

REGION

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DELHI CM ORDERS 24X7 WASTE PROCESSING AT DELHI'S LANDFILLS, ZERO TOLERANCE FOR DELAY

Delhi govt allocates ₹500 Crore to upgrade fire services, plans new stations in underserved areas

OUR CORRESPONDENT
New Delhi

In a decisive move to modernise the capital's firefighting infrastructure, the Delhi government has allocated Rs 500 crore for the upgradation of Delhi Fire Services (DFS). Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, who visited the DFS headquarters on Friday along with Home Minister Ashish Sood, announced that Rs 125 crore from the total budget has been earmarked for procuring state-of-the-art firefighting equipment.

Calling the initiative a crucial step towards building a "world-class, emergency-ready" fire service, Gupta said the aim is to ensure swift and efficient response in emergencies across the city. The budget includes the introduction of four aerial water towers, 17 water bowisers and 24 quick response vehicles. Several



new fire stations will also be established in areas currently underserved by DFS, while existing stations will undergo major infrastructure upgrades. The government is also undertaking a comprehensive inspection, repair and replacement drive to ensure that all firefighting equipment remains operational and up to date. Gupta said that a long-overdue revamp of the fire control room is underway, with plans to convert

BANKING & FINANCE

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NBFC CREDIT GROWTH TO MODERATE TO 13-15 PER CENT IN FINANCIAL YEAR 2025-26: ICRA

Indian households well positioned to support 6.5 pc growth over 3-5 years: Morgan Stanley

NEW DELHI: The households in India remain well positioned to support 6.5 per cent growth over the next 3-5 years, a Morgan Stanley report said on Friday.

Current household debt level in India is manageable and household debt (core) remains at levels lower than other economies, the report emphasised, adding that even as it rises, it expects the trend to be manageable driven by income growth.

The recent rise in retail loans has led to concerns on rising indebtedness at the household level. This has led to the narrative of higher household leverage, lower net financial saving, and patchy income growth, increasing distress in the household balance sheet.

According to the report, the rise in retail loans has been the key driver of credit growth post the pandemic, leading

POTPOURRI

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KAJOL TO SAMANTHA: CELEBS SHOWER BIRTHDAY WISHES ON VARUN DHAWAN AS HE TURNS 38

BJP returns to power in MCD as Raja Iqbal Singh elected Mayor of Delhi



OUR CORRESPONDENT
New Delhi

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) reclaimed control of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) on Friday after a two-year hiatus, with senior party leader Raja Iqbal Singh elected as the new Mayor of Delhi.

Singh secured a resounding victory with 133 votes, as the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) boycotted the election and the Congress was reduced to a token presence. Congress candidate Mandeep managed to garner only eight votes.

A seasoned politician, Singh has previously served as Mayor during the BJP's earlier term and is currently the Leader of the Opposition in the MCD. His long-standing experience includes key roles such as Mayor of North Delhi, Chairman of the Ward Committee in the Civil Line Zone, and councillor from the Mukherjee Nagar Ward 13.

Originally associated with the Shiromani Akali Dal, Singh's political journey began under its banner. According to *The Indian Express*, his father-in-law was a councillor from GTB Nagar, and his brother remains active in Akali politics. Singh represented the Civil Line zone under the Akali Dal until 2020. After the party's exit from the NDA, he stayed with the BJP and was appointed Mayor of North MCD in 2021.

India Strengthens Trade ties with Iran through Chabahar Port Expansion



NEW DELHI: India is accelerating the expansion of the Chabahar port and its rail connectivity to Iran's border with Central Asia, aiming to enhance regional trade and counterbalance China's influence in the region.

This initiative is particularly significant as the Chabahar-Zahedan railway line, a 750 km project connecting the port to Iran's rail network, is nearing completion and is expected to be operational by 2024.

The Chabahar port, located on Iran's Makran coast, is strategically positioned to serve as a gateway for trade between India, Iran, Afghanistan, and Central Asia.

India has invested approximately USD 500 million in the development of this port, which is seen as a critical component of the International North-South Transport Corridor.

This corridor aims to facilitate smoother and more direct trade routes between India and Central Asia, bypassing Pakistan. The development of Chabahar port and its associated infrastructure is also viewed as a strategic counter to China's influence in the region, particularly in light of China's significant investments in Pakistan's Gwadar port. By enhancing connectivity through Chabahar, India seeks to bolster its economic and strategic presence in the region. As the Chabahar-Zahedan railway project nears completion, it is expected to play a pivotal role in facilitating trade and strengthening regional ties. The successful implementation of this project will not only enhance India's connectivity to Central Asia but also contribute to the broader goal of regional economic integration.

Delhi court grants relief to Medha Patkar in defamation case, orders release on probation

OUR CORRESPONDENT
New Delhi

Activist Medha Patkar was granted relief by a Delhi court on Friday, which ordered her release on furnishing a probation bond and payment of Rs 1 lakh in compensation in a defamation case filed by Delhi Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena in 2001. The order came just hours after her arrest at a city railway station.

Patkar was arrested earlier in the morning as she arrived at the railway station and was brought before a judge at the Saket district court complex. The arrest was made to execute a non-bailable warrant (NBW) issued against her for failing to comply with a previous court or-



der to submit probation bonds and a Rs 1 lakh fine in connection with the defamation case. The case stems from a 2001 defamation lawsuit filed by Saxena, who was then heading the National Council of Civil Liberties in Ahmedabad. Patkar was accused of making derogatory remarks during

a television interview and issuing a press statement that Saxena claimed defamed him and his organisation. The dispute also arose from a counter-suit filed by Patkar in 2000, accusing Saxena of publishing defamatory advertisements targeting her and the Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA).

On Friday, Patkar's legal team withdrew their plea from the Delhi High Court challenging the lower courts' orders. Justice Shalinder Kaur granted the

request, allowing Patkar the liberty to file a fresh petition at a later date. Earlier in the week, Additional Sessions Judge Vishal Singh of the Saket court had noted Patkar's non-appearance before the court to comply with the sentencing order issued on April 8. The sentencing had initially mandated a five-month prison term for Patkar, along with a Rs 10 lakh compensation to Saxena, but the appellate court later modified this to probation for one year, subject to the payment of Rs 1 lakh.

Patkar's counsel, including advocates Gajinder Kumar, Kiran Jai, Chandra Shekhar, Driшти, and Somya Arya, represented Saxena before the court during the proceedings.

Jathedar of Sri Akal Takht Sahib strongly condemns attack in Pahalgam

Calls for justice for victims; incident reminds of Chittisinghpura Sikh massacre - Jathedar Giani Kuldeep Singh Gargaj

JAGMOHAN SINGH
Amritsar

The officiating Jathedar of Sri Akal Takht Sahib, Giani Kuldeep Singh Gargaj, has strongly condemned the attack in Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir.

Expressing grief over the incident, he extended heartfelt condolences to the families of those killed. He offered prayers before the Akal Purakh (True One Being) to grant eternal peace to the departed souls and strength to the bereaved families to accept His will. He also said such inhumane acts may never occur anywhere in the world and that peace and



harmony prevail across the nation and the globe. Jathedar Gargaj stated that this tragic event deeply pained him and reminded him of the March 2000 massacre in Chittisinghpura, Kashmir, in which 35 Sikhs were killed and the truth has yet to come to light. He emphasized the need for justice in the Pahalgam incident and urged that the truth behind the Chittisinghpura massacre also be revealed so that the affected families finally receive justice.

After Pehlagamn terror attack, India shuts Attari border but Beating Retreat Ceremony held as usual

JAGMOHAN SINGH
Amritsar

After Pehlagamn terror attack, India shuts Attari border but Beating Retreat Ceremony held as usual on April 24 in the evening during the sunset. The footfall was also as usual witnessed. Nevertheless to say that visitors on the Pakistan side were much less from routine.

Border Security Force (BSF) Jawans carried out the Beating Retreat Ceremony at Joint Check Post (JCP) Attari border and at the same time Pakistan Rangers also organized a parade in their own territory visible



from the Indian side. Both the forces from their respective territories were showing aggressive postures to each other in a routine manner. But today, the Beating Re-

treating ceremony was a little bit different from routine when during sunset 'Flag lowering' ceremony gates of International borders of both the nations remained shut and the Indian

parade commander didn't go forward to shake hand with his Pakistani counterpart as usual. The similar state of affairs from the Pakistan side was also noticed.

During evening parade from both sides none of the visitors were allowed to raise slogans against neighboring nations and 'Beating Retreat Ceremony' concluded in a peaceful manner since today it was well organised by BSF while keeping control over the visitors as heavy deployment of BSF troops were keeping Hawkeyes on each victors activities.

CNG fuel stations surge by 2,300 pc, PNG use up 467 pc in 10 years: Hardeep Puri



NEW DELHI: Union Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Hardeep Singh Puri, on Friday highlighted that in the last 10 years, the number of CNG stations providing green fuel for vehicles in the country has surged more than 20 times, while the number of households using piped cooking gas, has recorded a 5-fold increase and LPG connections more than doubled.

This reflects not only an improvement in the lifestyle of the people but also an acceleration in the journey of 'Healthy India with Clean Fuel'.

"Under the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in the last 10 years, CNG stations have increased by 2,300 per cent, PNG connections have increased by 467 per cent, LPG connections have increased by 128 per cent," the minister posted on X.

"These are not just figures, they show the achievement of our resolve. They show that big changes are possible with new thinking, true intentions and hard work," Puri said.

The minister further stated that along with providing convenience to the people, these figures are accelerating the journey of 'Healthy India with Clean Fuel'. "These achievements have strengthened the foundation of developed India, on which the construction of the grand building of developed India has begun," he added.

sumption is likely to rise by close to 60 per cent by 2030 as the country seeks to reduce dependence on oil imports and switch to cleaner fuels for running vehicles, cooking in household kitchens and industrial use, according to a study by the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) released earlier this month.

PNGRB has already developed gas infrastructure across 307 Geographical Areas, covering the entire country except islands, it ensures widespread access to natural gas across domestic, commercial, industrial, and transportation segments, the report points out.

"The City Gas Distribution (CGD) sector is expected to be the primary growth driver, with consumption projected to grow 2.5 to 3.5 times by 2030 and 6 to 7 times" by 2030 from a base of 37 mmscmd in FY24, according to the report.

The demand has been considered for fertiliser, power, refineries, petrochemical, other industrial & commercial establishments, households as well as CNG and LNG as transport fuel in the energy basket through 2030 and 2040. There are reasonable time periods to plan and construct pipelines, the report states.

Consumption of natural gas is expected to rise from 188 million standard cubic metres per day in 2023-24 to 297 mmscmd by 2030 under the 'Good-to-Go' scenario which assumes moderate growth and developments based on current trends and commitments, the report observes. The consumption is projected to rise further to 496 mmscmd by 2040 under the same scenario.

India must expand steel production to achieve 'zero import & net export' goal: PM Modi

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday highlighted the need for a goal of "zero imports" and a focus on net exports for the steel sector as "India is currently working towards a target of exporting 25 million tons of steel and to increase production capacity to 500 million tons by 2047".

Addressing the India Steel 2025 programme at Mumbai via video, PM Modi emphasised the importance of preparing the steel sector for new processes, grades, and scales, urging the industry to expand and upgrade with a future-ready mindset.

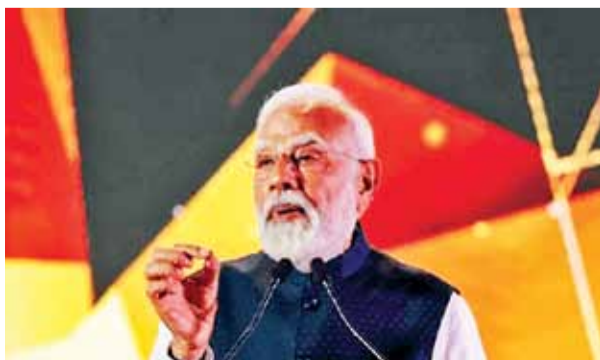
"We are proud that today India has become the second largest steel producer in the world, and we have set a target of producing 300 million tonnes of steel by 2030 under the National Steel Policy," he said.

to develop, nurture, and share new ideas. He emphasised collaboration in manufacturing, R&D, and technology upgrades to create more job opportunities for the country's youth.

He also highlighted that the \$1.3 trillion National Infrastructure Pipeline is being advanced to accelerate the projects that are being implemented, which would open fresh opportunities for the steel sector.

The infrastructure projects being implemented under the National Master Plan include large-scale efforts to transform cities into smart cities, along with an unprecedented pace in the development of roads, railways, airports, ports, and pipelines, creating more opportunities for the steel sector, the Prime Minister said.

Crores of houses are being constructed under the PM Awas Yojana, and significant infrastructure is being built in villages through the Jal Je-



van Mission, he added. He remarked that welfare initiatives like these are also providing new strength to the steel industry. He highlighted the government's decision to use only 'Made in India' steel in government projects and noted that government-driven initiatives account for the high consumption of steel in building construction and infrastructure.

Underscoring that steel is a primary component driving the

growth of multiple sectors, PM Modi remarked that government policies for the steel industry are playing a crucial role in making many other industries in India globally competitive.

He highlighted that sectors such as manufacturing, construction, machinery, and automotive are gaining strength from the Indian steel industry. He mentioned that the government has introduced the National Manufacturing Mission in this year's Budget to

accelerate the 'Make in India' initiative. The mission caters to small, medium, and large industries and will open new opportunities for the steel sector, he added.

Noting that India was long dependent on imports for high-grade steel, which was critical for defence and strategic sectors, the Prime Minister expressed pride in the fact that the steel used in India's first indigenous aircraft carrier was produced domestically. He also noted that Indian steel contributed to the success of the historic Chandrayaan mission, symbolising India's capability and confidence.

The Prime Minister remarked that this transformation was made possible through initiatives such as the PLI scheme, which has allocated thousands of crores to support the production of high-grade steel. He emphasised that this is just the beginning and that there is a long road ahead.

Delhi CM orders 24x7 waste processing at Delhi's landfills, zero tolerance for delay

OUR CORRESPONDENT
New Delhi

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Wednesday directed civic authorities to ensure round-the-clock waste processing at all three of the capital's major landfill sites — Ghazipur, Bhalswa, and Okhla — as part of a renewed push to tackle the city's mounting garbage crisis.

Chairing a high-level meeting at the Delhi Secretariat, Gupta expressed strong dissatisfaction over the slow pace of waste management at the sites and called for immediate corrective measures. "Delhi's landfills are not merely mounds of garbage, rather testimonies of neglect and mismanagement. This is not just an environmental initiative



but a responsibility towards future generations," she said. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) has been instructed to launch a three-month-long citywide cleanliness campaign. Additionally, the civic body has been asked to prepare a detailed plan for repurposing the landfill sites once they are cleared of waste.

In a significant move, the Chief Minister ordered a doubling of the speed of waste disposal operations and called for the rapid deployment of additional waste-processing machinery. A detailed action plan to expedite the clearance work at all three sites was also presented during the meeting. Highlighting the urgent need for infrastructure up-

grades, Gupta emphasized the fast-tracking of two new waste-to-energy plants in Narela and Ghazipur, while also expanding the existing facilities at Okhla and Tehkhand.

The Chief Minister voiced particular concern over the Ghazipur landfill, one of the oldest and most overburdened in the city, and directed authorities to ensure swift, visible progress on the ground. "The promise we made to the citizens of Delhi will be fulfilled under all circumstances. No negligence will be tolerated in this endeavour," she asserted.

The directives come as part of a broader mission to transform Delhi's waste management landscape and eliminate legacy dumpsites that pose serious environmental and public health risks.

Delhi traders observe bandh in tribute to Pahalgam terror attack victims

NEW DELHI: In a strong display of solidarity and national mourning, trade unions and market associations across Delhi have called for a one-day bandh on Friday, to honour the victims killed in the April 22 terror attack in Jammu and Kashmir's Pahalgam.

The Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT), which is spearheading the initiative, announced that over 900 markets in the national capital will remain closed. According to reports, the shutdown is being voluntarily observed by the trading community and is not intended as a protest but rather as a symbolic tribute.

CAIT Secretary General and BJP member of Parliament Praveen Khandelwal stated, "This bandh is not a form of protest but a national tribute. We stand with the families of the



victims and the government in this moment of grief. All traders are urged to participate voluntarily and ensure the bandh is observed peacefully." The organisation has also appealed to Delhi Police and administrative authorities to maintain law and order throughout the day and assist in ensuring a calm and respectful environment during the market closures.

Many leading trade associations are backing the shutdown and have expressed their grief over the attack, calling for unity and resolve in the face of terrorism. The bandh is being

seen as a collective expression of national sentiment and a message against such brutal acts of violence.

While most commercial markets are expected to remain shut, essential services, banks, government offices, and public transport, including the Delhi Metro, are operating as usual.

There has been no official directive from the Delhi government or police regarding the enforcement of the bandh, and participation remains voluntary.

Notably, establishments that choose to remain open will not be compelled to shut, as organisers have emphasised peaceful observance over forced participation.

On Thursday, the Chamber of Trade and Industry (CTI) protested by tying black bands in Connaught Place and took out a candle March.

Delhi EV policy 2.0 proposes cap on fossil fuel cars per household



OUR CORRESPONDENT
New Delhi

The proposed Delhi Electric Vehicle (EV) Policy 2.0 has sparked widespread concern among both consumers and automobile manufacturers, with several radical measures under consideration to curb pollution and accelerate EV adoption in the capital.

One of the key proposals in the draft policy is a cap on the number of petrol and diesel vehicles a household can own. According to a report by Reuters, the draft recommends limiting each household to a maximum of two internal combustion engine (ICE) cars.

Any additional vehicle must be electric. "All private car owners in Delhi will be required to purchase only electric cars if they intend to own a third or subsequent car registered to the same residential address," states the draft document. The new policy—currently undergoing revisions and delayed by three months—is part of the Delhi government's broader plan to phase out polluting vehicles. Other previously reported proposals include banning the registration of new petrol two-wheelers from August 2026 and CNG-run auto-rickshaws from August 2025.

Estimated to cost the government around Rs 2,860 crore, the draft policy is still open to stakeholder feedback, and its final shape remains uncertain. It is also unclear how the proposed initiatives will be funded or when the final policy will be rolled out. If implemented, the cap on ICE vehicles could significantly affect consumer behaviour in a city where car ownership—especially of multiple SUVs per household—is common. Experts suggest the policy could also have broader economic implications.

Gaurav Vangaal, Associate Director, Light Vehicle Production Forecasting — Indian Subcontinent, said, "While this move could push EV adoption forward, it may also slow overall car sales in Delhi, potentially impacting GST revenue and tax collections for both the state and central governments."

Delhi government to train teachers in AI Tools to ease non-teaching tasks



OUR CORRESPONDENT
New Delhi

In a move to integrate artificial intelligence (AI) into everyday teaching practices, the Delhi government will soon begin training its school teachers to use AI tools to simplify non-academic tasks such as creating PowerPoint presentations, generating ideas for extracurricular activities, and editing images.

According to an official from the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT), the initiative aims to help teachers focus more on classroom teaching by delegating time-consuming, repetitive tasks to technology.

As part of the plan, around 100 computer science teachers from government schools will be selected and trained to use a variety of AI tools designed to streamline such tasks. Once trained, these teachers will serve as master trainers and visit 50 selected government schools to educate other teachers on effectively using these tools.

"We're not just launching this programme; we'll also be gathering feedback from teachers to ensure they are comfortable and proficient in using the AI tools," the official said. Initially, some teachers expressed hesitation toward using AI, fearing it might replace their roles. However, the SCERT official clarified that the purpose of the programme is to assist, not replace, educators.

"Through this initiative, we want to assure teachers that AI is here to support them, not take over their jobs," the official said. "The core objective is to reduce their non-teaching workload so they can focus more on students and lesson delivery."

Teachers often spend considerable time preparing visual materials, editing images, and conceptualising cultural or extracurricular activities.

Delhi court junks Tahawwur Rana plea to talk to kin

NEW DELHI: A Delhi court on Thursday dismissed the plea of jailed 26/11 terror attack accused Tahawwur Hussain Rana seeking to talk to his family members.

"Not allowed," special Judge Chander Jit Singh held.

Rana filed the plea through his lawyer and said talking to his family members was a fundamental right and they must be worried about his well-being.

The NIA opposed the application, arguing he could share crucial information if allowed to speak with his family members.

The anti-terror agency said the investigation was at a crucial stage.

On April 10, the court remanded the 64-year-old Paki-



stani-origin Canadian businessman to 18-day custody.

The NIA alleged as a part of the criminal conspiracy, accused David Coleman Headley, had discussed the entire operation with Rana before his visit to India.



Anticipating potential challenges, Headley sent an e-mail to Rana detailing his belongings and assets, the NIA told the court seeking his remand.

Headley also informed Rana about the involvement of Pakistani nationals Ilyas Kashmiri

and Abdur Rehman, who are also accused in the case, in the plot, it alleged.

Rana, a close associate of 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks main conspirator Headley alias Daoud Gilani, a US citizen, was brought to India after the US Supreme Court on April 4 dismissed his review plea against his extradition.

On November 26, 2008, a group of 10 Pakistani terrorists went on a rampage, carrying out a coordinated attack on a railway station, two luxury hotels and a Jewish centre, after they sneaked into India's financial capital using the sea route in the Arabian Sea.

As many as 166 people were killed in the nearly 60-hour assault.

Five Dead in Tragic Fire at Rice Mill in UP, 3 in Critical Condition



NOIDA: At least five people died in a major industrial fire at the Rajgarhia Rice Mill located in the Dargah area of Bahraich district, Uttar Pradesh on Friday, officials said. Three others are injured and undergoing treatment at a nearby hospital. Their condition is critical.

According to reports, the fire started in the upper section of the rice mill around dawn, triggering chaos among the workers present.

In an attempt to control the blaze, eight workers rushed to extinguish the fire but were quickly surrounded by the dense, toxic smoke filling the facility. Tragically, five of them lost their lives after suffocating inside the mill.

Bahraich District Magistrate Monika Rani confirmed the incident and explained the circumstances leading to the mishap. "The workers were engaged in operations related to drying paddy. A machine was being used to remove moisture from the grains, and the

smoke that emanated during this process proved fatal. Unfortunately, five workers died due to smoke inhalation," she stated.

Meanwhile, Chief Medical Superintendent (CMS) Dr M.M. Tripathi of the local hospital shared further details about the victims. "We received eight people. Sadly, five were already deceased upon arrival. The remaining three are undergoing treatment. The incident occurred in a mill located in the Dargah area," he said.

Local administrative authorities have launched an investigation into the incident to determine the exact cause of the fire and whether any safety protocols were violated. Fire safety and labour rights activists have also raised concerns over the working conditions in such mills, particularly during high-risk operations.

Officials have assured that strict action will be taken if any lapses in safety or negligence are found.

Hydrogen train to run on the route from Jind to Sonipat in Haryana soon



SATISH HANDA
Sonipat

Hydrogen trains to compete with Vande Bharat Express trains would run on the route from Jind to Sonipat in Haryana soon, which will cause less pollution than diesel engines. This train also be environmentally friendly, will run in Haryana with 110 kilometers per hour speed and will have a capacity of 2638 passengers for which RDSO Lucknow has prepared the design havin new experiments to enhance the beauty, cleanliness and safety of high-speed trains. According to a senior railways officer, preparations are in full swing to run hydrogen trains in the country which cause less pollution than diesel engines. Information reveals, after Germany, France, Sweden and China, India will become the fifth country in

the world to operate hydrogen trains.

The design of the hydrogen fueled train has been prepared by Research Design and Standards Organization (RDSO) Lucknow, whereas Vande Bharat train was prepared in Integrated Coach Factory (ICF) Chennai, while work is going on the hydrogen fueled train. Sources reveal that the name of the country's first hydrogen train could be Namo Green Rail, because Namo Green Rail is written on the model train set launched by RDSO. However, the official name of the hydrogen train has not been finalized yet. More than 150 companies including countries like Austria, Germany, Russia, Japan have set up stalls at the Inno Rail India 2024 exhibition at the RDSO stadium complex at Lucknow recently, in which discussions were held on the

prosperous future of railways based on advanced technology and innovations along with a three-day discuss held on the latest developments to increase the efficiency, safety and beauty of the railways.

The Inno Rail India 2024 exhibition event organized by RDSO in which CII was a partner featured seminars and technical discussions on topics such as high-speed rail, urban mobility, bullet and semi-high-speed trains in India, modern technologies for traffic optimisation, smart rolling stock, etc.

Features of the hydrogen train have 400kg hydrogen filling capacity, initially will take four trips from Sonipat to Jind having 89 km distance with the eight coach train will be the world's largest hydrogen train with a capacity of 2,638 passengers with the trial being done at a speed of 110 km per hour. The event recorder in trains will work like a black box. However, the doors of Vande Bharat, Metro and other modern trains are automatic. The locomotive pilot applies brakes to stop the train, the brakes are applied in a blink of an eye. Similarly, in electric trains, the pantograph is connected to the power line and the announcement of the next station etc. all these activities will be done through the communication system.

60 percent of the 'Live in relationship' cases are misused: Renu Bhatia



SATISH HANDA

According to Renu Bhatia, Chairperson of Haryana State Women Commission, Live-in law was passed wrongly. Opposing the live-in relationship while talking to media she said that this law is wrong and is being misused as in about 60 percent of the cases, women and men living in live-in with mutual consent but later on, when there is a rift, they file a rape case making allegations on each other. Renu Bhatia said that in her view the live-in law has been passed wrongly, because in such cases in which the man and woman live together with mutual consent, later if there is a rift, usually a rape case is registered. She said, is completely against this law and if given a chance, she will raise her voice against it.

Chairperson of Haryana State Women Commission and during inspection at One Stop Center Yamunanagar on Tuesday disclosed that this year 7500 cases have come to the commission, out of which 800 cases went to court and the rest were settled.

Haryana CM assures industry for change in pharma policy to expedite Karnal Pharma Park

Haryana CM Nayab Singh Saini has assured the pharma industry that his government will renew the state pharma policy for the sake of development of the pharma park at Karnal, which aims to change the face of Haryana into a modern pharma hub.

SATISH HANDA
Karnal

The president of the Haryana Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association (HPMA) R.L. Sharma and chairman of the Karnal Pharma Park Ltd while talking to media persons said, a special purpose vehicle (SPV) has been formed for setting up the cluster at Karnal, for which has received an assurance from the Haryana Chief

Minister Nayab Singh Saini that the state government will change the state pharma policy for the speedy development of the Pharma Park Project at Karnal on the National Highway 1. Meanwhile, the chief minister Saini has assured the entrepreneurs of the pharma industry that his government will renew the state pharma policy for the sake of development of the proposed pharma park at Karnal aiming to change the face of Haryana into a modern pharma hub. It was assured by the CM during a state level meeting of the industrial leaders called by the Haryana Chamber of Commerce and Industry (HCCI) at Manesar recently where State industry minister Rao Narbir



Singh was also present.

Information reveals, the present pharma policy in the state was notified on February 4, 2019 valid for five years. Now the government is going to release another pharma policy with the priority for development of the Karnal Pharma Park Project which was also one of the priorities of the

ruling party's election manifesto in the last assembly election. Apart from this, there was a commitment from the union minister of chemicals and fertilizers that a pharma park would be set up in Karnal Industrial Area. RL Sharma, who is also the vice-president of the Haryana Chamber of Commerce and In-

dustry (HCCI) also met the chief minister and apprised him of the problems and challenges faced by the pharma industry and there is an immediate need in establishing the pharma park at Karnal. On hearing the grievances of the industry, the chief minister Saini had assured to renew the pharma policy of Haryana to expedite action for the development of the modern pharma formulation park which is expected to change Haryana as a hub of pharma industries in north India. Sharma said once the cluster scheme of pharma formulation industries is materialized, the pharma MSMEs in Haryana will become globally competitive. Further, the park will generate employment opportunities for more than 30,000 skilled and unskilled workers.

JIH Council of Representatives Urges Repeal of Waqf Law

KAVITA SHARMA
New Delhi

The Council of Representatives of Jamaat-e-Islami Hind (JIH), in its session held from April 12-15, 2025, at its headquarters in New Delhi, under the leadership of its President, Syed Sadatullah Hussaini, passed a series of critical resolutions addressing pressing national and international issues. The Council voiced grave concern over recent legislative developments, communal tensions, economic injustice, and global oppression, particularly in Palestine. Below is a summary of the key resolutions adopted:

1. Repeal of the Waqf Amendment Act, 2025

Jamaat-e-Islami Hind strongly condemned the re-

cently enacted Waqf Amendment Act, 2025, describing it as unconstitutional, unjust, and discriminatory. The Council felt that the law granted government-appointed officials the authority to adjudicate waqf disputes—allowing the state to be a judge in its own case—and opened the door to encroachment and dispossession of centuries-old religious properties, particularly those undocumented but used historically by the Muslim community. The Act ignored stakeholder objections, undermined the autonomy of religious institutions, and violated Article 26 of the Constitution.

JIH called for the immediate repeal of this law and urged the public to support the campaign led by the All India Muslim Personal Law Board. It appealed to democratic institutions, civil society, and intellectuals to raise awareness of its implications. The Council appreciated MPs and organizations that have taken a stand and urged continued pressure until justice

2. Condemnation of Israeli Aggression in Palestine

The Council described the Israeli assault on Gaza as one of the worst humanitarian atrocities of our time, with over 60,000 civilians killed and many more injured. It condemned the destruction of schools, hospitals, and refugee camps, and the targeted killing of aid workers and journalists, emphasizing Israel's ongoing violations of international law, including UN resolutions and the Geneva Conventions. JIH called for an immediate ceasefire, open humanitarian corridors in Gaza, and the recognition of Palestinian sovereignty. It demanded that India uphold its historic pro-Palestine stance, halt all forms of support to Israel, and use its diplomatic weight for justice. It also urged boycotts and sanctions against Israeli businesses, praised global student protests, and reminded the international community that oppression will never be permanent.

3. Call for a Just Global Economic Order

JIH expressed concern over the growing global trade crisis triggered by protectionist tariff policies, particularly by the United States. These actions, it said, reflected the perils of capitalist greed, toxic nationalism, and materialism, and disproportionately burdened the poor and developing nations.

Rahul Gandhi: We Must Stand United to Defeat Terrorism Once & Forever

SRINAGAR: Senior Congress leader and Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, on Friday said that the idea of the terrorists is to divide the society, and make brother fight brother, but the people of India must stand together to defeat terrorism once and forever.

Addressing the media here at the end of his daylong visit to the Kashmir Valley in the wake of the Pahalgam attack, Gandhi said: "It has been a terrible tragedy, and I came here to get a sense of what is happening and to help."

"I met one of the injured and the rest of the injured have gone back home. I assure the families who have lost their dear ones that the entire nation stands as one with them," he said.

Noting that the "entire J&K has condemned this terrible action and they have fully sup-



ported the nation this time", he said: "The idea of the attack was to divide the society and make brother fight brother. It is very important that every individual and the entire nation stands as one so that we can defeat what the terrorists want to do."

Terming it "sad to see that some people are attacking my brothers and sisters from Kashmir in the rest of the country", Gandhi said that it is important that all of us stand together to defeat terrorism.

in Badamibagh Cantonment area of Srinagar, where he met one of the injured tourists.

A total of 26 civilians were killed, and around two dozen people were injured in that cowardly terror attack that took place in Baisaran meadow of Pahalgam.

As per Congress leaders, Rahul Gandhi met various delegations, including those from the party and trade and tourism sectors. He also met Lt Governor Manoj Sinha and Chief Minister Omar Abdullah.

"Rahul Gandhi has come with a message of 'healing the wounds' of the people of the country, including Kashmiris, in the wake of the attack and its aftermath," a Congress leader said.

On his arrival, Gandhi was received by J&K Congress President, Tariq Hameed Karra and senior leader G.A. Mir at the airport.

"We had a (all-party) meeting yesterday (on Thursday) and the united opposition has assured the government that we support whatever action the government wants to take. I met the Chief Minister and the LG. They briefed me about the situation. I assured them that I and my party support the government in whatever action they take to end terrorism once and for all," the Congress leader asserted.

Earlier on Friday, Gandhi visited the Army's Base Hospital

Kashmir Economy has collapsed due to Pahalgam Terror Attack, says Kharge



BENGALURU: Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge said on Wednesday that J&K Chief Minister Omar Abdullah has conveyed to him that Kashmir's economy has collapsed following the Pahalgam terror attack.

"The summer season has just begun, and this is the time when tourists start visiting the region. Tourism is also the biggest source of income for J&K, especially Kashmir. They depend entirely on tourism income. Omar Abdullah told me that this year's economy has collapsed. He also said that tourism is their main source of livelihood and that they are devastated by this attack," said the Congress President, addressing a press conference at the Congress Headquarters in Bengaluru.

HM Shah, J&K CM Omar & LG Sinha pay tributes to people killed in Pahalgam

SRINAGAR: Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) Chief Minister Omar Abdullah and Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha arrived at Srinagar Police Control Room on Wednesday to pay tributes to the tourists killed in the Pahalgam terror attack in which 16 people were massacred.

The bodies of the tourists killed in Tuesday's terror attack were brought to the Police Control Room in Srinagar on Wednesday morning.

After paying tributes to the slain tourists, the Home Minister is scheduled to visit GMC Anantnag to meet those injured in the attack.

He is also likely to conduct an aerial survey of the attack site in Baisaran, Pahalgam, where 16 lives were tragically lost.

The bodies of tourists killed by terrorists in Pahalgam were brought to Srinagar on Wednesday as authorities are making arrangements for their return



to their native places.

The Civil Aviation Ministry has arranged four additional flights from Srinagar today, two each to Mumbai and Delhi.

The Civil Aviation Ministry is also ensuring that the airfare does not skyrocket because of the rush as the Srinagar-Jammu Highway remained closed for the fourth day on Wednesday.

A team of the NIA reached Srinagar on Wednesday. The

team is going to Pahalgam to collect evidence on the terrorists who carried out the cowardly attack on unarmed civilians.

A massive search operation was started in Pahalgam immediately after the terror attack to hunt down the terrorists.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said that the terror attack has redoubled the resolve of the nation to eradicate terrorists completely from Indian soil.

Waqf Act Amended to Prevent Encroachment of Government Properties, Centre to SC

NEW DELHI: The Centre, in an affidavit filed before the Supreme Court, said that it brought amendments to the Waqf Act, 1995, to prevent abuse of waqf legislation which resulted in the encroachment of government properties, apart from ensuring that the Waqf Boards in the country are properly administered and function with transparency.

"It is submitted that there have been reported misuse of waqf provisions to encroach private properties and government properties. It is really shocking to know that after the amendment brought in the year 2013, there is a 116 per cent rise in auqaf area," said the preliminary affidavit filed by the Union Ministry of Minority Affairs. The Centre, in its reply document filed before the top court, said that it was found that most of the Waqf Boards have been functioning in the "most non-transparent manner" and have either not uploaded the details in public domain or have uploaded partial details. "In an era of transparency, it is absolutely necessary that all details concerning waqf/waqf boards be uploaded in Waqf Asset Management System of India (WAMPSI) portal," it contended.

The Union government said that under the old regime, due to the absence of adequate safeguards, government properties and even private properties were declared as waqf properties.

"The provisions of Sections 3A, 3B and 3C take care of the said situation which has been prevailing since several decades. It is submitted that there are startling examples whereby the government lands or even the private lands were declared as waqf properties," it said in the affidavit.

The Union government said that the Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025, was passed with the objective of modernising the management of waqf properties in India through transparent, efficient and inclusive measures. It argued that the reforms introduced are directed solely at the secular and



administrative aspects of waqf institutions — such as property management, record-keeping, and governance structures — without impinging upon any essential religious practices or tenets of the Islamic faith. The affidavit highlighted that despite there being a regime of mandatory registration of all kinds of waqf, including 'waqf by user', making registration mandatory, individuals or organisations used to claim private lands and government lands as waqf including under 'waqf by user' which not only lead to deprivation of valuable property rights of individual citizens but similarly unauthorised claims over public properties. "While registration of all kinds of waqfs (including 'Waqf by user') has always been mandatory, the legal regime never required the waqf deed as a mandatory condition. In other words, it was mandatory to register 'Waqf by user' even in the absence of a waqf deed by giving other details for more than 100 years."

Referring to the recently introduced Section 36(1A), the Centre said that the 2025 amendment provides that a waqf may now be established only through a valid deed of waqf. It clarified that the amendment to Section 36 has not interfered with the status of existing/registered auqaf by user, and any existing property which has been registered as waqf by user will retain its status. The Union government said that a proviso has been inserted in Section 3 by the Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025, making it clear that the mandatory requirement of a 'waqf deed' applies prospectively from the date of the 2025 amendment i.e., if any new waqf is created after April 8.

"Waqfs by user registered before the amendment would therefore continue to be treat-

ed as waqf in terms of the proviso," the Centre said.

The preliminary reply document filed by the Union government said that before introducing the Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025, there has been a detailed executive level and Parliamentary level exercise in order to understand the problems plaguing the previous statutory regime, the consequences, and the appropriate measures that were required to remedy the same. The Centre contended that the "primary religious right being the right to make a dedication is not interfered with, and neither is the administration of any specific waqf interfered with as the same continues to be vested with the mutawalli as per the purpose behind such waqf."

The affidavit said that it is a settled position in law that constitutional courts would not stay a statutory provision, either directly or indirectly, and will decide the matter finally, as there is a presumption of constitutionality that applies to laws made by Parliament.

"While the Hon'ble Court would undoubtedly have the power to examine the constitutionality of the law, at the interim stage, the grant of an injunction against the operation of any provision of the law, either directly or indirectly, would be violative of this presumption of constitutionality which is one of the facets of the delicate balance of power between the different branches of the State," it added.

In the hearing held on April 17, a bench headed by CJI Sanjiv Khanna had granted a week's time to the Centre and state governments and the Waqf Boards to file their preliminary reply to the petitions challenging the validity of the Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025. The Bench, also comprising Justices Sanjay Kumar and K.V. Viswanathan, had taken on record the assurance given by the Union government that it would not de-notify provisions related to 'waqf by user' or include non-Muslim members in the Waqf Board.

PM Modi leads CCS in Historic Retaliation: India Strikes Back at Pakistan over Pahalgam Terror Attack



NEW DELHI: In a decisive response to the deadly terror attack on April 22 in Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir, India has taken a series of robust diplomatic measures to hold Pakistan accountable for its role in cross-border terrorism. The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS), chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on Wednesday evening discussed the implications of the attack, which claimed the lives of 25 Indian nationals and one Nepali citizen, with several others sustaining injuries.

The CCS expressed deep condemnation of the attack and offered heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims and wishing for the swift recovery of those injured. The attack, which targeted tourists in a popular destination, was attributed to Pakistan-backed terror groups, sources said.

India has also received strong expressions of support from governments worldwide, condemning the attack and reaffirming their commitment to zero tolerance for terrorism.

The meeting also noted that the attack occurred against the backdrop of successful elections in Jammu and Kashmir and the region's ongoing progress toward economic development and stability. These achievements, India believes, are viewed as a threat by terrorist factions seeking to destabilise the region.

Recognising the seriousness of this attack and its cross-border linkages, the CCS took the following unprecedented measures:

Indus Waters Treaty suspended — In one of the most significant decisions, India has placed the Indus Waters Treaty of 1960 in abeyance with immediate effect. This historic move effectively halts decades of cooperation on water-sharing between India and Pakistan.

Why Indian Farmers protest against US Vice President: 'Vance Go Back! India is Not for Sale'



JAG MOHAN THAKREN
During his four-day visit to India US Vice-President J.D Vance had to see the unpleasant incident of brutal massacre of tourists at Pahalgam and also faced the Indian farmers protesting with slogans 'Vance Go Back! India Is Not For Sale'.

Nearly after a century, Indian soil has again echoed 'Go Back' slogan to protest the dignity of a planned way. Previously, in 1928 the land of India had also expressed its voice through the 'Go Back' slogan when the British representative 'Simon Commission' visited India and it had to face the slogan — 'Simon Go Back'.

Now the Trump's new Tariff Policy, as alleged by the farmers' unions, thrust upon without considering the Indian common people view point and ground conditions, has also seems to have ignited the ground line and the farmers of India girded up the loins to protest the visit of US Vice-president J.D Vance. The Indian Soil once again echoed the slogan 'Vance Go Back! India Is Not For Sale'.

Prof (Dr.) S.N Tripathy, Former Professor of Economics, Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Pune, says: "President Donald Trump keeps the world on edge with daily blockbuster announcements, thrusting global trade into chaos. His unpredictable tariff policies have sown turmoil and uncertainty among nations and financial markets, leaving leaders pondering."

What Vance messages through his address at Jaipur?

While addressing the India-US Forum at Jaipur on April 22, the US Vice President said, "President Trump wants America to grow, he wants India to grow, and he wants to

build the future with our partners all over the globe. And when I look at this audience, or when I visit this incredible country over these last couple of days, I see a people that will not be held back."

Vance added, "Critics have attacked my president, President Trump, for starting a trade war in an effort to bring back the jobs of the past. But nothing could be further from the truth. He seeks to rebalance global trade so that America, with friends like India, can build a future worth having for all of our people together. And when President Trump and Prime Minister Modi announced in February that our countries aim to more than double our bilateral trade to \$500 billion by the end of the decade, I know that both of them meant it."

The US Vice-President hoped, "We are now officially one quarter into the 21st century, 25 years and 75 years to go. I really believe that the future of the 21st century is going to be determined by the strength of the US-India partnership. I believe that if India and the US work together successfully, we are going to see a 21st century that is prosperous and peaceful. But I also believe that if we fail to work together successfully, we are going to see a very dark time for all of humanity."

Why the Indian Farmers fear?

Reports received from different corners reveal that the Indian farmers under the banner of All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS), the largest umbrella of Indian farmers, conveyed their message of protest by organizing programmes in several places and burning the effigy of the US Vice President in token of their protest.

AIKS had called upon all its units across India to hold mass demonstrations and effigy burning with the slogan "Vance Go Back! India Is Not For Sale" in villages and dis-



trict headquarters when the US Vice President J.D Vance arrive in India even as negotiations are on for a bilateral trade deal.

In its call the AIKS had alleged that the Indian Prime Minister has capitulated to the dictates of the US President Donald Trump and is going ahead with plans to ease tariff and non-tariff barriers for US products including farm products. Howard Lutnick, the US Commerce Secretary asserted that India should open its agriculture market and agriculture cannot be 'off the table' in the negotiations for the Bilateral Trade Agreement.

The Farmers union feared that the Bilateral Trade Agreement under discussion will be the death-knell of dairy farmers as the US Dairy exports to India will make a quantum jump if tariffs and market restrictions are lifted. The US Wheat Associates claim that India has high levels of domestic support and trade distorting high tariffs; ironically this is while the peasantry in India is on the struggle path for remunerative Minimum Support Price with legally guaranteed procurement. Similarly, in the case of Maize, there is a push to remove India's import prohibition on genetically modified maize as well on ethanol with expectation of windfall gains for the USA. Soybean, almond,

pistachio, walnut, apple and horticultural crops are all up for negotiation at the behest of US based Commodity Cartels. Even as Indian cotton farmers are already in an acute crisis and committing suicide and there is a continuous steady decline in annual cotton production from 37 million bales (170 kg each) in 2017-18 to 34.7 million bales in 2022-23 and estimated further decline to 31.6 million bales in 2023-24, the heightened negotiations for withdrawing tariffs is extremely insensitive.

AIKS argues that a Mission 500 aiming to double total trade to \$500 billion by 2030 is in the offing according to news reports. The on-going trade negotiation is a deliberate move so that cheaper cotton, soybean, maize, apple etc. from the USA can be dumped in India, literally swamping the market. This will lead to a price crash for Indian farmers. All negotiations are being done without taking State Governments or the Parliament into confidence. Such Agreements also do not assure the implementation of International Labour Standards.

Quoting the stand of other countries, AIKS states that, while countries like China, Canada, Mexico etc., made a resolute push-back against Trump's tariffs and rallied to defend their economic interests, India has chosen to capitulate and surrender its

national interests. Notably, Canada and Mexico with more than 70 percent of exports to the USA did not blink an eye before hitting back, while India with nearly 18 percent exports to the USA is refusing to stand up against the strong-arm tactics of the USA. The farmers' Union warns that apart from agriculture, the interests of the MSMEs across sectors like generic pharmaceuticals to auto parts and millions of workers across these sectors are also going to be adversely hit.

A statement released on behalf of AIKS by Ashok Dhawale, President and Vijoo Krishnan, the General Secretary observe, "The Vice President of USA J.D.Vance's visit to India is part of putting pressure upon the State of India and the corporate led ruling classes to surrender the national interests to facilitate windfall profiteering to the Multinational companies."

Dr. Inderjit Singh National Vice-President of the AIKS reported to The Ground Post that the workers of All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) registered protest against the visit of US Vice President J.D Vance to India in connection with bilateral agreements on tariff and trade negotiations.

Singh stated that AIKS and SKM had given a call to register the opposition of Indian farmers against the bullying tactics by the Trump administration in the issue of tariffs and succumbing to the Modi government.

Addressing a meeting of farmers organised in the local grain market, Rohtak, AIKS national vice president Inderjit Singh questioned the continuing silence of Prime minister Modi while US President Trump has publicly claimed India's consent to lower down the tariffs on US products in Indian market and open the agriculture sector for the US produce. He urged the farmers and other sections of the peo-

ple to know about the threats such a bilateral agreement that would prove disastrous for the livelihood of millions of farmers and agricultural labourers and national food security. It was too disgraceful that most of the countries have refused to be cowed down. Modi government was succumbing to US pressures.

He stated that the US will dump its farm produce including fruits, cotton and dairy products in the Indian market while our produce can't compete with the huge amount of subsidies availed by farmers of developed countries where the cost of production was much less than those in the developing countries.

All India Democratic Women's Association Vice President Jagmati Sangwan asked the government to stand up firmly and not deceive the people of India to whom it was answerable.

Sumit Dalal, state General Secretary warned that India was not for sale. He reminded that the National Policy Framework on Agricultural Marketing (NPFAM) draft released on 25 November last was also part of the broader agenda of the Modi government to facilitate the corporate to take over the agriculture sector. He claimed that effigies of Trump, Vance and Modi were burnt in all the districts of Haryana and more such protest actions against the unequal trade agreement against national interests that would inevitably be harmful even to other sectors like MSME and automobiles.

What effect the AIKS movement will have on Vance's visit to India and bilateral Tariff Agreement, is in the womb of time, but one thing is certain: "Whenever a spark ignites, sooner or later it results in flames of fire."

Jag Mohan Thakren is a Senior Journalist, Columnist & Political Analyst, views are personal

PM Modi holds meeting with NSA, Foreign Minister at airport itself



MEENAKSHI BHATTACHARYA
New Delhi

According to sources, the Prime Minister did not utilize Pakistan's airspace during his return from Saudi Arabia. The Prime Minister has advised the National Security Advisor and the External Affairs Minister that a representative from the Indian Government should urgently communicate with Pakistan concerning this terrorist attack.

Prime Minister Modi, who assessed the situation early in the morning, curtailed his visit to Saudi Arabia to return to India. Upon his arrival, he convened a meeting with the National Security Advisor, Ajit Doval and the Foreign Minister, S Jaishankar & Foreign Secretary at the airport to address the circumstances following the terrorist attack in Jammu and Kashmir.

A meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS), chaired by PM Narendra Modi, is anticipated later today after FM Nirmala Sitharaman returns from her foreign trip. This high-level review will concentrate on the security situation in the wake of the Pahalgam attack. Terrorists cursed Modi, asked tourists to recite Islamic verse before shooting them.

At least 26 people, two foreign tourists among them, were killed by a group of terrorists who emerged from the dense forests around the trekking paradise of the Baisaran meadows in the upper reaches of Pahalgam on Tuesday (April 22, 2025) afternoon. Number of others were wounded, including with critical injuries, and the death toll is likely

to rise, sources told, though there is no official casualty data from the government as yet.

On Wednesday, April 23, 2025, Rahul Gandhi, the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, stated that he had communicated with Home Minister Amit Shah, Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, and Tariq Karra, the president of the Congress' J&K unit, regarding the tragic terror attack in Pahalgam to obtain an update on the circumstances.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has abbreviated her official trip to the United States and Peru in response to the recent terrorist attack in Jammu and Kashmir, and she will return to India as soon as possible, as stated in an official announcement on Wednesday. Ms. Sitharaman had arrived in the U.S. on Sunday for a six-day engagement, followed by a planned five-day visit to Peru.

An Intelligence Bureau officer stationed in Telangana was among those who lost their lives in the terrorist attack in Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir. Navy Lieutenant Vinay Narwal, who hailed from Karnal, lost his life in the Pahalgam terror attack. In light of the current circumstances, Air India will operate two additional flights from Srinagar to Delhi and Mumbai today, Wednesday, April 23rd. All other flights to and from Srinagar will proceed as scheduled. Air India is also providing complimentary re-scheduling and full refunds for cancellations to passengers with confirmed bookings until April 30th, 2025, on these routes.



BALAKRISHNA PISUPATI EXPLORES WAYS TO BRIDGE CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION LOCALLY

Creative economy unlocks power of ideas

Few countries have a unique history of innovations and creativity that changed the world. Yet, India's tryst with creativity and innovation ranges from the arts to science, from metallurgy to medicine, from astronomy and much more. As India works towards becoming a \$5 trillion economy, it needs to rejig its approach to innovations, supported by creativity at all levels.

Globally, in 2022, exports of creative services surged to \$1.4 trillion, marking a 29% increase since 2017. Creative goods exports also experienced a 19% rise, reaching \$713 billion. Collectively, the creative economy generates annual revenues exceeding \$2 trillion and supports nearly 50 million jobs worldwide.

According to the United Nations Trade and Development (UNCTAD) report on the creative economy, Creative Economy Outlook 2024, three sectors are the main contributors of the creative economy (2022): software services (41.3%), research and development (30.7%), advertising, market research and architecture (15.5%).

India's creative economy has also demonstrated significant contributions. In 2019, creative goods and services exports totalled about \$121 billion, with creative services accounting for nearly \$100 billion. The design segment alone represented 87.5% of creative goods exports, while arts and crafts contributed around 9%.

As of 2024, India's creative industry is valued at \$30 billion and employs about 8% of the country's working population. Creative exports grew by 20% in the previous year, generating more than \$11 billion.

Creativity in creative economy

While investments into traditional creative economic sectors are booming in a country



Creators come up with ideas while innovators translate the ideas into products and services. We need investments to bridge the gap between creativity and innovation.

Pioneering work on identifying and recognising grassroots innovations by organisations such as the Grassroot Innovations Augmentation Network (GIAN) have resulted in popularising hundreds of grassroots creative ideas.

An example from Indonesia

Where does one start? Consider a pioneering creative solution, the Antrodram Project, that has been conceived by the students of Binus School in Bekasi, Indonesia.

The Antrodram Project began with one mission: to create a solution to flooding, a challenge that affects communities worldwide. Looking for ideas from the best source of inspiration, nature itself, the Binus team explored structures from the animal and plant kingdoms to find the perfect design.

Inspired by the nests of Indian Harvester ants, the students engineered a flood protection system that works with nature rather than against it. The ants have intricate tunnel systems that direct water away from their nests, keeping them safe and dry. The students were also inspired by natural structures such as rose petals and their layered design to direct water; the lettuce leaf coral, with its intricate branching; the giant pill millipede which can roll into a compact shape; and the male frigate bird, known for its large, water-resistant throat pouch.

This is sheer creative brilliance but what we now need are investments to scale up these creative ideas into an innovation at scale that can be applied elsewhere.

Take some examples of creativity from India such as the 'mitti cool clay refrigerator', pedal-operated washing machines or the amphibious bicycle. Each needs scale-up to be commercially attractive with appropriate protection for the creative idea, design and application.

Investing in creativity and innovation

It is time that India invests more in creative pursuits at all levels — grassroots to technology-intensive ideas. Grassroot innovations need more investments to ensure the proof of concept demonstrated is supported by capital investments.

The innovation and associated intellectual property protection for such innovations, including informal ones, need better protection through adjustments to Indian intellectual property protection policies and regulations.

It is also time that the government invests in 'one district one innovation' modelled after the successful initiative of 'one district one product' initiative.

While the climate tech sector in India received \$2,853 million in 2023, the investments that grassroots creativity received seems to be very poor. Even if a small percentage of investments go to climate adaptation and mitigation actions that are creative and not working at the local level, India's ability to deal with climate change will be many times more.

What we need today is an ecosystem that balances creativity and innovations at all levels, backed by investments to ensure that India's ambitions to improve creative economic conditions are met.

Balakrishna Pisupati is the Country Head of the United Nations Environment Programme, India, and a member of Team UN India. Views are personal.



PRABHASH RANJAN EXPLAINS WHY INDIA MUST LEAD, NOT LINGER, ON TRADE JUSTICE

India's silence undermines its trade credibility

The world is shaken by the reckless decision of the United States to impose reciprocal tariffs, which were announced on April 2, 2025, though it has been paused for 90 days, barring the tariff rates on China.

The illegality of these tariffs under international trade law, as defined by the World Trade Organization (WTO), makes little difference to U.S. President Donald Trump, who treats international norms with derision. Since the announcement of the tariffs, countries have responded in various ways, with some openly criticising the U.S. while others have chosen to remain silent.

Several nations have condemned the U.S. for imposing illegal tariffs and undermining the fundamental principles of international trade. Singapore's Prime Minister Lawrence Wong remarked recently that the imposition of reciprocal tariffs "is a complete repudiation of the MFN principle", which is a cornerstone of the multilateral trading system. Similarly, Brazil stated that these tariffs "violate" the U.S.'s commitments under WTO rules.

Another BRICS nation, China, has openly criticised the U.S. for breaching its WTO obligations and has initiated a dispute within the WTO. In addition, China has imposed retaliatory tariffs on U.S. imports. Japan has also formally stated that the unilateral imposition of tariff rates contradicts WTO agreements. Canada, too, has not hesitated to challenge the legality of the U.S. actions.

It has imposed retaliatory tariffs and filed a legal claim at the WTO regarding U.S. tariffs on Canadian automobiles and automobile parts. The positions adopted by



these countries are justified; international trade is complex and cannot operate effectively without fundamental rules. If a powerful country disregards these rules, other nations that uphold the rule-based system must call out that country.

While some nations have refrained from explicitly condemning the U.S. for violating international law, they have expressed general dissatisfaction with the unjustifiable increase in tariff rates. For instance, Fiji referred to the tariff hikes as 'unfair', and Italy's Prime Minister described them as a 'mistake'.

However, some countries have chosen to maintain silence regarding the U.S.'s illegal actions, issuing insipid statements that they are carefully examining the U.S.'s decision. These countries neither criticise the U.S.'s blatantly illegal actions nor formally express their discontent. India falls into this category.

Reasons behind India's silence

There are primarily two reasons presented to justify India's silence on the U.S.

tariffs. First, India is negotiating a bilateral trade agreement (BTA) with the U.S., and it is deemed not in India's interest to criticise the U.S. for its illegal actions publicly. This reasoning is questionable.

The U.S. is also negotiating with India but

has not hesitated to express its dissatisfaction with India's high tariff rates publicly, even when they are legal. Mr. Trump has openly criticised India's tariff levels on several occasions. Yet, it did not prevent the U.S. from negotiating with India even prior to the announcement of the reciprocal tariffs.

Moreover, India is not the only country negotiating bilaterally with the U.S.; many nations are in similar situations, and yet have publicly called out the U.S. for its unilateral actions. Claiming that the U.S.'s actions violate WTO law should not hinder negotiations, as New Delhi is not confronting Washington by imposing retaliatory tariffs but reminding it to honour international trade rules.

Presumably, India will privately communicate this to the U.S., but a public statement would show its commitment to a rule-based trading order.

The second reason is that the WTO's dispute settlement body is currently dysfunctional. Therefore, calling out the U.S. for its illegal actions, such as by filing a legal claim

at the WTO, is useless. This transactional perspective is flawed because it limits the role of international law to material outcomes such as compliance and enforcement.

We must move beyond this narrow view. A key function of any legal system is its ability to differentiate between sheer public power and legitimate authority. Even though international law may not always and immediately punish decision-makers for non-compliance, it enables other actors to question those in power and to argue that their actions are illegitimate.

Both China and Canada are well aware of the dysfunction of the WTO's dispute settlement mechanism. However, this has not deterred them from filing legal claims against the U.S.; they understand that they can use international law to strengthen their case for legitimacy.

Respect for trade rules
Recently, around 40 WTO member countries, including many developing nations, issued a statement supporting trade multilateralism and WTO rules in response to U.S.-imposed tariffs. Notably, India, which often champions a rule-based trading system, did not sign this statement.

In accordance with its professed vision, this is a crucial moment for India to lead the Global South by advocating trade multilateralism and building a coalition against unilateral actions. History should remember India as a nation that defended national interests while taking up the cudgels for the developing world to establish a fair and just trading order.

Prabhash Ranjan is Professor and Vice Dean (Research), Jindal Global Law School. Views are personal.



As inflation falls, it's time to raise farm incomes

India's retail inflation cooled to 3.34 per cent in March — its lowest since 2018 — almost guaranteeing further interest-rate cuts by the Reserve

Bank of India. With back-to-back 25-basis-point reductions already lowering the repo rate to 6 per cent, the central bank has clearly shifted its focus to growth. Falling

food prices, especially vegetables, eggs and pulses, have pulled down headline inflation. This has already led to a decline in lending

rates, which, in more stable times, would spur borrowing, investment and consumption. Yet these are not stable times. Global

trade tensions, particularly those driven by American tariff policy, have cast a shadow over exports. Domestic demand, therefore,

becomes more critical. But there is a problem: falling food prices also mean shrinking farm incomes, which threaten rural

consumption — the backbone of India's demand story. The damage is visible. In

Andhra Pradesh, tomatoes were being sold for Rs 1 per kilogram in December. In February, farmers in Maharashtra and Madhya

Pradesh dumped their produce, unable to cover costs. Post-harvest losses, estimated at Rs 1.52 trillion a year, remain unad-

dressed due to poor storage and transport infrastructure. With most farmers owning

under two hectares of land and earning less than Rs 14,000 a month, their economic fragility is acute. Urban consumption

continues to outpace rural spending. Yet the gap — nearly Rs 3,000 per month per capita — offers a clear policy opportunity.

As export-led growth falters, reviving rural demand through investment in agricultural

infrastructure, improved market access and targeted income support will not only aid

farmers but also help drive a broader economic recovery. Interest-rate cuts may ease credit, but without bolstering rural purchasing power, their impact will be limited.

Now is the time to shift the focus from inflation control to rural revitalisation. Timely action will benefit the wider economy.



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BOOKS: REVIEW

Kabir returns: Irreverent, rooted, and still relevant

Few figures in Indian literary and spiritual history evoke as much awe, ambiguity, and appropriation as Kabir. In *The Notbook of Kabir*, S. Anand—poet, publisher, and self-professed "Kabirite"—engages with the mystic not to pin him down, but to let him fly. Through bold translation, sharp critique, and personal rumination, Anand takes Kabir out of the museum and sets him loose in the streets, in the margins, and in the minds of those still questioning faith, hierarchy, and meaning.

For Anand, Kabir is not a figure to be revered from a distance. He is a living, shape-shifting presence who thrives in contradiction and irreverence. The book opens with Anand's playful declaration of allegiance to "Kabiristan", a place where meaning is often inverted, slippery, and subversive. This tone carries through the work, echoing Kabir's own *ulat bansi*

style—his 'upside-down' verse that delights in dismantling orthodoxy.

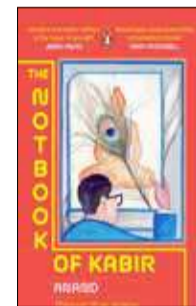
The Notbook of Kabir is not a scholarly biography, nor a faithful translation. It is a personal, political, poetic exploration of Kabir's legacy as reinterpreted through the lens of the Bhakti movement, Buddhism, and Ambedkarite anti-caste thought. Anand provocatively questions long-held assumptions—such as the claim that Kabir was a disciple of the Brahmin sage Ramananda—arguing that these narratives serve to domesticate Kabir's radical message within upper-caste frameworks.

One of the book's strengths lies in its refusal to privilege received wisdom. Anand questions who gets to be a guru, what authority means, and why it so often coincides with caste privilege. He asks, for example, whether reverence for the guru would persist if the teacher were a Dalit. In doing so, he exposes

how even progressive traditions like Bhakti are susceptible to appropriation and caste erasure.

Fifty Kabir songs—translated and reimagined—form the heart of the book. Sourced from marginalised singers such as Kaluram Bamaniya, Prahlad Singh Tipanya, and Mahesha Ram, these songs are not mere artefacts; they are living performances. Anand's translations, full of rhythm and irreverence, match the spirit of Kabir more than any literal rendering could. They are, in Anand's own words, acts of joyful surrender to the "flamboyance and flexibility" of oral tradition.

But this same creative exuberance sometimes comes at a cost. The book flits from anecdote to insight, from verse to polemic, without always providing a firm historical or philosophical grounding. Kabir's alignment with Buddhism is suggested but not fully examined. His misogyny, well-noted by



The Notbook of Kabir: Thinner than Water, Fiercer than Fire
By S. Anand
Viking
332 pages; Rs 499

scholars like Wendy Doniger, is acknowledged only in passing, with missed opportunities to interrogate the interplay between gender, caste, and spiritual renunciation.

To his credit, Anand does not pretend to be exhaustive or definitive. The text is laced with playfulness and digression, qualities that mirror Kabir's own resistance to categorisation. Rather than positioning himself as a scholar with authoritative claims, Anand plays the role of a curious interlocutor—sometimes irreverent, sometimes impassioned, always engaging. This refusal to tidy up the contradictions allows the book to stay true to Kabir's essential ambiguity.

What makes *The Notbook of Kabir* particularly resonant

today is its challenge to structures of authority—religious, textual, and caste-based. In an India where dominant narratives seek to purify, simplify and flatten history, Anand's Kabir is gloriously impure and uncontrollable. He belongs not to Sanskritised tradition but to the vernacular, to performance, to protest. In reclaiming Kabir through the voices of singers from oppressed communities, Anand offers not just an alternative reading, but an act of restoration.

The Notbook of Kabir is not a textbook. It is not a hagiography. It is a companion for those willing to wade into discomfort, contradiction and delight. Anand gives us Kabir not as a saint to be followed, but as a question to be lived. This is a book that doesn't offer conclusions but opens doors—sometimes upside down.

In an age where identities are fixed and faiths rigid, Kabir's wild laughter rings clearer than ever. And in Anand's hands, it reaches new ears, irreverent and urgent, reminding us that truth—if it exists at all—often begins with doubt

Air India, IndiGo reroute International Flights after Pak Shuts Airspace for India

NEW DELHI: Leading carriers Air India and IndiGo on Thursday announced that their international flights will take an alternative extended route, after Pakistan closed its airspace for India amid rising diplomatic tensions after the deadly Pahalgam terror attack in Jammu and Kashmir.

Air India said that due to the announced restriction of Pakistan airspace for all Indian airlines, it is expected that some Air India flights to or from North America, UK, Europe, and Middle East will take an alternative extended route.

"Air India regrets the inconvenience caused to our passengers due to this unforeseen airspace closure that is outside our control. We would like to reiterate that at Air India, the



safety of our customers and crew remains top priority," the airline said in a post on social media platform X.

Meanwhile, IndiGo also said in a post on X that due to the sudden announcement of airspace closure by Pakistan, "a few of our international flights

flexible rebooking options, or claim a refund through our website," said the low-cost carrier in its update on social media.

The high-level emergency meeting of Pakistan's National Security Committee (NSC), chaired by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday afternoon, seconded the recommendations made by the Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and decided an immediate closure of its airspace for India.

Islamabad also said that India's decision to suspend the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) will be considered as an "act of war", stating that Pakistan will use its national power to tackle any unilateral decision taken by India in this matter.

are being impacted".

"We understand the inconvenience this may cause, and our teams are doing their best to help you reach your destination at the earliest. We encourage you to check the latest flight status. If your flight is impacted, please explore

India's Core Industries Index Shows 3.8% Growth in March 2025



NEW DELHI: India's Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI) registered a 3.8 percent growth in March 2025 compared to the same month last year, according to provisional data released today.

Six out of the eight core sectors recorded positive growth, with Cement showing the strongest performance at 11.6 percent.

The Eight Core Industries, which comprise 40.27 percent of items included in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), posted a cumulative growth

rate of 4.4 percent during the fiscal year 2024-25 (April to March) compared to the previous year.

The final growth rate for December 2024 was confirmed at a robust 5.1 percent.

Steel production, which carries a weight of 17.92 percent in the index, increased by 7.1 percent in March 2025 over the same month last year, with its cumulative index rising by 6.7 percent for the fiscal year.

Electricity generation, having the second-highest weight in the index at 19.85 percent,

grew by 6.2 percent, while its cumulative annual growth stood at 5.1 percent.

The Fertiliser sector demonstrated strong performance with an 8.8 percent increase in March 2025 compared to March 2024.

Coal production showed moderate growth at 1.6 percent, while Petroleum Refinery Products registered a marginal increase of 0.2 percent.

However, two sectors recorded declines in March 2025. Crude Oil production fell by 1.9 percent compared to March 2024, with its cumulative index showing a 2.2 percent decline for the fiscal year. Natural Gas experienced a significant contraction of 12.7 percent, with its cumulative index decreasing by 1.2 percent during the 2024-25 fiscal year.

The cement industry emerged as the standout performer with 11.6 percent growth in March 2025, contributing to a strong cumulative annual growth of 6.3 percent, reflecting ongoing infrastructure development activities across the country.

Nearly 90% Kashmir tour bookings cancelled after Pahalgam attack



**FW DESK
Srinagar**

Nearly 90% of tourist bookings for Jammu and Kashmir have been cancelled following the terror attack in Pahalgam, according to PTI report quoting several Delhi-based travel agencies. The cancellations come in the wake of Tuesday's attack in Baisaran valley, a popular spot in Pahalgam, where terrorists opened fire on tourists. At least 26 people, including two foreigners and two locals, were killed in what has become the deadliest terror incident in the Valley since the 2019 Pulwama bombing, PTI reported. Travel agents said popular destinations like Gulmarg, Hajan Valley, and the Tulip Gardens were among the most-affected. In Kashmir also, the hoteliers and travel agents are reporting cancellations. Lal Chowk and Boulevard which used to be full of tourists now wears a deserted look. "All tourists at our guest house left," said Mohammad Imran, a staffer at a guest house in Srinagar. "We had bookings for May and June. They too have cancelled."

Government Vigilant against Dumping & Predatory Pricing says Joint Secretary Mishra



**TANVIR KAUR
New Delhi**

"A new world order is developing with tariffs and retaliatory tariffs announced almost in real-time. Chemicals is one sector which may benefit from this development. Exports to the US may be re-directed towards us, so we need to be vigilant against dumping and predatory pricing which may happen in the next few months. A task force under the Ministry of Commerce had been set-up to closely monitor the situation," said Deepak Mishra, Joint Secretary, Petrochemicals, Department of Chemicals & Petrochemicals, Government of India at the India Speciality Chemicals Conclave organised by ASSOCHAM. "We are working to develop a Registration, Evaluation, Authorization and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH) framework for India. Once this is in place, products can be branded accordingly in conformity to international environmental norms and quality controls," he said. "Research and development is crucial for speciality chemicals business as it is more of a knowledge centric business. The industry must work together with academia to enhance capabilities for research," he added.

'Viksit Bharat' journey a shared national mission: FM Sitharaman

NEW DELHI: India's journey to become a 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047 is not merely an aspiration but a shared national mission powered by a vision for inclusive, sustainable, and innovation-led growth, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said.

During her address at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University in the US, the Finance Minister said that India has risen from the world's tenth-largest economy to the fifth-largest, a clear sign of "our growing strength and global relevance".

"Despite the pandemic shock and a banking crisis, our progress over the past decade, anchored in strong macroeconomic fundamentals and steady



reforms, gives us confidence and direction for the road ahead," she told the gathering during her keynote address, titled 'Laying the foundations for a developed India #ViksitBharat by 2047'.

FM Sitharaman said that some of the works done in India

money was transferred by the government with a click of a button. DPI also came in useful in administering vaccines during the Covid-19 pandemic," the Finance Minister mentioned during her speech.

"In my interactions with the G20, the World Bank or the IMF, this singular population-scale achievement of India is repeatedly lauded," she added.

According to the Union Minister, over the next two decades, sustaining India's growth momentum calls for a fresh approach grounded in bold reforms, stronger domestic capacities, renewed institutional partnerships and adaptive strategies suited for the evolving global landscape.

stand out, and one such example is that of Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) and its success. "More than a billion digital identities have been created using DPI. Using these digital identities, bank accounts of people were created, and during the Covid-19 pandemic,

stand out, and one such example is that of Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) and its success. "More than a billion digital identities have been created using DPI. Using these digital identities, bank accounts of people were created, and during the Covid-19 pandemic,

Startups & MSMEs have filed 310% more patents in the last five years says Controller General

**TANVIR KAUR
New Delhi**

Patent filing by startups and MSMEs have increased by 310% in last 5 years from 1492 in 2018-19 to 6120 in 2023-24. In 2023-24 more than 30% patent applications have been filed by educational institute, said N. Ramchander, Joint Controller, Controller General of Patents, Designs and Trademarks at ASSOCHAM event.

In less than 3 years over 2.4 million students and faculty across India have been educated about IP rights through the National Intellectual Property



Awareness Mission (NIPAM) launched in 2021, N. Ramchander, Joint Controller, Controller General of Patents, Designs and Trademarks, DPIIT stated at 3rd Global IP Leadership Conference Building a Robust IP

Ecosystem for Viksit Bharat organised by ASSOCHAM today.

He further said that Indian patent office along with WIPO has conducted six roving seminars in Chennai, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad

and Delhi PCT system of filing patents and Madrid system of trademarks in the month of March 2025.

The filing of patent applications in India has surged by 116% rising from 42,763 in 2014-15 to 92,172 in 2023-24. Patent grants have been an even more remarkable increase of 1,624%, jumping from 5,978 in 2014-15 to 103,057 in 2023-24. India has seen biggest change in resident and non-resident distribution over past 10 years with the share of resident filing increasing from 24.8% in 2013 to 60% in 2024, added N. Ramchander.

Panipat textile goods manufacturers get orders worth Rs. 5000 cr. from USA

**SATISH HANDA
Panipat**

The US-China tariff war has started a golden opportunity for Panipat textile manufacturers and exporters. US tariffs on China have increased the prices of Chinese products, due to which American buyers have switched over their procurement of textile goods placing orders on Panipat exporters. Information reveals, Panipat exporters have received orders worth Rs 5000 crore from American buyers at the Indian Handicraft-Gift Fair held in Noida recently. It is expected that more orders for amounts worth Rs 5000 crore will be received by September this year. The US-China tariff war has become an opportunity for the textile city Panipat, when China imposed a 125 percent tariff on America, and responded by imposing a 245 percent dumping duty on China. In America, Chinese blankets, bedsheets, bathmats, towels and carpets have become more expensive than Indian products after their prices have much increased, as such the American orders being placed to China are being shifted to Panipat. Information reveals, about one thousand buyers from America arrived at the Indian Handicraft-Gift Fair held in Noida from 16 to 19 April this year, who have placed orders worth about five thousand crores to the exporters of Panipat, apart from another rupees five thousand crores worth of orders are expected by September this year as a result happiness among



exporters of Panipat has been seen. Now Panipat's exports to America can increase from 9,600 crores to 15 thousand crores in 2025-26, expecting worldwide exports to reach rupees 30,000 crores. Panipat's exporters are very happy with this and have also invited American buyers for a meeting in Delhi.

The Indian Handicraft-Gift Fair is held twice a year in September and April at Greater Noida. This fair being World's largest handicraft and gift fair gets a huge gathering of buyers from all over world, in which nearly 3500 buyers from about 105 countries attend this fair. Panipat exporters have received the maximum American orders, showcases the Indian handicraft sector to the world. The aim of this fair is to increase the production capacity of Indian handicrafts, improve quality and bring innovation in designs. Information reveals that Chinese products were nearly 40 percent cheaper in America as a result exporters from China used to get maximum orders in the past. In America, the prices of Chinese mink blankets, bedsheets, towels, bathmats, carpets and sofa covers were up to 40 percent lower than those exporters in Panipat as a result American buyers used to place more orders with China than Panipat.

Zymeworks Appoints Dr. Sabeen Mekan as Senior Vice President, Clinical Development

**FW DESK
Vancouver (British Columbia)**

Zymeworks Inc., a clinical-stage biotechnology company developing a diverse pipeline of novel, multifunctional biotherapeutics to improve the standard of



care for difficult-to-treat diseases, including cancer, inflammation, and autoimmune disease, today announced that Sabeen Mekan, M.D., has been appointed as Senior Vice President, Clinical Development. Reporting directly to the Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Mekan will have a key role in formulating the clinical development strategy for Zymeworks' clinical-stage oncology portfolio, including global regulatory affairs. Dr. Jeff Smith, who joined Zymeworks in 2023, will continue as Executive Vice President & Chief Medical Officer, with primary responsibility for Zymeworks' emerging R&D portfolio in autoimmune and inflammatory disease and Global Clinical Development Operations.

China Plus One: India as a Fit Candidate in Pharmaceuticals

DR. ANIL KUMAR ANGRISH

China is the manufacturing hub as China's share in Gross Production stood at 33 per cent as per the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Trade in value-added (TiVA) Database 2023, and this was 2.75 times of the U.S. share in Gross Production of the World. And the U.S. ranks 2nd in terms of Gross Production. China's production exceeded that of nine next largest manufacturers combined. Richard Baldwin (2024) pointed out that six nations manufacture at least 3 per cent of the world total.

By 1995, top 10 countries in manufacturing used to have almost 65 per cent share in gross output and China's share was around 5 per cent at that time. By 2020, share of top 10 countries in manufacturing has reached almost equal to China's share in gross output which reflects the strength of Chinese manufacturing capability.

COVID-19 pandemic compelled many developed countries to rethink about their dependence on China, and look for alternative sources of supply. Many countries started working on taking up the

role of 'Plus One'. Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) was touted as an alternative as it accounted for almost 40 per cent of the global GDP. Countries such as the U.S., Japan, Philippines, Australia, New Zealand, Brunei, South Korea, Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and India came together.

In May 2020, it was widely highlighted that a total area of 461,589 hectares was identified across India to attract businesses moving out of China. This identified land pool was almost double the size of Luxembourg. Pharmaceutical sector was identified as the focus area for promoting manufacturing along with other nine sectors.

In pharmaceuticals, China is the world's largest producer of Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs), and many countries including the U.S. is dependent heavily on the drugs that either come from China in finished form or from APIs which are sourced from China. During COVID-19 outbreak, it was realized by many countries that supply of essential medicines must not be compromised by just relying on a single source or country which is potentially unreliable. In recent tariff war between the U.S. and China, this has become another reminder.

As per the report by Bain & Company (2025) titled, 'Healing the World: A Roadmap for making India a Global Pharma Exports Hub', China is the leader in pharmaceutical exports (volume terms) if we observe the data of 6-digit India Trade Classification Harmonized System (ITC-HS) pertaining to APIs, Formulations, Biosimilars and Vaccines. France has second rank with just one-fifth in terms of volume in comparison to China whereas India ranked third with the size of almost 17.88 per cent of China in pharmaceutical exports.

In Key Starting Materials (KSMs), Drug Intermediates, and Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs), India must lower dependence on imports and enhance the capability in exports. In last almost four decades, India has seen a major shift. In 1991, there was less than one per cent dependence on China for APIs. Then in 2008, due to Beijing Olympics, several API plants were closed in China which led to increase in the price of those bulk drugs which India was sourcing primarily from China, to the extent of 20 per cent. By 2011, the dependence on China for APIs rose to 60 per cent. BCG-CII Report in 2016 had identified that nearly 80 per cent of many key materi-



als (mostly intermediates and some APIs) used to manufacture at least 12 essential drugs were being imported from China. It was only in FY21 that API exports from India stood at Rs. 32,856 Crore and API imports stood at Rs. 28,529 Crore. Quantity of API exports stood at 3,24,331 MT whereas Quantity of API imports was 3,90,476 MT. This partly reflected quality and complexity of APIs exported from India. Moreover, this was a positive sign in presenting India as 'China Plus One' in APIs.

Recent developments place 'Plus One' candidates in an advantageous position, e.g., the US Biosecure Act intends to prevent Chinese biotech companies and manufacturers from benefiting from US government funding directly or indirectly by prohibiting companies which use manu-

factured goods and services from certain Chinese companies, and those linked to government/military of China. Second major initiative is Biopharmaceutical Alliance formed by the US, EU, Japan, South Korea and India. Inaugural meeting took place as part of Bio International Conference 2024 that was held in San Diego. The purpose was to build resilient supply chain in the biopharmaceutical sector.

On domestic front, certain initiatives have been taken to build strength in pharmaceutical sector. First, the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for promotion of critical Key Starting Materials (KSMs)/ Drug Intermediates (DIs) and Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs) in India has been launched with a financial outlay of Rs. 6,940

crores and the tenure from FY 2020-2021 to FY 2029-30. This Scheme provides for financial incentive to 41 identified products. A total of 51 applicants have been selected under the scheme. Secondly, the PLI Scheme for Pharmaceuticals, with a financial outlay Rs. 15,000 crores and the tenure from FY 2020-2021 to FY 2028-29, provides for financial incentive to 55 selected applicants for manufacturing of identified products under three categories for a period of six years. The eligible drugs under this scheme include APIs. Thirdly, the Scheme for Promotion of Bulk Drug Parks provides for a financial outlay of Rs. 3,000 crores and the tenure from FY 2020-2021 to FY 2024-25. The Scheme provides for financial assistance to three States for establishing Bulk Drug Parks. The success of these schemes will make India self-reliant. Additionally, this will present India as a fit candidate for 'China plus One' tag in pharmaceuticals.

Biopharmaceuticals is another area which has immense potential. India's BioEconomy 2024 report by BIRAC pegged India's Biopharma at \$53.8 Bn with almost 35.65 per cent share in India's BioEconomy. It should be seen in the background that just 9 manufac-

urers account for over 70 per cent of the global supply in case of Global Vaccine Market. 3 vaccine manufacturers (Serum Institute of India, Bharat Biotech International, and Biological E Limited) out of these 9 manufacturers are from India.

When these facts are seen in comparison to Ireland then Indian Pharmaceutical Industry's size seems insignificant. Ireland exported \$92 Bn of pharmaceutical products in 2023 thereby becoming the 3rd largest exporter of pharmaceutical products in the world. For Ireland, pharmaceutical products were the most exported product in 2023, and exports to the U.S. alone stood at \$31.6 Bn. In contrast to this, India's total pharmaceutical exports for FY25 stood at \$30.47 Bn.

Recent data has shown that medicines from Indian companies provided \$219 Bn in savings to the US healthcare system in 2022 alone. Between 2013 and 2022, savings to the US Health System stood at \$1.3 Trn due to the use of generic medicines exported by Indian pharmaceutical companies. The U.S. will generate additional \$1.3 Trn in savings over the next five years. The U.S. alone is a huge market for Indian pharmaceutical products. India is

importing about \$800 Mn worth of pharma products from the US and exported pharma products worth US \$8.9 Bn. So, the US remained the largest market for Indian pharma exports contributing more than one-third of the pharmaceutical exports. This shows the strength of Indian Pharmaceutical Industry.

What Ajay Banga, as the World Bank President said on July 28, 2023, when he was addressing a G20 Finance Ministers' and Central Bank Governors' meeting at Gandhinagar seems most relevant: "India has a window of three-to-five years to seize this opportunity to attract investment. I think India's opportunity currently is to cash in on the 'China plus One' opportunity. This opportunity won't stay open for 10 years." Now, we are in 2025, and two years have already passed, so it has become crucial to realign national efforts with speed and scale to become 'Plus One' in Pharmaceuticals in sub-segments where we lack.

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 Issues New LCR Guidelines for Banks

MUMBAI: The RBI has issued new Liquidity Coverage Ratio (LCR) guidelines which will require a bank to assign additional run-off rates of 2.5 per cent to internet and mobile banking-enabled retail and small business customer deposits with effect from April 1, 2026.

Banks will also have to adjust the market value of Government Securities (Level 1 HQLA) with haircuts in line with margin requirements under the Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF) and Marginal Standing Facility (MSF).

In addition, the final guidelines also rationalise the composition of wholesale funding from "other legal entities". Consequently, funding from non-financial entities like trusts (educational, charitable and religious), partnerships, LLPs, etc., shall attract a lower run-off rate of 40 per cent as against 100 per cent



currently. "To give the banks adequate time to transition their systems to the new standards for LCR computation, the revised instructions shall become applicable with effect from April 1, 2026," the RBI statement said.

The Reserve Bank has undertaken an impact analysis of the above measures based on data submitted by banks, as on December 31, 2024. It is estimated that the net

impact of these measures will improve the LCR of banks, at the aggregate level, by around 6 percentage points as on that date. Further, all the banks would continue to meet the minimum regulatory LCR requirements comfortably. The RBI is sanguine that these measures will enhance the liquidity resilience of banks in India, and further align the guidelines with the global standards in a non-disruptive manner, according to an RBI

statement.

The Reserve Bank had issued a draft circular on July 25, 2024, on "Basel III Framework on Liquidity Standards - Liquidity Coverage Ratio (LCR) - Review of Haircuts on High Quality Liquid Assets (HQLA) and Run-off Rates on Certain Categories of Deposits". The draft circular proposed certain amendments to the LCR framework and invited comments from banks and stakeholders.

The final LCR guidelines have been issued after carefully examining this feedback, the RBI statement added.

The Liquidity Coverage Ratio is a regulatory standard developed by the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision. It requires banks to hold a buffer of High Quality Liquid Assets (HQLA) that can cover expected net cash outflows over a 30-day stress scenario.

Sensex, Nifty end Lower as Geopolitical Tensions Rise

MUMBAI: The benchmark equity indices saw intense selling pressure on Friday amid escalating tensions between India and Pakistan, following the barbaric terror attack in Jammu and Kashmir's Pahalgam.

Sensex started the day on a positive note, reaching an early high of 80,131. However, the market quickly turned negative, dropping sharply to a low of 78,606, a loss of 1,525 points, as reports emerged of a ceasefire violation at the India-Pakistan border. The index managed to recover some of the losses but still ended the day 589 points lower, closing at 79,213 — a decline of 0.7 per cent. Similarly, the Nifty index rose to a high of 24,365 before plunging to its intra-day low of 23,848, a drop of 517 points. The Nifty ended 207 points lower, settling at 24,039, a decrease of 0.9 per cent.

"Rising geopolitical tensions between India and Pakistan continued to weigh heavily on



investor sentiment, prompting a cautious start for Indian equities," said Sundar Kewat of Ashika Institutional Equity. Despite the sharp decline, the benchmark indices closed the week on a positive note. The Sensex gained 660 points, and the Nifty added 187 points over the course of the week. Among the Sensex stocks, Axis Bank was the biggest loser, following the announcement of its Q4 results. Other major losers included Zomato, Bajaj Finserv, Power Grid Corporation, Bajaj Finance, NTPC, Tata Motors, and SBI, all of which saw declines of 2-3 per cent.

On the flip side, stocks like TCS, Tech Mahindra, UltraTech

Cement, and Infosys managed to close with notable gains. The broader market was also hit hard, with both the BSE Mid-Cap and SmallCap indices falling more than 2 per cent each.

In terms of sectoral performance, the BSE Realty, Healthcare and Power indices experienced sharp declines, each falling up to 3 per cent.

Other sectors such as Auto, Capital Goods, Consumer Durables, and Metal saw declines of around 2 per cent each.

The Bankex and FMCG indices also ended the day in the red, down by about 1 per cent.

Rupak De from LKP Securities said that Nifty has slipped after a consolidation on the daily chart, indicating a rise in bearish sentiment.

"In the short term, sentiment is likely to continue driving the market trend, with the possibility of the index heading lower. Support on the lower end, is placed at 23800/23515," he mentioned.

Market Valuation of Top-10 Companies Surges by over 3 Lakh Core, HDFC Bank Biggest Gainer



MUMBAI: The combined market capitalisation of the top 10 most-valued companies surged by Rs 3.84 lakh crore last week, driven by a bullish trend in equities. HDFC Bank and Bharti Airtel emerged as the top performers.

Despite the two-day holiday, the stock market surged over 4 per cent last week. Nifty rose 1,023 points or 4.48 per cent to close at 23,851 and Sensex rose 3,395 points or 4.52 per cent to close at 78,553.

HDFC Bank's market capitalisation surged by Rs 76,483.95 crore to Rs 14,58,934.32 crore. Bharti Airtel's market valuation grew by Rs 75,210.77 crore, taking the company's market cap to Rs 10,77,241.74 crore. ICICI Bank gained Rs 67,597 crore, pushing its valuation to Rs 10,01,948.86 crore, while State Bank of India added Rs 38,420.49 crore, reaching Rs 7,11,381.46 crore. Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) saw an increase of Rs 24,114.55 crore, bringing its market value to Rs 11,93,588.98 crore. The market cap of Bajaj Finance rose by Rs 14,712.85 crore to Rs 5,68,061.13 crore. The market cap of ITC grew by Rs 6,820.2 crore to Rs 5,34,665.77 crore. The market capitalisation of Infosys rose by Rs 3,987.14 crore to Rs 5,89,846.48 crore.

Rising Investment by Indian Inc aboard Drags Net FDI Numbers



NEW DELHI: India's net foreign direct investment (FDI) has fallen dramatically to USD 1.5 billion during April 2024-February 2025, down from USD 11.5 billion in the corresponding period last year, according to Reserve Bank of India (RBI) data. This sharp decline comes despite robust growth in gross FDI inflows.

The country's gross FDI inflows showed impressive growth of 15.2 percent year-on-year, reaching USD 75.1 billion during the 11-month period of FY 2024-25, up from USD 65.2 billion in the previous fiscal year.

The State of the Economy report in the April 2025 RBI bulletin identified Singapore as the largest source of equity inflows with a 29.8 percent share, followed by Mauritius and the United States.

IMF, World Bank See India's Potential as Engine of Global Trade: FM Sitharaman



SAN FRANCISCO: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said that India has become the fastest-growing economy, driven by the "visionary leadership" of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the stability provided by a continuing government.

Addressing the Indian diaspora in the US, the Finance Minister said, "When we say that India is the fastest-growing economy and when the IMF and World Bank recognise that India can be the engine driving global trade, what they are recognising is the immense potential that exists in India."

Highlighting the steps to strengthen the Indian economy, Sitharaman said, "During the Covid-19 pandemic, our fiscal deficit went up. But in 2021, we came up with a clear signal as to how we wanted to manage our fiscal deficit. We set year-on-year targets and committed to bringing the fiscal deficit below 4.5 per cent by 2026. And that's what we have been following each year without fail."

She said the government's primary focus under Prime Minister Narendra Modi is achieving 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047. This vision encompasses improvements across sectors impacting women, the impoverished, youth, and farmers.

FM Sitharaman highlighted that India prioritises 'Sunrise Sectors' and stands out as a leader in Digital Public Infra-

India's DBT System Saves Rs 3.48 Lakh Crore, Boosts Welfare Efficiency: BlueKraft Report



NEW DELHI: A new quantitative assessment by the BlueKraft Digital Foundation has revealed that India's Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) system has generated cumulative savings of Rs 3.48 lakh crore by eliminating leakages in welfare delivery.

The report indicates that subsidy allocations have decreased from 16 per cent to 9 per cent of total government expenditure since DBT implementation, representing a significant improvement in public spending efficiency. The assessment, which analyses data from 2009 to 2024, examines DBT's impact on budgetary efficiency, subsidy rationalisation, and social outcomes. The transition from paper-based disbursements to direct digital transfers has ensured public funds reach intended beneficiaries.

A cornerstone of the DBT system is the JAM trinity—Jan Dhan bank accounts, Aadhaar unique IDs, and mobile phones—which has enabled targeted and transparent transfers at scale. To comprehensively measure impact, the report introduces a Welfare Efficiency Index that combines fiscal outcomes with social indicators.

This index has increased nearly threefold from 0.32 in

Indian Bank to Disburse Rs 20,000 Crore to Self-Help Groups in FY26



CHENNAI: Indian Bank, a public sector lender headquartered in Chennai, has announced plans to disburse Rs 20,000 crore to Self-Help Groups (SHGs) across India in the current financial year (FY26). This initiative aims to empower grassroots women entrepreneurs and support inclusive economic growth. In a recent 'Mega SHG Credit Outreach Programme' held in Bhuvaneshwar, the bank sanctioned Rs 509.91 crore to 9,961 SHGs.

The event was attended by M Nagaraju, Secretary of the Department of Financial Services, Binod Kumar, MD & CEO of Indian Bank, and Mahesh Kumar Bajaj, Executive Director.

This programme is part of a nationwide effort to provide credit access to one crore women SHG members, aligning with the government's 'Viksit Bharat 2047' vision for inclusive development.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has also encouraged banks to simplify loan procedures for SHGs, making financing more accessible and inclusive. SHGs play a crucial role in promoting savings habits and income-generating activities among women, contributing to their economic empowerment.

NBFC Credit Growth to Moderate to 13-15% in FY25-26: ICRA

NEW DELHI: Credit growth of non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) is expected to ease to 13-15 per cent in financial years 2025 and 2026, down from the 17 per cent recorded in the previous two fiscal years, according to a recent report by rating agency ICRA.

Overall NBFC credit stood at approximately Rs 52 trillion in December 2024 and is projected to exceed Rs 60 trillion by FY2026.

Retail assets, which accounted for 58 per cent of overall NBFC credit in December 2024, have been the primary growth drivers, while other wholesale and infrastructure credit expanded at a stable rate of 10-12 per cent during FY2023-FY2025.

The retail assets of NBFCs expanded at a compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) of 23 per cent during FY2023-FY2024.



However, ICRA now expects retail assets to grow at a relatively slower 16-18 per cent CAGR during FY2025 and FY2026, citing the high base created in the post-COVID expansion of this segment and concerns about borrower overleveraging, which has impacted loan quality in certain asset segments.

Asset segments including microfinance, personal loans, credit cards, and unsecured business loans are witnessing higher stress in FY2025, lead-

ing to elevated delinquencies and write-offs.

Unsecured business loans account for nearly 28 per cent of retail NBFC credit as of December 2024.

"While the stress is largely confined to the unsecured loans at present, in a constricted credit flow environment, the refinancing ability of some of the borrower segments shall get adversely impacted," stated Karthik Srinivasan, Group Head Financial Sector Ratings

at ICRA Limited. Thus, performance-secured loans availed by these borrowers, namely small-ticket vehicle loans and micro and small-ticket mortgage loans, etc., shall remain a key monitorable," he added.

The rating agency noted that while most regulatory actions are expected to have some near-term impact on growth, they augur well for the sector in the long term. Most entities have the ability to absorb any near-term impact, considering their strong balance sheets and healthy earnings profiles. "Moderate loan growth expectations, along with limited dependence on short-term funding at present, bode well for sectoral liquidity, which is expected to remain adequate, but access to the commensurate funding remains key," the report stated.

Finance Minister to review 'One State-One RRB' Implementation on May 6

NEW DELHI: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is likely to review the implementation and progress of the 'One State-One RRB' initiative on May 6.

The consolidation effort, which aims to achieve better operational efficiency and cost rationalization, will come into effect from May 1, merging 15 Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) across 11 states. This fourth round of consolidation will reduce the total number of RRBs in the country from 43 to 28. According to sources, the Finance Minister's scheduled



meeting with RRBs will address various issues, including the ongoing consolidation process. The consolidation affects RRBs in 11 states: Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Bihar, Gujarat, Jammu & Kashmir, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, and Rajasthan. Each state will now have a single RRB entity, fulfilling the 'One State-One RRB' objective.

In Andhra Pradesh, four banks—Chaitanya Godavari Grammeena Bank, Andhra Pragathi Grammeena Bank, Saptagiri Grammeena Bank, and Andhra Pradesh Grammeena Vikas Bank—will merge to form Andhra Pradesh Grammeena Bank. These banks were previously sponsored by Union Bank of India, Canara Bank, Indian Bank, and State Bank of India respectively. For Uttar Pradesh, Baroda UP Bank,

Aryavart Bank, and Prathama UP Gramin Bank will be consolidated into Uttar Pradesh Gramin Bank with its headquarters in Lucknow under Bank of Baroda's sponsorship. These banks were earlier sponsored by Bank of Baroda, Bank of India, and Punjab National Bank. In West Bengal, three banks—Bangiya Gramin Vikash, Paschim Banga Gramin Bank, and Uttaranga Kshetriya Gramin Bank—will merge to form West Bengal Gramin Bank, headquartered in Kolkata under Punjab National Bank's sponsorship.

Indian economy is moving towards nourishment to flourish



SATISH SINGH Retail inflation increased by 3.34% annually in March, while it increased by 3.61% in February. It is worth mentioning that retail inflation has come down to its lowest level in the last 67 months, while it was at the level of 5.22% in December 2024. At the same time, it was at 5.1% in January 2024. It is worth mentioning that after November 2021, retail inflation has increased at the lowest pace in March 2025. Here, wholesale inflation also declined and came down to 2.05% in March, while it was at the level of 2.38% in February and was at the level of 4.31% in January.

The price of food in the retail market increased by 2.69% in March 2025 compared to March 2024, while the cost of food in the wholesale market increased by only 1.57%. Retail inflation is within the 2% to 6% inflation tolerance limit set by the Reserve Bank of India. It has remained below 4% for the second consecutive month, making it easier for the Reserve Bank of India to cut policy rates in the proposed monetary review in June.

Inflation plays a vital role in determining one's purchasing power. When inflation increases, the prices of goods and services increase, which reduces a person's purchasing power and decreases the de-

mand for goods and services. Then, the sale of various products decreases, their production decreases, the company incurs losses, workers are laid off, employment generation decreases, etc. As a result, economic activities slow down and the pace of development is hampered. In such a situation, it would be correct to say that the pace of development accelerates only when inflation decreases.

The IMD's prediction of better-than-normal rainfall this year is a significant development for the Indian economy. This forecast is expected to lead to better crops, reducing farmers' dependence on irrigation and the overall cost of farming. Currently, about 48.8% of India's total agricultural land is irrigated, with the remaining 51.2% dependent on rain. The potential increase in rainfall could significantly boost agricultural production, thereby positively impacting the economy.

The National Statistical Office (NSO) has projected the GDP growth rate to be 6.4 per cent in its first advance estimate for the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for the financial year 2024-25, which is lower than the last three financial years. The GDP growth rate in the previous financial year was 8.2%. At the same time, the Reserve Bank of India has projected the GDP to grow at 6.6% during the financial year 2024-25.

Despite the recent slow pace of GDP growth, hope is on the horizon. The government's focus on increas-



ing investment, savings, and consumption in the budget is a promising strategy. We can accelerate economic activities and development by boosting these areas, bringing hope for a brighter financial future.

After loan growth between 14% and 16% in the last two years, the overall credit growth has slowed down for the past few months. In December 2024, credit growth came down to 11.2%, the biggest reason for which was the high lending rate. Cheap capital is not available from banks. Earlier, investors used to keep their deposits in the bank, but today, in the hope of getting higher returns, they are investing in the stock market, mutual funds, gold, bonds, etc., due to which banks are facing a shortage of capital. It is worth noting that banks take deposits from customers and give loans to people in need in the same amount, but customers are currently avoiding depositing their money.

In such an adverse situation, the central bank is the source of cheap capital for banks. When

the policy rates are cut, the Reserve Bank will give loans to banks at cheaper rates, which they can lend to people in need at more affordable rates, and borrowing will increase. Currently, banks are forced to give loans at higher rates, and due to the availability of loans at higher rates, ordinary people and business owners are avoiding taking out loans. Because of this, companies are short of capital, which makes them unable to produce at full capacity. Demand for products has also decreased. As a result, economic activities have been disrupted, and the pace of development is not increasing.

After the reduction in the repo rate in February, credit growth has picked up slightly. In March 2025, loans grew at a rate of 11.10% as compared to the same month last year, while loan growth was slow in February 2025. During this period, loans given to industry registered an increase of 7.3%. At the same time, personal loans registered a growth of 14%. It is worth noting that loan growth

in India averaged 11.83% from 2012 to 2025, which reached a high of 20.80% in December 2023 and a record low of 4.10% in March 2017. When we compare the Indian economy's growth rate with the global economy's growth rate, we are proud. Our economy is significantly outpacing the worldwide level. According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the global GDP growth rate was 3.2% in 2024 and is projected to be 3.3% in 2025. In contrast, the IMF estimates the global economy to grow at a rate of 3.1% in 2024 and 3.2% in 2025.

The Indian economy is not just better than that of the world's most powerful country, the US, but it's also expected to remain strong in the coming years. The growth rate in the US is estimated to be 2.7% during the financial year 2024 and 2.0% in the financial year 2025. This comparison underscores the strength and resilience of the Indian economy.

With the potential for cheaper loans, banks can lend at more affordable rates. This, in turn, will encourage people to take loans, leading to a boost in both investment and savings. The prospect of increased consumption and growth in economic activities is on the horizon, bringing hope and encouragement for the future.

Satish Singh, Ahmedabad Based Senior Columnist, views are personal.

INTERNATIONAL

'France Stands Firmly with India', says President Macron

Dials Prime Minister Modi on Pahalgam Terror Attack

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron on Friday spoke to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the telephone over the terrorist attack in Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir, and said that France stands firmly with India and its people in this hour of grief. Macron also said that France will stand together with its allies and would continue the fight against terrorism wherever necessary.

continue the fight against terrorism wherever necessary." Earlier on Thursday eve-



ning, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal wrote on X: "President @EmmanuelMacron called Prime Minister @narendramodi and conveyed his personal condolences on the brutal killing of innocent people in the heinous terror attack in the Indian Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. He strongly condemned

the attack and expressed full support and solidarity with the people of India adding that

on Tuesday in the Baisaran meadow of Anantnag district, has drawn condemnation from across the world. The brutal incident led to the killing of 25 Indian nationals and one Nepali citizen, and injuring several others. Following the attack, India convened a Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday. The Central government has announced several diplomatic measures, such as closing the Integrated Check Post (ICP) at Attari, suspending the SAARC Visa Exemption Scheme (SVES) for Pakistani nationals, giving them 40 hours to return to their country, and reducing the number of officers in the High Commissions on both sides. India also halted the Indus Waters Treaty signed in 1960 in the wake of the Pahalgam attack.

this kind of barbarism is totally unacceptable." MEA Spokesperson Jaiswal further wrote: "Prime Minister thanked him (French President Emmanuel Macron) for his message of support and conveyed India's strong resolve to bring the perpetrators to justice." The heinous Pahalgam terrorist attack, which occurred

US Vice President JD Vance arrives in India



NEW DELHI: United States Vice President J.D. Vance, accompanied by his Indian-origin wife Usha Chilukuri Vance and their three children, arrived in India on Monday for a four-day official visit. This marks a significant diplomatic engagement and the first trip by a sitting US Vice President to India in more than a decade. The last such visit was by Joe Biden in 2013. Vice President Vance, who began his international tour with a stop in Italy on Friday, landed at the Air Force Station in Palam, New Delhi. Upon his arrival, Vance was received by Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw and was accorded a ceremonial Guard of Honour at the airport. His visit underscores a renewed emphasis on strengthening US-India ties amid ongoing negotiations over a long-awaited bilateral trade agreement and deepening of strategic cooperation. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to host the Vice President for formal talks, followed by a dinner at his official residence at 7 Lok Kalyan Marg on Monday evening. The meeting will include key

Indian officials, with National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar expected to be present during the discussions. According to sources, the leaders will discuss trade-related matters, regional security, and avenues to boost technological and economic collaboration between the two countries. Vance's arrival in India comes at a time when talks over a bilateral trade deal — originally triggered by former President Donald Trump's imposition of sweeping tariffs — have gained renewed momentum. While the US had initially set a 26 per cent tariff on imports, India currently faces a reduced baseline levy of 10 per cent, which is the standard for most US trading partners except China, during a 90-day pause in the broader tariff rollout. This will be the Vice President's first-ever visit to India and his second bilateral engagement with Prime Minister Modi, following their initial meeting in Paris earlier this year during the AI Summit. That meeting was followed

by PM Modi's visit to Washington for his first official meeting with the current US President after his return to office.

The Vice President is travelling with a five-member high-level US delegation, which includes representatives from the Pentagon and the State Department. The delegation's itinerary includes visits to Agra and Jaipur, underscoring the cultural dimension of the visit alongside strategic dialogue. Vance's wife, Usha Chilukuri Vance, who is of Indian origin, is also part of the trip with their children — Ewan, 7; Vivek, 4; and Mirabel, 2. Usha Vance's family traces its roots to Andhra Pradesh. However, it remains unclear whether they will be meeting with any relatives during their stay in India. This visit also marks the second high-profile trip to India by a senior official from the Trump administration during the current term. In March, Tulsi Gabbard, who serves as the Director of National Intelligence, visited India and participated in the Raisina Dialogue while also holding meetings with Indian officials and the Prime Minister. Vice President Vance's presence in India after such a long gap reflects the significance both countries place on their evolving partnership. His visit is expected to set the tone for further high-level engagements in the near future, especially in the context of growing global geopolitical shifts and economic realignments.

Twelve US states sue Trump administration over 'illegal tariffs'



SAN FRANCISCO: A coalition of 12 US states sued US President Donald Trump's administration over "illegal tariffs" in the US Court of International Trade in New York. Attorneys general of Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Maine, Minnesota, Nevada, New Mexico, New York, Oregon and Vermont on Wednesday filed the lawsuit to seek a court order to block the Trump administration from enacting the tariffs. The lawsuit said the policy has left the national trade policy subject to Trump's "whims rather than the sound exercise of lawful authority," asking the court to declare the tariffs illegal and to block government agencies and officers from enforcing them, Xinhua news agency reported. It noted the US President can only invoke the Emergency Act when there is an "unusual and extraordinary threat" from abroad. "By claiming the authority to impose immense and ever-changing tariffs on whatever goods entering the US he chooses, for whatever reason he finds convenient to declare an emergency, the President has upended the constitutional order and brought chaos to the American economy," the legal action said. "Congress has not granted the President the authority to impose these tariffs and therefore the administration violated the law by imposing them through executive orders, social media posts, and agency orders," New York Attorney General Letitia James' office said in a statement. "His tariffs are unlawful and if not stopped, they will lead to more inflation, unemployment, and economic damage," said James. "President Trump's reckless tariffs have skyrocketed costs for consumers and unleashed economic chaos across the country," New York Governor Kathy Hochul said in a statement on Wednesday. In response, White House spokesperson Kush Desai said the administration "remains committed to addressing this national emergency that's decimating America's industries and leaving our workers behind with every tool at our disposal, from tariffs to negotiations". On April 2, Trump signed an executive order at the White House, invoking the International Emergency Economic Powers Act to declare a national emergency and impose so-called "reciprocal tariffs" on all US trading partners.

US expresses optimism on tariff negotiations with Japan

TOKYO: George Glass, the US Ambassador to Japan, on Tuesday expressed optimism about the ongoing tariff negotiations between Washington and Tokyo as he met Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba. The remarks came ahead of the second round of talks, which is expected to be held later in the month, local media reported. Addressing reporters after his meeting with PM Ishiba, Glass said that the two countries are in a "golden age" both "economically and friendship-wise." He further added that the

"best and brightest" of the United States and Japan have been discussing how to improve their economies and enhance cooperation, adding he is "very optimistic" about the results, according to Kyodo News. According to the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, PM Ishiba and Ambassador Glass exchanged views on current Japan-US relations, including the US tariff measures. The ministry mentioned that the Prime Minister expressed his intention to promote cooperation in a wide variety of fields in a



mutually beneficial manner, and Ambassador Glass concurred to this point. PM Ishiba stated that the Japan-US alliance is the "cornerstone" of Japan's diplomacy and security and expressed his intention to promote mutually beneficial cooperation and

further strengthen the alliance, the ministry said in a statement. Sharing his view, Ambassador Glass stated that the Japan-US alliance is the most important and he would like to cooperate for further strengthening the alliance, it added. "Both sides exchanged views on regional situations, such as China and North Korea. Prime Minister Ishiba asked for continued understanding and cooperation for the immediate resolution of the abductions issue and gained full support from Ambassador-Designate Glass," the statement further read.

Tariff tangles: Global courier giant suspends high-value shipments to US

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump's new tariff regime has also impacted another sector - courier shipments to citizens in the country beyond a certain value.



DHL Express announced it is suspending deliveries worth more than \$800 from all countries to the US because of a "significant increase" in red tape at customs. The delivery giant said it will temporarily stop shipments from companies in all countries to American consumers on Monday "until further notice", the BCC reported. However, business-to-business shipments will still go ahead, "though they may also face delays", the global courier major said. Previously, packages worth up to \$2,500 could enter the US with minimal paperwork, \$800, which can be sent to the US with minimal checks. However, this segment also faces a challenge - with the US set to tighten curbs on these deliveries too - specifically those sent from China and Hong Kong - on May 2 when it closes a loophole allowing low-value packages to enter the US without incurring any duties. The Trump administration has claimed that "many shippers" in China "hide illicit substances and conceal the true contents of shipments sent to the US through deceptive shipping practices". The White House said the measures were aimed at "addressing the synthetic opioid supply chain", which it said "plays a significant role in the synthetic opioid crisis in the US".

but now, due to tighter customs checks in place with the new tariff regime, which was launched earlier in April before being placed in abeyance temporarily, the value threshold has been lowered. DHL said that the change "has caused a surge in formal customs clearances, which we are handling around the clock" and while it is working to "scale up and manage this increase, shipments worth over \$800, regardless of origin, may experience multi-day delays", the BBC report said. The company said it will still deliver packages worth less than

Pope Francis to be buried at Basilica of St. Mary Major

VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis, who died on Easter Monday at the age of 88 at his residence in the Vatican's Casa Santa Marta will be buried on Saturday at the Basilica of St. Mary Major in Rome, a site of deep personal significance for the pontiff. The basilica, one of the four major papal basilicas, has been a central Marian shrine for over sixteen centuries. Pope Francis often prayed here, especially after returning from his numerous apostolic visits abroad. This will be the first papal burial at the Basilica since the 17th century, when Pope Clement IX was interred there. The basilica is also the final resting place of seven other popes, saints including Matthew and Jerome, and Renaissance master Gian Lorenzo Bernini and his family. True to the spirit of simplicity that defined his



life and ministry, Pope Francis had requested a modest burial. According to his last testament, his tomb will be in the ground, devoid of elaborate decoration, bearing only a single inscription. The Vatican also confirmed that the body of Pope Francis may be transferred temporarily to St. Peter's Basilica on

Wednesday, April 23, pending approval from the College of Cardinals, to allow the faithful to pay their final respects. The Dean of the College of Cardinals, Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, has convened the General Congregations starting Tuesday to prepare for the upcoming Conclave, expected

to take place between May 5 to May 10. The funeral will be attended by numerous world leaders, with Italy and India already declaring three days of state mourning. Just hours before his death, the ailing pontiff had met with US Vice President J.D. Vance after participating in Easter services despite his visibly weakened state. Born Jorge Mario Bergoglio in Buenos Aires, Argentina, to Italian immigrant parents, Francis was the first Jesuit and first Latin American pope. His election in 2013 following the resignation of Pope Benedict XVI marked a turning point in the Church. Rejecting the papal apartments, Francis chose to live in the modest guesthouse of Santa Marta and led with a pastoral heart and reformist vision.

Canadian Police release images of Khalsa Diwan Society Gurdwara vandalism suspects

VANCOUVER: Canadian Police have released images of a vehicle and two people who were outside the Khalsa Diwan Society (KDS) Gurdwara on Ross Street in Vancouver when it was vandalised last week.



The Vancouver Police Department (VPD) sought public assistance to identify the individuals as they investigated the matter. On April 19, the prominent KDS Gurdwara in Canada was vandalised with pro-Khalistan graffiti, sparking outrage among the local Sikh community. "We believe these people may have information about this crime and what the motivation was. We ask anyone who

recognises the people in these pictures, or the vehicle, to come forward and speak with our investigators," said VPD Sergeant Steve Addison. According to the police department, investigators from the major crime section of the department who have been collecting and analysing evidence from the crime scene and the surrounding neighbourhood, have obtained images of a white

pickup and two people who were in the area at the time. "Police believe the truck drove through the area around the time of the offence, between approximately 4 and 4:30 a.m. on April 19. Two people, who are believed to be associated with the truck, then walked near the front entrance of the temple. One person was wearing a yellow cap, yellow jacket, and black pants. The other was wearing a grey hoodie with black pants," read the VPD statement. The police department further stated that it initiated a criminal investigation on April 19 after suspects spray-painted on the walls outside of the gurdwara, adding that the graffiti

Pope Francis dies, breathed his last in Vatican City

VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis has died at the age of 88 at his residence in the Vatican's Casa Santa Marta, the Vatican said in a statement Monday afternoon, India time. "Pope Francis died on Easter Monday, April 21, 2025, at the age of 88 at his residence in the Vatican's Casa Santa Marta," the Vatican posted on X. The leader of the Roman Catholic Church had been suffering from respiratory ailments and pneumonia. "Dear brothers and sisters, it is with profound sadness I

must announce the death of our Holy Father Francis," Cardinal Kevin Farrell announced on the Vatican's TV channel. On Easter Sunday morning, Pope Francis had a brief private meeting with the Vice President of the United States of America, J D Vance, the Holy See's Press Office had detailed about the interaction that lasted a few minutes. Vance was travelling to Italy with his family and visited the Secretariat of State before leaving for India. Prime Minister Narendra



Modi has in the past admired Pope's commitment to serve people and had also extended an invitation to Pope Francis to visit India at an early date. "Met Pope Francis on the

sidelines of the G7 Summit. I admire his commitment to serve people and make our planet better. Also invited him to visit India," the Prime Minister posted on X after meeting the Pope at the G7 Summit's Outreach Session in Borgo Egnazia, last year. In October 2021, the Pope received PM Modi during a private audience at the Apostolic Palace in the Vatican, which was also the first meeting between an Indian Prime Minister and the Pope in more than two decades.

Tarn Taran girl studying in Canada killed, family claims Gunfire claimed her life

JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar



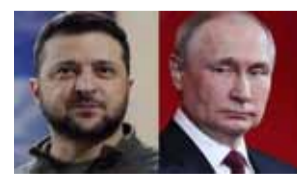
An Indian student studying in Canada died due to a suspected gun shot when she was waiting for a bus. The girl was identified as Harsimrat Kaur Randhawa (21) killed when she was struck by a stray bullet in the port city of Hamilton, claimed family here India. Sharing information with the media, family informed about Harsimrat Kaur said that she had gone to Canada about two years ago to pursue her studies and was going out on a routine matter when the unfortunate incident occurred. A stray bullet pierced her body that claimed her life. Randhawa's family, from Dhunda village of Goindwal Sahib sub division in Punjab's border district of Tarn Taran has urged both the govern-

ments to expedite the process of repatriation of her body to India at the earliest possible. Harsimrat was a student at Mohawk College in Hamilton, Ontario, was waiting at a bus stop on her way to work when

shots were fired by someone in a car. She had gone to Canada two years ago for a healthier future, said family. Tears rolled down from the eyes of her grandfather, Sukhwinder Singh, when shared with a husky voice about Harsimrat who had gone to Canada for her education. Incident occurred when she was waiting for the bus, she was shot and killed during a shooting carried out by some people moving in a car. People here in Tarn Taran from nearby villages began to assemble in their house to express their condolences when the news of the killing of Harsimrat Kaur reached the village. "As for yet another attempt by Putin to play with human lives -- at this moment, air

Attempt to play with human lives: Zelensky slams Putin's Easter truce offer

KYIV: Russian President Vladimir Putin announced a surprise ceasefire, declaring a 30-hour Easter truce in Ukraine that is set to last until midnight on Sunday. In response, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky expressed skepticism, stating that this is just another attempt by Russia to play with human lives. The proposal, which marks one of the most significant pauses in the three-year war, was described by Putin as a humanitarian gesture. Zelensky responded with deep scepticism, accusing the Kremlin of using religious holidays to manipulate public perception. "As for yet another attempt by Putin to play with human lives -- at this moment, air



or provocations. The announcement coincided with blaring air raid sirens across major Ukrainian cities, including Kyiv, which only subsided around the time the ceasefire was to take effect. Ukrainian authorities have not confirmed whether they would adhere to the truce. Zelensky dismissed the ceasefire as another ploy by Moscow. "Putin might do it to give some hope or to show his humanity. But either way, of course, we don't trust Russia," said Dmitry, a 40-year-old Ukrainian soldier. "These 30 hours will lead to nothing... The killings will continue." Despite the looming scepticism, Russia and Ukraine conducted a major prisoner

swap on the same day, with both sides confirming the return of 246 captured soldiers each. Zelensky noted that the total number of Ukrainian POWs released has now reached 4,552. Putin framed the truce as a test of Kyiv's willingness to engage in peace talks, stating, "This will show how sincere the Kyiv regime's desire and ability are to observe agreements." Past efforts to arrange ceasefires around major holidays, such as Easter in 2022 and Orthodox Christmas in 2023, collapsed due to mutual distrust and ongoing hostilities. A month ago, Ukraine agreed to a 30-day ceasefire proposed by former US President Donald Trump, but Moscow declined.

Kajol to Samantha: Celebs shower birthday wishes on Varun Dhawan as he turns 38



MUMBAI: Varun Dhawan turned 38 years old on Thursday and members from the entertainment industry showered the 'Badlapur' actor with heartfelt wishes. His 'Dilwale' co-star Kajol dropped a picture with Varun on her Instagram stories and penned, "Happy birthday @varundvn! Keep spreading that infectious energy everywhere you go."

Additionally, Southern beauty Pooja Hegde, who will be seen opposite Varun in his forthcoming drama, "Hai Jawani Toh Ishq Hona Hai" took to social media and dropped a picture with the birthday boy, most likely from their work trip to Rishikesh. "Happy birthday @varundvn May you continue to amuse me

with all your madness", Hegde wished her co-star. Moreover, Varun's 'Citadel' co-actor, Samantha Ruth Prabhu shared a throwback video of him on her IG stories where both of them were seen tapping a foot on the "Baby John" song "Nain Matakka". Wishing him on his special day, Samantha penned, "Happy birthday @varundvn may the child in you always stay alive...curious, playful, full of wonder. Wishing you a day filled with joy and a year filled with great adventure."

Actress Ananya Panday called the birthday boy 'annoying' in a fun way as she shared a birthday post for Varun that read, "Happy birthday Mr annoying @varundvn."

Actor Maniesh Paul also penned a heartwarming message for his "brother from another mother". "Happy birthday to my brother from another mother Stay blessed meri jaan! Hope we keep sharing all the secrets we do with each other for life," Paul wrote. For the unversed, Paul will be a part of Varun's "Hai Jawani Toh Ishq Hona Hai". Actor Rohit Saraf shared a birthday story for the 'October' actor saying, "Happy Birthday Bhai!! Only Sanskari vibes for you this year @varundvn."

Saraf and Varun will be seen together in the upcoming release "Sunny Sanskari Ki Tulsi Kumari". Several others from the industry wished Varun on his 38th birthday.

Talking Points

Narvijay Yadav



In high-stakes operations, robotic advancements like MULE and nano-drones save lives, offering Indian Army jawans critical support, reducing risks, and enhancing efficiency in treacherous terrains.

The Myanmar earthquake of April 2025 shook the ground like a vengeful giant, leaving rubble and despair in its wake. In a ravaged village near Mandalay, Indian Army jawan Ranveer Singh, 24, stood at the edge of a collapsed school, his heart racing. As part of Operation Brahma, he was tasked with search and rescue, but the unstable debris screamed danger. Dust stung his eyes, and the air smelled of concrete and fear. Yet, Ranveer wasn't alone; beside him hummed Sanjay, a robotic MULE (Multi-Utility Legged Equipment), its four legs steady on the jagged terrain.

wreckage, beaming real-time data to his tablet. A faint heat signature flickered - someone was alive. "Go, boy!" Ranveer urged, and the robot navigated a crumbled wall, its legs whirring softly. Above, nano-drones buzzed like fireflies, another marvel of India's robotics surge. These tiny machines, barely bigger than a sparrow, mapped the disaster zone, dodging gusts to relay 3D images of unstable structures. Ranveer's headset crackled with updates from his team, coordinating based on the drones' feed. "Clear path on the left," a voice confirmed. Without these robots, he'd be crawling blindly into the rubble, risking his life with every step. Instead, Sanjay took the lead, its electro-optics spotting cracks no human eye could catch. Ranveer followed, pulling a trapped child to safety minutes later. The boy's faint smile felt like a medal.

Ranveer, a lean soldier from Western Uttar Pradesh, had trained with Sanjay for months. The sleek, black robot, weighing 51 kilos, was no ordinary machine. Equipped with thermal cameras and sensors, it could sniff out survivors under rubble, climb stairs, and dodge obstacles in temperatures from -40 to 55 degrees Celsius. "You're my brother now," Ranveer often joked, patting its metal frame. Today, that bond was his lifeline. As he guided Sanjay via a handheld remote, its sensors scanned the

Back at base, Ranveer marveled at the tech's precision. India's robotics had come far; Sanjay wasn't just a mule but a guardian, born from firms like AeroArc and DRDO's labs. He thought of Sophia, the humanoid robot he'd seen at a Delhi expo, chatting like

Robots Shield Soldiers in Crisis



a Bollywood star. If Sophia could mimic Shah Rukh Khan's charm, surely robots like Sanjay could redefine warfare and rescue. In Kashmir's snowy peaks, MULEs carried ammo through blizzards; in jungles, they hunted terrorists' hideouts. "They don't tire, don't fear," Ranveer told a rookie, pride swelling. Last month, a MULE had spotted an IED, saving his squad. Today, it saved a child. Tomorrow, who knew?

Night fell, and Ranveer cleaned Sanjay's sensors, grateful for its steel heart. The earthquake's chaos wasn't over, but he felt unstoppable with robots at his side. His radio hummed with the news: more drones were en route. Ranveer grinned, picturing his village elders' awe at these 'iron dogs.' The Army was evolving, and he was its pulse, safer because of machines

that took the hits he once did.

Points to Ponder:

Robotic advancements like MULE and nano-drones are game-changers, but stakeholders - the military, developers, and policymakers - must act wisely. Soldiers need rigorous training to sync seamlessly with robots. Developers should prioritize durability and AI ethics, ensuring machines like Sanjay remain tools, not threats. Policymakers must fund Indigenous R&D to rival global leaders, fostering startups like Edith Defence. Collaboration can make India's robotic future a shield for jawans like Ranveer, saving lives while securing borders. Together, let's build a safer tomorrow.

The author is a senior journalist and columnist, views are personal.

Big B, Deepika Padukone, late Irrfan Khan-starrer 'Piku' to re-release on May 9



MUMBAI: As 'Piku' gears up to celebrate its 10th anniversary, actress Deepika Padukone shared that the film, which will re-release on May 9, will always have her heart.

Deepika took to her Instagram, where she shared a video featuring megastar Amitabh Bachchan talking about his character Bhaskor's journey in 'Piku'. The video then shares some moments from the film.

"A film that will always have my heart - PIKU is back in theatres on 9th May, 2025 to celebrate its 10th Anniversary! Irrfan, we miss you! And think about you every so often..." Deepika wrote in the caption.

"Piku" was released on May 8 in 2015. The comedy drama film is directed by Shoojit Sircar. The film stars Amitabh Bachchan, Deepika Padukone and Irrfan Khan along with Moushumi Chatterjee, Jishu Sengupta and Raghubir Yadav. The megastar won his record-setting fourth National Film Award for Best Actor at the 63rd National Film Awards.

The film revolved around Piku, an architect and her aging but nagging father Bhaskor Banerjee, who come close via a road trip to Kolkata despite their disparate ideologies and fights over trivial issues.

On the acting front, Deepika was last seen in Singham Again directed by Rohit Shetty. Based on an original story ideated by Kshitij Patwardhan, the film stars Ajay Devgn in the title role, alongside Akshay Kumar, Ranveer Singh, Tiger Shroff, Shweta Tiwari, Kareena Kapoor Khan, Arjun Kapoor and Jackie Shroff. It is the fifth installment of Shetty's Cop Universe franchise.

Deepika is married to Ranveer Singh, whom she began dating in August 2012. In October 2018, the couple announced their impending marriage.

Dia Mirza warns of growing climate risks, cites UNEP report this Earth Day



MUMBAI: On this Earth Day, actress Dia Mirza has raised an urgent alarm about the growing climate crisis, referencing the latest findings from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The actor and environmental advocate took to social media to emphasize the alarming rise in global greenhouse gas emissions and the urgent need for immediate action. As per the UNEP's findings, 2022 saw record high emissions, and to keep global warming within the critical 1.5°C limit, emissions must be reduced by 42% by 2030.

On Tuesday, the "Sanju" actress took to her Instagram and shared a video, emphasizing that commitments are essential to protect the planet for future generations. Mirza, who has long been a champion for environmental causes, also reminded her followers that Earth Day should serve as a starting point for lasting change, not just a day of reflection. For the caption, the actress wrote, "This Earth Day, let's move beyond conversation and into action. The latest UNEP findings are a wake-up call we can't afford to ignore: Global

greenhouse gas emissions reached a record high in 2022. To stay within 1.5°C of warming, we must cut emissions by 42% by 2030. Urban areas contribute 70% of CO2, and yet, just 29% of our electricity comes from renewables. Fossil fuels still dominate our energy systems, while climate-fueled disasters rise year after year. "The path forward is clear: we need to triple renewable energy capacity by 2030. We need cleaner cities, greener choices, and policies rooted in science and compassion. Each of us can be a part of the solution. Choose sustainable

“ We need cleaner cities, greener choices, and policies rooted in science and compassion. Each of us can be a part of the solution. Choose sustainable practices. Together, we can change the future”

practices. Support clean energy. Hold leaders accountable. Let Earth Day be your starting point—not just a reminder. Together, we can change the future,” Dia added. Earth Day, observed annually on April 22, is a global event aimed at raising awareness and advocating for environmental protection. First celebrated in 1970, it marked the beginning of a worldwide commitment to safeguarding our planet.

Shah Rukh Khan says 'words fail to express' his grief over inhumane act of violence in Pahalgam

MUMBAI: Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan has expressed his shock and outrage following the recent terrorist attack in Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir.

In a heartfelt post on social media, Khan condemned the "treachery and inhumane act of violence" that left the region reeling, urging for justice and unity in the face of such tragedy. Taking to his Instagram stories, Shah Rukh shared a note that read, "Words fail to express the sadness and anger at the treachery and inhumane act of violence that has occurred in Pahalgam. In times like these, one can only turn to



God and say a prayer for the families that suffered and express my deepest condolences. May we as a Nation, stand united, strong and get justice against this heinous act." The Indian film industry has been flooded with outrage and sorrow following the recent attack, with numerous celebrities

speaking out in strong condemnation. Celebrities such as Priyanka Chopra, Alia Bhatt, Anushka Sharma, Akshay Kumar, Kareena Kapoor, Vicky Kaushal, Sidharth Malhotra, Sanjay Dutt, Raveena Tandon, Nani, NTR Jr., Allu Arjun, and several others have expressed their profound grief and anger over the heartbreaking incident.

Condemning the attack, Alia wrote, "The news from Pahalgam is heartbreaking. Innocent lives lost. Tourists, families, people who were just...living. Seeking beauty. Seeking peace. And now there's only grief."

Madhuri Dixit to be part of Nadiadwala's next!

MUMBAI: Actress Madhuri Dixit was spotted at producer Nadiadwala's office in the Juhu area of Mumbai on Saturday.

The 'Dhak Dhak' girl looked absolutely ravishing in a black shirt with a matching top underneath. She paired it with baggy grey trousers. The diva was all smiles as she carried a black handbag, along with black sunglasses.

As you might already know, Sajid Nadiadwala, the head of one of the biggest production banners in the industry, Nadiadwala Grandson Entertainment, has backed countless movies with some of the biggest names in Bollywood. Madhuri visiting his office has raised the possibility of a new project in the works. However, it is still not known what was the actual purpose



behind the meet. Meanwhile, after the overwhelming success of Kartik Aaryan's "Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3", Madhuri will next be part in the much-awaited web series "Mrs. Deshpande". Madhuri will play the role of an intense serial killer in her next. Made under the direction of Nagesh Kukunoor, this psychological thriller is a remake of a popular French series.

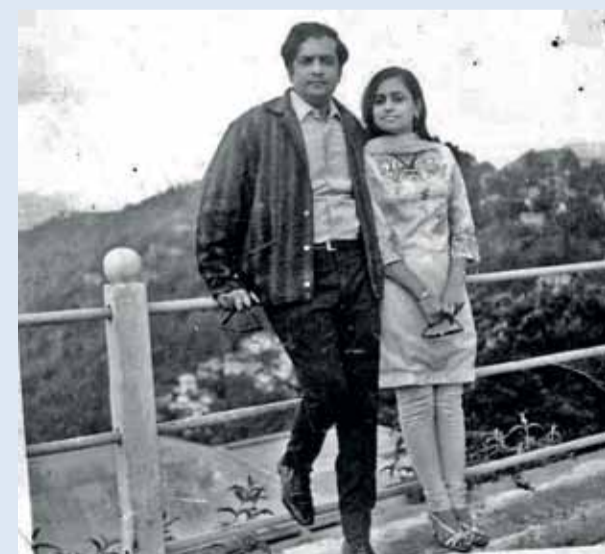
HARI JAISINGH IS NO MORE

An Uncompromising Journalist like a Prince and a Legend among Editors



GOPAL MISRA
Consulting Editor-FW

Among his contemporary peers, he was a loner, when Hari Jaisingh was picked up by India's irrepressible newspaper magnet, Ramnath Goenka, to edit the Indian Express published from Ahmedabad. Little did he realize that he is grooming a journalist, who might refuse to make any compromise for surviving in the coveted post of an editor? It was quite surprising, when in eighties; he joined National Herald as its editor. Many may ask why he enjoyed so much respect in almost every section of the society, the answer is simple, and he had never harbored any ill-will or vengeance for anyone. His writings were always judicious. In personal life, while some of his peers own farm houses in Delhi's elite areas, he took bank loans to ensure higher education for his children. It may be recalled that once Delhi's chief minister told this author that why Haribhai did not ask for any favors from the politicians, whether seeking a plot at Panchkula in Haryana or a farm land in Delhi. He even mentioned the names of some of his peers and suc-



cessors, who were able to get big bungalows in South Delhi and even a farm house. The answer, perhaps, could have been we exercise our choices. During early years of his presence in the national media platforms, especially in eighties and nineties, perhaps, being divided among different ideological groups was not taken seriously. He did not represent any ideology or political outfit, but his journalism was just an emphasis on the truth. It is yet to be explained that why did he accept a sick publication, which perhaps was already abandoned by the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi. Interestingly, she had given the management to Yashpal Kapoor, known for doing India Gandhi's dirty political maneuverings. Earlier, Indira Gandhi had evicted M. Chelapati Rao, one of the most admired journalists during decades of sixties and seventies, by force. He was pushed from his chair at the Herald House, Bahadur Shah Zafar Marge, New Delhi, perhaps, by Yashpal Kapoor, either himself or by his goons. A few weeks later, Chelapati Rao was found dead at a tea stall in the Pandara Park, near India Gate. He never revealed, but according to the Congress Party sources, he was lured to accept the challenging task by



daily a few months later after Hari Jaisingh. One year later, however, I had to quit due to some professional as well as other reasons, and Haribhai too resigned, but Goenka asked him to rejoin your old assignment in Ahmedabad. During this period, the Times of India offered him the position of editor at its proposed Bangalore edition; he however, declined the offer, later he became Editor-in-Chief of the Tribune at Chandigarh, where he led the editorial team for next nine years. The Tribune Years- Hari Jaisingh's commitment to the truth became a countrywide

mantra during his tenure in The Tribune, when his page one editorial boldly pursued the truth. Even today, it is considered a milestone in the Indian journalism. Later, he commented that "There has been an overwhelming response from the people to the front-page editorial "No, My Lord!" (The Sunday Tribune, May 5, 2002). I never thought that ideas or ideals like the people's right to information, freedom of the Press and transparency in the investigation process of the PPSC scam would evoke such massive support from the readers. "The huge number of telephone calls since then gave me a clear indication of the citizens' perspective on the most sensitive arm of governance symbolised by the judiciary" he further stated. His conclusion are quite illuminating even after 23 years that, one, the people are alert and alive to the goings-on in the polity though they generally prefer to remain silent. However, once they feel that they are getting the right lead on matters dear to their hearts; they do not hesitate to speak out. Two, in addition to the general disgust at the existing state of affairs, the people seem to be nursing bottled-up feelings even against the working of the judiciary.

They resent certain functional aspects of the judicial system, the general drift and the growing shadow of undesirable activities. The sharp public reaction was a revelation. This may come as a shock to all those who have put the judiciary on a high pedestal, and rightly so. The people have had high expectations from the judges. They do not want them to be part of the aberrations that the rest of society suffers from. Three, once convinced about the correctness of the cause, the people are willing to go along with the bold and the upright. The spontaneous response of thousands of lawyers in Chandigarh and other parts to the issues of freedom of information and corruption is unprecedented. It is a landmark event. This should help us to keep our hopes alive for a better system and better times ahead. It cannot be overemphasised that the people have not taken kindly to the affairs in the Punjab Public Service Commission. They are terribly angry at the trading in jobs. The judiciary needs to bear in mind the public sensitivity in the matter while looking at legal tangles in the Ravi Sidhu case. What is right and what is wrong can be interpreted differently in legal terms. All the same, everything needs to be viewed in the larger framework of how public institutions and persons at the helm should

conduct themselves. Truth has to be seen as truth. It cannot be turned into falsehood with the help of legal jargon. The Lamp Post- Few among journalists know that his grandparents had migrated from Karachi to Kolkata, where he had received education. During the past five decades, he had been serving in a number of newspapers, but he also brought in an aroma of Bengal, where he received education. His innings in Gujarat inculcated in him objectivity and the prolonged stay in Chandigarh, enabled him to be reinvented by the dynamism of Punjab. In 2017, he, perhaps, was quite happy, when the president of the Tribune Trust was summarily sacked for apologising to a drug peddler. He once informally stated that like any other profession, journalism may be undergoing difficult periods, but its energy is alive. On April one, he suffered brain stroke and had remained hospitalised till April 23, when he breathed his last. He was a sticker for professional ethics and embodied rich human values; he was a good human being. He did not communicate his last wishes to anyone, but his deeds will continue to illuminate us, stated Ashwini Bhattacharya, a noted author, who had served in the Tribune as his close associate.