

REGION

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MALVINDER SINGH KANG SEEKS RELEASE OF SIKH PRISONERS IN LOK SABHA



Punjab Excise Department earns ₹ 9,878 Crores in Online Auction: FM

CHANDIGARH: Punjab Finance, Planning, Excise and Taxation Minister Advocate Harpal Singh Cheema announced the successful completion of the allotment process for 207 Retail Excise Groups for the financial year 2025-26. The process, which commenced on March 5, 2025, and concluded on April 2, 2025, has yielded unprecedented revenue, generating an annual license fee of Rs. 9, 878 crores, surpassing the projected target of Rs. 9, 017 crores. This represents a 9.5% rise over the set Reserve price, marking a historic achievement for Punjab's Excise Department.



Revealing this in the press communiqué issued here, Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema said that the Excise Department has allotted 207 retail groups successfully through online Auction and the whole process saw a very spirited response from the stakeholders. The Finance Minister attributed this outstanding success to the progressive and stakeholder-centric approach embedded in

the Excise Policy 2025-26, which was designed to foster a transparent and well-regulated liquor trade. Emphasizing that the total Excise Revenue for the year 25-26 is set to cross 11500 Crore, the Finance Minister said that the Punjab Excise Department's consistent year-on-year success is a direct result

of strategic policy formulation, which defines revenue expectations, establishes market routes, and streamlines supply chain management. He said that Punjab's dynamic excise policy ensures the availability of high-quality liquor at competitive prices, reinforcing the state's commitment to balancing revenue growth with consumer welfare. The Finance Minister further commended the dedicated efforts of Excise officers and officials in combating the illicit liquor trade and smuggling (both intra- and inter-state). "By leveraging cutting-edge technology for monitoring and enforcement, and maintaining seamless coordination with Civil and Police Authorities, the department has successfully strengthened trust among stakeholders and ensured a transparent and supportive ecosystem for the liquor trade", he added. Reaffirming Punjab's position as a leader in Excise Management, the Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema said that the Excise and Taxation Department remains steadfast in its mission to enhance revenue generation while upholding regulatory integrity and consumer welfare. He said this year's milestone achievement sets a new benchmark, further cementing Punjab's status as a frontrunner in excise sector modernization and transparent governance.

BANKING & FINANCE

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SBI, CITI UNVEIL \$295 MILLION SOCIAL LOAN TO EMPOWER LOCAL SMALLHOLDER FARMERS IN INDIA



GST Collections Surge 9.9% to Rs 1.96 Lakh Crore in March

NEWDELHI: India's goods and services tax collections surged by 9.9 per cent to Rs 1.96 lakh crore during March this year compared to the same month of the previous year, reflecting the higher level of economic activity and better compliance. Sequentially, the GST collections were 6.8 per cent higher than the Rs 1.84 lakh crore revenue recorded in February this year. Gross GST revenue in March included Rs 38,100 crore from Central GST, Rs 49,900 crore from State GST, Rs 95,900 crore from Integrated GST, and Rs 12,300 crore from compensation cess. In comparison, February saw Central GST collections at Rs 35,204 crore, State GST at Rs 43,704 crore, Integrated GST at Rs 90,870 crore, and compensation cess at Rs 13,868 crore. Maharashtra, Karnataka, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, and Uttar Pradesh were the top five contributors to GST collections in March. Maharashtra paid Rs 31,534 crore in March, a 14 per cent increase compared to March last year while Karnataka paid Rs 13,497 crore, a 4 per cent increase year-on-year. Gujarat contrib-



uted Rs 12,095 crore, a 6 per cent rise from March 2024. Tamil Nadu paid Rs 11,017 crore, reflecting a 7 per cent increase, while Uttar Pradesh collected Rs 9,956 crore, a 10 per cent year-on-year growth. Delhi was the sixth-highest payer, contributing Rs 6,139 crore, which represents a 5 per cent increase from March 2024. Bihar recorded the lowest GST payment, with dues amounting to just Rs 2.6 crore in March 2025. Lakshadweep and Andhra Pradesh fared a shade better with Rs 3 crore and Rs 4.033 crore, respectively. However, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands recorded a 60 per cent rise in its GST payments, at Rs 51 crore. Goods and services tax collections rose 9.1 per cent to Rs 183,646 crore during February after recording a double-digit rise of 12.5 per cent in January to Rs 1.96 lakh crore, compared to the same period last year.

The Birth of FW and Its 25-Year Odyssey!



Kanwar Deep Singh
Founder

The year 2000 marked a time of transformative change in India. The positive effects of liberalization were evident everywhere—pink papers dominated the media landscape, and the economy was thriving. Yet, despite the boom, there was a noticeable gap in the market: no newspaper offered a truly comprehensive experience. While numerous newspapers existed, some focused on political developments and others exclusively on economic, business, and financial news, none provided a holistic view. This presented a perfect opportunity to launch a complete newspaper, a one-stop destination for readers seeking in-depth knowledge and analysis. It is often said that the Law of Attraction works when our dreams align with our subconscious desires, setting us on a path to realize them. This was precisely what unfolded during this period. A journalist friend, who was with the Indian Express group and working for its business daily, *Financial Express*, came to interview me on my return from the US to announce a new tie-up. He shared some exciting news. The Express group was exploring the idea of launching a franchise edition—a ground-breaking experiment in the media industry. At the time, I was contemplating my venture to mark the new millennium with something fresh and innovative. Shekhar Gupta, the then Editor-in-Chief of *Indian Express*, helped shape this vision into reality, leading to an unprecedented media collaboration. This collaboration became the foundation for Chandigarh's first-ever business daily, which quickly expanded to launch an independent edition in Delhi. Over time, *FE Newline* evolved into *Financial World*, or *FW*, capturing readers' attention as one of the fastest-growing newspapers in the country. *FW* soon made a name for itself, breaking exclusive stories with unmatched frequency. Business magnates, bankers, economists, and politicians sought a place in its pages. However, *FW* remained steadfast in its commitment to serving the public interest. It became known for covering stories that resonated with ordinary people, championing a type of journalism that was free, frank, and fearless. In doing so, *FW* also became a nurturing ground for young, aspiring journalists. Many who began their careers at *FW* have gone on to hold prominent positions in leading media houses, both in print, TV, and online. As we celebrate *FW's* 25th Silver Jubilee, I take immense pride in reflecting on its journey—a tumultuous yet rewarding path. From the sapling planted in 2000, *FW* has blossomed into a vibrant, 25-year-old entity. Its existence holds more significance for me than many other ventures in my life. To conclude, I would like to leave you with the words of Robert Frost: "The woods are lovely, dark and deep, But I have promises to keep, And miles to go before I sleep, And miles to go before I sleep."

Centre Government's Waqf Amendment Bill is an interference in minority affairs – Dhami



JAGMOHAN SINGH
Amritsar

The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) President, Harjinder Singh Dhami, has reacted to the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2025 passed in the Lok Sabha, stating that it is a direct interference by the Centre Government in minority-related matters.

PM Narendra Modi to flag off Rameswaram-Tambaram new train service on Ram Navami

CHENNAI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Tamil Nadu on April 6. On the occasion of Ram Navami, at around 12 noon, he will inaugurate the new Pamban Rail Bridge - India's first vertical lift sea bridge and flag off a train and a ship from the road bridge and witness the operation of the bridge. Thereafter at around 12.45 p.m., he will perform darshan and pooja at Ramanathaswamy temple at Rameswaram. At around 1.30 p.m. in Rameswaram, he will lay the foundation stone and dedicate to the nation various rail and road projects worth over Rs 8, 300 crore in Tamil Nadu. He will also address the gathering on the occasion. The Prime Minister will



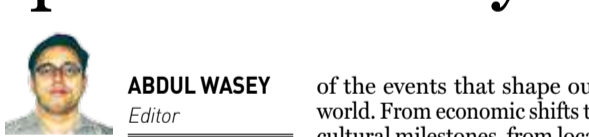
inaugurate the New Pamban Rail Bridge and flag off the Rameswaram-Tambaram (Chennai) new train service. The bridge carries a deep cultural significance. According to the Ramayana, the construction of Ram Setu was initiated from Dhanushkodi near Rameswaram. The Bridge, linking Rameswaram to the mainland, stands as a remarkable feat of Indian engineering on the global stage. It was built at a cost of over Rs 550 crore. It is

Congress, AIMIM leaders move Supreme Court against Waqf (Amendment) Bill

NEW DELHI: Congress MP Mohammad Jawed and AIMIM president Asaduddin Owaisi on Friday challenged the validity of the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2025, in the Supreme Court, saying it violated constitutional provisions. Jawed's plea alleged the bill imposed "arbitrary restrictions" on Waqf properties and their management, undermining the religious autonomy of the Muslim community. The petition, filed through advocate Anas Tanwir, said the proposed law discriminated against the Muslim community by "imposing restrictions that are not present in the governance of other religious endowments". Owaisi's plea was filed by advocate Lzafeer Ahmad. The bill was passed in the Rajya Sabha with 128 members voting in favour and 95 opposing it. It was passed in the Lok Sabha on April 3 with 288 members supporting it and 232 against it. Jawed, a Lok Sabha MP from Kishanganj in Bihar, was a member of the Joint Parliamentary Committee on the bill and alleged in his plea that it "introduces restrictions on the creation of Waqfs based on the duration of one's religious practice". "Such a limitation is unfounded in Islamic law, custom or precedent and infringes upon the fundamental right to profess and practise religion under Article 25," it said.



Together for a quarter century



ABDUL WASEY
Editor

As we celebrate the 25th anniversary of *The Financial World's* Chandigarh edition, we are filled with immense gratitude for your unwavering support and trust over the past quarter-century. Your engagement has been the cornerstone of our journey, inspiring us to deliver news that is both accurate and insightful. Reflecting on the past 25 years, we have navigated a rapidly evolving media landscape — adapting to technological advancements and the shifting dynamics of news consumption. In 2010, we also expanded with a Delhi edition. Through all these changes, our commitment to journalistic integrity and excellence has remained unwavering. Our dedicated team of editors, reporters, photographers, designers, and support staff have worked tirelessly to bring you comprehensive coverage of the events that shape our world. From economic shifts to cultural milestones, from local developments to global affairs, we have endeavoured to keep you informed and engaged. As we celebrate this significant milestone, we recognize that our achievements are deeply intertwined with your continued readership and feedback. Your insights and perspectives have enriched our content, fostering a community of informed individuals who value the essence of quality journalism. Looking ahead, we remain committed to evolving with the times while upholding the principles that have defined *The Financial World*. We aim to enhance our offerings, embrace new storytelling formats, and continue providing content that resonates with your interests and needs. You, our readers, have been an integral part of this journey. Your continued support and blessings are invaluable as we step into the next chapter of our story.

1984 Sikh Genocide: Court records DSGMC ex-Chief's statement against Jagdish Tytler



NEW DELHI: A Delhi court on Friday recorded the statement of former Delhi Sikh Gurdawara Management Committee (DSGMC) president Manjit Singh GK as a prosecution witness in a 1984-anti Sikh riots case against Congress leader Jagdish Tytler. Appearing before special judge Jitendra Singh, GK said he had received a pen drive allegedly containing the voice recording of Tytler confessing his role in the riots. He claimed having received an envelope at his house in 2018, containing a letter and the pen drive, which he later handed over to the CBI, which was investigating the matter. GK said Tytler, who was present in the court, had threatened a witness in the case. GK will continue recording his statement on April 21. The case is linked to the killings of three persons at Gurdwara Pul Bangash in the national capital in 1984. The judge on



November 12, 2024 concluded recording the statement of Lakhvinder Kaur, the widow of Badal Singh, who was killed by a mob at Gurdwara Pul Bangash during the riots. The court framed charges of murder and other offences against Tytler on September 13 last year. A witness claimed Tytler came out of a white car in front of the gurdwara on November 1, 1984, and instigated a mob against the community, leading to the killings. A sessions court in 2023 granted anticipatory bail to Tytler in the case on a personal bond of Rs 1 lakh and a surety of like amount. Tytler was directed not to tamper with the evidence in the case or leave the country without the court's permission, among other conditions. The agency invoked charges under Sections 147 (rioting), 109 (abetment) read with 302 (murder) of the IPC, among others, against him.

Meeting between a Muslim community delegation and Jathedar of Akal Takht Sahib



JAGMOHAN SINGH
Amritsar

A delegation from the Muslim organization Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind visited the Secretariat of Akal Takht Sahib on April 4 and met with Giani Kuldeep Singh Gargaji, the officiating Jathedar of Sri Akal Takht. During the meeting, discussions took place between the Muslim delegation and Jathedar Gargaji regarding Sikh-Muslim unity, mutual harmony and the challenges faced by both communities. The Muslim delegation stated that their organization has maintained long-standing relations with the supreme Sikh authority, Akal Takht Sahib, in order to foster ongoing unity between the communities and to resolve any issues that may arise through mutual dialogue and peaceful means. The delegation assured the Jathedar that if any issues con-



cerning the Sikh community are brought to their attention, the leaders of their organization will coordinate with Sikh representatives and take immediate and necessary action to resolve them in a way that maintains communal harmony. In return, the Jathedar also assured the Muslim delegation of similar cooperation from the Sikh side. Jathedar Giani Kuldeep Singh Gargaji stated that the beauty of this country lies in its communal harmony and shared values, which prevent divisive forces from succeeding. During the meeting, the Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind delegation also discussed matters related to the Waqf Board and other religious concerns.

Markets slump in early trade on global trade war fears

MUMBAI: Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty slumped in initial trade on Friday due to heavy selling in metal, oil and gas shares as President Donald Trump's sweeping tariff salvo reignited the fears of global trade war.

Besides, foreign fund outflows also dented investor sentiment. The 30-share BSE Sensex slumped 591.05 points or 0.77 per cent to 75,704.31 in the morning trade. The broader NSE Nifty declined 202.55 points or 0.87 per cent to 23,047.55. Among the major laggards on the Sensex were Tata Motors, Tata Steel, Larsen & Toubro, Reliance Industries, Maruti Suzuki, IndusInd Bank, Infosys, HCL Technologies, NTPC, Tech Mahindra, Sun Pharmaceutical



Industries, and Adani Ports. In contrast, HDFC Bank, Bajaj Finance, Bharti Airtel, Mahindra & Mahindra, Kotak Mahindra Bank, ICICI Bank, Nestle India

and Hindustan Unilever were the gainers. "Markets are going through heightened uncertainty, likely to last some time. A trade war has been triggered by Trump, and retaliatory tariffs from China, EU, and others are on the cards. This will only extend the period of uncertainty and confusion in the market," V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services, said.

He further said, "It appears that a contraction in global trade and decline in global growth are inevitable, which would impact India's growth, too, even though we might do better than other large economies." "For the short term, investors should focus on domestic consumption-driven sectors and pharmaceuticals within the externally-linked segments," he advised.

Malvinder Singh Kang seeks release of Sikh prisoners in Lok Sabha

NEW DELHI: Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Member of Parliament Malvinder Singh Kang on Thursday raised a human rights issue in the Lok Sabha, urging the Union government to fulfill its promise made in 2019 regarding the release of Bandi Singhs (Sikh prisoners). Kang reminded the House that in 2019, under the leadership of the Prime Minister, the government had announced the release of these prisoners who had already been in jails for 25-30 years and served their sentences.

A formal notification was



also issued at that time, yet even after six years, these prisoners remain incarcerated. Highlighting the humani-

tarian aspect of the issue, Kang emphasised that these individuals have already completed their legal sentences

and should no longer be kept behind bars. He stated that their prolonged imprisonment "is a violation of human rights and goes against the principles of justice". He further urged the government to consider the deteriorating health conditions of these prisoners and take a compassionate approach towards their release. "The government of India had made a commitment to the people of Punjab through an official notification in 2019. It is now time to honor that promise and ensure the release of Bandi Singhs," Kang added.

800 MW thermal power plant to be set up in Yamuna Nagar- Anil Vij

GULSHAN KUMAR Chandigarh

Haryana Energy, Transport, and Labour Minister, Anil Vij said that a new 800 MW thermal power plant will be set up in Yamunanagar. Besides this, thermal power plants will also be established in Hisar and Panipat.

Anil Vij said this while interacting with the media here today. He said that adequate arrangements have been made to ensure an adequate power supply during the upcoming summer season. Transformers have been upgraded, and if any transformer gets damaged, arrangements have been made to replace it immediately. He also directed officers to update the information about the availability of transformers online. Responding to a question regarding electricity rates, Anil Vij said that there has been no increase in electricity rates in Haryana for the past eight years. The electricity rates are determined by the Haryana Electricity Regulatory Commission, and at present, there is no proposal to increase them. In response to another question regarding illegal vehicles, the Transport Minister said that it is a serious problem and he has personally inspected the situation on the roads several times. He directed departmental officers to take appropriate action against illegal vehicles under the law, he added.

Dhami inaugurates new building of PNB

Bank officials offer Rs 30 Lakh cheque to SGPC President to purchase bus for Sri Darbar Sahib

JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar



Harjinder Singh Dhami, President of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), on April 4 inaugurated the newly renovated branch of Punjab National Bank (PNB) near Gurdwara Baba Atal Rai Sahib. On this occasion, officials from PNB presented a cheque of Rs 30 lakh to Advocate Harjinder Singh Dhami for the purchase of a bus for the convenience of devotees visiting Sri Darbar

Sahib. Speaking on the occasion, Dhami said that Punjab National Bank has consistently contributed to the services of gurdwaras. Continuing in this spirit, the bank has donated Rs 30 lakh for the purchase of a 32-seater bus for the service of pilgrims visiting Sri Darbar Sahib. He expressed hope that the bank will continue to actively support such community-friendly initiatives. During the event, SGPC President along with others, honoured the bank officials with robes of honor (siropao) and a golden model of Sri Darbar Sahib.

SGPC seeks suggestions from Panth on forming rules for appointment and retirement of Jathedar of Sri Akal Takht Sahib

JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar

The President of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), Harjinder Singh Dhami, has appealed to all Sikh organizations, including Damdami Taksal, Nihang Singh jathebandis, global Sikh institutions, Singh Sabhas, diwans, societies, scholars and intellectuals residing in India and abroad, to send their suggestions regarding the qualifications, appointment, jurisdiction, responsibilities, and retirement rules of the Jathedar of Sri Akal Takht



Sahib. He stated that the Sikh community has long demanded that service rules be established for the position of the Jathedar of Sri Akal Takht Sahib, considering the respect and significance of this role. In light of this, a resolution for its approval in principle was passed during the SGPC's budget related General House

FIR to be lodged against 1609 fake families identified in the BPL list in Haryana



SATISH HANDA Chandigarh

The Haryana government has taken strict action against fake poor people and has removed 1609 fake families from the BPL list falsely availing the benefits of government schemes for families below poverty line. The government has warned such families to get their names removed from the BPL category by April 20, 2025, failing which legal action will be taken against them. However, the Haryana state Government has taken action against the fake poor in Haryana and 1609 families have been removed from the BPL list last month. Information reveals that there are 51,96,000 families currently in BPL category in the state which include 36 in Ambala, 106 in Bhiwani, 12 in Dadri,

20 in Faridabad, 82 in Fatehabad, 84 in Gurugram, 73 in Jhajjar, 75 in Jind, 40 in Kaithal, 73 in Karnal, 175 in Kurukshetra, 38 in Mahendergarh, 17 in Nuh, 46 in Palwal, 3 in Panchkula, 49 in Panipat, 39 in Rewari, 73 in Sirsa, 294 in Sonapat, 90 in Yamunanagar and 145 in Hisar districts. According to information, a number of families in the state had falsely sought their name registered as below poverty line (BPL) family to avail benefits applicable for poor families in the state. After a survey, the families who had become BPL through fraud were warned to get their name removed from BPL category by April 20, after this, the government can take legal action against such families and register an FIR. This issue was raised in the assembly during the recent

budget session also. At that time, the Chief Minister had issued orders for immediate action in the House itself. Now this action has started on the same ground. According to the state government report, currently 51,96,380 families in the state are in the BPL category. According to information, the benefit of BPL family is available only to those families whose annual income is less than 1.80 lakh. The government suspects that despite having more income than this, families have got BPL cards made by filling less income and the income of a large number of families in the state is more than this slab to avail benefits for BPL families. It was observed that most of the families had done fake division of the family, taking advantage by showing themselves as different on paper. The names of all such fake families have been deleted. State coordinator of Haryana Parivar Pehchan Pradhikaran, Satish Khola, said that people coming under BPL category are being deleted by giving wrong information in the family ID. If such people do not correct the information themselves, action will be taken against them filing an FIR against them.

Preserving mother tongue Punjabi – need of hour: Jathedar Kuldeep Singh Gargajj



JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar

The officiating Jathedar of Sri Akal Takht Sahib and Jathedar of Takht Sri Kesgarh Sahib, Giani Kuldeep Singh Gargajj, stated in a statement issued from the Secretariat of Sri Akal Takht Sahib that a person's mother tongue holds the same significance in life as their birth mother and native land. He emphasized that the mother tongue is the soul of a thriving communities, making it our duty to preserve and promote the Punjabi language. He pointed out that the concerns he raised about challenges to the Punjabi language during his address at Hola Mohalla are now proving true. He said with new school admissions underway in Punjab, reports indicate that many CBSE-affiliated schools have made English and Hindi mandatory while keeping Punjabi as an optional subject, which is unacceptable. This reflects the growing negligence towards Punjabi, contrary to the government's claims of implementing it, he said. Jathedar Gargajj asserted that under such circumstances, it becomes imperative to ensure that Punjabi is taught from the nursery class in every school in Punjab. Currently, many schools start teaching Punjabi from the first grade, which distances children from their mother tongue. The Punjab government must ensure that Punjabi is made mandatory from the nursery class in all schools, regardless of the board they are affiliated with, said the Jathedar. He also stressed that not just the government but parents, too, have a responsibility to encourage their children to learn Punjabi from the beginning. Many parents believe that early education in English will benefit their child, but scientific studies have shown that unless children have a strong grasp of their mother tongue, they cannot excel in other languages either, he said. While knowledge of multiple languages is beneficial, Jathedar Gargajj emphasized that in Punjab, priority should be given to Punjabi. Addressing parents, he questioned how their children would connect with Gurbani when the sacred Sri Guru Granth Sahib is written in Gurmukhi if they are not taught Punjabi. He called upon every Punjabi to come forward to safeguard the Punjabi language. He urged all language activists to take a pledge and inspect schools in their respective areas to identify those schools which are not teaching Punjabi from the nursery class. A list of such schools should be compiled and presented to Sri Akal Takht Sahib for further action. He stressed the need for every Punjabi son and daughter to stand firmly against attacks on the existence of Punjabi.

Preparations for wheat procurement are incomplete, BJP Government playing with the emotions of farmers' says Kumari Selja

SATISH HANDA Chandigarh

The General Secretary of the All India Congress Committee former Union Minister, and Member of Parliament from Sirsa Kumari Selja said that while the BJP claims to be a farmer-friendly party they are at the forefront of ignoring farmers' interests. Wheat procurement is scheduled to begin from April 1, but there has been no preparation yet. Tenders for gunny bags and wheat lifting have not been issued, and in the markets, there are no proper arrangements for drinking water, and the street lights are not working. The government has been making announcements, but nothing is visible on the ground. The state government should take strict steps in this direction and focus on the convenience of farmers. In a statement to released the media, Kumari Selja said that this time, the government is playing with farmers under the name of mustard procurement. Officers are acting arbitrarily, with no procurement happening in Ambala, Karnal, Kurukshetra, Yamunanagar, and Kaithal on Sunday. Where procurement has taken place, lifting has either not been done or is happening at a very slow pace, causing trouble for farmers. In the Hisar grain market, 12,149 quintals of mustard were procured, but only 3,000 quintals were lifted. There is widespread mismanagement in the market, with no proper arrangements for drinking water and street lights. The situation in Fatehabad's markets is similar, where mus-



tard lifting has not been done in most places. In Sirsa's market, half of the mustard purchased has not been lifted. While the traders are facing problems, the farmers are suffering even more. The situation is similarly poor in Charkhi Dadri and Panipat, with the facilities farmers should be receiving in the markets remaining confined to paper only. Kumari Selja said that the state government claims to have completed preparations for the procurement of wheat, mustard, barley, gram, lentils, and sunflower for the Rabi season 2025-26. This year, a bumper wheat harvest is expected. The procurement will be handled by the Food & Supply Consumer Affairs Department (30%), HAFED (40%), Haryana State Warehousing Corporation (20%), and the Food Corporation of India (10%). Wheat, barley, and gram procurement will start from April 1, while sunflower procurement will begin in June. Despite the government claiming full preparation for wheat procurement, tenders for gunny bags and wheat lifting have not been issued. The payment for mustard procurement is also delayed. Farmers bringing their crops to the market should receive basic facilities such as proper drinking water arrangements and attention to street lights.

Demand for stern action against complainants of fast increasing false rape & sexual molesting cases

After BJP senior leader Mohan Lal Badauli & Rocky Mittal got a clean chit, the girl came in front of the media and said- I want justice; I was raped.

SATISH HANDA Panchkula



The girl who accused Haryana BJP president Mohan Lal Badoli and a singer Rocky Mittal a resident of Panchkula, allegedly raped has appeared before the media first time. The woman said that the reason for filing the case after one and a half years was death threats. During the press conference, the police arrived at the spot and started the investigation. The woman narrated her story while crying and pleaded for justice, said that Mohan Lal Badauli and Rocky Mittal had raped her. On the question, why did she file a case

after one and a half years', she said that she was being threatened with death. The woman said that she has appealed to the Sessions Judge. When the woman was holding a press conference in Panchkula, suddenly the police reached the spot and stopped the press conference in between. Then after some time the police reached there and started trying to find out whether it was really the same

woman or a fake woman holding a press conference there the same girl was found at the spot holding the press conference. After the police arrived, the woman wept and narrated her story saying she have come in front of the media for the first time and is not being allowed to talk to the media and want justice, demanding action against Rocky Mittal and Mohanlal Badauli raped her.

Information reveals, police did not find any concrete evidence when the police took the woman along and searched the hotel in Kasauli after the complaint. The victim was also taken for medical examination, but she refused to undergo medical examination. After that, the police went to Haryana and interrogated both the accused. However, the police suspected this case weak from the very beginning. Due to lack of evidence in the rape case registered against both alleged accused (BJP leader Mohan Lal Badoli and singer Rocky Mittal) in the at Police Station Kasauli against both, the police had submitted the Cancellation Report making sure that a false case of gang rape has been registered as part of a conspiracy to trap Badauli in a false honeytrap case.

The Panchkula police had registered a case against six people, including the victim girl who made the false allegation, her companions and three unidentified persons, of them Haryana police have arrested two people, including the complainant girl suspecting a plan was to trap senior BJP leader Mohan Lal Badauli in a rape false case and loot money and honeytrap case was registered against the complainant girl since victim could not even identify the crime scene in front of police; refused to undergo medical examination, could not identify the place (room) where the rape took place and the victim's friend has called the allegations of gang rape false. The Himachal police could not find any concrete evidence regarding the allegations made in the complaint and filed the case.

Plane landing trial at Hisar airport successful

SATISH HANDA Hisar



The first successful trial of Alliance Airlines took place at Maharaja Agrasen Hisar Airport, where a 72-seater ATR-72600 aircraft was landed. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on April 14 will flag off the first flight from the airport, scheduled to have flights for five states including Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh. Along with this, the Prime Minister will also lay the foundation stone of a new conch-shaped terminal. The first flight will depart for Ayodhya. The residents of the area expressed happiness for the first successful trial of Alliance Airlines took place at Maharaja Agrasen Hisar Airport. A water salute was given on landing of the aircraft by Captain Krishna Modi and Mohit Shukla arrived with the aircraft who

described the landing of the plane as very smooth. Chief Minister Naib Singh Saini informed about the successful trial in the Vidhan Sabha session and said Prime Minister Narendra Modi will reach Hisar on April 14 and flag off the planes of five states

including Ayodhya of Uttar Pradesh from the airport. A public meeting will also be organised in the airport premises. Hisar airport is being constructed on a 7,200 acres area, where an Industrial area will also be developed on 2,988

acres. After the first trial landing of a 72-seater aircraft, which stopped for a while and then went back. The trial ATR-72600 aircraft belongs to the company which is going to start the flight landing on the runway for the first time at Maharaja Agrasen Hisar Airport at around 1 pm. After the completion of the trial, the way for flying the aircraft was made clear when Captain Krishna Modi and Mohit Shukla arrived at Maharaja Agrasen Airport with the passenger plane of Alliance Air said now regular flights can be operated from Hisar to Ayodhya and other places. The first flight from Hisar Airport to fly to Ayodhya will be flag on April 14 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. After the flight takes off, air services will be started for Chandigarh, Ahmedabad, Jaipur and Jammu.

Seven members of inter-state gang of cyber fraudsters arrested by Ambala police

SATISH HANDA Ambala



The Ambala police arrested seven members of an inter-state gang of cyber fraudsters allegedly duping an Ambala resident Rs 26.57 lakh. The accused have been identified as Sumit, Narendra, Harshit, Shailendra, Gaurav, Hardik and Dvesh belonging to Uttar Pradesh, Delhi and Gurugram operating a network from Gurugram. The accused Gaurav was an YES Bank employee and used to provide bank accounts for frauds. Among seven arrested Sumit, Narendra, Harshit and Shailendra were arrested on March 25 and on their disclosure the remaining three accused Gaurav, Hardik and Dvesh were arrested on March 27. Among arrested

Pradesh against the accused. The gang had cheated a resident of Sector 8 in Ambala City who was duped of Rs 26.57 lakh on the pretext of investments in stock market and trading. The amount was taken over a period of one month and a case was registered at the cyber crime police station Ambala in June 2024 when

Ambala police after investigation arrested seven members of this inter-state gang. SP Bhoria said that police have seized Rs 13.74 lakh currency notes, 25 ATM cards, a money counting machine, seven mobile phones and six cheque books from the accused who used to open dummy accounts in the name of poor people and operate those accounts. After getting the amount in the accounts, they used to transfer the amount further into other accounts and then withdrew the money from ATMs they admitted during preliminary investigation. The fraudsters using new techniques and methods to dupe people and even the well-educated people were being trapped in their net and duped by these cyber fraudsters.

Waqf Bill ends era of years of injustice, corruption: Shah

NEW DELHI: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday hailed the passage of the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2025, calling it a historic step toward ending years of injustice and corruption in the management of Waqf properties.



A day after Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju made a strong case for the Waqf (Amendment) Bill in the lower house of the Parliament, Leader of Rajya Sabha and Union Minister J.P. Nadda led a passionate debate in the upper house on the bill while slamming the Opposition.

The Raja Sabha approved the Bill in the early hours of Friday with a majority of 128 votes against 95, following a

charged debate. This came just a day after the Bill was passed in the Lok Sabha following a nearly 12-hour-long discussion. Taking to X, Amit Shah posted, "Today is a historic day, when the Parliament has ap-

proved the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2025, ending the era of years of injustice and corruption and ushering in an era of justice and equality." He added, "Through this Bill, the Waqf Board and Waqf properties are going to be more accountable, transparent and equitable. This will definitely benefit the poor, women and children of the Muslim community." Congratulating the leadership behind the Bill, Shah said, "I congratulate Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Minority Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju for this important Bill that gives justice to crores of people. Also, I express my heartfelt gratitude to all the parties and MPs who supported it." The Rajya Sabha debate, which started on Thursday, concluded with the approval of the Bill early Friday morning. The legislation will now be sent to President Droupadi Murmu for her assent to become law.

Prime Minister Modi dedicates 100 pc electrified rail network in Chhattisgarh

BILASPUR: Prime Minister Narendra Modi dedicated 100 per cent electrification of the rail network of Indian Railways in Chhattisgarh on Sunday by pressing a remote button in Mohbhata village of Bilaspur district of the state, where he dedicated several other projects in key sectors.



With a focus on improving connectivity in the region, the Prime Minister laid the foundation stone of seven railway projects with a total length of 108 km and dedicated to the nation the three railway projects with a total length of 111 km, worth over Rs 2, 690 crore. The Prime Minister also flagged off the MEMU train service in the Abhanpur- Raipur

section via Mandir Hasaud through remote control. These projects will reduce congestion, improve connectivity, and enhance social and economic growth across the region. With the inauguration of these multiple railway projects as part of this transformative journey to attain Net Zero Carbon Emission by 2030, Chhattisgarh has successfully achieved the complete electrification of its Broad Gauge (BG) railways,

marking a significant milestone. Indian Railways has set forth an ambitious vision to achieve Net Zero Carbon Emissions by 2030, with electrification of all Broad Gauge (BG) networks across the nation as its cornerstone. During the event, Prime Minister Modi highlighted the wide-ranging advantages of this initiative. He mentioned that multiple rail projects worth Rs 40, 000 crore are underway in Chhattisgarh.

Gujarat to host AICC national convention after 64 years



AHMEDABAD: Ahmedabad is gearing up to host the 84th National Convention of the All India Congress Committee (AICC) on April 8-9, marking a historic return of the event to Gujarat after a gap of 64 years. The high-profile gathering, set against the scenic backdrop of the Sabarmati Riverfront, will witness the presence of nearly 3, 000 Congress leaders, including party president Mallikarjun Kharge, senior leaders Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi, and KC Venugopal.

RBI Played Key Role in Making India Global Leader in Digital Payments: Prez Murmu

MUMBAI: President Droupadi Murmu on Tuesday lauded the Reserve Bank for its key role in making India a global leader in digital payments with innovations like UPI revolutionising financial access. Addressing the closing ceremony of the commemoration of the RBI's 90th year, the President said, "By continuously modernising the country's payment infrastructure, the Reserve Bank has ensured that digital transactions are not only seamless and efficient but also secure. Innovations like the UPI have revolutionised financial access, enabling instant, low-cost transactions and deepening financial inclusion. Beyond payments, RBI has nurtured a vibrant fintech ecosystem." She stated that in the nine decades, the biggest achievement of the RBI is the trust of the people. The RBI earned this trust by steadfastly



maintaining its mandate of price stability, growth, and financial stability. Also, it has continuously adapted to meet the evolving needs of our growing nation. Its swift responses to key challenges, from economic liberalisation in the 1990s to the COVID-19 pandemic, highlight its resilience and adaptability. In an increasingly globalising world, it has also ensured that India's financial system remains resilient in the face of any adverse international trends. The President said that the RBI has emerged as one of the most critically important institutions in the nation. She pointed out that a common man or woman has no direct interaction with RBI — except for its name printed on the currency notes in their pockets — but indirectly, all their financial dealings, through banks and otherwise, are governed by the RBI. And they instinctively place their utmost faith in the financial system overseen by it. She further stated that the RBI, as the central bank, was

Rahul Gandhi Corners Modi Govt on Chinese Occupation, US tariffs



KAVITA SHAMRA
New Delhi

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi today cornered the government on the issues of Chinese occupation of about 4,000 square kilometres of country's land and the US tariffs on Indian goods. "We would like an answer from the Government of India: what are you doing about our land, and what will you do about the tariff our ally has imposed on us?" he asked. Speaking in the Lok Sabha today, Gandhi pointed out, "it is a known fact that China is occupying 4,000 square kilometres of our territory" and the Indian Foreign Secretary was cutting cake with the Chinese ambassador.

"I was shocked sometime back to see our Foreign Secretary cutting a cake with the Chinese Ambassador. The question is, what exactly is happening to this territory?" he asked, adding that the Congress was not against normalising relations with China, but before that the country must get its land back. Rahul also expressed surprise that it was the Chinese ambassador who had revealed that the PM and the President had written to the Chinese. "It is the Chinese Ambassador who is informing us about this, not our own people", he noted, while adding, "foreign policy is about managing external relations; you have given China 4,000 square kilometres of land".

Strengthens Feeling of Brotherhood: Prez Murmu Extends Greetings on Eid-ul-Fitr

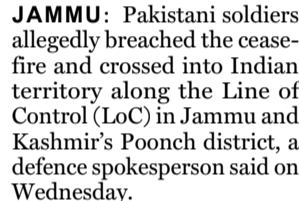


NEW DELHI: President Droupadi Murmu on March 31 extended her heartfelt greetings on the auspicious occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr, emphasising that the festival strengthens the spirit of brotherhood and promotes compassion and charity.

Taking to social media platform X, President Murmu conveyed her wishes, stating, "Greetings to all countrymen, especially Muslim brothers and sisters on the auspicious occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr. This festival strengthens the feeling of brotherhood and gives the message of adopting compassion and charity. I wish that this festival brings peace, prosperity, and happiness in everyone's life and strengthens the spirit of moving forward on the path of goodness in everyone's hearts." Several prominent leaders also extended their wishes on the occasion. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh shared his greetings, saying, "Greetings on Eid-ul-Fitr. May this festival bring happiness, peace, and prosperity to all. Hope this day further strengthens the bonds of harmony and brotherhood all across society. Eid Mubarak!"

Pak soldiers intruded into Indian Territory along LoC in Poonch district of J&K

JAMMU: Pakistani soldiers allegedly breached the ceasefire and crossed into Indian territory along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district, a defence spokesperson said on Wednesday. Reports indicate that the intrusion and ceasefire violation occurred at around 1:10 pm on Tuesday. In response, Indian troops carried out a "controlled and calibrated" retaliation. So far, the Indian Army has not reported any casualties on the Pakistani side.



According to media reports, 5 Pakistani soldiers were injured following an explosion and the subsequent exchange of gunfire. Jammu-based defence PRO, Lt Col Suneel Bartwal, said that a landmine blast took place in the Krishna Ghati sector due to the Pakistani

Army's incursion across the LoC, which was followed by unprovoked firing and a ceasefire violation. "Our troops responded effectively in a controlled and calibrated manner. The situation is under control and is being closely monitored," he said. The Indian Army has reiterated the importance of maintaining the 2021 agreement between the Director Generals of Military Operations (DGs-MO), which was established to ensure peace along the LoC. Since its renewal on February 25, 2021, ceasefire violations have been relatively rare.

JIH strongly opposes Waqf Amendment Bill

Kavita Sharma
New Delhi

The President of Jamaat-e-Islami Hind (JIH), Syed Sadatullah Husaini has strongly opposed the waqf amendment bill terming it "a highly condemnable move that paves the way for legislative discrimination against Muslims". He pointed out that the provisions of the Waqf Act, 1995, which the bill seeks to revoke, are not exclusive to Muslims. Other religious communities also have similar rights. The endowment laws of various religious communities include provisions that restrict their management



boards to members of their respective faiths. They also allow for 'temples by users' similar to 'Waqf by user' and grant exemptions from laws such as the Limitation Act. However, Muslims alone are being singled out and deprived

of these rights, which is blatant legislative discrimination and a dangerous precedent. He further said, "The bill introduces sweeping changes to the Waqf Act, 1995, increasing governmental interference in managing Waqf properties and fundamentally altering their religious character. This is a direct violation of Article 26 of the Constitution, which guarantees religious minorities the right to manage their religious institutions. Despite widespread opposition and millions of objections from the public, the government disregarded the feedback it received from the main stake-

holders of the bill. It appeared as if the consultative process was just a formality and the decision to pass the bill had been predetermined, rendering public opinion and stakeholder concerns irrelevant." He strongly criticized certain media outlets for misleading the public with false narratives. He emphasized that the bill does nothing to curb corruption, illegal occupation, or misuse of Waqf properties. The government cannot pinpoint a single provision that is helpful in this regard. Its provision only worsens the waqf administration."

With her VRS Sujata Kartikeyan IAS be left with enduring memories of her jobs done for Odisha

ARABINDA MOHAPATRA
Bhubaneswar



Putting an end to all speculation over her future senior IAS officer Sujata R. Kartikeyan, wife of former chief minister Naveen Patnaik's trusted aide and bureaucrat-turned-politician VK Pandian, has taken voluntary retirement from service (VRS). The Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions on Friday approved her application for premature retirement under existing rules. A powerful and efficient officer who played a major role in carrying out the Naveen Patnaik government's agenda of women empowerment Sujata was the brain behind not just the creation of Mission Shakti which had over 70 lakh women members earning through various activities organised as self help groups (SHGs) supported by Mission Shakti but also the chief architect of its enhanced stature which led the Naveen government to turn it into a full-fledged department.

on leave for six months citing childcare responsibilities. The government refused to extend her leave, and she was compelled to rejoin duty in November 2024.

Sujata's tenure in administration was marked by a rapid rise and she was responsible for implementing some of Naveen's flagship programmes, most notably the Mission Shakti movement. She had earlier served as collector in key districts such as Cuttack and Sundargarh with an excellent record. When Mission Shakti was officially designated as a government department, she was appointed as its secretary, overseeing the activities of lakhs of women self-help group members. These women constituted a loyal and crucial vote bank for the Biju Janata Dal led by Naveen Patnaik. She was the one who recommended Ganjam's SHG leader Pramila Bisoi as a potential Lok Sabha candidate from Aska to then chief minister Naveen Patnaik in 2019. Pramila won the election from Aska hands down.

Her husband, VK Pandian, had taken voluntary retirement from service in October 2023 while serving as the all-purpose private secretary to CM Naveen Patnaik. Following his retirement, he entered full-time politics, joining the

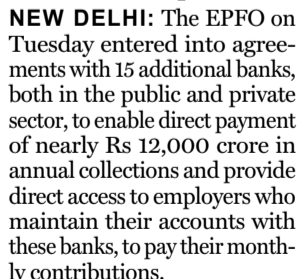
BJD and leading the party's campaign and election strategy. The party's defeat was a significant setback for him, and days after the results, he announced he was taking 'sanyas' from politics. Sujata's voluntary retirement has now sparked speculation about her next move, with rumours suggesting she may join an international organisation. There is also talk of Pandian taking up an assignment with a global agency.

However, Sujata's legacy as a bureaucrat will endure. She was responsible for making lakhs of women coming from poor backgrounds empowered by making them financially independent. As the powerful secretary of Mission Shakti department she diversified the role of women self help groups by coordinating with various government departments which offered them new responsibilities which also helped them earn and stand on their feet. There was a time when women SHG members were only cooking mid-day meals in government schools but under Sujata-run Mission Shakti they also started collecting water bills and performing many new roles.

The 49-year-old bureaucrat hails from Kaluria village in Odisha's Kendrapara district and spent some time in Jamsheedpur, where her father worked as a doctor. She met VK Pandian at Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration during their IAS training. Though Pandian was initially allotted the Punjab cadre, after marriage, he changed to the Odisha cadre.

EPFO empanels 15 more Banks for Direct Payment of Collections

NEW DELHI: The EPFO on Tuesday entered into agreements with 15 additional banks, both in the public and private sector, to enable direct payment of nearly Rs 12,000 crore in annual collections and provide direct access to employers who maintain their accounts with these banks, to pay their monthly contributions.



The EPFO has already empanelled 17 banks, and with the addition of these 15 banks, the total number has gone up to 32 banks. The agreements with the banks were signed in the presence of Union Labour & Employment Minister Dr Mansukh Mandaviya, and Union Minister of State for Labour & Employment, and MSMEs Shobha Karandlaje. Mandaviya said that with nearly 8 crore active members and more than 78 lakh pensioners, the EPFO provides benefits that ensure social security for millions. He expressed happiness that the EPFO is offering an interest rate of 8.25 per cent to its ben-

eficiaries. The participation of banks in service delivery would further enhance the efficiency of the EPFO and improve good governance, he added. He further stated that in the Financial Year 2024-25, EPFO settled a record of over 6 crore claims, which is a 35 per cent increase compared to the 4.45 crore claims settled in the previous year (2023-24). Mandaviya said that a significant milestone was also marked with the introduction of the Centralised Pension Payment System. "This system will benefit over

78 lakh pensioners, enabling them to receive their pensions in any bank account across the country. Previously, pensioners were required to have an account in a specific zonal bank; this compulsion has now been removed," the Minister said. Mandaviya also touched upon the significant reforms introduced by the EPFO recently. "The auto claim settlement process is a major reform which has improved claim processing speed. With auto-processing, claims are now being settled in just three days. In FY 2024-25, we settled 2.34 crore claims

under this system, a 160 per cent increase from the 89.52 lakh claims in 2023-24," he said. The EPFO, one of the largest social security organisations in the world and has collected over Rs. 3.41 lakh crore in contributions remitted by employers through 1.25 crore electronic challan cum returns till 20th March 2025.

The empanelment of new banks will bring seamless integration of EPFO collections/dues payments by employers, further reducing the need for an aggregator payment mechanism for employers, which will help both the EPFO & employers to reduce transactional delays and thereby, strengthen operational efficiency. This will yield financial benefits for EPFO, as dues remitted through empanelled banks will be available for investment on T+1 day, compared to T+2 day through an aggregator. This will also significantly reduce the costs to the EPFO payable for name validation of members' accounts held in non-empanelled banks.





PAC Report shall act as a catalyst for GST overhaul

The 19th report of Parliament's Public Accounts Committee (PAC) delivers a critical assessment of India's Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime, highlighting significant shortcomings that warrant immediate attention. Introduced in July 2017 to unify and streamline the indirect tax system, GST aimed to bolster compliance and enhance revenue collection. However, the PAC's findings reveal a nearly two-percentage-point decline in indirect tax revenue between FY18 and FY20, preceding the COVID-19 pandemic. This downturn raises concerns about the efficacy of the GST framework in achieving its foundational objectives. A particularly alarming revelation is the six-year delay in auditing and finalizing the States' Compensation Fund. This fund was established to reimburse states for revenue losses incurred due to the GST rollout. The Centre's failure to present the Compensation Fund Account to the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has impeded timely and transparent compensation to states, undermining the cooperative federalism that GST was supposed to strengthen. The PAC also underscores the centralizing tendencies of the GST regime, which have eroded the fiscal autonomy of major revenue-generating states. The destination-based nature of GST disproportionately affects manufacturing-heavy states, leading to significant revenue shortfalls. Despite the GST (Compensation to States) Act, 2017, which assured states a 14% annual revenue growth for five years, many have reported delays or non-receipt of funds, adversely impacting governance and development initiatives. Furthermore, the PAC identifies 2,447 discrepancies amounting to Rs 32,577.73 crore out of a sample of 10,667 cases, criticizing the Finance Ministry's audit approach as "lackadaisical." To address these issues, the PAC recommends establishing a formal mechanism with the CAG for timely audits and proposes a comprehensive review to develop a "GST 2.0." This revamped framework should aim for a more equitable revenue-sharing model, with states advocating for an increased share of 70%–80%, up from the current 50%.

LETTERBOX

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Message from Publisher

I wish the team of *The Financial World* (FW) a hearty congratulation on its 25th Anniversary of Chandigarh edition and 15th Anniversary of Delhi edition. Team's hard work and dedication has helped in to maintain its continuity even during bad phase of its journey. We had to change its periodicity from Daily to weekly for its existence.

I hope this team would continue to work with same enthusiasm and professionalism to serve the society as fourth pillar of democracy in India. I once again congratulate & wish good luck to entire team to take *The Financial World* forward

Swinder Pal Singh Bajwa,
Publisher

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ANIRUDH SHINGAL ADVISES INDIA TO CUT TRADE BARRIERS TO COUNTER RECIPROCAL US TARIFFS

Time to untangle reciprocal tariffs

Under the 'Fair and Reciprocal Plan,' the Donald Trump administration is countering "non-reciprocal trading arrangements with trading partners by determining the equivalent of a reciprocal tariff with respect to each foreign trading partner". The non-reciprocal trading relationship is assessed based on tariffs, discriminatory taxes, non-tariff barriers (including subsidies and restrictive regulations), exchange rate manipulations, and any other practice deemed to limit U.S. market access or impede American firms from competing.

In 2010, countries across the world sent 12 per cent of their total merchandise exports to American shores. By 2019, one year before the pandemic, the U.S. share of world exports had only risen to 13 per cent. The share stood at 13.4 per cent in 2022, the latest year for which internationally comparable data on merchandise exports are available for the largest sample of the world's trading economies. Thus, roughly 87 per cent of global merchandise exports are currently traded among countries that do not include the U.S.

Of course, there are variations around this average. For instance, the Cayman Islands and Bermuda in the Caribbean export almost 85 per cent of their goods to America. The U.S. also accounts for over 75 per cent of Canadian and Mexican merchandise exports. At the opposite end of the spectrum, 81 out of 160 countries, for which data were available from UN Comtrade for 2022, exported less than 5 per cent of their total goods to the U.S. For 26 of these 81 countries (many from Africa), the U.S. share was less than 1 per cent. The average U.S. share across the 160 countries was 11.4 per cent, while the



median was much lower at 4.7 per cent. Less than a fifth of Indian, Chinese, and EU merchandise exports (18 per cent, 16 per cent, and 19 per cent, respectively, in 2022) were destined for the U.S.

Now, let us look at the tariff picture and compare U.S. tariffs on partner exports vis-à-vis partner tariffs on U.S. exports. The latest tariff data available for this comparison are from UNCTAD TRAINS for 157 trading partners of the U.S., mostly for the year 2022. The European Union is considered a single partner given its common external tariff.

The average import-weighted tariffs on U.S. exports in 27 partner countries are lower than the corresponding U.S. tariffs. Technically, the concept of reciprocal tariffs works as a threat and a bargaining tool only when U.S. tariffs are lower than those in the partner country.

Considering only tariffs, this simple analysis thus rules out almost a fifth of all countries for which comparable tariff data are available from the 'Fair and Reciprocal

Plan.' These countries include Canada, the EU, Japan, and the U.K. — among America's largest trading partners, which together accounted for half of total U.S. merchandise exports in 2022. In fact, U.S. commercial interests could be harmed if these countries imposed reciprocal tariffs on American merchandise exports instead.

Of the remaining 130 countries where the Trump administration perceives a tariff disadvantage, the magnitude of the tariff increase needed to nullify the disadvantage is less than 5 per cent in 57 countries, including China and India. Moreover, in 15 of these 57 countries, the U.S. needs to increase its import-weighted tariffs by less than 1 per cent to restore parity with partner tariffs. Thus, the threat of reciprocal tariffs may be more credible in the remaining 73 countries worldwide, where U.S. bilateral tariffs need to be raised by more than 5 per cent.

Interestingly, however, the magnitude of the tariff hikes in these cases is positively correlated with the U.S. export shares in the partner countries. Put simply, pursuing the policy of reciprocal tariffs against partners where there is a significant tariff differential results in raising average import duties on exports from countries for whom the U.S. is an important destination market. There is extensive commentary on how tariffs are a self-defeating policy. The correlation above only compounds the self-inflicted harm that a policy of reciprocal tariffs brings to the U.S.

This simple analysis is at the aggregate level, and more detailed product-level bilateral tariff and U.S. export share comparisons might be more revealing. However, based on

this simple analysis, could partner countries be tempted to divert their exports to other countries in response to large reciprocal tariffs? After all, even today, 87 per cent of global merchandise exports do not involve the U.S. While there are obvious costs to finding new export markets and trading partners, the experience during the pandemic has shown that firms adapt to external shocks quicker than governments.

Removing barriers

The best policy response to reciprocal tariffs is for impacted countries to remove barriers to doing business, both internally and with their non-U.S. trading partners. This is also the time to enhance regulatory cooperation and reduce regulatory bottlenecks to cross-border trade with the rest of the world, not just in goods but also in services.

The World Bank and World Trade Organization reports show that exports of digitally delivered services have grown faster than those of all other services and goods during the last decade. My own research also shows that preferential trade agreements, which include provisions on regulatory behind-the-border issues, have the most positive effect on digital services trade. Instead of wasting scarce resources on retaliatory tariffs, countries will be much better served if policymakers focus on issues that matter.

Anirudh Shingal is a Professor in the Finance & Economics faculty at the S.P. Jain Institute of Management & Research, Mumbai, and a Visiting Fellow at the Centre for Social and Economic Progress, New Delhi. The views expressed are the writer's own and not those of the affiliated organisations. Views are personal.



KANIKA JAMWAL SAYS WATER POLICIES SHOULD FOCUS COMMUNITIES IN DECISION-MAKING

Communities play role in conserving water

On March 22, World Water Day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi highlighted the need to conserve water for present and future generations through collective action. On the same day, the Ministry of Jal Shakti launched the Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch the Rain 2025, emphasising the importance of community participation in water conservation.

In the context of this occasion, it is important to take a panoramic view of India's water policies, with a focus on rural areas. New environmental challenges and renewed understandings of ecosystems underscore the need to recalibrate rural water policies. The following issues must be considered by policymakers.

First, policies should ensure effective participation from communities and mainstream their ecological practices. Indigenous and local communities carry rich knowledge of their immediate ecosystems. Existing policies provide for their participation, but it is limited to the management of water sources; decision-making powers remain with state authorities. Further, policies have overlooked the need to identify and empower communities' own ecological practices on water management. Rather, they have formalised water governance by introducing uniform practices. This is counter-intuitive to the objective of encouraging effective participation from communities.

Take, for example, Water User Associations (WUAs), which are statutory bodies set up in different States since the 1990s to further participatory irrigation management. Water users (or farmers) are members of these bodies. While the responsibility to manage irrigation sources has been transferred to them, they have



little say in decision-making.

Second, water policies should consider the disproportionate vulnerability of certain groups to environmental crises. Subaltern social groups and economically marginalised individuals are more vulnerable to such crises than others. Within these groups, those located at the intersection of social and economic marginalisation are the most vulnerable. Therefore, it is crucial for policies to consider the interests of vulnerable groups. Concomitantly, policies must recognise their agency in managing water and ensure their participation in decision-making.

Third, policies must address the issue of fragmentation of water management. Here, fragmented management means that different parts of the ecosystem, such as forests, water, land, and biodiversity, are regulated by different policies and authorities. Such an approach fails to consider the interdependence of these constituents. While there have been some

efforts towards taking an integrated approach, they are limited and ineffective. Since policies adopt a fragmented approach, they do not always achieve the desired goals, and in fact, adversely affect each other's potential to do so.

A good example of an integrated approach comes from the ecological practices of rural communities in western India. For example, the practice of establishing orans. Orans are sacred forests which hold deep religious and cultural significance to local communities. Some communities have been establishing orans to serve an additional purpose — water conservation. By augmenting tree and grass cover, orans trap surface runoff and support in-situ rainwater harvesting. Such an appreciation about the interdependence of water with other constituents of the ecosystem is key to effective water management and conservation.

Fourth, globally, there has been a thrust on adopting a more-than-human perspective in environmental governance. This means considering the interests of the non-human environment in laws and policies that regulate the environment. This approach is based on the idea that the non-human environment has an intrinsic value, and so its interests must be considered in environmental policies. The judiciary has often subscribed to this approach and developed compelling jurisprudence recognising the rights of nature. However, water policies have overlooked this aspect. Their sole focus has been on

human needs for water. Contrastingly, water management practices of some of the local communities in western India take a more holistic perspective to water governance. For example, the amount of water available for irrigation is partly dependent on its sufficient availability for animals.

A final issue is the impact of climate change on water. A recent report published in the journal *Nature* concluded that as global temperatures rise, the water gap in India will widen. Both climate and water policies must address the impact of climate change on water. Water policies must focus on creating climate-resilient water systems and increasing the climate resilience of existing systems; climate policies, particularly adaptation policies, should focus on building the resilience of ecosystems to water gaps.

Beyond the rhetoric

A common theme across these suggestions is that local and indigenous communities and their practices can support effective water management. Therefore, rural water policies should facilitate active engagement with communities. This means moving beyond the existing rhetoric of engagement, and centering communities' voices in the decision-making process. While doing so, we must be mindful that communities' practices may come with their own limitations which should be addressed through sensitisation and capacity building where required.

Kanika Jamwal is a doctoral candidate, Faculty of Law, National University of Singapore. Views are personal.



BOOKS: REVIEW

New book traces the migrant's longing through centuries

Devi Yesodharan's *The Outsiders* is a profound exploration of displacement, identity, and the universal quest for belonging. Through the intertwined narratives of Nita, a migrant worker in 1990s Dubai, and Darius, an ancient Egyptian sailor, Yesodharan delves into the complexities of being an outsider in unfamiliar territories.

Nita, a widowed teacher from Kerala, seeks better opportunities by moving to Dubai to work as an English tutor for a wealthy family. Her employer, Rouhi, an Egyptian woman trapped in an abusive marriage, becomes both a friend and a symbol of the complex social hierarchies that pervade their environment. As Nita becomes entwined in Rouhi's tumultuous life, the boundaries between employer and employee blur, leading to a profound relationship that

challenges societal norms. This narrative sheds light on the fragility of migrant existence and the intricate dynamics of power, privilege, and vulnerability.

Interwoven with Nita's story is the tale of Darius, an Egyptian sailor who arrives at the bustling port of Muziris in 213 CE. His journey is one of self-discovery, as he navigates the vibrant and diverse marketplace teeming with traders from various cultures. Through Darius's eyes, Yesodharan vividly reconstructs the ancient harbor, immersing readers in its sights, sounds, and scents. Darius's experiences mirror Nita's, as both characters grapple with love, betrayal, and the ephemeral nature of human connections.

At its core, *The Outsiders* delves into the essence of "otherness." Both protagonists confront the challenges of being outsiders in foreign

lands, highlighting the universal struggle for acceptance and understanding. Yesodharan masterfully captures the nuanced emotions associated with migration—the longing for home, the pain of isolation, and the resilience required to forge new identities. As noted in an interview with *The Federal*, the author reflects on how migration, while a journey of hope, often results in a hyphenated identity, perpetually positioning individuals between worlds.

Employing a "story within a story" technique reminiscent of *One Thousand and One Nights*, Yesodharan intertwines Nita's and Darius's narratives seamlessly. Nita's recounting of Darius's adventures to Rouhi serves as both a bonding mechanism and a means of expressing her own suppressed desires and fears. This layered storytelling not only enriches the narrative



The Outsiders
By Devi Yesodharan;
Penguin,
208 pages; Rs. 399.

but also emphasizes the timeless nature of migration and the continuous search for belonging.

Yesodharan's prose is replete with sensory details that bring both ancient Muziris and modern Dubai to life. From the aromatic food tents and vibrant marketplaces of Muziris to the opulent yet soulless landscapes of Dubai, the author paints vivid tableaux that immerse readers fully. Such meticulous descriptions underscore the contrasts between the two settings, enhancing the thematic depth of the novel.

The emotional depth of the characters is another standout aspect of the novel. Nita's internal conflicts, stemming from her status as a migrant and her complex relationship

with Rouhi, are portrayed with sensitivity and realism. Similarly, Darius's transformation from a naive sailor to a worldly individual is depicted with nuance, making his journey compelling and relatable.

Yesodharan also delves into the power dynamics inherent in employer-employee relationships and the societal structures that perpetuate them. Nita's position in Rouhi's household highlights the vulnerabilities faced by migrant workers, especially women, in foreign countries. This exploration adds a critical socio-political layer to the narrative, prompting readers to reflect on issues of privilege and exploitation.

The Outsiders is an evocative and thought-provoking novel that resonates deeply in today's globalized world. Devi Yesodharan's exploration of migration, identity, and human connection offers readers a profound understanding of the complexities of belonging. Through the intertwined lives of Nita and Darius, the novel serves as a testament to the enduring human spirit and the universal quest for home.

FY25: Deciphering Pharma Exports from India



DR. ANIL KUMAR ANGRISH

In first eleven months of FY 2024-25, i.e., from April 2024 to February 2025, export of pharmaceuticals touched \$26.72 Bn. In February 2025, India exported drugs & pharmaceuticals worth \$2.47 Bn. Exports of Drugs & Pharmaceuticals were marginally lower in February 2025 as compared to exports of \$2.58 Bn in January 2025 thereby registering a decline of 4.42 per cent. Exports for full FY25 are likely to cross \$29.0 Bn, up from \$27.85 Bn in FY24.

Table 1: Export of Pharmaceuticals from India

Financial Year	Export of Pharmaceuticals (In Rs. Crore)
2019-20	1,40,537
2020-21	1,74,064
2021-22	1,74,955
2022-23	1,94,254
2023-24	2,19,439

Source: Compiled from Annual Report 2024-25, Department of Pharmaceuticals (p.4)

Table 4: Top 5 States in Pharma Exports (April 2024 - Feb. 2025)

States	Pharma Exports (\$ Mn)	Percentage Share in Total Pharma Exports
Gujarat	5,597.59	20.90
Telangana	5,071.13	18.93
Maharashtra	4,482.37	16.73
Andhra Pradesh	2,167.83	8.09
Himachal Pradesh	1,558.27	5.82

Source: Compiled from National Import-Export Record for Yearly Analysis of Trade

Growth in exports for FY25 is in line with the trend observed in previous five years. India has remained a net exporter of pharmaceuticals. Export of Pharmaceuticals stood at Rs. 2,19,439 Crore in FY24, up from Rs. 1,40,537 Crore in FY20.

Overall, export of pharmaceuticals revealed a positive trend in previous five years. Growth rate in exports of pharmaceuticals was lowest in 2021-22. Import of pharmaceuticals including bulk drugs, drug intermediates, etc. remain a concern. In 2019-2020, India had import of pharmaceuticals worth Rs. 40,139 Crore, which went up in 2020-2021 to Rs. 46,808 Crore. In 2021-22, the import of pharmaceuticals touched

a new level of Rs. 60,060 Crore, the highest one in the period from 2020 to 2024. Import of pharmaceuticals declined to Rs. 56,391 Crore in FY 2022-23, but again in 2023-2024, trend got reversed due to increase in import of pharmaceuticals. In 2023-24, import of pharmaceuticals stood at Rs. 58,440 Crore.

Among commodities exported from India, Drugs & Pharmaceuticals figure among top 5 slots. Export of Drugs & Pharmaceuticals account for almost 7 per cent of India's total merchandise exports by value for April 2024 to February 2025 period.

The USA market occupied the first place with exports worth \$8,953.37 Mn during first 11 months of FY25 and formed about one-third

Table 2: Exports from India - Top Five Commodities April 2024 - Feb 2025

Commodities	Exports (\$ Mn)	% Share in selected criteria's total exports
Engineering Goods	105,845.12	26.75
Petroleum Products	58,617.85	14.82
Electronic Goods	34,015.88	8.60
Gems & Jewellery	26,917.63	6.80
Drugs & Pharmaceuticals	26,785.69	6.77

Source: Compiled from National Import-Export Record for Yearly Analysis of Trade (Accessed on April 1, 2025)



collectively have 53.81 per cent share. Major share of exports to highly regulated markets remain a strength of Indian Pharmaceutical Industry. North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) comprising 3 countries) has 36.65 per cent share in total exports of Drugs & Pharmaceuticals followed by Europe (38 Countries/Territories) with 19.39 per cent share, Africa (48 Countries/Territories) with 13.15 per cent share, Latin American Countries (LAC) (43 Countries/Territories) with 6.79 per cent share, and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (10 Countries/Territories) with 5.89 per cent share, are major Group-

ings forming major markets for Drugs & Pharmaceuticals from India. Collectively, top five states had 70.47 per cent share in first 11 months' exports of Drugs & Pharmaceuticals from India. Other States/Union Territories which have more than one per cent share in exports of Drugs & Pharmaceuticals include Madhya Pradesh (5.63%), Karnataka (5.28%), Goa (4.18%), Tamil Nadu (2.89%), Daman & Diu and Dadra & Nagar Haveli (2.67%), Punjab (1.76%), Rajasthan (1.35%), Haryana (1.32%), and Uttarakhand (1.24%).

Table 3: Export of Drugs & Pharmaceuticals - Top Five Destinations April 2024 - February 2025

Country	Pharma Exports (\$ Mn)	% Share in selected criteria's total pharma exports
USA	8,953.37	33.50
UK	830.18	3.11
Brazil	692.46	2.59
France	644.98	2.41
South Africa	626.03	2.34

Source: Compiled from National Import-Export Record for Yearly Analysis of Trade

from India. Growth in exports of AYUSH and Herbal products remains a positive sign. In the beginning of FY 2024-25, India's pharmaceutical exports were expected to touch \$31 billion, due to various reasons. Shortage of drugs in the U.S. market, which occupies top slot for India's export of pharmaceuticals, was cited as major reason in April 2024.

Closure of certain pharma plants in the USA was also positive for exports from India. In February 2023, Wockhardt had shut down its manufacturing facility at Morton Grove, Illinois in the USA. Wockhardt did it as a part of its business restructuring in the USA, and opted for third-party contract manufacturing to save about \$12 million annually. In-house to Third-party contract manufacturing helped the company to lower fixed cost as the company was incurring a fixed cost of \$25 million annually to operate the plant.

Jubilant Cadista Pharmaceuticals Inc., USA, the subsidiary of Jubilant Pharmova also decided to shut down the manufacturing operations of its solid dosage formulation facility at Salisbury, Maryland, USA in April 2024. Jubilant Cadista continued the sales and marketing operations for US market. This facility used to manufacture tablets and capsules for the US market with the capacity to serve almost 1.5 billion doses.

were visible for February and March 2025 due to the US reciprocal tariff threats. In February 2025, it was reported in media that the government was mulling incentives for exporters. Exporters anticipated announcement regarding allocation in the Export Promotion Mission which was announced in the recent Union Budget.

Exporters of pharmaceutical products expect that Trump administration will give preferential treatment to pharma exports as branded generics from India ultimately help the US consumers/patients to reduce their healthcare costs. Words of Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal convey the message in this context that councils (Pharmexcil with respect to pharmaceutical products) and industry associations need to come out of the protectionist mindset, and be bold and ready to deal with the world from a position of strength and self-confidence. Indian Pharmaceutical Industry is well-positioned to keep the momentum in exports of pharma products.

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.

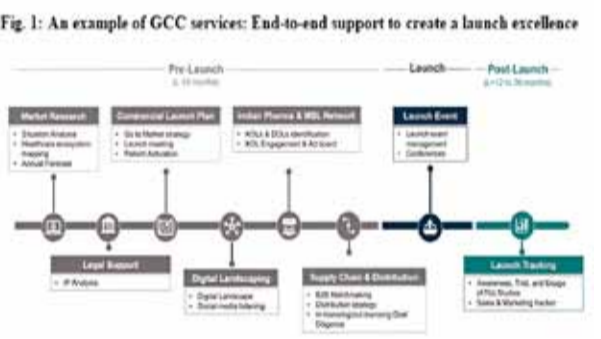
Evolution of Global Pharma GCCs in India: A Shift to Value Services



VIRENDRA KUMAR

Over the last decade, India has rapidly emerged as a global hub for pharmaceutical Global Capability Centers (GCCs). These centers, which serve as critical extensions of multinational pharma companies, have transformed the pharmaceutical landscape in the country by fostering innovation, boosting employment, and contributing significantly to economic growth. Along with areas such as manufacturing and research, Pharma business support services have been accepted as a key offering by pharma GCCs. Over a period, customer expectations have shifted towards more value-oriented services. India has become the home of pharma experts who understand the critical aspects of decision-making during drug development and go-to-market (GTM) strategy planning.

Fig. 1: An example of GCC services: End-to-end support to create a launch excellence



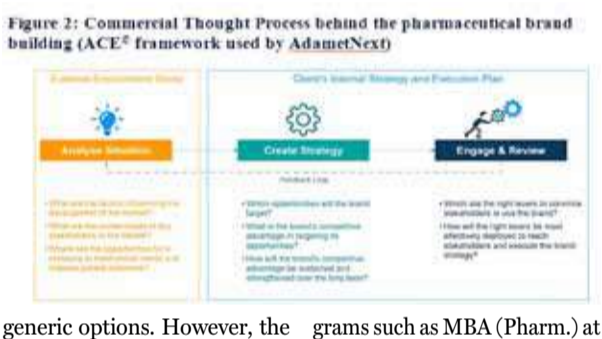
Pharma GCCs are offshore units of Pharma MNCs. These GCCs are set up to centralize operations, research, and support services. These centers play a crucial role in drug discovery, regulatory compliance, pharmaceutical compliance, pharmaceutical compliance, pharmaceutical compliance, and digital transformation in the pharmaceutical sector. Pharma GCCs enable global companies to streamline their operations while leveraging their host country's technological expertise and cost efficiency, such as the US, EU, and UK markets.

are integral parts of Scientific Services, whereas Tech Operations Support, Legal Compliance & Intellectual Property (IP), and Lean Six Sigma are integral components of Operations Services. Certain services are part of Commercial Services as well as Scientific Services, e.g., Customer Campaigns & Market Development. There are services such as Training Design & Delivery, which cover the entire gamut of PLC Services covering Commercial, Scientific & Operations Services.

India is becoming a preferred destination for Pharmaceutical GCCs due to multiple factors. The availability of a skilled pharmaceutical workforce is a major factor due to the vast pool of pharmaceutical graduates and postgraduates, including highly skilled professionals in MBA/M. Pharm. and other specialized fields such as clinical research and healthcare service management. With over 4 Lakh pharmaceutical graduates annually, the country offers a young, talent-rich ecosystem for pharmaceutical GCCs who can easily be trained in global pharmaceutical operation management. India offers lower operational costs while maintaining high-quality output compared to developed nations. Companies setting up GCCs in India benefit from reduced labour and infrastructure expenses, making it an attractive investment destination. The efficiency gain helps the global companies maintain their positive bottom line while their top line performance shrinks due to poor new launch performance or blockbuster drug patent cliff.

With the passage of time, many Pharma MNCs initiated the establishment of these captives under their brands as done by companies like Novartis, Lilly, BMS, Sanofi, Amgen, Sanofi, and Takeda to name a few. Regarding location priority, Hyderabad was a clear winner among other cities. Product Life Cycle Services typically include Commercial Services, Scientific Services, and Operations Services. Insights and Analytics, Field Force Operations, and Patient Access are integral components of Commercial Services. Medical Support, Pre-Launch Scientific Support, and Post-Launch Scientific Support

Figure 2: Commercial Thought Process behind the pharmaceutical brand building (ACE³ framework used by AdametNext)



generic options. However, the exposure has inspired many young professionals to work in innovative drug development businesses. The expansion of GCCs (now close to 1,700), including Pharma sector-specific GCCs, has attracted significant FDI inflows, strengthening India's economic resilience and fostering a stable business environment. Besides attracting FDI, the presence of pharma GCCs fuels growth in associated industries such as biotechnology, software development, data security, and legal services, further expanding India's economic potential.

To maximize the Pharma GCC opportunity, continuous efforts are required from all stakeholders. The government should continue to refine its policies to attract more foreign investments in the pharma GCC sector. Streamlining regulatory approvals, offering tax incentives, and facilitating ease of business can further solidify India's position as a global hub. By increasing funding for R&D initiatives and fostering industry-academia collaboration, India can drive innovation in pharmaceuticals and biotech, strengthening the long-term sustainability of pharma GCCs. Investing in AI, big data analytics and automation technologies will help pharma GCCs optimize operations and develop novel drug discovery and patient care solutions. Expanding healthcare and IT infrastructure, particularly in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities, can support the decentralization of pharma GCCs and create employment opportunities in emerging regions.

The most pertinent intervention is to align our education system with industry requirements to sustain and enhance India's attractiveness as a pharma GCC hub. Pharma institutes (national or regional) must understand and appreciate the requirements of pharma GCCs. Accordingly, these institutes must change their syllabus to make their students more relevant to pharma GCCs. Prominent institutes have already initiated these moves, e.g., in many such courses, students are now exposed to the global drug development and commercialization process rather than restricted to only the Indian market focus.

Pharma sector-specific pro-

Telemedicine Models: Harnessing \$200 Bn Rural Healthcare Sector of India



SIDDHARTH ANGRISH

Telemedicine received a lot of attention during Covid times. The Government of India brought out Telemedicine practice guidelines in March 2020 to help patients seek healthcare from remotely located doctors and bring clarity on the regulations guiding this space. Many new startups rose quickly to capitalize upon the new opportunity. Most of these startups focussed on providing Telemedicine solutions for urban consumers. Consequently, most of Telemedicine use cases covered in popular media were also related to urban populations. Incidentally, a good number of Telemedicine startups could not find traction beyond Covid and subsequently closed operations.



It is pertinent to look at Telemedicine solutions working in rural healthcare, where there is a pressing need for effective Telemedicine solutions. There are 6.4 lakh villages in India with very sparse population and negligible presence of specialist doctors. Healthcare systems in India have struggled to find doctors willing for rural postings. The villages overall account for nearly 60% of India's population. Many studies have indicated that a rural patient has to travel 100 km on average to seek good quality healthcare. More than 80% of patients visiting city hospitals are from rural regions. While government run Primary Health Centers (PHCs) do operate in rural regions, they frequently do not have specialist doctors and frequently have quality issues. Over the past several years, many Telemedicine based models have emerged to tackle the problem of making specialist doctors available to the rural masses.

Primarily, four different models are being deployed namely Purely app-based e-consultation, Company-operated Brick-and-mortar based e-Clinics, Franchisee-operated Brick-and-mortar based e-Clinics, and PHCs upgraded by the CDAC developed e-Sanjevani Telemed system.

First model, i.e., Purely app-based e-consultation models have city-based specialist doctors. Most of these solutions had the same look and feel for both urban and rural patients. These solutions were primarily designed for urban consumers. Second type is of Company Owned & Company Operated brick and mortar-based e-Clinics under which a telemedicine solutions provider company sets up and runs a new healthcare facility in a village region providing telemedicine services among others. The company also hires a couple of team members: pharmacist and a nursing staff to help manage the patients, dispense medicines and perform sample collection.

Third Model is of Franchisee operated brick and mortar-based e-Clinics. This model leverages the presence of existing pharmacies run by a village pharmacist by upgrading them with Telemedicine services among other value-added features. Fourth Model is where PHCs are upgraded

needed for operations. This approach requires proper training and regular engagement of the e-Clinic operators. This can be achieved through regular online programs. This model though requires active management of a large number of such e-clinics. Building or nursing an existing comprehensive CRM software to manage multiple nuances of running remote e-clinics is very important. A great advantage of this approach is the nimbleness it provides which can help in fast scalability as this model does not incur any fixed monthly liabilities. A downside is that the person managing the e-Clinic is not on the company payroll but rather he/she is a local independent professional who has taken the company franchise. This may require more active work to ensure that standard operating procedures of the company are followed accurately. Performance based rewards can be employed to help local operators adhere to the prescribed protocols. Just like the company operated e-Clinics model, this model also enables important patient data capture which can help newer drug and disease research.

Lastly, the government's e-Sanjevani initiative provides free e-consults at PHCs. This is also quite an effective approach since a PHC can easily provide most of the necessary medicines and lab tests. However, PHCs typically operate for about 6 hours a day. On the other hand, private health facilities typically remain available for 10-12 hours each day, frequently available even on Sundays and other holidays. Addition of new technologies to a government-operated telemedicine system may have longer gestation periods. Additionally, the quality of operations of some remote PHCs may not be satisfactory. Several articles which have appeared in reputed journals including Lancet, over the years indicate less than satisfactory performance of government PHCs.

It is possible that different state governments may provide a telemedicine system other than e-Sanjevani in their local Government health facilities. This may lead to lack of cohesiveness among multiple solutions making impact analyses a bit difficult. Indian rural healthcare presents a very attractive business and impact opportunity for the world's investors and Indian policy makers. Over the past few years, many Telemedicine solutions have been deployed in different parts of rural India indicating acceptance of the need. It is only a matter of a few years that rural healthcare in India will have a strong, sustainable and effective Telemedicine system catering to 100s of thousands of patients needing specialty care. Not only would this help reduce the healthcare burden of the country but also contribute to newer drug and disease research. The startups involved in this endeavour are quite likely to be rewarded handsomely.

Siddharth Angrish Founder and CEO, Jigyo Innovations

Talking Points

Narvijay Yadav



The most significant risk isn't AI itself but the speed at which it transforms the job market. If India fails to upskill its workforce in time, the job gap will widen, and the unskilled workforce may struggle with underemployment.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is reshaping industries worldwide, and India is no exception. As automation takes over repetitive tasks in data entry, customer support, and manufacturing, concerns about mass job displacement are growing. Studies suggest that AI could replace millions of jobs globally, including in India. However, history shows that tech-driven disruptions also bring new opportunities. The challenge is not just job loss but how quickly the workforce can adapt to new roles in an AI-driven economy.

For professionals, the lesson is clear - adapt or risk redundancy. Upskilling is the key to surviving this shift. Learning AI-related skills like Python, data analytics, or cloud computing can open doors. Even in non-tech sectors, AI literacy is becoming essential. Soft skills - creative thinking, problem-solving, and emotional intelligence, remain valuable because AI cannot replicate human insight and empathy.

New Opportunities: India's diversity presents unique job opportunities. AI applications in agriculture, healthcare, and education can transform rural and urban economies. Smart farming using AI-powered drones, telemedicine platforms, and AI-driven e-learning are growing fields where human involvement remains crucial. The gig economy is another safety net.

Platforms like Upwork, Fiverr, and Indian startups offer freelance work opportunities in content creation, AI consulting, and remote services. Indian youth, known for their adaptability, can leverage these platforms while transitioning into AI-integrated careers. The key is staying ahead of AI rather than competing with it. For instance, rather than fighting

Automation Threat or AI Boom?



automation in finance, professionals can learn AI-driven financial modeling.

Government's Role: While individuals must take charge of their learning, the government has a critical role in smoothing this transition. Large-scale AI-focused skill development programs are needed. Expanding the Skill India initiative to include AI training in tier-2 and tier-3 cities can prevent a digital divide. Public-private partnerships with tech giants like Google, Microsoft, and Infosys can ensure AI boot camps reach rural areas.

Education reforms are also urgent. Schools must introduce AI and coding from an early stage, replacing outdated rote-learning models with hands-on problem-solving approaches. Job creation should focus on industries where AI enhances rather than replaces. Renewable energy, smart

agriculture, and AI-driven healthcare need skilled professionals. The government can incentivize startups that generate employment in these sectors.

Time to Act: A proactive approach is the only way forward. Indian professionals must embrace lifelong learning, diversify their skill sets, and stay updated with industry trends. With strategic adaptation, India can turn AI's disruption into a launchpad for innovation and job creation. The AI revolution is here. Whether it leads to crisis or opportunity depends on how quickly India acts. The future of work is not about man versus machine - it's about man with machine. The choice is clear: evolve or be left behind.

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

J&K Police book actor Shreyas Talpade in financial fraud case

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir Police have registered a financial fraud case against Bollywood actor Shreyas Talpade, for allegedly deceiving people through a chit fund scheme.



According to reports, the accused were associated with The Loni Urban Multistate Credit and Thrift Cooperative Society Limited, which promised villagers high returns on their investments. Agents of the company allegedly convinced hundreds of people to invest, claiming their money would double in a short period. However, after collecting crores of rupees, the company reportedly ceased operations and disappeared. The scheme had been running in Mahoba for a decade before coming under legal scrutiny.

Authorities have filed a case at Srinagar police station, and an investigation is underway to determine the full extent of the fraud. Legal action will follow based on the findings.

This is not the first time Shreyas Talpade has faced allegations of financial misconduct. Last month, an FIR was lodged against him and actor Alok Nath in Uttar Pradesh for allegedly defrauding investors of over 9 crores. They were also implicated in a similar case in Sonapat, Haryana, linked to a multi-level marketing scheme. Reports suggest that both actors endorsed the cooperative society's investment plans, adding credibility to the operation.

Annual Budget of Rs 16.20 Crore passed for Gurdwara Sri Paonta Sahib management



JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar

The annual budget of Rs 16.20 crore of the Gurdwara Sri Paonta Sahib Management Committee was passed under the leadership of Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) President Harjinder Singh Dhami. The gathering for this occasion was attended by prominent personalities, including Jathedar Baba Nihal Singh Harijan Velan, Baba Nagar Singh, Joga Singh, Harbhajan Singh, Harpreet Singh Rattan and Karamveer Singh.

Providing details about the budget, SGPC President Ad-

vocate Harjinder Singh Dhami stated that the approved budget for 2025-26 includes allocations for the construction of new buildings within the gurdwara premises, maintenance of old structures, the ongoing free dispensary, management-run schools and other associated institutions. He also confirmed that funds have been earmarked for celebrating and marking religious days, including festivals, Gurpurbs and other events, ensuring their continuation. Additionally, provisions have been made for the purchase of land for accommodation facilities and for the procurement of essential items for the community

kitchen (Langar) in accordance with regulations. During the gathering, the committee also unanimously elected Harbhajan Singh as the Vice-President and Harpreet Singh Rattan as the General Secretary of the Gurdwara Sri Paonta Sahib Management Committee.

On this occasion, SGPC President inaugurated and dedicated the newly constructed Sri Guru Teg Bahadar NRI Yatri Niwas to the Sikh community. This modern facility, built in collaboration with the gurdwara management by the Kar Sewa organisation led by Baba Amrik Singh of Patiala, and the support of devotees, features 56 air-conditioned rooms with attached bathrooms. For the convenience of visitors, basement parking has been provided. The first floor of the building houses shops and a bank, while the upper two floors serve as the accommodation area for pilgrims. Devotees can book rooms online as per their requirements.



Akal Takht jathedar Giani Kuldeep Singh Gargaj and SGPC members pay their respects during the Bhog of Akhand Path, kept in the memory of wanted **Bhai Mehal Singh Babbar**, general secretary of Babbar Khalsa outfit, who died at Sri Nankana Sahib in Pakistan recently, at Sri Shaheed Ganj Baba Gurbaksh Singh Gurdwara located at the rear side of Sri Akal Takht on April 04, 2025. A Sikh activist prevented him from presenting a 'siropa' (robe of honour), lodging his dissent over accepting him as 'Jathedar'. PHOTO-PRABHJOT GILL

Star of Patriotic films Manoj Kumar passes away at 87



MUMBAI: Veteran actor and filmmaker Manoj Kumar breathed his last on Friday at the Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital. He was 87.

Reportedly, the medical reports reveal that Manoj Kumar's death was caused by cardiogenic shock resulting from an acute myocardial infarction, a severe heart attack. The reports also indicated that he had been struggling with decompensated liver cirrhosis in recent months, which had worsened his health.

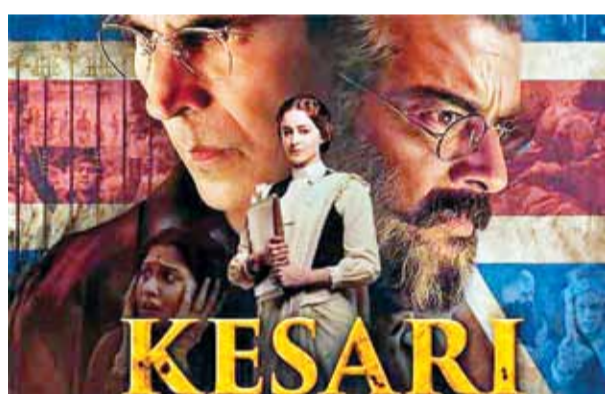
The legendary actor was admitted to the hospital on February 21, 2025, when his health deteriorated. Dr Santosh Shetty, CEO and Executive Director at Kokilaben Ambani Hospital, said in an official statement, "Veteran actor Shri Manoj Kumarji passed away peacefully at the Kokilaben Ambani Hospital early this morning at around 3:30 AM, due to age-related health issues. He had been hospitalized for the past few weeks." Following the news of his passing, tributes quickly flooded in from celebrities, politicians, and fans alike. Prime Minister Narendra Modi also expressed his sorrow, mourning the loss of the legendary actor-director. Taking to his X handle, he tweeted, "Deeply saddened by the passing of legendary actor and filmmaker Shri Manoj Kumar Ji. He was an icon of Indian cinema, who was particularly remembered for his patriotic zeal, which was also reflected in his films. Manoj Ji's works ignited a spirit of national pride and will continue to inspire generations. My thoughts are with his family and admirers in this hour of grief. Om Shanti." Manoj Kumar, widely recognized for his patriotic films, was affectionately known by the moniker 'Bharat Kumar.'

Akshay Kumar fights against British Empire Post Jallianwala Bagh massacre in 'Kesari Chapter 2' Trailer

MUMBAI: The highly anticipated trailer for "Kesari Chapter 2" is finally out, and it showcases Akshay Kumar in a powerful role as Sir C. Sankaran Nair.

Set against the backdrop of the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy, the trailer depicts Nair's courageous battle against the British Empire, promising an intense and gripping narrative filled with historical significance and emotional depth. The makers took to social media to unveil the trailer and captioned it, "This is a wound. This is a roar. This... is #KesariChapter2! Trailer out now. Link in bio. In cinemas 18th April, worldwide."

The trailer begins with a compelling dialogue from Akshay Kumar as he questions General Dyer: "How did you warn the crowd at Jallianwala



Bagh to disperse? Did you fire tear gas? Did you shoot in the air? Or did you just open fire on them without any warning?" General Dyer responds, "They weren't just a crowd; they were terrorists." Akshay retorts, "But they were still humans! Babies as young as eight or nine months were shot with bullets in their tiny chests. What weapons did they have?" Based on true events, the film explores the aftermath of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre and the relentless fight for justice spearheaded by C. Sankaran Nair, a prominent lawyer and former President of the Indian National Congress.

Akshay Kumar stars as C. Sankaran Nair, capturing his unwavering resolve as he takes on Colonel Reginald Dyer, the British officer responsible for the horrific Jallianwala Bagh massacre of 1919.

The trailer also introduces Ananya Panday as Dilreet Gill, a determined female barrister who partners with Nair in his pursuit of justice. R. Madhavan plays Neville McKinley, a brilliant mind referred to as 'a genius' in the film. Directed by Karan Singh Tyagi, the film is produced by Hiroo Yash Johar, Karan Johar, Aruna Bhatia, and Adar Poonawalla.

With a screenplay by Tyagi and Amritpal Singh Bindra, the film promises to deliver a powerful courtroom drama that blends history, bravery, and resilience.



Muslims offer prayers during Eid al-Fitr, that marks the end of the Islamic holy fasting month of Ramadan, at Jama Masjid Khairuddin in Amritsar on Monday. PHOTO-PRABHJOT GILL

Haryana CM seeks blessings at Shri Mata Mansa Devi Temple on Chaitra Navratri

CM extends Chaitra Navratri greetings to the people

GULSHAN KUMAR Chandigarh

Haryana Chief Minister, Nayab Singh Saini along with his family, visited Shri Mata Mansa Devi Temple on the second day of Chaitra Navratri. He offered prayers and sought blessings from the Mata. After this, the Chief Minister reached Yagnyashala and performed Havan.

His wife, Suman Saini, and son, Vinay Saini, also participated in the rituals and received blessings.



Chief Minister extended his greetings and best wishes to the people of Haryana on the occasion of Chaitra Navratri. He prayed for the well-being, peace, and prosperity of the state and hoped that the people would continue to contribute to the state's development.

KCVAS organized Livestock Judging Competition

JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar

Khalsa College of Veterinary and Animal Sciences (KCVAS), Amritsar organized one day Livestock Judging Competition under 'Catch Cow Cues' Programme for the first time in the college at the premises of Livestock Farm Complex (LFC). The competition was inaugurated by Dr. S. K. Nagpal, Managing Director, KCVAS and Dr. Harish Kumar Verma, Principal of the college.

The judging events were conducted by the outgoing interns on the different categories of cows, Buffalos, Sheep & Goat. The interns were divided into six groups as Judging teams



and they judged the animals on the basis of body capacity, gait, udder, breed and other signs & submitted their scores. Two jury teams comprising of senior faculty members lead by Dr. V. K. Gandotra and Dr. T. A. S. Ganai judged the scores of the students and declared the winners for the various categories. Dr. Verma revealed that such competitions prepare

the budding veterinarians for learning the practical skills about the judging of the animals on the basis of various body parameters that will help them in undertaking various Livestock Championships being organized by Punjab Animal Husbandry department. Further, in his remarks, the Principal emphasized the importance of such competitions in dairy animals which can play a crucial role in improving breeding standards, promoting quality livestock, milk yield and reproduction.

A complete **KNOWLEDGE CAPSULE**

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