delhi-NCR on Saturday morning, with the India Meteorological Department (IMD) predicting cloudy skies and light rain in the region.

The cold conditions are expected to persist, offering no immediate relief from dense fog and cold waves.

The IMD has forecast cloudy skies with light rain or drizzle during the morning hours on January 11 and 12. Over the past 24 hours, the city experienced a sharp drop in temperature, with readings dipping as low as 1 degree Celsius. Maximum and minimum temperatures were recorded between 18-22 degrees Celsius and 6-8 degrees Celsius, respectively. Although the fog is expected to clear gradually as the day progresses, light rain could prolong its impact. The minimum temperature in the capital is predicted to drop further to around 5 degrees Celsius in the coming days. Visibility conditions in Safdarjung initially dropped to 50 meters at 1:30 am but improved to 200 meters later. In Palam, visibility dropped to zero for three hours until 2 am, with easterly winds blowing at 6-8 km/h. Conditions improved gradually, reaching 500 meters by 7 am as winds shifted to the east-southeast at speeds of 15-18 km/h.

## Union Budget Falls on Saturday this Year, Stock Exchanges to Remain Open



**NEW DELHI:** As the preparations for the Union Budget 2025-26, which generally comes on February 1, are in full swing, all eyes are now on the official confirmation from the government about presenting the budget over the weekend this year.

There have been occasions in the past when the Union Budget was presented on Saturdays and the domestic stock markets were open. On February 1, 2020, and February 28, 2015, the markets were open on Saturday due to the presentation of the Union Budget. In a circular dated December 23, the National Stock Exchange (NSE), has already said that due to the presentation of the Union Budget, a special trading session has been kept for Saturday, February 1, 2025.

## Kejriwal targets Centre, demands inclusion of Delhi's Jat community in Central OBC list



**NEW DELHI:** As Assembly elections draw closer in Delhi, AAP convener and former chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday accused the BJP-led Central government of reneging on its promise to provide reservation to the capital's Jat community.

Speaking at a press conference, Kejriwal said he wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, demanding the inclusion of Delhi's Jat community in the Central OBC list.

He also accused the Centre of misleading the community for the past decade, and fail-

ing to deliver on its promises. "In 2015, the BJP invited Jat leaders to the prime minister's residence and assured them that Delhi's Jat community would be included in the Central OBC list. Union Home Minister Amit Shah promised the same in 2019. However, nothing has been done to fulfil these promises," Kejriwal said.

Drawing comparisons, he questioned why Jat students from Rajasthan benefit from reservations in Delhi University (DU), while Jat students from Delhi are denied the

same. "Thousands of children from the Jat community in Delhi are unable to secure admission in DU because they are not part of the Central OBC list," he said.

Kejriwal also alleged that despite Delhi's Jats being recognised under the OBC category in the state, the Central government has refused to extend the benefits to them.

"This is nothing but betrayal. The Centre must include Delhi's Jat community in the OBC list to ensure they receive reservations in Central government institutions, including for jobs and college admissions," the AAP supremo said.

Central agencies like the MCD, DDA, and PWD operate extensively in Delhi, and including Jats in the OBC list would open up significant opportunities for them, Kejriwal said, as he vowed to continue the fight until the community's demands are met.

## President Murmu urges Indian diaspora to contribute towards Viksit Bharat mission

**BHUBANESWAR:** President Droupadi Murmu on Friday said that the Indian diaspora can make significant contributions towards the realisation of India's mission of Viksit Bharat - a developed India by 2047, when the country will celebrate 100 years of its Independence.

Speaking at the valedictory session of the three-day Pravasi Bharatiya Convention here on Friday, President Murmu said: "Our nation today is marching towards Viksit Bharat - a developed India - by the year 2047. It is a National Mission that requires proactive and enthusiastic participation of every Indian, including those living abroad. The Indian Diaspora is an integral part of this vi-



sion. Their global presence gives them a unique perspective, and their achievements place them in a position to significantly contribute to the realization of

a developed India." She also said that the Indian diaspora represents the best of our country.

The President also noted that the Indian diaspora have carried with them not just the knowledge and skills acquired in this sacred land but also the values and ethos that have been the foundation of Indian civilisation for millennia.

President Murmu said that the Indian diaspora has made a mark in the fields of technology, medicine, arts, or entrepreneurship, which the world acknowledges and respects.

She expressed happiness over the fact that the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas convention has turned into a platform where

ideas converge, collaborations are forged, and the bonds between India and its diaspora are strengthened.

Referring to India's timeless philosophy of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, the President said that this vision is about creating an ecosystem that not only meets our needs, but also contributes to global well-being.

President Murmu said that India seeks to be a nation that balances economic progress with social justice and environmental stewardship, ensuring a bright future for generations to come.

She stated that the Indian Diaspora would play an essential role in achieving this vision.

## Platform to Propel India's Indigenous Cleantech Manufacturing Growth

**NEW DELHI:** India marked a significant milestone in its journey toward achieving climate goals and economic self-reliance with the launch of the Bharat Climate Forum on Friday here.

A national platform dedicated to unifying stakeholders from policy, industry, finance, and research to accelerate cleantech manufacturing in India, the Bharat Climate Forum aims to drive sustainable economic growth and innovation. Hosted by the Centre for Indigenous Economic Understanding (CIEU) and Dalberg Advisors, the Bharat Climate Forum is supported by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), NITI Aayog, and International Solar Alliance (ISA).

Addressing the launch of the forum, Minister for Railways Ashwini Vaishnav said: "Atmanirbhar Bharat embodies India's drive for economic sovereignty and technological leadership through innovation and collaboration. Our 4G-5G telecom stack showcases this spirit which the cleantech sector can imbibe, with public-private partnerships enabling world-class, competitive solutions. I thank the Bharat Climate Forum organizers for highlighting India's commitment to cleantech innovation for a sustainable future."

The forum comes at a time when India is pursuing ambitious climate targets, including



achieving net-zero emissions by 2070 and scaling up non-fossil fuel capacity to 500 GW by 2030. Despite progress in renewables, challenges such as reliance on imports for solar and wind infrastructure persist. Ashwani Mahajan, National Co-Convenor of Swadeshi Jagran Manch and Member-Secretary of the Bharat Climate Forum, emphasised the need for a comprehensive manufacturing policy to address these challenges.

"India's cleantech manufacturing sector holds immense potential to reduce import dependencies, stabilise energy transitions, and create millions of jobs. A robust policy framework is crucial in ensuring economic growth aligns with sustainability goals. By advancing solar, wind, and EV technologies, India is boldly pursuing Atmanirbhar Bharat, reinforcing the ethos of self-reliance and charting a roadmap to tackle the climate crisis for global benefit," he said.

## India's Forex Reserves Decline USD 4.11 Billion amid RBI Interventions

**NEW DELHI:** India's foreign exchange reserves have continued their downward trajectory, marking the twelfth decline in thirteen weeks, according to the latest data released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

The reserves decreased by USD 4.11 billion to reach USD 640.279 billion in the week ending December 27, reflecting the central bank's active involvement in currency market stabilisation.

The recent decline represents a significant shift from September's all-time high of USD 704.89 billion, with reserves



falling approximately 10 percent since then.

The RBI's strategic intervention in currency markets, involving both buying and selling of dollars to manage the rupee's volatility, has been identified as the primary factor behind this reduction.

Current figures show that foreign currency assets, the largest component of the reserves,

stand at USD 551.921 billion, while gold reserves are valued at USD 66.268 billion.

Despite the recent downturn, India's foreign exchange position remains robust, with current reserves sufficient to cover nearly a year's worth of projected imports.

The country's reserve management has shown mixed patterns over recent years, with an addition of approximately USD 58 billion in 2023, contrasting with a USD 71 billion decline in 2022. The reserves had gained over USD 20 billion in 2024 before the current decline began.

## Statistics reveal that 45% of Indian women are facing domestic violence

SATISH HANDA  
New Delhi

A home is often believed as just a heaven, a safe place where all family members live peacefully, but facts reveals that many times it also become a center of violence and becomes a dangerous place for the family, especially for female members live in anxiety, terror, stress and in great danger in their so called own house. Their human rights are violated and the couples live by facing threat of sexual, physical



and psychological violence occurring against women which include epidemic and disaster-related tension, insecurity and fear, along with social exclusion and movement constraints, which is a matter of concerns due to increase in gender-based violence re-

sulting in a large number of cases of break in the family. Domestic Violence' includes any act that causes harm to women by her intimate partner or a family member affecting women physically as well as mentally.

The United Nations Declaration defined domestic violence as 'any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to a woman. It has become a public health menace for society which never sees the caste, religion and nation.

## Digital Personal Data Protection Rules prioritise India's citizen-centric governance: PM Modi

**NEW DELHI:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said the Draft Digital Personal Data Protection Rules, 2025, prioritise India's commitment to citizen-centric governance as they aim to safeguard personal data while driving growth and inclusivity.

The Prime Minister, in his comments on X, referred to Minister for Electronics and IT Ashwani Vaishnav's explanation on the draft rules which seek to protect personal data of individuals and empower citizens. Union Minister Vaishnav highlighted that the Draft Digital Personal Data Protection Rules reflect India's leadership in shaping global data governance norms.

"Unlike some international models that lean heavily towards regulation, our approach is pragmatic and growth-oriented. This balance ensures that citizens are protected without stifling the innovative spirit that drives our startups and businesses. Small businesses and startups will face lower compliance burdens," the Minister observed.

"When we talk about the global future, then human-centric approaches should be foremost." These words by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the recent United Nations Summit of the



Future reflect India's vision of putting people first.

"This philosophy has guided our efforts in shaping the Draft Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Rules. The rules, after being finalised, would operationalise the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, bringing to life our commitment to safeguarding citizens' right to personal data protection," the Minister further stated.

The rules are designed with simplicity and clarity, ensuring that every Indian, regardless of their technical know-how, can understand and exercise their rights, he added. The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology on Friday released the draft rules for the Digital Personal Data Protection Act which make it mandatory for a Data Fiduciary to ensure the verifiable consent of a parent before processing any personal data of a child. The Act was passed in Parliament in August 2023 and the government is

seeking feedback on the draft rules through the MyGov portal till February 18, 2025.

According to the draft rules, "A Data Fiduciary shall adopt appropriate technical and organisational measures to ensure that verifiable consent of the parent is obtained before the processing of any personal data of a child and shall observe due diligence, for checking that the individual identifying herself as the parent is an adult who is identifiable". The identity must be established through government-issued IDs or digital tokens linked to identity services like Digital lockers. This is aimed at ensuring the privacy of a child on various social media platforms such as Google, Meta's Facebook and WhatsApp and X. The rules also make it mandatory for the Data Fiduciary to immediately inform any personal data breach to each affected Data Principal, in a concise, clear and plain manner and without delay".

# Delhi polls an opportunity to choose between AAP's corruption and BJP's development, says JP Nadda

**NEW DELHI:** BJP President J P Nadda has reviewed preparations for the upcoming Delhi Assembly polls, asking party leaders to reach out to new groups of people from various social segments and areas for better electoral impact, adding that "this election offers an opportunity to choose between Arvind Kejriwal's "falsehoods and corruption" and the BJP's "truth and development".



Nadda on Thursday visited the BJP's Delhi unit office and spent more than four hours meeting the in-charges and members of various poll panels, state functionaries and front organisations. He reviewed the preparations for the elections to 70-member Delhi Assembly scheduled on February 5. Nadda said the BJP will form the government in Delhi with a full majority, according to a BJP statement. "The BJP President said the party unit's outreach programmes and campaigns should focus on meeting new people and convincing them to support the BJP for better electoral results. He said interacting with the same set of people who

support the party does not bear fruit," said a senior Delhi BJP functionary. Nadda was informed during the course of the review meetings that more than one lakh women have been contacted through various campaigns and programmes so far. The BJP Chief asked the party's Mahila Morcha (women's wing) to reach out to more women ahead of the polls. He sought to boost the morale of the BJP leaders, saying the entire party needs to jump into the elections as a unified force to ensure the party's victory, the functionary said. Some functionaries present in

the meeting said Nadda told the leaders that there are a limited number of tickets in elections and everyone cannot get one. He said a real leader does not get disheartened if he fails to get a chance to contest the elections. "A leader will remain a leader even if she or he does not get a ticket," he said. In two separate meetings, Nadda interacted with members of the Election Coordination Committee and the Election Management Committee to gather updates on poll arrangements and provided guidance for improvement, according to the party statement.

The meetings, chaired by Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva, were attended by Delhi election in-charge Baijayant Panda, co-in-charge Atul Garg, State General Secretary (Organisation) Pawan Rana, poll coordination committee head and Union Minister Harsh Malhotra and co-head Manoj Tiwari, among others. Responding to Nadda's allegation against party convener Arvind Kejriwal, AAP, in a press statement, said, "The people of Delhi know that all corrupt leaders of the country have joined the BJP, while Arvind Kejriwal is a staunchly honest leader who has worked tirelessly for them." "Kejriwal has provided free electricity, world-class health and education model among others, achievements the BJP has failed to replicate in any of its 20 states," said AAP. The BJP has so far announced candidates on 29 of the 70 seats. The remaining candidates are likely to be announced soon as the Central Election Committee (CEC) of the party is meeting on Friday. The BJP is making all-out efforts to return to power after over 26 years.

# Parvesh Verma's illegal acts will reduce polls to farce: Kejriwal tells ECI



**NEW DELHI:** Seeking a ban on BJP nominee Parvesh Verma for Model Code of Conduct violation, the AAP's National Convener and former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday reiterated allegations of manipulation in the electoral rolls of New Delhi constituency, claiming the electoral process may be reduced to a "big farce" if the Election Commission of India (ECI) fails to intervene. Hitting back, Verma said the AAP's allegations against him and poll panel officials were a sign of Kejriwal conceding defeat even before voting on February 5. After leading a party delegation to the Election Commission, Kejriwal alleged wrongdoing in addition of 13,000 voters and deletion of 5,500 voters' name between December 15-January 7 in the New Delhi

Assembly seat, where he is pitted against Verma and Congress nominee Sandeep Dikshit. "We have given an application to the ECI... the practices which are going on are going to render the election process a big farce. However, we have full faith in the Election Commission and hope strict action will be taken to bring the entire process on track," Kejriwal said. The AAP leader sought the removal of the District Election officer and Electoral Registration Officer of the seat, alleging that the officials have not taken any action against the "corrupt practices" of Verma who is openly conducting job fairs, distributing spectacles and giving money to women. Kejriwal accused his BJP rival of getting illegal support

from election officials and said Verma has defied all restrictions related to the Model Code of Conduct that came into effect after the poll panel announced the dates for the February 5 elections in the national Capital. "Parvesh Verma's home should be raided. There should be a ban on his contesting the elections. He is openly declaring things on social media and adopting unfair means," said Kejriwal. However, Verma denied any wrongdoing and said Kejriwal and his party leaders were looking at a big defeat in the upcoming elections and making wild allegations due to panic. He said his 'selfless' efforts to help the youths get job calls from companies and his NGO's efforts to financially help poor women were being blown out of proportion. Earlier, Kejriwal led a team of party leaders - Delhi Chief Minister Atishi, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann and AAP MP Sanjay Singh - and met Election Commissioners Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Gyanesh Kumar and sought action against Verma for violating the Model Code of Conduct.

# Uddhav Thackeray's Shiv Sena bats for Kejriwal, accuses Delhi L-G of BJP bias, nudges Cong



**MUMBAI:** The Shiv Sena (UBT) on Thursday raised questions about the neutrality of the Delhi Lieutenant Governor (L-G) during the election season, alleging that he was favouring the BJP. It has also attacked the Congress party for attacking AAP instead of BJP. Uddhav Thackeray's party though its mouthpiece Saamana has alleged that the L-G's actions favour a particular political narrative. The hard-hitting editorial titled 'Haryana, Maharashtra and now Delhi', said: "Delhi is a union territory where L-G is supreme. But he is now working as the Union Home Ministry's agent. After the Model Code of Conduct for the upcoming Delhi Assembly election came into force, the L-G withdrew the powers of the chief minister and all ministers. He is working for the BJP which is quite dangerous. Even though the Election Commission is singing a tune of transparency in conducting the election, behind the curtains, a lot of things in favour of the BJP are happening. The BJP will stoop to any low to win the Delhi Assembly election. People should remain alert and careful." The Saamana editorial attacks the Prime Minister, Home Minister and BJP's central ministers, saying that they have swung into action for the party's victory. It says that the BJP has set the goal of defeating Arvind Kejriwal and capturing the Delhi Assembly and can go to any extent to defeat the Aam Aadmi Party in Delhi which is not appropriate.

# Punjab Congress seeks Bharat Ratna for Dr. Manmohan Singh



**NEW DELHI/CHANDIGARH:** Leader of the Opposition in the Punjab Assembly and Congress leader, Partap Singh Bajwa, has written to all political parties in the state Assembly, urging them to collectively honour former Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh by recommending him for the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian honour. In an appeal, Bajwa addressed Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, Speaker Kular Singh Sadhwan, and other prominent leaders, including Manpreet Singh Ayali of the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD), Ashwani Sharma of the BJP and Nachatar Pal of the BSP, proposing a joint resolution in the Assembly to recognise Dr. Singh's "unparalleled contributions to the nation and his deep-rooted connection to Punjab". Bajwa's letter highlights Dr. Singh's transformative role as the architect of India's economic liberalisation in 1991, which not only revived the Indian economy but also positioned the country as a global economic powerhouse. As Prime Minister, Dr. Singh consistently prioritized inclusive growth, economic stability, and social justice, impacting millions across India. "Dr. Manmohan Singh is a proud son of Punjab, and his journey is an inspiration to all," Bajwa wrote. "Born in Punjab, his life exemplifies resilience, humility, and selfless service. He has not only brought pride to our state but has also addressed critical issues in agriculture, rural development, and education, leaving a lasting impact on Punjab and the nation as a whole."

# AAP govt lacks vision to drive Delhi's development says PM Modi

**NEW DELHI:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday launched a sharp critique of the AAP government in Delhi, calling it an "AAPda government" that lacks vision for the city's progress. Speaking at a mega rally in Rohini ahead of the Delhi Assembly elections, the Prime Minister asserted that all significant developmental projects in the national capital have been undertaken by the BJP-led central government. Amid chants of "Delhi mei bahane nahi, badlav chahiye; BJP ki sarkaar chahiye" (Delhi needs change, not excuses; it wants a BJP government), the crowd welcomed the Prime Minister enthusiastically. PM Modi emphasised the importance of the next 25 years for India and Delhi, stating, "The coming 25 years are crucial for India's journey to becoming a 'Viksit Bharat' (developed nation). For India to achieve this, it is vital that Delhi progresses in tandem." He urged the people of Delhi



to give the BJP a chance for a brighter future, stressing that only the BJP can bring real development to the capital. Highlighting the BJP's governance record, PM Modi said, "In the last decade, Delhi has experienced a government that is nothing short of an 'AAPda' (disaster). Today, the people of Delhi are demanding change, saying, 'AAPda nahi sahenge; badal ke rahenge' (We won't tolerate disaster; we will bring change)." PM Modi praised the BJP as a party of good governance

and nation-first ideology, citing its successes in states like Odisha, Maharashtra, and the Northeast, and at the Centre. He encouraged BJP workers to connect with Delhi residents and showcase the party's commitment to development, calling this election a "golden opportunity to win the hearts of Delhi." He reiterated his vision of making Delhi one of the world's top cities with world-class facilities. "Last year, the Centre allocated over Rs 75,000 crore

for health and development projects in Delhi. We want to make Delhi a capital that reflects India's heritage and pride," he said. The Prime Minister pointed out that Delhi's metro expansion, including the Namoo Bharat Train, Delhi Metro Phase-IV's Janakpuri-Krishna Park stretch, and the Rithala-Kundli corridor, are all Centre-driven initiatives. He highlighted the PM Awaz Yojana, mentioning the Swabhimaan Apartment in Ashok Nagar as a "Modi ki guarantee" for affordable housing. PM Modi also listed achievements like Bharat Mandapam, Yashbhoomi, Kartavya Path, and the National War Memorial, which have become symbols of pride for Delhi, attributing their creation to the Centre's efforts. He slammed the AAP government for wasting a decade, accusing it of mismanagement in areas like sanitation, public transportation, and law and order.

# RRTS rapid rail's 13km stretch operational, Meerut to Anand Vihar in 30 mins



**YOGESH KANT**  
New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is all set to inaugurate a 13-km stretch of the Delhi-Meerut Namoo Bharat Corridor between Sahibabad and New Ashok Nagar. This significant development marks the arrival of high-speed Namoo Bharat trains in Delhi, enhancing regional connectivity. With the new section operational, the corridor's total stretch will expand to 55 km, connecting 11 stations. Currently, a 42-km section from Sahibabad to Meerut South with nine stations is operational. The newly added stretch includes six kilometers of underground track and features stations at Anand Vihar and New Ashok Nagar. Starting Sunday at 5 PM, trains will operate every 15 minutes. The fare from New Ashok Nagar to Meerut South is Rs 150 for standard coaches and Rs 225 for premium coaches. Commuters can now travel from New Ashok Nagar to Meerut South in under 40 minutes, reducing travel time by one-third.

**Anand Vihar: A Key Underground Station**  
Anand Vihar station, one of the largest on the corridor, is located just 8 meters below ground. It offers seamless integration with six public transport modes, including the Pink and Blue Metro lines, Anand Vihar Railway Station, two ISBTs (Swami Vivekananda and Kaushambi), and a city bus stand. Special engineering techniques were employed to construct this station beneath existing metro lines.

# 1,217 FIRs lodged, 4000 arrests made under PCPNDT Act in Haryana to take action against doctors and touts involved in illegal activities



**PARVESH HANDA**  
Rohtak

Health department, Haryana has intensified its efforts to combat female foeticide and enforce strict adherence to the provisions of the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act. According to available data since 2014, the state has registered a total of 1,217 FIRs under the PCPNDT Act including 397 FIRs through raids in neighbouring states, in which action was taken led to more than 4,000 arrests which included doctors involved in illegal practices, quacks and touts involved in sex determination and female foeticide.

# New railway division to boost Jammu's economy says CM Omar Abdullah

**FW DESK**  
New Delhi

Chief Minister Jammu & Kashmir Omar Abdullah assured that the upcoming train connectivity to Kashmir and the newly inaugurated Jammu Railway Division would enhance the region's economy and bolster tourism. Speaking at the inauguration ceremony of the Jammu Railway Division, held virtually by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Abdullah expressed gratitude for the fulfillment of a long-standing demand of the people of Jammu and



Kashmir. "This is a historic milestone for J&K," the chief minister said, emphasizing that the new rail division would bring administrative control closer to Jammu, reduce reliance on Ferozpur, and create local job opportunities. The Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Railway Link (USBRL) project, including the world's highest

Chenab Rail Bridge, has been a transformative initiative to improve connectivity in the region. The recent trial run of the train between Srinagar and Katra signals further progress, with full operations expected soon. Abdullah also addressed concerns about potential economic losses for Jammu due to direct rail connectivity to Kashmir. He assured residents that the project would bring significant benefits, including increased trade, tourism, and industrial growth. "Despite challenges, the benefits will far outweigh any disadvantages," he stated. The

chief minister highlighted ongoing infrastructure development projects, such as the Zojila and Z. Morh tunnels and the expansion of Jammu and Srinagar airports, which are expected to complement the enhanced rail connectivity. The event was attended by Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav (virtually), and several other dignitaries. Abdullah extended his thanks to Prime Minister Modi, Railway Minister Vaishnav, and others for their efforts in making this project a reality.

# Textile export sees 100 percent increase due to political disturbance in Bangladesh

**SATISH HANDA**  
Panipat

Apart from China, Bangladesh is another major country in the world ranking at second place in export of textile and handloom products, followed by India ranking at third place in export in the world. Production as well as export of textile and handloom products in Bangladesh has been worst affected due to political disturbance in the country since the past more than a year. According to information, there are more than 3500 small, medium and large manufacturers producing textile and handloom products in Bangladesh having nearly 85 percent export of goods manufactured in the country. Information also reveals that textile and handloom manufacturers in Panipat have witnessed more than 45% increase in exports in the past sometime due to political disturbance in Bangladesh. Information reveals, Panipat



textile and handloom industry in the country did total business of value worth over Rs 58 lakh crore (nearly 62,000 dollar) till 31st December during year 2024, which was recorded as over Rs 30 lakh crore (nearly 35,000 dollar) during year 2019-20, over Rs 17.15 lakh crore (nearly 20,000 dollar) during year 2020-21, Rs 21.43 lakh crore (nearly 25,000 dollar) during year 2021-22, Rs 34.29 lakh crore (nearly 40,000 dol-

lar) during year 2022-23 and Rs 58.15 lakh crore (nearly 62,000 dollar) during year 2024-25 (till December, 2024). Information reveals that textile and Handloom industry in Bangladesh is facing a severe crisis at present where the majority of industrial units have turned sick and most of the buyers across the world have switched over their procurements for textile and handloom products from India manufacturers.

# Union Minister Gadkari praised Haryana Transport Minister Anil Vij's suggestions to reduce 80 % of vehicle accidents

**PARVESH HANDA**  
New Delhi

Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways, Nitin Gadkari praised the suggestions made by Haryana's Transport Minister Anil Vij to reduce human error in vehicle accidents. He welcomed Vij's proposals and emphasized that the Union ministry is planning various measures to address human error in accidents while improving the convenience of passengers and drivers. Vij presented these suggestions on Tuesday at the 42nd meeting of the Transport Development Council and a meeting of Transport Ministers of all states and Union Territories, chaired by Sh. Nitin Gadkari at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi. Haryana's Additional Chief Secretary for Transport Ashok Khemka was also present at the meeting. During the meeting, Anil Vij stated that 80% of ac-



cidents in the country are caused by human error. He stressed the need to develop systems to minimize human errors and reduce the loss of life and property. He highlighted that drivers should have access to hygienic food and comfortable rest stops to avoid accidents caused by fatigue and unrest. Vij mentioned that since assuming office as Transport

Minister, he has directed that all bus stands in Haryana provide clean food and beverages to passengers. He noted that Haryana Tourism has been tie-up to ensure safe and hygienic food for passengers and drivers. He suggested studying a system akin to food services in railways to provide similar facilities for vehicle drivers, including fruits and other healthy options.

The Union Minister welcomed Anil Vij's suggestions and announced plans to focus on clean and accessible toilet facilities, particularly for women, as part of a broader initiative. Vij shared that Haryana's Dial 112 emergency vehicles are equipped with facility to load stretchers to ensure immediate care for accident victims. In today's meeting, Haryana Transport Minister Anil Vij addressed the country's transport associations, emphasizing the shared responsibility of bringing discipline to the transport sector. He acknowledged the hard work of transport workers, who operate in all conditions—day or night, heat or cold—and highlighted their significant contribution to the nation's economy. However, he stressed that maintaining discipline in the sector is a collective responsibility. He urged transporters to monitor critical issues such

as driver and cleaner working hours, overloading, and oversizing, as these practices often lead to corruption. He stated that "We must work towards a corruption-free society, and this cannot be achieved without the active participation of transporters." Citing an example, Vij shared his experience in Jaipur, where he observed that no stalls were placed outside a market. He learned that this was a decision made by the market association, which benefited everyone involved. He concluded by emphasizing the need for self-imposed discipline, the creation of rules and regulations, and proactive steps to achieve positive outcomes. The Union Ministry also lauded Haryana's implementation of Registered vehicle scrapping facilities during the meeting, noting that the state has made significant progress in this area.



## Economic red flags call for urgent action

The past week's economic data delivers a sobering message to the Finance Ministry and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), complicating their aspirations for a robust growth rebound in the latter half of 2024-25. GDP growth has tapered to 5.4% in the second quarter, prompting reassurances that it is merely a transient dip. However, the slowdown in consumption demand, exacerbated by restrained urban spending, raises serious questions about the depth of recovery expected in the October-December quarter. While policymakers hope for a festive-season boost and resilient rural demand, the latest data paints a less optimistic picture. Bank credit growth has decelerated for the fifth consecutive month in November, casting a shadow over investment and consumption prospects. Meanwhile, core infrastructure sectors, despite recording a four-month high expansion of 4.3 per cent, reported production levels 3.3 per cent below October's output, with six of eight sectors operating below capacity. The Purchasing Managers' Index reveals factory activity has slumped to its worst levels in 2024, compounded by rising input costs that threaten to stifle demand further.

Adding to these challenges are dismal Goods and Services Tax (GST) receipts for December, which stood at a three-month low of 1.77 lakh crore. With year-to-date revenue growth at just 8.6 per cent, meeting the 11 per cent growth target set in the Union Budget appears increasingly unlikely. Particularly concerning are sluggish revenue upticks in major consumer states such as Uttar Pradesh (1 per cent) and Gujarat (4 per cent), alongside contractions in Andhra Pradesh and northeastern states. As the government prepares the Union Budget for 2025-26, it must scrutinize these indicators and address the underlying pain points. High inflation, tightening credit flows, and uneven consumption trends need targeted interventions to reinvigorate growth and ensure economic momentum is sustained across regions and sectors. Bold, well-calibrated measures are imperative for turning the tide.

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**“**  
**You don't build a business, you build people, then people build the business.**  
**”**  
ZIG ZIGLAR

## THE FINANCIAL WORLD

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VIBODH PARTHASARATHI TELLS HOW PLATFORMS AMPLIFY PUBLISHERS TO SUSTAIN THEIR ENGAGEMENT CYCLES

## Platforms, publishers, & policy gaps

Last month, *The Australia Today's* coverage of External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar's visit was discussed less for its substance and more for being inaccessible on Facebook in Canada. Coming on the back of diplomatic tensions between India and Canada, were Mr. Jaishankar's interview and joint press conference, covered in *The Australia Today*, inaccessible in Canada due to a nudge by the Trudeau government? Or was it part of Meta's strategy to block news on social media platforms in Canada?

Some argue that this is a casualty of Canada's approach to mitigate asymmetries between all-pervasive platforms, such as Facebook and Google, and news publishers, such as *The Australia Today*. The blackout has less to do with the politics of foreign policy and more to do with the politics of Meta's corporate strategy. Mostly, it has to do with the geopolitical ramifications of developments in Canada's media policy.

Let's start with the actors involved. Platforms facilitate publishers to reach a very large audience, and publishers offer platforms a stream of content to incessantly engage users. In this seemingly symbiotic relationship, only platforms know the true popularity of the news distributed to their users and therefore, the incremental advertising revenues trickling in from the content produced by publishers. Platforms are also known to change the metrics to gauge popularity and audience preference. These problems raise questions about transparency, accountability, and parity in the dealings between platforms and publishers.

### Governing frenemies

In June 2023, Canada devised a bargaining framework for platforms to duly remunerate news outlets. The resultant



Online News Act (ONA) sought to protect publishers from losing income that is justifiably due to them from Meta and Alphabet. These platforms are legally obliged to fashion commercial agreements with one or a group of publishers. If either party disagrees, a bargaining process ensues with the involvement of a mediator. If no agreement is arrived at despite this, each party can propose a final offer, and an arbitration panel is empowered to choose which offer becomes binding.

Canada was the second country to move on this matter, after the Australian initiative of 2021, known as the 'Bargaining Code'. While concerns over the financial health of local news websites led to the enactment of the ONA, the Bargaining Code has been criticised for legitimising a mechanism that safeguards the interests of giants in the news business. After initial opposition, Meta and Google negotiated deals with many, but not all, Australian news outlets.

In Canada, Google complied with the ONA by agreeing to pay publishers and journalist associations. Meta adopted a contrary route: from August 2023, it foreclosed news

offerings on its platforms, Facebook and Instagram, in Canada. However, web pages of journalists can still be accessed on both platforms.

Since the ONA does not define a news website, Meta decides which is a news site and which is an opinion or community site. For instance, Baaz, a Canada-based news outlet catering to the Punjabi and Sikh diaspora, was inaccessible for a while on Facebook and Instagram. After it switched to Substack, a subscription-based platform, and rechristened defined itself a 'community page', Baaz became visible on both platforms.

### Interrupting global flows

Following the uproar over Mr. Jaishankar's interview, Meta maintained that it blocks news in Canada, irrespective of its geographical origins. However, the editor of *The Australia Today* pointed out that prior to the interview, the content of the site was visible, suggesting that Meta restricted the site around the time the interview was posted. Such experiences render Meta vulnerable to criticism of selective compliance with the ONA.

The unavailability of the Jaishankar interview on Facebook in Canada also uncorks the geopolitical ramifications of national media policy. Regulations in Australia, Canada, and Indonesia have tackled the imbalances between platforms and publishers, as seen in

their respective news markets. Consequently, they vary in normative considerations, policy priorities, and institutional design. Recently, Australia disincentivised platforms which refrain from, or do not renew, agreements with publishers. Its News Bargaining Incentive (NBI) policy proposes to penalise platforms harvesting revenue of \$250 million and more and failing to finalise agreements. This is to ensure, inter alia, that Meta does not replay its Canadian strategy in Australia, since earlier this year, it had announced plans to discontinue paying news outlets there. What is interesting is that the NBI also incentivises platforms by offsetting payments to publishers against some of their fiscal liabilities in Australia.

How is India tackling publisher-platform asymmetries? Since 2022, the Competition Commission has been inquiring into the conduct of platforms, following pleas by news associations. We don't know if their efforts factor in geopolitical dimensions of the matter. If the policy paralysis continues, India's news outlets will continue to be devoid of fair shares of online advertising revenues, and vulnerable to the whims of the Alphabet-Meta duopoly.

Meanwhile, structural censorship, seen in the Jaishankar interview case, could recur. It will proliferate if Meta replicates its Canadian strategy in the U.K., South Africa, and Germany, where fair compensation regulations are being evolved. If so, interviews by Indian Ministers to news outlets in those countries will be inaccessible on Meta's platforms there. Therefore, policy pundits must weigh in urgently on fair compensation.

*Vibodh Parthasarathi teaches media policy at the Centre for Culture, Media and Governance, Jamia Millia Islamia. Views are personal.*



MUKUL SANWAL EXPLAINS HOW DISCONNECT ENABLES G7 DOMINANCE IN CLIMATE GOVERNANCE

## Shared prosperity in a post-G7 world

The climate conference in Baku in 2024 turned the climate treaty on its head by scrapping the defining feature of the post-colonial world divided between 'donors' and 'recipients' and suggesting the need for an alternate global sustainability forum. The shift requires that developing countries take charge of their own destiny.

The purpose of the climate treaty in 1992 was to collectively deal with a common concern. In an unequal world, this was defined by the G7 reducing future emissions of carbon dioxide despite the treaty acknowledging cumulative emissions alone matter. Developing countries agreed to take on a problem they did not create in exchange for technology transfer and funds, not realising that the imbalance in research capacity had set the stage for shifting the burden.

The backbone of the current arrangement is the disconnect between academic treatment and rules and practice, providing continuing advantage to the G7. The way global concerns have been selected, agenda defined, and rules implemented — all the time dealing with the symptoms rather than the causes of problems — provides continuing advantages to the G7. The pressure to provide incentives for private finance and dealing with trade restrictions at the same time was never part of the 'grand bargain'. The G7 have now absolved themselves of any responsibility for climate change with, in India's words, the "optical illusion" of providing financial support by 2035.

### Two world views

The former colonial powers morphed into the G7 in 1973. Climate change with its



reduction in emissions of carbon dioxide is only for the G7 who have overused their fair share of the common atmospheric resource. For the others, the greatest challenge is sustainable development, that is, modifying pathways, lifestyles and energy transition. The way the agenda was set masks the injustice within the climate crisis and the extent it is underestimated.

The impact of the Global South, representing four-fifths of the global population and half the GDP, no longer following the lead of the G7 has been felt most significantly in climate change with growing calls for climate justice. The Nationally Determined Contributions of 72 countries explicitly include the concept of a "just transition", reflecting recognition of the social dimensions of climate action.

Climate justice is not about perceptions of fairness of specific policies. It questions the framing of existing distinctions between global and local levels and between mitigation and adaptation. It is not just the disproportionate continuing levels of emissions but

also solutions such as carbon pricing and trade restrictions that widen the income gap and increase inequality. Current global rules do not reflect the interests of the Global South.

These views reflect conflicting visions of how society is organised and what constitutes progress. Distinguishing between total emissions of countries and trends, drivers, and patterns of natural resource use as causes of climate change masks the impact of the most stable global trend of urbanisation covering three-quarters of global emissions and natural resource use. A middle class and more equal world is adopting opinions, pathways, and actions distinct from those who developed earlier.

The foundational fact is that patterns of urban natural resource use of the G7 are not being followed by the Global South. The G7 with one-fifth the population was consuming three-quarters of global resources in 1950, with the U.S. alone consuming 40%. By the 1970s, three-quarters of the population of the G7 had shifted to cities and their lifestyles based on commodity prices kept low by the former colonial powers directly led to climate change. The real price of the most traded commodity, oil, was not allowed to increase over a century, leading to its wasteful use. In 2050, the G7 will account for 25% of global emissions with a 10% share of the global population, while Asia is expected to account for 55% of the world's emissions equal to its share of the global population. The time is ripe for new foundational

principles of sustainability with justice at its centre. India would have to match the strategic thinking of the U.S. in setting up interlinked voluntary arrangements of the 'rules-based order', with the rules determined by the G7, for a new order for 'shared prosperity' seeking comparable levels of well-being within ecological limits.

### Global governance

With global cooperation itself in danger, three initiatives are suggested. First, BRICS and partner countries should take the strategic leap for an alternate sustainability forum to support each other in the urban energy transition. This would not be an anti-G7 forum, but focused on units located in member countries in different continents researching sustainability science, urbanisation, monitoring G7 climate policy and supporting exchange of experiences.

Second, the UN Climate negotiations should be limited to reviewing emissions reductions in the G7 and grants in the \$300 billion to the most vulnerable — Small Island States and Least Developed Countries.

Third, international fora should be seen as what they are: annual stocktaking that helps the world assess its position and decide course-correction accordingly. The World Trade Organization with its dysfunctional dispute settlement could also be allowed to wither away.

The BRICS playing a bridging role in the new multilateralism will entitle them to their rightful place in the UN Security Council.

*Mukul Sanwal is a Former U.N. diplomat. Views are personal.*

### BOOKS: REVIEW

## New book explores pandemic's art, anxiety and resilience

Garth Greenwell's *Small Rain* is a deeply introspective and evocative exploration of the human condition amid the unprecedented uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic. Set in the tumultuous year of 2020, the novel captures the pervasive anxiety of the time through the eyes of a nameless narrator, whose emergency trip to a hospital becomes a catalyst for profound personal transformation. Through its poetic prose and emotional depth, *Small Rain* is a remarkable meditation on art, relationships, and resilience in the face of collective and individual crises.

The hospital setting is not just a backdrop for the narrator's physical ordeal but also a stage for his emotional and intellectual revelations. In a time when human connections are fraught with fear and separation, the narrator turns to art as a sanctuary. The medieval song 'Westron Wynde', which inspires the book's title, becomes a bridge between him and Alivia, a compassionate nurse. This shared appreciation for art transcends their roles as patient and caregiver, offering a poignant commentary on the redemptive power of shared humanity.

### A Mirror to Collective Anxieties

Greenwell's narrator embodies the fears and uncertainties that defined the pandemic era. A sharp pain forces him to seek medical care, plunging him into what he perceives as the most dangerous place amid a global health crisis—the hospital. This internal struggle mirrors the larger societal disarray, as he re-

flects on decisions like reopening colleges despite surging COVID-19 cases: "It's like watching a car drive straight off a cliff, a friend said, but slowly, deliberately, a slow-motion suicide." Such observations encapsulate the collective unease of a world grappling with its fragility.

The hospital setting is not just a backdrop for the narrator's physical ordeal but also a stage for his emotional and intellectual revelations. In a time when human connections are fraught with fear and separation, the narrator turns to art as a sanctuary. The medieval song 'Westron Wynde', which inspires the book's title, becomes a bridge between him and Alivia, a compassionate nurse. This shared appreciation for art transcends their roles as patient and caregiver, offering a poignant commentary on the redemptive power of shared humanity.

### The Role of Art in Survival

Art, particularly poetry, emerges as the narrator's anchor in *Small Rain*. Greenwell portrays the nar-

rator as someone who has devoted his life to art, which in turn sustains him through his isolation and fear. Poetry becomes not merely a form of expression but an object of contemplation and devotion. The narrator muses, "All art is a message, we want to communicate something but not entirely graspable something, maybe there's a kind of sense only non-sense can convey." This sentiment underscores how art can provide solace and meaning when life feels incomprehensible.

Greenwell masterfully illustrates how art shapes the narrator's relationships and self-perception. Longing for his partner, L., the narrator channels his emotions through artistic reflection, rediscovering the depth of his connection. As he navigates the challenges of his hospital stay, art becomes a spiritual lens through which he reimagines his body, his work, and his relationships.

### Layers of Brokenness

The narrative unfolds against



*Small Rain*  
By Garth Greenwell  
Picador,  
320 pages; Rs 750.

a backdrop of multi-layered brokenness—physical, emotional, and societal. The narrator resides in a damaged house with his partner, in a country fracturing under the weight of the pandemic and racial tensions. Beyond these personal and national struggles lies a world devastated by climate change, where even the natural order is collapsing with the disappearance of bird species. This intricate layering of brokenness reflects the interconnected fragility of human existence and the planet.

Greenwell delves into the asymmetry of relationships, particularly the dynamic between patients and caregivers. The narrator becomes emotionally attached to Alivia, whose acts of care hold profound significance for him. Yet, for Alivia, he is just one among many patients. This asymmetry poignantly illus-

trates the inherent vulnerability and subjectivity in human connections.

### Transformation and Redemption

The narrator's hospital experience becomes a crucible for transformation. By the end of his stay, he begins to care for the body he once loathed and appreciates the small but vital joys of his romantic relationship. His longing to reunite with his partner, L., signifies a re-kindled appreciation for love and connection. Greenwell's portrayal of this journey is tender and compassionate, reminding readers of the resilience of the human spirit.

### Conclusion

*Small Rain* is a profound and poetic exploration of life, love, and art in the shadow of a global crisis. Greenwell's lyrical prose and introspective narrative invite readers to reflect on their own experiences of isolation, connection, and renewal. The novel is not just a testament to the power of art but also a compassionate chronicle of humanity's enduring quest for meaning in times of turmoil. By blending the personal and the universal, Greenwell crafts a literary work that resonates deeply with the anxieties and hopes of our time.







