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NEW DELHI • CHANDIGARH • WEEKLY • SATURDAY • APRIL 5, 2025 • VOLUME 15, ISSUE 1 • Rs 5

MARKET CAP OF NSE-LISTED

7 PC GROWTH IN FY25 WITH

FIRMS SEES NEARLY

11.3 CR INVESTORS

CORPORATE & INDUSTRY

REGION



DELHI TO INCREASE WATER SUPPLY WITH 249 TUBE WELLS AND ENHANCED **TANKER FLEETS**

The Birth of **FW** and Its 25-Year Odyssey!



Kanwar Deep Singh Founder

he vear 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 Newsline 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-young 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 n go before I

Lifetime smart cards to replace 'Pink Ticket' scheme for women's free travel in Delhi

OUR CORRESPONDENT New Delhi

In a major shift from the previous administration's policies, the Delhi government, under Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, will soon introduce a "smart travel card" for women, replacing the existing 'pink ticket' scheme. The new system, which will limit free travel to women residents of Delhi, aims to streamline public transportation while addressing corruption and inefficiencies in the former system.

The lifetime smart card will ensure that only eligible women, who are verified as residents of Delhi, can benefit from free travel on public buses. The registration process for the new smart card is expected to begin in the coming weeks. This initiative follows allegations of corruption in the previous 'pink ticket' system, which was introduced by the AAP government in 2019.

CM Rekha Gupta has made it clear that the new system is part of the government's

commitment to transparency and accountability. "We are committed to providing this service to women, but corruption will not be tolerated," she stated. The new digital travel cards will replace the physical tickets, ending the "pink corruption" linked to the old scheme. Gupta emphasized that the system would be fully digitized, improving efficiency and eliminating any misuse.

The 'pink ticket' system, launched by AAP on Bhai Dooj in 2019, allowed women to travel for free on DTC buses. However, the process

of issuing single-journey pink tickets and compensating bus operators based on ticket volumes led to inefficiencies and concerns about misuse. The scheme had seen over 150 crore tickets issued and cost the Delhi government Rs 1,910.79 crore in subsidies from 2019 to 2024. Despite its popularity, the lack of oversight and voluntary participation raised concerns, prompting the new BJP-led administration to overhaul the system.

set to be implemented within initiatives in the city.

the next 2-3 weeks, will allow women to travel without limitations, making public transport more accessible, reliable, and modern. The lifetime card will be available only to women who can prove their Delhi residency, and will grant them unlimited access to public buses, ensuring that the scheme remains targeted and transparent.

Chief Minister Gupta's broader vision for the city's public transport system includes making it more inclu- 12,300 crore from compensive and globally recognized. In her budget address on March 25, Gupta allocated Rs 12,952 crore for public transport development, a significant increase from the previous year's budget, reinforcing the government's focus on modernizing Delhi's transport infrastructure.

This move marks a significant step toward improving public transport in Delhi, making it more efficient, accessible, and corruption-free for women, while also setting The smart card initiative, a benchmark for future digital



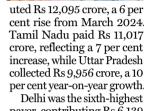
Anniversary

th

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 sation 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-



payer, contributing Rs 6,139 crore, which represents a 5 per cent increase from March 2024. Bihar recorded the low est 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.

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



NEW DELHI: Congress MP Asaduddin Ow

filed through advocate Anas

Tanwir, said the proposed law

discriminated against the Mus-

lim community by "imposing

restrictions that are not pres-

ent in the governance of other

Owaisi's plea was filed by

The bill was passed in the

Rajya Sabha with 128 mem-

bers voting in favour and 95

opposing it. It was passed in

the Lok Sabha on April 3 with

288 members supporting it and

Jawed, a Lok Sabha MP

from Kishanganj in Bihar, was

a member of the Joint Parlia-

mentary 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

ed in Islamic law, custom or

precedent and infringes upon

the fundamental right to pro-

fess and practise religion under

Article 25," it said.

"Such a limitation is unfound-

232 against it.

practice"

religious endowments".

advocate Lzafeer Ahmad.

provisions.

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 Ramanathaswa-Mohammad Jawed and AIMIM my temple at Rameswaram. around 1.30 n.m. in R meswaram, he will lay the Friday challenged the validity of the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, foundation stone and dedicate 2025, in the Supreme Court, to the nation various rail and saying it violated constitutional road projects worth over Rs 8, 300 crore in Tamil Nadu. He Jawed's plea alleged the bill will also address the gathering imposed "arbitrary restrictions"



Delhi government to use artificial rain to tackle air pollution through cloud seeding



YOGESH KANT New Delhi

> To reduce pollutants, the Delhi government is set to implement nd seeding



Together for a quarter century



ABDUL WASEY Editor

s 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.

on the occasion The Prime Minister will

tions of Meitei and Kuki-Zo-

Hmar communities will hold a

tripartite meeting with officials

of the Ministry of Home Af-

fairs (MHA) in New Delhi on

Saturday, officials and leaders

the first such tripartite meet-

ing after ethnic riots broke out

23 months ago between the

non-tribal Meitei and tribal

Kuki-Zo-Hmar communities

over the tribal status demand

of the Meiteis. Though Manipur

government officials confirmed

Saturday's first meeting in the

national Capital, they refused

to disclose the agenda of the

Leaders of the Kuki and

tripartite meet.

Saturday's meeting will be

said here on Friday.

on Waqf properties and their management, undermining the religious autonomy of the Muslim community. The petition, 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

inaugurate the New Pamban 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

special polysiloxane coating protects it from corrosion, en- at generating artificial rain. Supsuring longevity in the harsh marine environment.

PM Modi will lay the foundation stone and dedicate to the nation various rail and road projects worth over Rs 8,300 crore in Tamil Nadu.

ported by IIT Kanpur, the initiative was discussed in a high-level meeting held at the Delhi Secretariat on Thursday.

In an effort to address the worsening air quality in Delhi, the government is turning to an innovative solution-cloud seeding, a technology that has successfully been employed in regions like Pakistan, the UAE, and Mumbai. Cloud seeding involves dispersing special chemicals into clouds to trigger rainfall, which helps bring down airborne pollutants and improve air quality. A high-level meeting chaired by Environment Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa at the Delhi Secretariat on Thursday provided a platform for experts from IIT Kanpur to present the cloud seeding process. Senior officials from various ministries and agencies were in attendance. The technology is expected to play a pivotal role in reducing the city's air pollution, especially during the months when the pollution level peaks.

How Cloud Seeding Works Cloud seeding involves the injection of chemicals like silver iodide into clouds to stimulate precipitation. As the artificial rain falls, pollutants suspended in the air are washed down, leading to cleaner, healthier air. The technique has been successfully applied worldwide, including in countries like Pakistan and the UAE, where it has proven effective in improving air quality. Focus on Dust Pollution from Construction Sites

In addition to cloud seeding, the Delhi government is introducing stringent measures to control dust pollution, a significant contributor to the city's overall pollution. Minister Sirsa announced new directives for construction sites, including the installation of PTZ cameras, video fencing, and PM 2.5 sensors. The government will also implement AI-driven

surveillance to ensure compliance with pollution control norms and impose fines for violations.

Manipur : First Tripartite Talks between 1984 Sikh Genocide: Court records Meitei, Kuki-Zo, MHA In Delhi in April 5 IMPHAL: In a significant development, leading organisa-

isations of both the communities. Mishra last month held separate meetings with various organisations of the Meitei and the Kuki-Zo in Manipur. Last year also the MHA tried to hold a tripartite meeting with the leaders of the two communities but the tribal organisations (Kuki-Zo) refused to meet the Meitei leaders. Leaders of the Kuki-Zo Council (KZC), a conglomerate of 13 organisations of the Kuki-Zo tribal communities in Manipur, held a meeting with senior officials of the MHA in New Delhi on January 17 and discussed their demands and

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

Meitei communities separately said that MHA advisor for the the prevailing situation in the northeast region, A.K. Mishra, invited the leaders of the organnortheastern state.



uity 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

flows also dented investor sentiment. The 30-share BSE Sensex slumped 591.05 points

MUMBAI: Benchmark eq- 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, Besides, foreign fund out- Reliance Industries, Maruti Su-

zuki, 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

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 the market," V K Vijayakumar, sectors and pharmaceuticals Chief Investment Strategist at within the externally-linked seg-Geojit Financial Services, said. ments," he advised.

envelope at his house in 2018, containing a letter and the pen He further said, "It appears 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



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 judge Jitendra Singh, GK said Tytler came out of a white car he had received a pen drive in front of the gurdwara on November 1, 1984, and instigated allegedly containing the voice recording of Tytler confessa mob against the community, ing his role in the riots. He leading to the killings.

A sessions court in 2023 claimed having received an 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 capital in 1984. The judge on others, against him.

REGION

Delhi to increase water supply with 249 tube wells and enhanced tanker fleets **OUR CORRESPONDENT** OUR CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi

In a bid to address the city's per-sistent water shortages, Delhi's Water Minister, Parvesh Verma, unveiled a series of initiatives on Wednesday aimed at boosting the capital's water supply and improving infrastructure. The plan includes the mandatory installation of biometric attendance systems for Delhi Jal Board (DJB) staff, the addition of 249 new tube wells, and a substantial increase in the number of water tankers deployed across the city.

Speaking in the Delhi Assembly, Verma outlined that while Delhi requires 1,200 million gallons of water per day (MGD), the current supply stands at just 990 MGD. To bridge this gap, the government has committed to installing 249 new tube wells over the next three months, with 96 expected to be operational by May, 88 in June, and 55 by

July. Alongside this, the number of water tankers will rise from 901 to 1,327, although Verma acknowledged that tankers are a short-term fix for a much larger problem.

Verma also highlighted the establishment of a new command centre to better monitor water distribution across the city, with plans for its inauguration by Chief Minister Rekha



Gupta in the coming days. The Minister stressed that despite these temporary measures, a more comprehensive solution is needed to address the root causes of Delhi's water short-

Other notable initiatives include the deployment of 32 new super sucker machines for sewer cleaning, with tenders for an additional 30 machines ap-

proved. In the coming months, the government plans to desilt all gutters and sewers and install sensors in water tankers to ensure accurate monitoring of water levels. Verma also drew attention to the pressing need for infrastructure repairs, citing a Rs 4 crore water project in Sangam Vihar that remains unusable due to leaks and outdated pipelines.

To improve efficiency and accountability, the government will install fingerprint scanners in DJB offices to track employee attendance and recruit 180 junior engineers for maintenance work. The number of laborers per constituency will also be doubled from 10 to 20, in a bid to streamline operations and enhance service delivery.

These measures form part of the Delhi government's ongoing efforts to address the city's chronic water issues and build a more sustainable water management system for the future.

Former CM Atishi requests retention of central-pool bungalow as LoP Delhi assembly

New Delhi

Former Delhi Chief Minister Atishi has formally requested that the Public Works Department (PWD) allow her to retain the AB-17 bungalow on Mathura Road, which she has been occupying since her tenure as Chief Minister. LoP Atishi, now serving as the Leader of the Opposition (LoP) in the Delhi Assembly, has requested either continued residence at the Mathura Road bungalow or an alternative accommodation to be allotted to her, specifically the Ansari Road bungalow in Daryaganj.

PWD sources confirmed that Atishi still resides in the Mathura Road property, which had previously been allotted to former Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia. After his arrest, the bungalow was reassigned to Atishi. However, PWD officials

pool of residences, meaning it may not be available for her long-term use. As of now, no decision has been made regarding her request.

Sources within the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) revealed that Atishi's initial request to retain the Mathura Road bungalow was denied, with the PWD informing her that the residence is centrally managed. In response, Atishi has asked the PWD to allot her the bungalow on Ansari Road, which had been used by party leader Jasmine Shah during her tenure as Vice-Chairman of the Delhi Dialogue and Development Commission.

PWD explained that Atishi had written to the department in March requesting the Mathura Road residence. "She was told that the bungalow belongs to the Centre's pool, and the decision on her official residence is still

pending," the official said. The AB-17 bungalow, located near Bharat Mandapam, has been home to various senior politicians in the past, including former Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit and Sisodia. Following Sisodia's legal issues, the property was assigned to Atishi, but with the ongoing

uncertainty over her request, she remains in residence Meanwhile, PWD officials noted that new Chief Minister Rekha Gupta has yet to be allotted an official residence, despite more than a month having passed since her appointment. Sources say the government is currently looking for a suitable bungalow in Lutyens' Delhi, keeping in mind its proximity to the Secretariat. In the interim, Gupta is residing at

her personal residence A senior official from the

have stated that the bungalow is part of the central government's Delhi Extends EV Policy by 15 Days; New Draft to Focus on Electric Buses & Cars receiving extensions through

2025.According to sources, the

new policy will mandate EV charging points for at least 20 per cent of parking spaces in all new buildings, while older buildings will need to allocate 5 per cent of total parking for charging infrastructure.

Buildings with large parking areas will face specific provisions for EV charging facilities.

Additionally, the draft policy proposes that all garbage collection vehicles operated by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), Delhi Jal Board (DJB), and other civic agencies transition to electric vehicles in phases, with the goal of achieving a fully electric fleet by 2027.

In a major step to improve better services for young children, ensuring access to quality healthcare, nutrition, and early learning opportunities.

will be designated as Saksham Anganwadis under the Poshan 2.0 program, an integrated nutrition support scheme designed to promote child welfare. The focuses on improv ing facilities such as healthcare, safety, responsive caregiving, and learning environments for children to help them reach their full potential.

Battle against RSS-BJP continues: Kharge to District Presidents



KAVITA SHARMA New Delhi

The Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge have said that the party's battle against the RSS and the BJP will continue. He said the united fight against the RSS-BJP during 2024 General Elections had prevented the BJP from getting absolute majority and saved the constitution from their desire to change it. He also emphasised the need for voter list management.

Addressing the first leg of the District Presidents from 13 states and 3 union territories here today, he underlined the importance of the meeting, pointing out that the party had called all District Presidents from across the country just before the AICC session.

Maintaining that in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections INDIA parties fought unitedly against the BJP alliance, restricting them to 240 seats, he said, "our 'Save Constitution' campaign exposed BJP-RSS' secret desire to change the Constitution".

He said, "while the Congress secured almost 100 seats, if we had worked harder, we could have gained 20-30 more seats and a gain of such seats could have led to the formation of an alternative government in the country".

"Had we achieved this, we could have halted the systematic assault on our independent institutions, democracy, and the Constitution", he remarked. Emphasising the importance of the role of District Presidents, he told them "you are not just our messengers, but the generals of the Congress Party, leading from the

ont on the ground" Referring to the challenges faced by the country, Kharge observed, the economy was in shambles. "The rich are getting richer while the poor become poorer. Unemployment is at an all-time high. Skyrocketing inflation has resulted in the have been identified for reloca- lowest household savings in he pointed or adding, "attacks on the poor, marginalised communities, women, and weaker sections of society are increasing". Kharge reiterated the party's demand for caste census to restore social justice in the country.

Growing stars CDC celebrates world autism awareness day with special event **OUR CORRESPONDENT**

New Delhi

Growing Stars Child Development Centre (CDC) celebrated World Autism Awareness Day by organizing a special event to showcase the extraordinary talents of children with autism. The event, held at the center, featured performances in dance, singing, and public speaking, underscoring the potential of neurodiverse children and raising awareness about autism and child development.

Children with autism captivated the audience with their remarkable skills, highlighting how, with the right support, they can excel in various fields. The event also included an insightful presentation by Dr. Deepa Gautam, Founder of Growing Stars CDC, and Pratyaksh Trivedi, an Occupational Therapist. They discussed "How Senses Affect Child Development," offering valuable insights into sensory integration and therapeutic strategies for children with autism. Dr. Santosh Kumar. Director of Chetna Foundation and a pediatric specialist, graced the event as the chief guest. In his address, he praised the children's incredible performances asized of early intervention. "Today, we witnessed that every child, regardless of their challenges, holds immense potential. With proper guidance, therapy, and inclusive education, children with autism can lead fulfilling lives and contribute meaningfully to society," Dr. Kumar stated. The Growing Stars CDC team also presented a powerful group dance performance, symbolizing the organization's journey and commitment to supporting neurodiverse children. Dr. Kumar honored the dedication of the children and staff by distributing awards and certificates, motivating them to continue their progress.



Under the existing policy, EV buyers receive various financial incentives including a 25 per cent purchase subsidy (up to Rs 5,500) for e-cycles, Rs 30,000 for e-rickshaws and e-carts, Rs 5,000 per kWh of battery capacity (capped at Rs 30,000) for two-wheelers, and Rs 30,000 for e-light commercial vehicles.

cus toward promoting adoption

A senior official revealed that the upcoming policy will shift fo-

of electric buses and cars while implementing disincentives for petrol, diesel, and CNG vehicles. The short extension period is designed to ensure policy continuity during the transition to

the new framework.

Delhi's Electric Vehicle Policy 2.0, will introduce fresh incentives for EV buyers alongside stricter measures to phase out fossil fuel-based vehicles

The original policy had ex-The revised policy, expected pired in August 2023 before

to be announced next month as

Ten year old minor became pregnant, rapist arrested

SATISH HANDA Rohtak

in a shameful incident in Rohtak, a 10 years old minor child complaining of severe stomach pain was taken to PGI in Rohtak where her ultrasound was done and the report revealed that the minor was pregnant. On the information of child the police have arrested the accused, a 35-year-old man identified as Ravi, being close to the

riorated, there, an ultrasound test revealed that the girl was pregnant. However, the doctors got the girl aborted as per the rules, after this, the police registered a case in the matter on the statement of the girl and his family.

Rohtak SP Narendra Bijarnia formed a team under the leadership of Kuldeep Kadyan CIA One in-charge and City Police Station and ordered an investigation by female investigating officer Santosh ASI and arrested the accuse

Ravi during the investigation.

Gujarat HC extends Asaram's temporary bail by 3 months for medical treatment



AHMEDABAD: The Gujarat High Court has extended

OUR CORRESPONDENT New Delhi

early childhood care, around 1,000 Anganwadi centres in Delhi will be co-located with government schools over the next three months, officials from the Women and Child Developschools, Municipal Corporation ment Department announced. of Delhi (MCD) schools, and This initiative aims to enhance institutions under the Delhi infrastructure and provide Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB). The process is expected to be completed within

aid for infrastructure upgrades The newly relocated centres coming through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Asian Development Bank (ADB). To date, 153 MCD schools

Delhi to relocate 1,000 anganwadi centres to government schools to enhance facilities



early development. It is essential that they receive the right nutrition, healthcare, and opportunities for early education to support their growth," an official said.

The relocation will involve

transferring Anganwadi centres

to a mix of Delhi government

three months, with financial

equently ing their house whose wife died about four years ago, had raped minor girl. The accused used to lure the girl by giving her cold drinks and sweets, misbehaving with the girl after which the minor became pregnant.

According to the CIA Staff of police started investigation in the case, the accused Ravi who used to work with the girl's father earlier used to visit the girl's house and the girl's entire family knew the accused, as such taking advantage of this, the accused a couple of times on the



home. He used to give her cold drinks and sweets to entertain her. Meanwhile, the doctors have discharged the girl from PGIMS on Monday. committed abominable acts On March 27, the 10-year-old victim girl was admitted to girl when she was alone at PGIMS after her health dete- third degree measures.

The counseling of the girl child was done when it was revealed that Ravi had misbehaved with her and sexually assaulted her. But the victim girl's father did not know where the accused lived at present, in such a situation, it was difficult for the police to reach the accused. However, the police gathered information about the accused by interrogating him at many of his old hideouts, the police team was able to reach the accused by connecting the dots, who initially refused the crime, but admitted when the police investigation team applied

Bapu's temporary bail by three months, citing the need for continued medical treatment. The 86-year-old, who is serving a life sentence in Jodhpur Central Jail for rape, had earlier been granted interim bail due to heart-related ailments and other age-related health complications. The Supreme Court had initially granted Asaram temporary bail until March 31, 2025, on medical grounds. With the latest decision from the Gujarat High Court, his temporary release has now been extended further. Asaram, once a revered spiritual leader with millions of followers, has faced multiple legal battles over the past decade.

"These changes are part of a broader effort to provide better infrastructure for children's

tion, with efforts continuing to identify additional schools that can accommodate the centres. Officials explained that moving Anganwadis into schools would address infrastructure challenges faced in rented spaces, making it easier to improve facilities for children.

BJP's approach to convince JDU and TDP about the Waqf Amendment Bill, astonishing opposition

frequently voiced its dissent

regarding the Uniform Civil

Code (UCC). However, during

the election season in Bihar,

the JD(U) chose to support the

past year, the BJP has been

working to clarify aspects

of the bill to the opposition,

focusing on how it will ben-

efit ordinary Muslim voters,

women, and widows, rather

than adhering to the narrative

constructed by the opposition.

has held more than a dozen

meetings with its allied par-

ties regarding the bill. Conse-

quently, while the opposition

has crafted a narrative against

the bill, the NDA and its allies

are planning to promote the

positive aspects of the Waqf

Bill, also known as 'Umeed,'

through various national pro-

grams immediately following

the conclusion of the parlia-

mentary session. According to

sources, the government is pre-

paring points to illustrate how

Over this period, the party

The reality is that for the

NDA on the Waqf Bill.



MEENAKSHI BHATTACHARYA

By garnering support for the Waqf Bill, the BJP has effectively demonstrated that, despite relying on coalition partners to govern at the centre. Prime Minister Narendra Modi can still secure backing from these allies on contentious issues. However, both the JD(U) and TDP have a significant portion of Muslim voters within their electoral base. With assembly elections scheduled in Bihar this year, where the JD(U) is one

In the past, when issues related to Muslims have arisen, both the JD(U) and TDP, as well as Chirag Paswan's Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas), have consistently expressed differing opinions from the BJP. Notably, the JD(U) has

this bill will benefit women and how it can help release the properties of ordinary Muslims from Waqf control.

According to the government, one of the most significant changes proposed in the Waqf Amendment Bill of 2025 is the protection of women's inheritance rights under family waqf (waqf-alalawlad). The bill stipulates that waqf property can only be dedicated once it is ensured that female heirs receive their rightful share of inheritance. This provision directly addresses long-standing concerns regarding the neglect of inheritance laws, which have

often disadvantaged women. Tarun Chugh, the National General Secretary of the Bharatiya Janata Party, has remarked that certain leaders from the Congress and Samajwadi Party have succumbed to mental bankruptcy and are acting like puppets in collusion with land mafias that exploit waqf properties for electoral gains.

Section 3(R)(iv) stipulates that the income generated from waqf can now be utilized for the maintenance and welfare of vulnerable groups, thereby ensuring economic security and social stability for those in need. This provision reinforces the government's commitment to gender justice, aligning with the principles of Islamic welfare.

Many cases of husbands being harassed by their wives have come to light in country after Saurabh muder case in Meerut

SATISH HANDA New Delhi

The act of a wife killing her husband have been hitting headlines in the newspaper time to time have been witnessed in society quite often in India, in which a woman had been in extramarital affairs with someone else, or her husband's friend and with the aid of this same man, she killed her an alcoholic, unemployed or a husband who could not provide her children or she suffered several physical cases of abuse in the hand of her husband which forces her to be responsible for killed him husband. According to a survey report many times women that commit Matricide do so for financial reasons also and the act mostly involves hiring third-party to murder the victim generally using knife or firearms

The incident sensational murder was reported few days after the sensational murder of a merchant navy officer,



Saurabh Rajput (29), who was in Uttar Pradesh's Meerut alhacked to death and sealed in a legedly threatened to cut her drum with cement by his wife husband into pieces and seal Muskaan Rastogi and her lover him in a drum if he did not Sahil Shukla in Meerut and change his behaviour and excessive use of liquor. The the incident hitting headlines of every newspaper as well as incident was reported from electronic media in which the Meerut's Kanker Khera region woman chop alcoholic huswhen a youth approached the band along with her lover in local police station after the al-Meerut and seal him inside leged threat from his wife that drum with cement . Both the she will chop him into pieces accused have been lodged in and pack him in a drum' in the jail since March 19 after a the same way as Muskan had court sent the duo to judicial killed her husband Saurabh custody for 14 days. with a smile, saying his fate will be like Saurabh's. The

Recently, after this mueder case, in another case, a woman a brick, causing serious injuries to him, has also threatened to chop him into pieces and pack in Drum Like Saurabh Rajput Murder Case. The Saurabh Rajput murder case of Meerut is being discussed all over the country. After the murder, the blue drum is also being discussed and it is becoming a means of threat. According to police, in the latest case, a wife has given a similar threat to her husband when the husband and wife had a fight over excessive use of liquor by him, and the wife first beat up the husband and then threatened

him that if you fight, you will meet in the drum. A video is viral on social media in which the husband who has received the threat works as a labourer a resident of labour colony under Kankarkheda police station area of Meerut district alleged that his wife married 5 years ago also having two children attacked complainant alleged his wife of him with bricks and threat-

attacking him on the head with ened that if he does not stop his antics, he will be chopped into pieces and packed in a drum. Information revealed that there was often a quarrel between husband and wife over drinking alcohol. This time also the husband came home after drinking alcohol and once again there was a dispute over this matter. It is alleged that the husband was sleeping till late in the morning, so the wife woke him up. When the husband protested, the wife hit him on the head with a brick. After this the matter reached the police. However, later the police explained to both of them and made them compromise and then sent them back home.

> Sources reveal, even though this case has been solved by Meerut police. The couple, married for five years with two children, had a troubled relationship due to husband's addiction to alcohol. The couple had an argument on Sunday night when he was intoxicated.

of the major parties, the opposition is astonished at how the BJP managed to persuade the JD(U), a party that has consistently opposed issues concerning Muslims.

NATION

Waqf Bill ends era of years of injustice, corruption: Shah Rahul Gandhi Corners Modi Govt on Chinese Occupation, US tariffs

NEWDELHI: 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 Rajya 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 vears 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.



KAVITA SHAMRA New Delhi

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi todav 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

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."

"However, the BJP and the 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!"

Minister of Road Transport & Highways, Nitin Gadkari, also took to X to express his wishes, posting, "Warmest wishes for Eid-ul-Fitr. May this joyous occasion fill every heart with peace, love, and endless blessngs. Eid Mubarak!"

Similarly, Minister of Parliamentary Affairs Kiren Rijiju extended his greetings on Eid.

He wrote in a post on X, "Wishing everyone a joyous & blessed Eid-ul-Fitr! May this special day bring happiness, prosperity & new opportunities for all. Let's celebrate the spirit of togetherness & gratitude with

Eid-ul-Fitr, marking the end

The festival signifies a time

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 Mohbhatta 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

Gujarat to host AICC

national convention

after 64 years





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





With the inauguration of 108 km and dedicated to the 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

Chhattisgarh

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

> at the very centre of India's incredible growth story. It has witnessed the whole journey of the country so far, from the time before Independence when it was suffering from widespread poverty to the time now when it is among the top economies in the world.

served that as India approaches the centenary of its Independence, the mission of 'Viksit Bharat 2047' calls for a financial ecosystem that is innovative, adaptive, and accessible to all. She stated that the path ahead would present new complexities and

The President also ob-

that with a steadfast commitment to stability, innovation and inclusivity, the RBI would continue to be a pillar of strength – reinforcing trust future of prosperity and global leadership.

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 have been relatively rare.



Army's incursion across the

"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

Addressing the closing ceremony of the commemoration of the RBI's 90th year, the President said, "By continuously modernising the country's payment infrastructure, maintaining its mandate of RBI has emerged as one of AHMEDABAD: Ahmedabad is gearing up to host the 84th the Reserve Bank has ensured National Convention of the that digital transactions are All India Congress Committee not only seamless and efficient but also secure. Innovations like the UPI have revolutionised financial access, enabling

(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 leadecosystem. ers, including party president

Mallikarjun Kharge, senior leaders Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi, and KC Venugopal. Gujarat last hosted an

AICC convention in 1961 in Bhaynagar, making this a po

service in the Abhanpur- Raipur RBI Played Key Role in Making India Global Leader in Digital Payments: Prez Murmu MUMBAI: President Droupa di 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.

instant, low-cost transactions and deepening financial inclusion. Beyond payments, RBI has nurtured a vibrant fintech

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



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

ient in the face of any adverse international trends The President said that the



the most critically important institutions in the nation. She pointed out that a common financial system remains resil-

erned by the RBI. And they instinctively place their utmost faith in the financial system overseen by it. She further stated that the

man or woman has no direct interaction with RBI - except for its name printed on the challenges. currency notes in their pockets - but indirectly, all their financial dealings, through banks and otherwise, are gov-

RBI, as the central bank, was

She expressed confidence and steering India towards a

she answered that she is an Indian and she stands straight. RSS have a different philosophy; when asked to lean right or left, they say they bow their heads to every foreigner that comes. This is part of their culture and history", he taunted the BJP and the RSS. land".

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

Control (LoC) in Jammu and defence spokesperson said on Wednesday.

fire violation.

"

The BJP and the

RSS have a different

asked to lean right or

their heads to every

foreigner that comes.

This is part of their

culture and history"

Gandhi also referred to the

26 percent tariff imposed by

the US on Indian goods. "Our

ally has suddenly decided

to impose a 26 percen tar-

iff, which will devastate our

economy. Our auto industry,

pharmaceutical industry, and

agriculture are all in line", he

pointed out. Leader of Op-

position cited the example

of former Prime Minister Ms

Indira Gandhi, who, when

asked, does she lean left or

right on foreign policy and

left, they say they bow

philosophy; when

LoC, which was followed by unprovoked firing and a cease-

our loved ones.

of the holy month of Ramadan, is celebrated with great fervor across India and the world.

of joy, generosity, and unity, as people come together to share meals, exchange gifts, and offer prayers for peace and harmony.



litically significant event for the Congress party in the state.

With the Lok Sabha elections on the horizon, the gathering is expected to set the stage for key political discussions and strategic planning.

With top Congress leaders staying in the city for two days, the party has made extensive accommodation arrangements, booking around 2,000 hotel rooms across Ahmedabad and nearby areas. Prominent hotels, including ITC Narmada and Courtyard Marriott, have been fully reserved.

At the same time, other high-end properties such as Hyatt, The Fern, Fortune Landmark, Lemon Tree, Rivera, and Radisson Blu have also been secured for delegates. To facilitate seamless transportation, the party has arranged a fleet of cars and buses, with additional vehicle support from party workers if required.

Congress has also tied up with private travel agencies and hotel transport services to accommodate any last-minute logistical needs. Such large-scale hotel reservations are typically seen during international cricket matches or high-profile concerts, but this time, political activity has driven the surge in demand. Given that the convention will be held at the Sabarmati Riverfront and the Sardar Patel Memorial, Congress has ensured that all nearby accommodations are exclusively booked for its attendees.

The Gujarat Pradesh Congress Committee (GPCC) is currently navigating a complex political landscape, marked by internal challenges and external pressures. In the 2022 Gujarat Legislative Assembly elections, the Indian National Congress (INC) faced a significant defeat, securing only 17 out of 182 seats, while the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) maintained its dominance in the state.

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 boards to members of their the bill seeks to revoke, are not exclusive to Muslims. Other re-

ligious communities also have similar rights. The endowment laws of various religious communities include provisions that restrict their management

NEW DELHI: The EPFO on

Tuesday entered into agree-

ments 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 month-

The EPFO has already em-

panelled 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 Man-

sukh Mandaviya, and Union

Minister of State for Labour

& Employment, and MSMEs

Mandaviya said that with

and more than 78 lakh pension- ous year (2023-24).

nearly 8 crore active members

ers, the EPFO provides benefits

that ensure social security for

He expressed happiness that

the EPFO is offering an interest

rate of 8.25 per cent to its ben-

Shobha Karandlaje

millions.

ly contributions.



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

eficiaries. The participation of

banks in service delivery would

further enhance the efficiency

of the EFPO and improve good

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 previ-

Mandaviya said that a signifi-

cant milestone was also marked

with the introduction of the

Centralised Pension Payment

"This system will benefit over

System.

governance, he added.

of these rights, which is blatant holders of the bill. It appeared 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

78 lakh pensioners, enabling

them to receive their pensions

in any bank account across the

country. Previously, pensioners

were required to have an ac-

count in a specific zonal bank:

this compulsion has now been

Mandaviya also touched upon

removed," the Minister said.

the significant reforms intro-

duced by the EPFO recently.

"The auto claim settlement pro-

cess 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

as if the consultative process was just a formality and the decision to pass the bill had been predetermined, rendering public opinion and stake-

holder 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 prowidespread opposition and millions of objections from vision that is helpful in this regard. Its provision only the public, the government disregarded the feedback it worsens the waqf adminisreceived from the main staketration.

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

on leave for six months cit-

ing childcare responsibilities.

The government refused to

extend her leave, and she was

compelled to rejoin duty in

Sujata's tenure in admin-

istration was marked by a

rapid rise and she was re-

sponsible for implementing

some of Naveen's flagship

programmes, most notably

the Mission Shakti movement.

She had earlier served as col-

lector in key districts such as

Cuttack and Sundargarh with

an excellent record. When Mis-

sion Shakti was officially des-

ignated as a government de-

partment, she was appointed

as its secretary, overseeing the

activities of lakhs of women

self-help group members.

These women constituted a

loval 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 elec-

tion from Aska hands down.

had taken voluntary retire-

ment from service in October

2023 while serving as the all-

powerful private secretary to

CM Naveen Patnaik. Follow-

ing his retirement, he entered

full-time politics, joining the

Her husband, VK Pandian,

November 2024.

ARABINDA MOHAPATRA Bhubaneswar

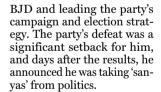
Putting an end to all speculation over her future senior IAS officer Sujata R Karthikeyan, wife of former chief minister Naveen Patnaik's trusted aide and bureaucrat-turnedpolitician VK Pandian, has taken voluntary retirement from service (VRS).

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.

She wielded considerable influence in the Naveen Patnaik government which was resented by the BJP which lodged a complaint against her with the Election Commission during the last elections. The commission ordered her transfer from the Mission Shakti department and she was posted as the special secretary of the Finance Department where she remained following the defeat of the BJD in the 2024 elections.

However, as soon as the BJP government assumed office in June last year, she went



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 bureau-

crat hails from Baluria village in Odisha's Kendrapara district and spent some time in Jamshedpur, 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

March 2025.

reduce transactional delays and

reduce the costs to the EPFO

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

the world and has ollected over Rs. 3.41 lakh crore in contributions remitted by employers through 1.25 crore electronic challan cum returns till 20th

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

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

payable for name validation of members' accounts held in non-empanelled banks.

social security organisations in

PAC Report shall act as a catalyst for GST overhaul

he 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 manufacturingheavy 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 revenuesharing model, with states advocating for an increased share of 70%-80%, up from the current 50%.



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

nder the 'Fair and Reciprocal Plan,' the Donald Trump administration is countering "non-reciprocal trading ar rangements 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 counries 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

EDITORIAL

COPINION

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 behindthe-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

n 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.

E.

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 provide for their participation, b 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 economially marginalised

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. uppreciation about the

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

LETTERBOX

Readers' feedback adds value to the newspaper. Please email comments on reports, features and columns to fwletters@gmail.com. We will publish them on this page.

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

THE FINANCIAL WORLD

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EDITOR* ABDUL WASEY

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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

BOOKS: REVIEW

pendence 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

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.

New book traces the migrant's longing through centuries

evi 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.

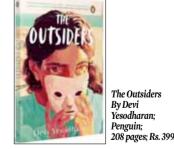
Nita, a widowed teacher from Kerala, seeks better opportunities by moving to Dubai to work as an English tutor for a wealthy family. Her employer, Rouhi, an Egyptian woman trapped in an abusive marriage, becomes both a friend and a symbol of the complex social hierarchies that pervade their environment. 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 lands, highlighting the univernarrative 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 sal 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



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.

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.

but also emphasizes the time-

less nature of migration and

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

BANKING **G**FINANCE

SBI, Citi Unveil \$295 Million Social Loan to Empower Local Smallholder Farmers in India

MUMBAI: State Bank of India (SBI) and Citi on Thursday announced a social loan facility of \$295 million to support smallholder farmers in India.

The financing is specifically directed towards smallholder farmers in India, to support them to improve their agricultural productivity, enhancing their financial well-being, the banks said in a statement.

The SBI will utilise the facility to finance its Kisan Credit Card loan portfolio, to help meet the credit requirements of the agricultural sector, and within this, smallholder farm-

Jayati Bansal, Dy Managing Director (International Banking Group), SBI, said that leveraging our extensive network, "we aim to reach small and marginal farmers who are at the core of India's agriculture sector but often lack access to essential credit



resources"

"This initiative will empower these farmers by enhancing their access to financing, helping them improve productivity and create sustainable livelihoods. At SBI, we believe that supporting the underserved farming community is key to strengthening rural economies and fostering long-term economic inclusion," said Bansal. Smallholder farmers con-

tribute a significant segment



yet face pronounced social and economic difficulties.

Limited income and restricted access to credit hinder their ability to plan for long-term needs, often restricting their productivity, growth, and excluding them from the wider economy. By enhancing access to

credit, this facility aims to foster their agricultural production and income-generation, thereby contributing towards of India's agricultural sector, livelihood enhancements and

promoting economic inclusion for this underserved community

Mayank Gupta, Asia South Head of Trade and Working Capital Solutions, Citi said that this agreement with SBI will utilise "the depth of our trade and working capital loan solutions to unlock positive social impact and economic growth."

The SBI is actively driving positive change through various initiatives across its operations, products, and services that prioritise environmental and social causes. It supports its community by expanding access to banking services, promoting financial inclusion, and enhancing financial literacy. Globally, Citi has committed USD\$1 trillion to sustainable finance by 2030 and expanding access to basic services for 15 million underserved and low-income households.

Governor Malhotra: RBI Needs Fresh Thinking & Commitment to Excellence

MUMBAI: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is committed to enhancing financial access, efficiency, and resilience in an evolving economic landscape, said Governor Sanjay Malhotra at the central bank's 90th commemoration ceremony on Tuesday.

'We at the Reserve Bank remain fully prepared to meet all challenges and seize all opportunities," Malhotra stated, emphasising the institution's expanding role beyond its ini-

tial mandate. "The RBI's journey ahead demands continuous adaptation, fresh thinking, and unwavering commitment to excellence," Malhotra said, reaffirming that public trust remains the institution's greatest asset.

He highlighted the need to balance price stability, financial stability, and economic growth amid technological advancements, global uncerincluding 10 million women.



and innovation to strengthen tainties, and climate change challenges.

Malhotra pointed out that financial inclusion is a key focus area, noting that over 551 million bank accounts have stakeholders, governments, been opened under various schemes

The RBI's Financial Inclusion Index rose to 64.2 gears up for a crucial decade. in March 2024 from 60.1 in the central bank's focus will March 2023 and 43.4 in 2017, reflecting significant progress ance between regulation and in access, quality, and usage of growth, ensuring a robust and financial services. "It will be our endeavour the future.

Poonam Gupta is new RBI Deputy Governor



NEW DELHI: The government

has approved the appointment of NCAER Driector General Poonam Gupta as the Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) for a period of three years, say sources. The post of the Deputy Governor of RBI fell vacant after MD Patra demitted the office in January. The sources said the Appointments Committee of Cabinetapproved Gupta's appointment for the post of Deputy Governor in the RBI for three years from the date of joining. Currently, Gupta is the Director General of National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) India's largest economic policy think tank. She is also a member of the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister and Convener of the Advisory Council to the 16th Finance Commission.

India's External Debt-too-GDP Ratio **Rise Over 10%**



NEW DELHI: India's external debt reached USD 717.9 billion by the end of December 2024, marking a 10.7 per cent increase from USD 648.7 billion in December 2023, according to the latest data from the Finance Ministry. On a quarterly basis, the external debt rose by 0.7 per cent from USD 712.7 billion in September 2024. The external debt-to-GDP ratio stood at 19.1 per cent in December, compared to 19 per cent in the previous quarter. A significant portion of this increase is attributed to valuation effects arising from the appreciation of the US dollar against the rupee and other major currencies, including the ven, euro, and Special Drawing Rights (SDR). This valuation effect contributed an additional USD 12.7 billion to the external debt in the December quarter. Excluding this impact, the actual increase in external debt would have been USD 17.9 billion, a notable rise compared

to the USD 5.2 billion increase recorded from September to 30 years (1990-91 to 2022-23). er 2024 Decem sition of India's external debt remained largely US dollardenominated, accounting for 54.8 per cent of the total debt by December 2024. Other currency components included Indian Rupees, Japanese Yen, SDR, and the Euro.

IDFC first Bank Authorized by the Central Pension Accounting Office MUMBAI: IDFC FIRST Bank

today announced that it has been authorised by Central Pension Accounting Office (CPAO), Government of India, to disburse pensions on its behalf.

disburse pensions to Central Government pensioners including - All India Service Officers, former Members of Parliament, retired Judges of High Courts and Supreme Court, former Presidents and Savings Account.



This allows the Bank to Vice Presidents of India, and officials of Civil Ministries and Departments (other than Railways, Posts, Telecom and Defence). Pensioners can now receive their pension directly in their IDFC FIRST Bank

From a technical point of view, the integration between the CPAO, GOI and IDFC FIRST Bank is complete and is ready for such pension disbursements.

Pensioners can also open an IDFC FIRST Bank Savings Account jointly with their spouse to receive pension. In the event of the primary pensioner's demise, the spouse can continue receiving the family pension in the same account.

Axis Bank first to go live with a pioneering B2B Collections Solution for a Fortune 500 company on NBBL's Bharat Connect

MUMBAI: Axis Bank, one of tors, stockists. Retailers can the largest private sector Banks initiate invoice payments directly from the application. in India, announced that it As the Biller Operating Unit has partnered with a Fortune capable of offering this unique 500 company in India to pro-Bharat BillPay.

Neeraj Gambhir, Group Executive & Head - Treasury, Markets & Wholesale Banking Products, Axis Bank said, "Axis Bank has been at the forefront in rolling out pioneering digital payments & collections for its clients. Our partnership



bracing technology

The RBI aims to remain vig-

ilant, adaptive, and forward-

looking, collaborating with

and financial regulators to en-

hance the banking ecosystem.

be on striking the right bal-

inclusive financial system for

As the Indian economy

the financial sector.

with the corporate in coming up with a first of its kind B2B collections solution is a testament to our best-in-class Corporate API banking stack. This initiative is an example of innovation in India's Digital journey that ensures high customer convenience and seamless payment experience." Noopur Chaturvedi, CEO, NPCI Bharat BillPay Ltd.

(NBBL) said, "Bharat Connect is expanding its horizon with the introduction of Business to Business (B2B) invoice payment and financing platform with an aim to streamline manual processes of large supply chain and distribution networks. We are happy to have Axis Bank as our key partner and the first bank to go live with the expanded solution. This further deepens our already strong relationship with the bank and reflects our shared commitment to democratizing the payments and collections

space.

'NITI NCAER States Economic Forum' Portal to Boost Research on Public Finances Launched

NEW DELHI: Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday launched the "NITI NCAER States Economic Forum" portal, that will help states make more meaningful interventions, raising revenues, managing debts and learning from peer experiences.

The portal, developed by NITI Aayog, in collaboration with the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER), is a comprehensive repository of data on social, economic and fiscal parameters, research reports, papers, and expert commentary on state finances for a period of about

In her keynote address Sitharaman stated that NITI NCAER States Economic Forum will be beneficial in the availability of authentic data. sised the importance of balance in public finances between revenue generation without burden-



ing the people. She said that this forum is a much-needed step in present times which will help in greater engagement with states.

Poonam Gupta, highlighted the states. He further stated that scal path of the states. She underlined the need for a portal which has comprehensive data of all states, thereby, providing an opportu-The Union Minister empha- nity to appreciate the position K Bery, the 'NITI NCAER State of other states while making informed policy decisions.

rahamanyam emphasised that this forum will not only provide information for public knowledge but will also create aware-NCAER Director General, Dr ness and fiscal learning across this forum will pl

vide B2B collections utilising service, Axis Bank has devel-NBBL's Bharat Connect (Erstoped this seamless, agile, scalwhile BBPS). With this, Axis able and customisable solution Bank becomes the first Bank and with support from NBBL to go live in implementing this Commenting on the launch. pioneering solution, leveraging its best-in-class, robust API stack. The solution can integrate

multiple ordering applications across sectors; FMCG, Pharma, Automotives, Healthcare facilitating collections for the company's wholesale distribu-

NRI Remittances Soar to Record \$129.4 Billion in 2024, India Retains Top Rank

NEW DELHI: Indians working abroad sent home a record \$129.4 billion in 2024 with the highest-ever inflows of \$36 billion in the October-December quarter, according to the latest figures compiled by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

India tops the list of recipient countries for remittances in 2024 and is way ahead of second-placed Mexico with n. China (\$48)



registered in 2023, accord- account for around half of the Bank

especially true for the United States where the employment of foreign-born workers has recovered steadily and is 11 per cent higher than the prepandemic level seen in February 2020. Officially recorded remittances to low-and middleincome countries (LMICs) are expected to reach \$685 billion

According to the World tinued to outpace other types of external financial flows, such as FDI, to low and middle-income countries and will continue to increase because of enormous migration pressures driven by demographic trends, income

role in human service and be a permanent asset for the nation as a whole. According to NITI Aayog Vice Chairman, Suman Economic Forum' is a key step in data-driven research, especially NITI Aayog ČEO B.V.R. Sub- on public finances.

is at the third spot followed by the Philippines (\$40 billion), and Pakistan (\$33 billion), according to figures compiled by World Bank economists. The growth rate of remittances in 2024 is estimated to be 5.8 per cent, compared to 1.2 per cent

number of Indians working overseas has tripled from 6.6 million in 1990 to 18.5 million in 2024, with its share in

world. The recovery of the job markets in the high-income countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and global migrants rising from Development (OECD), follow-4.3 per cent to over 6 per cent ing the onset of the COVID-19 during the same period. Indian pandemic, has been the key migrants in the Gulf countries driver of remittances. This is gaps, and climate change.

The trust of the depositors of cooperative banks has to be saved



ecently, an incident of embezzle-

ment of Rs. 122 crore was reported in the New India Cooperative Bank of Mumbai. As a result, to handle the situation, the Reserve Bank of India immediately banned withdrawals, new loans and deposits from the bank. Later, customers were given partial relief in the matter of withdrawals. Nevertheless, fear and doubt persist in the minds of customers.

Due to the scam in Punjab and Maharashtra Co-operative Bank (PMC) a few years ago, customers had to face a lot of problems in withdrawing their money. Incidents of irregularities and bankruptcy in co-operative banks have become common, due to which the trust of small investors in the banking system is decreasing. A major reason for irregulari-

ties or scams in cooperative banks is believed to be the dual control system of the Reserve Bank and the Registrar of Cooperatives. Cooperative banks are established bank and fourth, land developaccording to the State Cooperative ment bank. Cooperative bank is Societies Act. They are registered with the «Registrar of Cooperative Societies», which are regulated by central cooperative bank situated the state government. The Reserve in the district controls the credit Bank of India is the regulator, societies, in the same way, the state but its regulatory role is limited. cooperative bank organizes all the The central government does not central cooperative banks spread interfere in the functioning of this bank. The task of monitoring such bank is the apex institution of ag-

government, whose directors are leaders of the ruling party. Due to these reasons, it is easy to carry out scams in cooperative banks.

A major reason behind Housing Cooperative Society or the public keeping money in cooperative banks is that they offer higher interest on deposits. Due to this, investors get tempted. New India Cooperative Bank and PMC Bank

were also offering higher interest on deposits, which was even higher than some other cooperative banks. The formation and functioning

of cooperative banks are based on cooperation. Most countries of the world have cooperative banks, which take deposits and give loans. The main purpose of their establishment is to provide banking facilities in agricultural and rural areas and to realize the concept of financial inclusion. Generally, their branches are limited to one state, but there are exceptions to this.

There are 4 types of cooperative banks in India, namely, first, primary cooperative credit societies, second, central or district cooperative bank, third, state cooperative the apex institution of cooperative credit organization. Just as the across the state. In this way, this banks is mainly done by the state ricultural cooperative institutions



spread across the state.

So far, the Reserve Bank has taken control of 27 cooperative banks due to scams or irregularities in operations. According to the Reserve Bank of India>s report on the trend and progress of banking in India, the number of urban cooperative banks has decreased from 1,926 to 1,472 in the last 2 decades. Thus, from the financial year 2004-05 till now, 156 urban cooperative banks have been merged, out of which 6 urban cooperative banks have been merged in 2023. In the past years, the Reserve Bank of India

has given licenses to many urban cooperative banks, which has increased their number. Although they were also merged later, their number is low.

It is not easy to stop irregularities in cooperative banks in the current system. Also, in the greed of higher interest, customers will not stop depositing their life savings in such banks. Therefore, to keep the confidence of investors intact, the Central Government is considering increasing the existing insurance cover of Rs 5 lakh under the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation Act

(DICGC). This is also necessary because banks are currently facing the problem of deposits. In such a situation, if investors lose faith in the banking system, then banks will face more difficulties in raising deposits. It is worth mentioning that only when bank deposits increase at a cheaper rate, banks will be able to give loans to the needy and businessmen, because investment in business can be done only when there is availability of capital and economic activities can increase when investment increases. DICGC is an institution owned

by the Reserve Bank of India that provides insurance cover on bank deposits. The premium for the insurance cover is paid by the banks to DICGC on behalf of the customer. All commercial banks including branches of foreign banks, local area banks and regional rural banks operating in India are insured by DICGC. In case of registration of banks, DICGC shares the details of insurance with them so that customers can be given proper information about the insurance

At present, DICGC pays insurance amount of up to Rs 5 lakh

to the customers in case of bank collapse or bankruptcy. Customers are paid their deposited money within 90 days of the bank collapsing or closing. The affected bank has to give the details of the account holders to DICGC within 45 days. After that, it returns the money to the account holders in the remaining 45 days.

If a depositor has 10 lakh rupees deposited in a bank and the bank collapses, then the depositor will be paid only the insured amount of 5 lakh rupees and the customer>s 5 lakh rupees will be lost. Such a provision has created fear in the minds of investors. Therefore, it is believed that if the insurance amount is increased, investors will not hesitate to deposit money up to the insured amount in banks and this will increase the credibility of banks

The Indian banking system is still strong. It would be wrong to consider the entire banking system flawed based on the scam in New India Cooperative Bank or PMC or any other bank. The monitoring system in the context of cooperative banks is very weak, which needs to be strengthened. Also, there is a need to increase the insurance cover to ensure that the account holders> deposits in banks are safe. Therefore, the government and the Reserve Bank of India need to take further action in the matter to give concrete shape to the corrective measures as soon as possible.

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

IBC Emerges as Dominant Recovery Mechanism, Accounts for 48% of Bank Recoveries

NEW DELHI: The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 (IBC) has established itself as a consolidated framework for reorganisation, insolvency resolution, and liquidation of corporate persons, partnership firms, and individuals.

The primary objective of the code is to maximise the value of assets and it has significantly impacted the health of India's banking sector while redefining debtor-creditor relationships.

According to the Reserve Bank of India's Report on Trend and Progress of Banking in India released in December 2024, the IBC has emerged as the dominant recovery route for banks, accounting for 48 per cent of all recoveries.

Other recovery mechanisms include the SARFAESI Act at 32 per cent, Debt Recovery Tribunals at 17 per cent, and Lok Adalats at 3 per cent during the Financial Year 2023-24.

A study conducted by the Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad in August 2023 analysed the financial performance of firms that underwent resolution under the IBC.

The findings revealed significant improvements in profitability, liquidity, and overall financial health of resolved



firms in the post-resolution period, highlighting the positive impact of IBC on business continuity and value preservation

As of December 31, 2024, a total of 8,175 Corporate Insolvency Resolution Processes have been initiated. Of these, 3,485 Corporate Debtors have been rescued, including 1,119 through resolution plans, 1,236 through appeal, review, or settlement, and 1,130 through withdrawal under section 12A.

Additionally, 2,707 Corporate Debtors have been referred for liquidation. The 1,119 cases that yielded resolution plans have realised a value of Rs 3.58 lakh crore for creditors, amounting to 162.79 per cent of liquidation value

and 87.58 per cent of fair value. To facilitate expeditious resolution processes and ensure proper implementation of the IBC, the Government has made six amendments to the code and 122 amendments to regulations since its inception.

Regular training and capacity-building programs for insolvency professionals, adjudicating authorities, and other stakeholders are conducted to improve the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the IBC ecosystem.

The government is also leveraging information technology through digital platforms to automate and streamline processes, making the system more efficient, accurate, and faster, ultimately leading to better outcomes for all stakeholders

This information was provided by the Minister of State in the Ministry of Corporate Affairs and Minister of State in the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, Harsh Malhotra, in a written reply in the Rajya Sabha today.



Market Cap of NSE-Listed Firms Sees Nearly 7 Pc Growth in FY25 with 11.3 Cr Investors

NEW DELHI: The market capitalisation of NSE-listed companies reached Rs 410.87 lakh crore (\$4.81 trillion) in FY25 (till March 31), from Rs 384.2 lakh crore (\$4.61 trillion) in FY24 - a growth of 6.94 per cent year-on-year, according to the data released by the National Stock Exchange on Monday.

The total number of companies listed on the NSE stood at 2,720 (as on March 31, 2025).

Total unique registered investors reached 11.3 crore (till March 28), with total unique accounts at 21.94 crore (till March 27). New investor registrations in FY25 were 2.09 crore (till March 28), according to the NSE data. The financial year saw 242 initial public offerings (IPOs), and the total amount



raised through IPO (Mainboard Total cumulative volume in + Emerge) reached Rs 1.7 lakh GIFT Nifty contracts for FY25 crore. According to the data, the reached 23.99 million contracts, market capitalisation of NSE with a total turnover of \$1.111 Emerge (SME) listed companies trillion. Since the commence-(as of March 31, 2025) was Rs ment of full-scale operations 1.8 lakh crore (\$20.8 billion) in in July 2023, GIFT Nifty has achieved a total cumulative FY25, up a massive 50 per cent from Rs 1.2 lakh crore (\$14.8 volume of 38.99 million conbillion) in FY24. tracts, with a total cumulative

turnover of \$1.72 trillion as of March 28, 2025.

The total cumulative traded value surged from \$611.95 billion to \$1111.14 billion, a growth of 82 per cent. Average monthly value rose from \$67.99 billion to \$92.60 billion, a growth of 36 per cent, as per the NSE data. Average daily traded value climbed from \$3.19 billion to \$4.26 billion, a growth of 34 per cent. On NSE IX (GIFT IFSC), the total notional turnover crossed the \$1 trillion mark in FY25. "Total Notional Turnover of the NSE IX across all the products for FY25 is \$1,144 billion vs \$735 billion for FY24,' according to the NSE data. As many as 65,031 unique clients were registered in FY25 (till March 28) compared to 316

India's Heavy Industries Hold 20 GW Solar Opportunity: Report The report notes that sourcing up to 50 percent of electricity from variable renewable energy



by UK-based energy think-tank

renewable procurement could significantly reduce both production costs and emissions, potentially cutting up to 29 million tonnes of carbon dioxide annually. The steel sector alone contributes 9.4 GW to this opportunity, driven by the high cost of grid power that can be cost-effectively offset by solar. In some configurations, such as standalone arc furnaces used

by up to 10 percent. The cement and aluminium already underway, with Odisha sectors, despite their dependence on captive coal, contribute

NEW DELHI: A new analysis in Chhattisgarh and Odisha account for approximately 40 percent of the assessed 20 GW open access solar market.

The high concentration of industrial activity, combined with favourable open access regulations, makes these states particularly attractive markets.

Policies offering discounts on cross-subsidy surcharges and various other charges strengthen the business case for renewable procurement across states.

"Odisha and Chhattisgarh have long been legacy industrial hubs, owing to their proximity to rich mineral reserves. By integrating renewable power, they are well-positioned to begin their transformation to green manufacturing hubs," said Duttatreya Das, Asia analyst, Ember.

He added that this shift is actively envisioning green industrial parks, setting the stage for an export-driven, low-carbon future in manufacturing.

Crore in FY 2024-25

BEL Achieves Record Turnover of Rs. 23,000

ARUN KUMAR RAO

advanced strategies. "Cost-competitive, near-24x7 renewable Bangaluru energy will power the first wave

Navratna Defence PSU Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) has achieved a turnover of around Rs.23,000 Cr (Provisional & Unaudited), during the Financial Year 2024-25, against the previous year's turnover of Rs.19,820 Cr registering a growth of 16%. This includes Export sales of around US\$ 106 Million during FY 2024-25, as against the previous year's export turnover of US\$ 92.98 Million, registering a growth of 14%. In the fiscal year 2024-25, BEL secured orders worth Rs.18,715 Cr. Some of the major orders received during the year are BMP II Upgrade, Ashwini Radar, Software Defined Radios, Data link, Multi-Function Radars, EON 51, Seekers, Anti Drone System, Airport Surveillance Radar, Sonar Upgradation, Flycatcher spares, Radar upgradation, Spares and

Services, etc, and other projects in Non-defence sector. With this, the total Order Book of BEL as on April 1st, 2025, stands at around Rs.71,650 Cr including Export Order Book of USD 359 Million.

Sandeep Jain Re-elected **FISME President**

NEW DELHI: The Central Executive Committee of Federation of Indian Micro and Small & Medium Enterprises (FISME) has reelected the incumbent President Sandeep K. Jain for the year 2025-26 An IIT-Kanpur alumnus, Jain was elected President in 2024-

KNN, Sandeep quent about his current tenure and thanked the CEC colleagues

for reposing in faith in him for next year as well. The brief period of one year has enriched me immensely. It is a matter of great satisfaction that with amazing team at FISME- both present and past office bearers and officials in the secretariat, we have been able to make an inedible mark on long

itious prog

SEBI Extends Deadline for Retail Investors' Algo Trading Norms to Aug 1



MUMBAI: The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) on Tuesday said that it has extended the deadline for implementing new regulations governing retail investors' entry into algorithmic (algo) trading.

The new rules, which were initially set to take effect on April 1, will now come into force on August 1.

This extension follows requests from stock exchanges, who asked for more time to fully implement the new standards in consultation with the Brokers' Industry Standards Forum (ISF)

The SEBI had first introduced these guidelines on February 4, aiming to regulate how retail investors can access and use algo trading.

cargo mark in a single fiscal, a Under the new rules, there first for any Indian port. will be a three-party relationship involving stock exchanges, operator handled 420 MMT

brokers, and algo providers. of cargo in the financial year Brokers will act as the prin-2023-24, surpassing the government's 410 MMT volume. This cipal, while algo providers will function as their agents. Stock milestone was accompanied by exchanges will assign a unique a record 24 per cent revenue identifier to all orders placed through these algos to track anage them

Uber for Teens Aged 13-17 arrives in India, **Company Claims Extra Safety Tools**

NEW DELHI: Ride-hailing major Uber on Wednesday announced the launch of a new service called 'Uber for Teens' in India, which, the company claimed, is designed to offer safe and reliable transportation options for teenagers aged

13 to 17 years in the country. This service has been rolled out across 37 cities in the country, including Delhi NCR, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Hy-

AHMEDABAD: Adani Ports

and Special Economic Zone Ltd

(APSEZ) handled 450 million

metric tonnes (MMT) of cargo

in FY 2024-25, marking a 7 per

cent year-on-year growth, it

was announced on Wednesday.

port, achieved a historic feat

by surpassing the 200 MMT

The country's largest port

Mundra, APSEZ's flagship

Adani Ports Clocks 7 Pc Cargo



The service comes with a set of strict safety protocols, including GPS tracking, realtime ride tracking, and an inapp emergency button. "This is to ensure that both teens and their parents feel secure while

derabad, using the service," claimed the company.

in FY24

A key feature of 'Uber for Teens' is that it allows parents to have oversight on the rides their children book.

Parents can create a Teens account, which lets them request rides on behalf of their teens, track the rides in real-time, and even receive detailed ride summaries after the trip.

tential market. Heavy industries

HAL Reports Steady Revenue Growth amid Challenges in FY 2024-25 Handling Growth at 450 MMT in FY25, Aims at Global Expansion

ARUN KUMAR RAO

Bengaluru

Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) has recorded a revenue of Rs. 30,400 crores (provisional and unaudited) for the financial year ending March 31, 2025, marginally exceeding the previous year's revenue of Rs. 30,381 crores, Press release lion in merchandise exports from HAL said.

Despite facing challenges in the delivery of the Light Combat by 2030 while aiming to cut logistics costs from 14 per cent Aircraft (LCA) and Advanced Karan Adani emphasised Light Helicopter (ALH), the APSEZ's commitment to these company successfully maintained its revenue. The LCA national objectives, vowing to expand global trade connectivity deliveries were affected due to and strengthen infrastructure. the non-availability of engines, Despite challenges such as while the ALH schedule suffered global trade disruptions in the setbacks following an accident Red Sea, the Panama Canal in January 2025, leading to the surge, a 50 per cent jump in crisis, geopolitical conflicts, and grounding of the fleet. However, net profits, and a 24 per cent extreme weather events, APSEZ HAL accelerated deliveries of ther products an



Managing Director of HAL, stated, "This achievement was despite the shortfall in deliveries of LCA and ALH. However, the deliveries of other products and services were accelerated, which helped us to maintain the top line.

st vear. F significantly

of Rs. 94,129 crores after adjusting for current-year liquidation. The company secured new manufacturing contracts worth Rs. 1,02,000 crores and Repair and Overhaul (ROH) contracts amounting to Rs. Strengthened Order Book 17,500 crores. A landmark and Capacity Expansion: Over contract was signed with the upgrade of one IL-78 aircraft. Ministry of Defence (MoD) for

the largest procurement by MoD from HAL to date. To support its growing or-

der book, HAL expanded its manufacturing capacity by adding additional production lines for the LCA and HTT-40 25. Speaking to aircraft and augmenting aero engine capacity at its Koraput Jain was wax elo-

HAL reached several milestones during the fiscal year: Maharatna Status: HAL be-

came the first Defence Public Sector Undertaking (DPSU) to achieve the prestigious 'Maharatna' status.

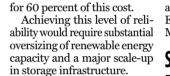
New Contracts: HAL secured contracts for the supply of 12 additional Su-30 MKI aircraft, Mid-Life Upgrade (MLU) of 40 Do-228 aircraft, supply of 240 AL31FP engines for the Su-30 standing issues of MSMEs", he MKI aircraft, and an avionics said. "The Agenda of the year is Swift Execution: The first

facility. an opening order book position

Ember reveals that India's three key heavy industries-steel, cement, and aluminium-represent a 20 gigawatt (GW) solar open access market opportunity despite their current reliance on captive coal generation. The report highlights how

in secondary steelmaking, solar could reduce production costs

an additional 11 GW to the po-



is already cost-competitive for

However, pushing beyond

this threshold requires more

of industrial decarbonisation

and redefine the future of cor-

porate power purchases," said

Neshwin Rodrigues, Senior

Ember's modelling showed

that reaching 80 percent renew-

able energy remains feasible

with only a moderate cost in-

crease-about 1.4 times higher

than plain solar-due to the

need for energy storage and

Increasing to 90 percent re-

newable energy raises costs to

approximately 1.6 times that of

plain solar. Even at this level, the

premium remains reasonable

when weighed against decar-

bonisation commitments and

growing international mandates

The report indicates that

achieving 100 percent renew-

able energy is challenging at

present. Full renewable power

could cost Rs 8 to Rs 11 per unit

in India, about 3.5 times the cost

of solar. Batteries alone account

for clean supply chains.

managing surplus power.

Energy Analyst, Ember.

heavy industries.

investors using their own algos, the new regulations will require them to register their algorithms if they exceed a certain number of orders. However, they will only be permitted to let immediate family members use the algo.

The stock exchanges, which will not be directly regulated by the SEBI in this system, will be responsible for registering the algo providers. Once registered, these providers can be onboarded by brokers, who them," said Karan Adani. will also be accountable for handling any complaints re-

lated to algo trading.

Karan Adani, Managing Director of APSEZ, is steering the company toward global dominance, aiming to become the world's largest port operator by 2030, achieve carbon neutrality by 2025, and attain net-zero

emissions by 2040.

cargo mo

on infrastructure enhancement, cutting-edge technology adoption, operational excellence, and handling a diverse range of cargo efficiently.

Currently managing 27 per cent of India's cargo volumes, "Aspiration is a promise we APSEZ has developed or acquired 14 ports and terminals make to ourselves. Under our Chairman Gautam Adani's since 1998 leadership, we will continue to

emains resilient

to 8 per cent of GDP.

The company also operates aim for the stars - and achieve international ports in Haifa (Israel), Abbot Point (Australia), APSEZ's vision aligns with Colombo (Sri Lanka), and Dar es Salaam (Tanzania), reinforc-India's broader economic goals. The government targets \$1 tril- ing its growing global footprint.

Its growth strategy focuses helping sustain its financial performance

Dr. D K Sunil, Chairman and

strengthened its order book, which now stands at Rs.

1,84,000 crores, compared to **CSIR-NAL and Supreme Solar Partner to**

Revolutionize Solar Water Heating with Eco-Friendly NALSUN-NGTM Coating

ARUN KUMAR RAO Bangalore

In a significant stride towards self-reliance in renewable energy technology, CSIR-National Aerospace Laboratories (CSIR-NAL) has signed a Transfer of Technology (ToT) agreement with M/s. Supreme Solar Pvt. Ltd. for the application of its groundbreaking NALSUN-NGTM coating technology. This eco-friendly, sprayable coating, designed for high-efficiency flat plate solar water heaters, marks a crucial step in reducing India's dependency on imported solar components while advancing

A Breakthrough in Solar Absorber Coatings: NALSUN-NGTM is an advanced graphene oxide-based solar absorber coating that sets a new benchmark in solar thermal applications. Unlike conventional coatings, it uses water as a solvent, eliminating volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and hazardous chemicals. Fully compliant with RoHS and REACH regulations, the technology is a testament to CSIR-NAL's commitment to developing scalable, costeffective, and environmentally sustainable solutions.

Developed by Dr. N. Selvakumar, Principal Scientist, G. Srinivas, STO, and Dr. Harish Barshilia, Chief Scientist at CSIR-NAL, this innovative coating replaces expensive and complex physical vapor deposition processes. It also surpasses sprayable alternatives that often contain flammable and harmful

VOCs, offering a safer, sustainable, and scalable solution for the solar industry Transforming Solar Water

Heating Efficiency: The integration of NALSUN-NGTM coating on aluminum and copper fins in flat plate solar water heaters enhances sunlight-to-heat conversion efficiency up to an impressive 70%. This efficiency translates into substantial energy savings, reducing household electricity consumption by 1,000-2,000 kWh per year and lowering CO2 emissions by 1-2 tons annually. This innovation network through the construc-

action initiatives and aligns with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 7 -Affordable and Clean Energy and SDG 13 - Climate Action). CSIR-NAL Director Dr. Abhay Pashilkar emphasized

the transformative impact of automobile dependency, and this innovation, particularly in contribute to a sustainable remote villages where access to conventional energy sources is limited. By replacing traditional electric or gas-powered water heating systems, these solar heaters offer a cost-effective and sustainable alternative.

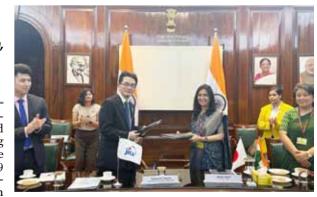
Boosting India's Manufacturing and Clean Energy Goals: This initiative is a crucial step towards reducing India's reliance on imported solar components.

the supply of 156 Light Combat AL31FP engine was handed and I am eagerly looking for-Helicopters (LCH) Prachand, over within just one month of valued at Rs. 62,777 crores— contract signing.

full with amb

ward to contributing to them in the tenure", he added.

JICA extends ODA loan of Rs. 4,649 cr for Delhi Mass Rapid **Transport System Project**



vehicle ownership in Delhi has led to severe traffic congestion and environmental challenges. The expansion of the Delhi Metro network is a critical step toward address-Capital Region (NCR) of Delhi by expanding the Delhi Metro ing these issues by providing a reliable, efficient, and ecotion of additional corridors. friendly mass transit solution. With Delhi facing severe traffic JICA remains committed to supporting India's efforts in congestion, high air pollution developing sustainable urban levels, and increasing travel infrastructure, and this project help improve public transwill contribute significantly to portation accessibility, reduce improving the quality of life for Delhi's residents.'

The project involves the expansion of the Delhi Metro urban environment. The ODA loan agreement was signed network with the construcbetween Manisha Sinha, Adtion of approximately 47 km ditional Secretary, Department of new metro corridors, includof Economic Affairs, Ministry ing extensions of Line 1 and of Finance and TAKEUCHI Line 5, and the development Takuro, Chief Representative of a new Line 11. It includes the construction of 39 new Commenting on the occametro stations, comprising sion, TAKEUCHI Takuro, 9 underground, 1 at-grade, Chief Representative of JICA and 29 elevated stations, along India, stated, "The rapid inwith a new metro depot. The

crease in urbanization and initiative will also introduce advanced electrical, signalling, and communication systems, along with automatic fare collection systems to enhance passenger experience. Additionally, 178 new metro cars will be procured to support increased network capacity. To ensure efficient execution, the project will include consulting services for design review. construction supervision, and technology transfer, strengthening local expertise in metro operations and infrastructure management.

The project is expected to directly benefit approximately 400,000 daily commuters by 2031, while indirectly improving connectivity for over 17 million residents in the Delhi NCR region. By reducing traffic congestion, enhancing accessibility, and lowering vehicular emissions, the project will contribute to Delhi's long-term urban sustainability goals.

Panipat has become a global hub in dealing with 'textile waste'

SATISH HANDA Panipat

Panipat has become a global hub in dealing with textile waste. Prime Minister Narender Modi also recently praised that Panipat's textile industry in Haryana is helping in earning huge foreign exchange and has become a global hub in dealing with 'textile waste', where rugs coming from 90 countries, yarn and cloth being made having annual turnover for amount worth rupees 3,650 thousand crores from waste cloth (rugs). There are about 350-400 textile industries in this textile city in North where yarn and cloth are made by recycling the rugs coming to Panipat from about 90 countries

are stored in 140-150 warehouses in the district producing over 20 lakh kilograms of yarn every day. Information reveals, nearly 270 tons of textile waste arrives in Panipat every day. Apart from this, polyester yarn is also being made by recycling PET bottles, even clothes are being made from this. The former Union Minister of

products. There are eight units in textile town Panipat producing polyester yarn from PET bottles, which also include plastic bottles and broken cans. This is how the box is made from plastic thread. By recycling water, cold drink or any other bottle, white coloured plastic granules and chips are made first. According to information, in

past three years, nearly 70 new Textiles has given the message of environmental protection by units have been set up in Panipat wearing jackets made of polyesto produce yarn from waste. After ter yarn. Entrepreneurs are imthat the grain is sent to different porting waste cloth from foreign units and plastic sheet is made countries including USA and from the thread. The plastic sheet is put into the rag machine and European countries to produce fiber is prepared. Fiber strips cloth and exporting it to the same countries to earn foreign curprepared in automatic spinning mills is sent to the yarn makrency, besides utilizing foreign waste in manufacturing textile ing mill.

sustainability goals.

directly supports global climate



TANVIR KAUR New Delhi

Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has signed a loan agreement amounting to 79,726 million Japanese Yen (approximately INR 4,649 crores) (part of a total project cost of 298,358 million Japanese Yen) for the Delhi Mass Rapid Transport System Project (Phase 4 Additional Corridors) (I). This project aims to enhance urban mobility in the National

demand, this initiative will

of JICA India.

PHARMA **INDUSTRY**

FY25: Deciphering Pharma Exports from India



n 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. Growth in exports for FY25 Crore, the highest one in the 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 due to increase in import of 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 ary 2025 period. pharmaceuticals worth Rs. 40,139 Crore, which went up

in 2020-2021 to Rs. 46,808 worth \$8,953.37 Mn dur-Crore. In 2021-22, the import ing first 11 months of FY25 & Pharmaceuticals' exports tries/Territories) with 5.89 per logicals form a major propor-of pharmaceuticals touched and formed about one-third from India. Top 10 markets cent share, are major Group- tion of pharmaceutical exports

DR. ANIL KUMAR Table 1: Export of Pharmaceuticals from India Export of Pharmaceuticals **Financial Year**

	(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	1,5558.27	5.82	

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

a new level of Rs. 60,060 of total export of drugs and 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 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 Febru-The USA market occupied

the first place with exports

pharmaceuticals from India as India exported drugs and pharmaceuticals worth \$26,724.16 Mn (or \$26.72 Bn) share. Major share of exports during this period. Because to highly regulated markets remain a strength of Indian of this very reason, tariff in the USA remains a concern Pharmaceutical Industry. for Indian pharmaceutical North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA compriscompanies

Other major markets for Drugs & Pharma from India are Netherlands (2.09%), Canada (2.05%), Germany (2.02%), Russian Federation (1.89%), Belgium (1.81%), Nigeria (1.79%), Australia (1.58%), Philippines (1.49%), Kenya (1.45%), United Arab Emirates (1.29%), Mexico (1.10%), and China (1.09%).

Top five countries have 43.95 per cent share of Drugs

abte 2. Exports nominata	Top The commou	ACS April 2021 105 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 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 ing 3 countries) has 36.65 per cent share in total exports of which have more than one per cent share in exports of Drugs Drugs & Pharmaceuticals followed by Europe (38 Coun-& Pharmaceuticals include Madhya Pradesh (5.63%), tries/Territories) with 19.39 per cent share, Africa (48 Karnataka (5.28%), Goa Countries/Territories) with (4.18%), Tamil Nadu (2.89%), 13.15 per cent share, Latin Daman & Diu and Dadra & American Countries (LAC) Nagar Haveli (2.67%), Punjab (1.76%), Rajasthan (1.35%), (43 Countries/Territories) Haryana (1.32%), and Uttawith 6.79 per cent share, and Association of Southeast Asian rakhand (1.24%).

Nations (ASEAN) (10 Coun-Drug formulations and bio-

eb 2025 Table 3: Export of Drugs & Pharmaceuticals - Top Five Destinations

April 2024 – February		
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

facility at Salisbury, Maryland,

USA in April 2024. Jubilant

Cadista continued the sales

and marketing operations for

to manufacture tablets and

capsules for the US market

Closure of plants by Wock-

with the capacity to serve al-

from India. Growth in exports also decided to shut down the of AYUSH and Herbal prod- manufacturing operations of ucts remains a positive sign. In its solid dosage formulation 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 US market. This facility used U.S. market, which occupies top slot for India's export of pharmaceuticals, was cited as major reason in April 2024. most 1.5 billion doses.

Closure of certain pharma hardt and Jubilant Cadista plants in the USA was also positive for exports from Inare just two examples to point dia. In February 2023, Wockout the potential shift towards hardt had shut down its manu- exports from India rather than facturing facility at Morton manufacturing in the USA. Akorn Pharma became bank-Grove, Illinois in the USA. Wockhardt did it as a part of rupt and closed all US sites. its business restructuring in The company also laid off entire workforce. These examples the USA, and opted for thirdparty contract manufacturalso showed the impact on ing to save about \$12 million supply of pharma products in annually. In-house to Thirdthe US market due to closures party contract manufacturing of manufacturing plants. 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 Pharmaan increase of just little more ceuticals Inc., USA, the subthan \$1 Bn over FY24 exports. sidiary of Jubilant Pharmova Signals of decline in exports

were visible for February and 025 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 brandgenerics from India ultied mately help the US consumers/patients to reduce their healthcare costs. Words of **Commerce Minister Pivush** Goval 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 Fig. 1: An example of GCC services: End-to-end support to create a launch scellence Fig. 1: An example of GCC services: End-to-end support to create a launch scellence Fig. 1: An example of GCC services: End-to-end support to create a launch scellence Fig. 1: An example of GCC services: End-to-end support to create a launch scellence Fig. 1: An example of GCC services: End-to-end support to create a launch scellence Fig. 1: An example of GCC services: End-to-end support to create a launch scellence Fig. 1: An example of GCC services: End-to-end support to create a launch scellence Fig. 1: An example of GCC services: End-to-end support to create a launch scellence Fig. 1: An example of GCC services: End-to-end support to create a launch scellence Fig. 1: An example of GCC services: End-to-end support to create a launch scellence Fig. 1: An example of GCC services: End-to-end support to create a launch scellence Fig. 1: An example of GCC services: End-to-end support to create a launch scellence Fig. 1: An example of GCC services: End-to-end support to create a launch scellence Fig. 1: An example of GCC services: End-to-end support to create a launch scellence Fig. 1: An example of GCC services: End-to-end support to create a launch scellence Fig. 1: An example of GCC services: End-to-end support to create a launch scellence Fig. 1: An example of GCC services: End-to-end support to create a launch scellence Fig. 1: An example of GCC services: End-to-end support to create a launch scellence Fig. 1: An example of GCC services: End-to-end support to create a launch scellence Fig. 1: An example of GCC services: End-to-end support to create a launch scellence Fig. 1: An example of GCC services: End-to-end support to create a launch scellence Fig. 1: An example of GCC services: End-to-end support to create a launch scellence Fig. 1: An example of GCC services: End-to-end support to create a launch scellence Fig. 1

E P E

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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 experts who understand the critical aspects of decision-making during drug development and go-to-market (GTM) strategy planning. 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, pharmacovigilance, data analytics, clinical research, commercialization (brand planning, marketing, and sales), 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. The big pharma companies initially tested the water in collaboration with various India-based KPOs such as WNS, EvalueServe, ZS, Cognizant, etc. In the early 2000s, the less critical and timeconsuming business activities were shifted to India. With the knowledge transfer, more and more complex services were also moved to India, such as commercial and medical integrated insights, competitive readiness leads, commercial analytics, forecasting, and market access solutions. 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, Sandoz, 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

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

Figure 2: Commercial Thought Process behind the pharmaceutical brand

uilding (ACE² 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 ble business environ-

grams such as MBA (Pharm.) at the Department of Pharmaceutical Management, NIPER Mohali, collaboration of pharma institutions with pharma GCCs and vendors/partners such as AdametNext, IQVIA, etc. can help in aligning curriculum in line with the changing demands inflows, strengthening India's of pharma industry including good number of Telemedicine startups economic resilience and foster- Pharma GCCs. New-age institutes must include the novel

March 2025 figures on

export of pharmaceutical

products are not yet available

but exports for full FY25 are

likely to cross \$29.0 Bn with

ing 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 could not find traction beyond Covid and si equently closed operations



by the CDAC developed e-Sanjeevani Telemed system. This refers to the government initiative which provide free telemedicine services to patients in PHCs

All these 4 models have their own strengths and weaknesses. The purely app-based e-consultation systems are easy to develop and manage but are often deemed insufficient due to lack of timely availability of medicines and lab tests which are needed immediately after an e-consultation. It is also not understood clearly how many of the rural patients are able to use such systems on their own. Since Covid days, many hospitals also brought out their mobile based video e-consultation apps increasing competition and decreasing margins for Telemedicine companies. As a result, most such startups have complemented their offerings with multiple services like health insurance, lab test bookings and online medicine ordering. A company owned and company operated e-Clinic is a powerful method to provide specialist access through Telemedicine and allied services in villages. It is an extensible model where many additional services can be added like medicines, disease screening programs, pathology setups, referrals to hospitals and even occasional presence of qualified doctors. This model also offers to capture interesting patient data which, after proper anonymization, can help in both drug and disease research. However, it is quite costly to maintain each such facility for a single village. Hiring and retaining manpower, managing the facility, and avoiding pilferages pose monthly liabilities. Given that rural regions have smaller population concentrations and relatively lower spending capacity, the pricing for offered services in the e-Clinic have to be quite aggressive putting strain on sustainability. Such a new e-Clinic would also face intense competition from local alternatives adding to the difficulties. More awareness campaigns must be run in the short to medium term to generate local trust. This further puts more strain on economics. Finding new locations where new e-Clinics can be set up, needs multiple onfield staff members adding to costs of running the business. Franchisee operated e-Clinics where a local healthcare professional with an entrepreneurial mindset operates the e-Clinic is also a powerful and nimble approach. It is well documented that on an average, each India village has 3-4 healthcare professionals operating their own small pharmacy or a clinic. Thus, it is not difficult to find local collaborators. Having their skin in

the game, by way of a small invest-

ment, ensures general seriousness

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 e followed accurately. P 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-Sanjeevani 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 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-Sanjeevani 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 speciality 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 elemedicine received a lot of attention dur-



are integral parts of Scientific US and India can work like 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 serto India.

vice 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 highquality 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 blockbuster drug patient cliff. Strong IT and digital in-

frastructure have brought the global workforce close to each other, and now people in the

colleagues without many communication challenges. The acceptance of remote work has

enabled work-from-anywhere concepts across the globe. The Government of India has proactively promoted foreign investment through initiatives like Make in India, Start-up India, and production-linked incentives (PLI). Setting up Special Economic Zones (SEZs) helped provide a conducive environment for pharma GCCs.

Indian pharma professionals have traveled a long way in the last 20-25 years, thereby gaining recognition for their work and potential. Many Indian professionals have also successfully shifted to the US and EU to take bigger responsibilities in the pharma value chain. The confidence in the Indian workforce has led to the shift of more business-critical roles

The rapid expansion of pharma GCCs in India has significantly impacted the economy in multiple ways, be it job creation, strengthening of the Innovation Ecosystem, FDI, or boosting ancillary industries. Along with conventional job options, offshore GCCs (captive/vendors) have emerged as major high-value job-creating centers.

Due to their global exposure and best employee-friendly practices, these centers have emerged as preferred employers in recent vears.

The majority of professionals in the global GCC support global innovative drug development. It equipped them with the essential skills required for converting new launch performance or a new chemical entity into a pharmaceutical drug/brand. Unfortunately, these skills are not much appreciated by the local pharmaceutical industry, which revolves around low-cost

ment. 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-

drug development and commercialization process in their syllabus to make their students industry-ready. A pertinent example in this regard is MBA students, while working with AdametNext on live projects, develop an understanding of the **Commercial Thought Process** (Refer to Figure 3) behind the pharmaceutical brand building.

Encouraging Multidisciplinary Learning, including new-age data analytics, use of new-age tools such as Chat-GPT, and understanding of various key stakeholders in the drug development and commercialization process can ensure 360-degree readiness of Indian talent for these global GCC opportunities. Along with technical expertise, communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills are essential for roles in global pharma GCCs. Introducing leadership and business communication training at the academic level will help graduates integrate seamlessly into the industry.

To conclude, India's rise as a premier destination for pharma GCCs is a testament to its robust talent pool, cost advantages, and technological capabilities. As the global pharmaceutical industry continues to evolve, India has the potential to emerge as a powerhouse for research, innovation, brand building, and commercialization of pharmaceutical brands. However, realizing this potential requires a concerted effort from policymakers, industry leaders, and educational institutions to foster a conducive environment for growth. By implementing strategic reforms and investing in future-ready talent, India can not only strengthen its position as a global pharma GCC leader but also drive long-term economic and healthcare advancements on a global scale.

Virendra Kumar- CEO, AdametNext (Hyderabad)

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, Companyoperated Brick-and-mortar based e-Clinics, Franchisee-operated Brickand-mortar based e-Clinics, and PHCs upgraded by the CDAC developed e-Sanjeevani 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

Siddharth Angrish-Founder and CEO, Jiyyo Innovations

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AGRICULTURE

Indian Agriculture Exports to US May attract higher Punjab Govt fully prepared duties due to 32.4 per cent Trade Imbalance: GTRI for Wheat Procurement Board, and the Punjab DGP

NEW DELHI: A recent analysis by Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) highlights existing tariff differentials, noting that Indian farm exports to the US currently face a 5.3 per cent tariff, whereas US farm exports to India encounter a much higher 37.7 per cent, creating a 32.4 per cent gap.

Other sectors face similar imbalances, with pharmaceuticals facing an additional tariff of 10.9 per cent, diamonds and jewellery 13.3 per cent, and electronics 7.2 per cent.

"If the US implements a reciprocal tariff policy on India on April 2, India's exports of gems and jewellery-particularly studded gold jewellery and cut and polished diamonds-will be largely impacted," stated Kirit Bhansali, Chairman, Gems and Jewellery Export Promotion

AIC Anand Foundation Sanctions Rs 1.12 Crore for Agri-Startups to **Boost Innovation in** Agriculture



NEW DELHI: Anand Agricultural University (AAU), through its Section 8 company AIC Anand Foundation, has sanctioned Rs 1.12 crore to ten agri-startups to drive innovation in the agricultural sector

AAU has successfully incubated over 201 agri-startups, significantly contributing to Gujarat's agricultural ecosystem.

AIC Anand Foundation operates the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) agribusiness incubator for Gujarat under the Union agriculture ministry's Innovation & Agri-Entrepreneurship Programme.

During a recent startup seed fund awarding ceremony at AAU, successful startups from AAU's incubation program were felicitated.

As part of this initiative, ten AAU-incubated startups were selected for funding, with a total sanctioned amount of Rs 1.12 crore. The first installment of Rs 50,80 lakh was disbursed



gems and jewellery export mar-Council (GJEPC). He added that GJEPC is already engaged ket, with the advantage of zeroin discussions with the governtariff access to the US market. ment to reach a mutually agree-According to the same official, able solution that protects Inapproximately 44 per cent of India's gem and jewellery exports. dia's exports to the US by value A government official workwould face an additional tariff ing on an impact assessment reof up to 2 per cent, while only port noted that Israel represents 7-8 per cent of exports would India's biggest competitor in the be subject to additional tariffs

exceeding 20 per cent. In the electronics sector, smartphone exports may face

significant challenges. "If the reciprocal tariffs are imposed by the US, exports of smartphones from India will attract a tariff of 15 per cent. This could impede the growing trajectory of smartphone exports from India as currently the tariffs attracted stand at 0 per cent," according to a PwC report. Within the farm and processed food sector, fish, meat, and processed seafood industries are expected to be hardest hit, with USD 2.58 billion in exports facing a 27.83 per cent tariff differential, according to GTRI data.

Shrimp exports, a major revenue generator, would become significantly less competitive in the US market.

police repression and are com-

mitted to nationwide farmer

agitations against NPFAM,

MSP@C2+50%, loan waivers

necessary to solve the agrarian

crisis. In a statement shared

with our representative, the

SKM has declared that by

building a broad unity of Kisan-

Mazdoor Sangathan and Jan

Sangathan and learning from

riences of the

move

Minister Jitendra Singh Launches India's First Nationwide e-Tractor Roadshow to Showcase Sustainable Farming Tech

JAMMU: Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology Dr. Jitendra Singh flagged off a nationwide roadshow featuring the CSIR-developed e-Tractor from Jammu.

The initiative marks a significant advancement in India's pursuit of sustainable and technology-driven agricultural practices, with the roadshow set to traverse the entire country before concluding in Kanyakumari. The e-Tractor, which was initially unveiled in Delhi, will be showcased across various regions to raise awareness about eco-friendly and cost-effective

farming solutions. During the ceremony, the Minister also inaugurated an E-Tiller developed by CSIR-Central Mechanical Engineering Research Institute (CMERI), Durgapur.

Addressing attendees at the **Rajasthan SKM horns up in Support of Punjab Farmers**

JAG MOHAN THAKEN Rajasthan

Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) Rajasthan has come up in support of Punjab farmers and warned that the Bhagwant Mann led Punjab State Gov- upon all the farmers of the ernment and Modi led BJP-RSS Government at the Centre of Rajasthan to mobilize against who want to crush the farmers the police repression. protest are bound to be defeated



flag-off ceremony, Dr. Singh The Minister highlighted that emphasised the transformative the e-Tractor aligns with the potential of agricultural innovagovernment's broader objectives of promoting green energy and tion, stating, "This e-Tractor is not just an advanced technoself-reliance in agriculture. He logical intervention but a step noted that while conventional towards ensuring affordable and farming practices depend on environment-friendly farming costly fossil fuels, the electric tractor presents a viable alternasolutions. It reflects our comtive that substantially reduces mitment to integrating innovation with agriculture, benefiting both carbon emissions and opboth farmers and agri-startups." erating expenses.

Govt to provide all Facilities to Farmers in Mandis

CHANDIGARH: The Punjab government is fully prepared for the wheat procurement wef April 1. Punjab's Food, Civil Supplies, and Consumer Affairs Minister Lal Chand Kataruchakk stated that all arrangements in the mandis have been completed, and now the government is just waiting for the arrival of wheat in mandis.

Kataruchakk said the Punjab government has secured a cash credit limit (CCL) of ₹28, 000 crore for wheat procurement. Therefore, farmers will face no difficulties in receiving payments for their crops. He added that adequate ar-

rangements for gunny bags have been made, and these have been delivered in sufficient quantities to all procurement centers. A have been issued to the Power procurement process, "he said.

New Report Calls for Inclusive Reforms in Agriculture Sector

total of 1,864 mandis and pro-

curement centers have been

equipped with all necessary

arrangements to ensure that

farmers face no inconvenience.

Facilities such as water and

medical treatment have been

ensured in the mandis, along

with several other essential ame-

nities.Additionally, around 700

temporary mandis have been

prepared to be used if needed.

Strict instructions have been is-

sued to all departments involved in the procurement process.

Kataruchakk emphasized that

farmers are the backbone of

Punjab, and the state's econo-

my and rural development are

based on agriculture. Hence, the

Punjab government is working

with full dedication to ensure

To ensure uninterrupted

power supply, instructions

the prosperity of farmers.

NEW DELHI: A new report, Women in Agribusiness Opportunities and Challenges,' released in March, sheds light on the gender disparity in India's agricultural sector.

The study, launched by Godrej Agrovet Ltd in collaboration with the Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad (IIMA) and Godrej DEI Lab, highlights that while women constitute 64.4 per cent of India's agricultural workforce, only 6-10 per cent hold positions in top agri and agri-related

companies. Speaking at the second Women in Agriculture Summit, Godrej Agrovet Managing Director Balram Singh Yadav emphasised the importance of empowering women in agribusiness through education.

workplace inclusivity, and leadership development. "Last year, we pledged to support 100,000 women across the agri value chain, and ing, and inclusive workplace I'm proud to share that we've reforms. elv impacted 20.000

In a sign



The report also reveals a stark Ltd, and Balram Singh Yadav contrast: although women acannounced the launch of the count for 30-40 per cent of to-Godrej Agrovet Women in Agtal enrolment in agricultural studies, very few transition into five students pursuing agricul-

IIMA Faculty Member Vidya Vemireddy highlighted this issue, calling it a paradox where women's presence in education does not translate into workforce participation.

from 8 per cent to 12 per cent To address this gap, the rein FY25, with a target of 32 per cent by FY28. port recommends measures such as equitable resource access, gender-responsive trainpanel discussions on overcoming barriers for women in agriculture and advancing

With 2% Increase, Wheat **Production** to Reach Record 115 Mn Tons

has been tasked with maintaining law and order. All Deputy Commissioners have also been notified to ensure that farmers do not face any issues during the Minister Kataruchakk re-

procurement process.

ferred to the directives of Chief

Minister Bhagwant Mann, stat-

ing that the Chief Minister has

clearly ordered that farmers

should receive the full price for

their crops, as per the MSP,

within 24 hours. Kataruchakk

mentioned that he has been

visiting various mandis as a

minister and holding meetings

with relevant officials to review

arrangements. This year, the

government will ensure that

farmers face no difficulties at all.

Kataruchakk assured that the

Chief Minister's orders will be

strictly followed and that the

wheat procurement process will

be made seamless and convenient

for farmers. He warned that any

department or official found neg-

ligent during the procurement

process would face strict action

from the government. Kata-

ruchakk reiterated that the Aam

Aadmi Party is fully committed

to the Puniab's farmers. "Work-

ing under the guidance of AAP

supremo Arvind Kejriwal and

Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann,

we will ensure that farmers face

no challenges during this year's

NEW DELHI: India's wheat production is expected to reach a record 115.3 million tonnes (MT) during the 2024-25 crop year (July-June), reflecting a 2 percent increase over the previous year, according to the second advance estimate of major crops released by the agriculture ministry in March 2025.

The government's projection addresses concerns about the potential impact of abovenormal temperatures on rabi crop yields, particularly wheat, hana, and mustard.

Wheat inflation stood at 8.8 percent in January 2025 on a vear-over-year basis, maintaining single-digit levels since August 2023.

The wheat processing industry had recently estimated the current year's wheat output at 110 MT, compared to 105-106 MT in the previous year, indicating that the government's projection exceeds industry expectations.

Officials noted that wheat harvesting has already commenced in several states, including Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Bihar.

Market arrivals in key growng states such as Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh are expected to begin by the end of the current month.

The agriculture ministry clarified that the rabi crop production estimates are based on average yields and remain subject to adjustment in subsequent estimates upon receipt of more accurate yield data

from crop cutting experiments. This season's wheat sowing has expanded to 32 million hectares (Mha), surpassing last year's 31.56 Mha and exceeding the average sown area of the past five years.

The food ministry has projected wheat procurement by overnment agencies at 31 MT for the 2025-26 rabi marketing season (April-June), representing a 26 percent increase over the actual purchase of 26.6 MT in the 2024-25 marketing season.

Currently, the Food Corporation of India (FCI) maintains a wheat stock of 13.55 MT. which exceeds April 1.



at the event to support their eventually. growth and innovation.

ndia's

that farmers will never sur- ments, we will strengthen the The State SKM has called render to corporate forces and issue-based unity.

country including the farmers

women in just one year," he stated.

of Godrej Consumer Products

ship roles, reinforcing the Godrej, Executive Chairperson need for a more inclusive and requirement of 7.46 MT for equitable agricultural sector.

riculture Scholarship to support

Godrej Agrovet's HR Head,

Mallika Mutreja, shared the

company's commitment to

increasing female representa-

tion, having already improved

The summit also featured

tural studies.

Need for Efficacy of Animal Vaccines for Protecting Livestock for Protecting the Farmers



stating her being a global dent for importing milk powder to imports from abroad. The inability of the country's of offering assistance to the of the cattle and further the animals suffer losses, esti-

mated at Rs. 50,000 crores. The quality of the cattle needs to be improved as well as an immediate need diseases. The government's ineffectiveness in introducing a vaccination for the cattle has weakened the rural economy past five years, it is estimated a huge loss or the wastage of nearly Rs. one lakh crore earmarked by the government. Being committed to the welfare of the cattle, this author is keen that the government should undertake thorough falo, sheep, goats, pigs). The investigation regarding the squandering of the government funds, the usage of sub- milk yield. The National administration, and a systemic gramme (NADCP), launched reluctance to acknowledge the extent of the problem.

financial haemorrhage is a direct consequence of "our legacy to hide the disease, due to substandard vaccines, livestock inefficient vaccination, illsector, the education of livestock farmbackbone of its ers and above all the political rural economy, which plays will." The situation has further a key-role in reinforcing the worsened for the farmers due country's agriculture by stress- to the apathy of the governing upon the animal vaccines. ment towards the challenges In spite of the claim of India's the farmers and cattle suffer livestock population and her due to the systems failures. The roots of this crisis are leader in milk production; multifaceted, spanning the however, she is being depen- entire vaccine value chain from production to field ap-

plication. Environmental changes and much-trumpeted rhetoric the emergence of new viral variants have further exacfarmers suffering the quality erbated the situation, overwhelming an already strained veterinary infrastructure. Farmers, often unaware of

the intricate web of internal conflicts and systemic failures, bear the brunt of these shortfor preventing them from comings. This article delves into the core issues plaguing India's animal vaccination landscape, examining expert opinions, policy gaps, and the of the farmers. During the urgent need for comprehensive reforms.

Major Livestock and Pet Diseases:

Foot-and-Mouth Disease (HS): (FMD) is a highly contagious viral disease affecting clovenhoofed animals (cattle, bufsymptoms include fever, blisand sudden death. Its vacters, lameness, and reduced cine, Alum-precipitated or oil-adjuvanted bacterin (2-5 standard vaccines, inefficient Animal Disease Control Pro- ml, subcutaneous, annual) cost Rs.5-10 per dose. It is in 2019, allocates Rs. 13,343 being made available free of crores to vaccinate 53 crore cost at the government hospi-As highlighted by a 2019 animals by 2025, aiming for tals under the scheme of the



polyvalent inactivated vaccine Control (LH&DC) schemes. is administered biannually According to the 2014 esti-(2-4 ml for cattle/buffalo, 1-2 mates, if not controlled, it would lead to the cumulative ml for sheep/goats. Its cost is approximately Rs. 20-30 per losses to the tune of Rs. 5,255 dose, but is also available at crores due to high mortality of the government-run centre cattle affected by the disease. without any charges

Brucellosis According to studies con-

ducted in 2016, if the pro-A zoonotic bacterial disease gramme fails the estimated (Brucella abortus/melitensis) annual loss could be 20,000 causing abortions and infertility in cattle, buffalo, sheep, crores. However, a network of facilities is needed to reach and goats. It costs Rs. 10-15 each animal, while maintainper dose. With an outlay of ing a cold chain for its storage Rs. 13,343 crore budget, it at a low temperature 2-8 detargets bovine females. grees C. It should be repeated Peste des Petits Ruminants

(PPR)It is a viral disease (Morbil-

Hemorrhagic Septicemia livirus) affecting sheep and goats, with fever, diarrhoea, It is a bacterial disease (Pasand may cause up to 90% teurella multocida) affecting mortality. It needs a vaccine, cattle and buffalo, causing live attenuated (Sungri/96 high fever, throat swelling, strain, 1 ml, subcutaneous, lifelong immunity). It costs

every six months by injecting

a booster dose

Rs. 2-5 per dose, Classical Swine Fever (CSF): It is a viral disease (Pestivirus) in pigs, causing fever, haemorrhages, and high mortality. Its vaccine, live attenuated C-strain (1 ml, intramus-ResearchGate study, this FMD eradication by 2030. The Livestock Health & Disease cular, annual boosters) costs

Rs. 2 per dose.

The Viruses Affect Pets Canine Parvovirus (CPV):

A viral disease in dogs causing severe vomiting, diarrhoea, and dehydration, often fatal in puppies. The vaccine cost: Rs. 300-500 per dose.

RABIES: A fatal zoonotic viral disease affecting dogs, cats, and humans, causing neurological symptoms. The vaccine costs Rs. 100-200 (private); free via government anti-rabies campaigns. The government budget is estimated between Rs. 100-200 crore annually for rabies control (human and animal

combined). **Canine Distemper:**

A viral disease in dogs causing respiratory, gastrointestinal, and neurological issues. The vaccine costs Rs. 300-500 per dose.

Feline Panleukopenia:

A viral disease in cats causing fever, vomiting, and low white blood cell counts. The vaccine costs Rs. 400-600 per dose.

A Careless Approach

There is a growing awareness among farmers and pet lovers regarding the inability of the government to save the cattle and pets. Dr. R.S. Chauhan, a former Director of the Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI) and WHO Advisor, paints a grim picture, deeming the national program "worthless" due to pervasive issues in procurement, trans-

portation, and manufacturing of vaccines. He even observed that "distilled water might be as effective," underscores the

severity of the problem. This sentiment is echoed by the 2021 Parliamentary Committee, which identified vaccine quality as a "big issue."

Dr. Chandra Shekhar Sahukar, former Joint Commissioner of Animal Husbandry and Deputy Advisor at NITI

Aayog (an apology to the Planning Commission replaced by the PM Narendra Modi calling it the National Institution of Transforming India or NITI), further elucidates the systemic failures, highlighting inadequate regulatory oversight, substandard manufacturing practices, cold chain failures, and a cost-driven procurement system. These observations of the advisor to the NITI Aayog could not influence the government's policy. It appeared to be just an observation made by an emasculated outfit.

The economic impact of ineffective vaccination programs is staggering. As detailed in the 2019 ResearchGate study, preventable diseases like Hemorrhagic Septicemia (HS), Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD), Brucellosis, Peste des Petits Ruminants (PPR), and Classical Swine Fever (CSF) result in annual losses of approximately Rs. 50,000 crores. This financial burden falls squarely on farmers, who are often ill-equipped to cope with the devastating consequences of disease outbreaks.

Author is an eminent scientist known for his contribution towards the key role of livestock in the country's agricultural sector



A Bold Initiative Finally Materialises under Cooperative Umbrella.

A.N. Tiwari, a well-known journalist known for his insight in the country's cooperative movement, interviews Ram Iqbal Singh, founder and Working Chairman of the National Federation of Farmers' Procurement, Processing and Retailing Cooperatives of India (NACOF) that how this organization has triggered off the transformation of the rural economy. Excerpts:

Is it not a little intriguing that you seldom come before the media platforms to talk about your organization's successes and its future plans?

SINĜH: Let us skip this issue for a while, the job of seeking presence in the media should be left to the active politicians. Our agenda transcends political fault lines; for the past more than decade, we have been trying to establish and provide the adequate linkages between the producers and the markets, more specifically the small and medium farmers. the work forces from the remote areas to the industrial hubs; thus, making the cottage industries unsus- came necessary.

Converting Agriculture in Gold tainable? SINGH: It cannot be denied that each geography has its own challenges and issues, but being affiliated to the cooperative movement since 1975, almost for halfa-century, we have come to realize that each producer needs a market, whether it is an agriculture produce or anything manufactured by

machine. The industries have assured access to technology, capital and the market. On the other hand, we farmers have been exposed to the apathy of the colonial power. The transformation really began during the post sixties, when the country's leadership continued to be humiliated for begging for food grains from the USA and Australia, and it decided to augment the process of the green revolution. Is it not true that the impact of the green revolution did not cover the millions of farmers across the country?

SINGH: With the key issue to tackle the issue of hunger more or less tackled for a while, but the quality of food,

especially the nourishing food for the lactating mothers, growing-up children and the rest of the younger generations could not be accessed only by focusing on the food grain production. The mechanization of agriculture also adversely affected the keyrole of the cattle in the farming sector. In other words, How do your organization the country has to undertake really prevent exodus of a massive policy correction in the context of farming. For this, the concept of the cooperatives in catering the local agriculture and even needs of this vital sector be-

GANGSTERS

On the Prowl: The Gangs, Criminal Syndicates of Punjab

FW Special

n Sunday, March 23, 2025, the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) transferred notorious gangster and drug trafficker, Jagdeep Singh (also known as Jaggu Bhagwanpuria), from the high-security Bathinda prison to the Central Jail in Silchar, Assam. This move is part of a larger crackdown on criminal syndicates operating from within prisons. Bhagwanpuria is a prime accused in the murder of Punjabi singer-rapper Sidhu Moosewala on May 29,

2022.The NCB stated that his "established linkages with international operatives" in Canada, the United States, and Pakistan made this relocation necessary to disrupt his ongoing criminal activities. He has been detained under the Prevention of Illicit Traffic in Narcotic **Drugs and Psychotropic** Substances Act (PITNDPS), a measure that prevents individuals involved in drug trafficking from engaging in such activities.

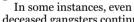
A Career Steeped in Crime

Jaggu Bhagwanpuria, a native of Gurdaspur district, has an extensive criminal record. He has over 128



Vikramiit Vicky Middukhera

FIRs registered against him across multiple states and is implicated in several high-profile cases, including extortion, arms smuggling, and narcotics trafficking. Bhagwanpuria is widely considered one of Punjab's most dangerous gangsters, ranking just behind Lawrence Bishnoi in terms of notoriety. His criminal network has been responsible for facilitating the smuggling of heroin, opium, psychotropic substances.



of this dangerous conver-

gence.

gangs and Khalistani Activ-

ists. The fusion of organized

crime with militant activities

has led to a rise in violence

and terror-related incidents.

Punjab Police Intelligence

hali in May 2024, allegedly

masterminded by gangster

Lakhbir Landa under the

instructions of a terrorist in Pakistan, is a prime example

The RPG attack on the

Headquarters in Mo-



meet Singh Chauhan, Assistant Inspector General of Police at the Anti-Gangster Task Force (AGTF

becoming a breeding ground nections between the music industry and these criminal for criminal gangs, many of which are headed by youths networks are so deep that with no clear direction or gang members are now discipline. Gurmeet Singh actively involved in manag-Chauhan, Assistant Inspecing the careers of aspiring singers and actors. tor General of Police at the Anti-Gangster Task Force Moreover, the ongo-(AGTF), notes that the cur-

ing feud among gangs has resulted in violent incidents, including the murder of Sandeep Singh Sandhu (Sandeep Nagal Ambian) a famous kabaddi player, in March 2022. The police have linked this murder to gang rivalries, with one of the suspects identified as a gangster based abroad.

gangster recruitment, rather The Growing Threat of Cross-Border Smuggling

Police sources reveal that

many Punjab-based gangs

smuggling, including the

illegal transportation of

are involved in cross-border

weapons and narcotics. The

rise of these international

criminal underworld more

powerful and dangerous.

ment of foreign nationals,

particularly from countries

like Canada and Malaysia,

is indicative of the growing

global reach of these crimi-

This detailed account

sheds light on the notori-

ous gang wars in Punjab,

organizations, each led

by influential and feared

deep roots in extortion,

murder, robbery, and other

forms of violent crime, with

significant connections both

Here's a brief overview of

within India and interna-

the key gangs and figures

1. The Lawrence Bishnoi

Bishnoi, a 30-year-old

gangster from Punjab,

Delhi's Tihar Jail. His

gang operates across

of criminal activities,

tion, carjacking, and

and Rajasthan.

• Known for a variety

currently imprisoned in

Punjab, Harvana, Delhi,

including murder, extor-

tionally.

Gang:

mentioned:

nal syndicates

Moreover, the involve-

links has made Punjab's

The "Deadly Cocktail" of Crime and Terrorism

rent generation of Punjabi

youth are lured by the allure

of fast money, luxury life-

violence.

styles, and a glorification of

Chauhan highlights the

troubling trend in student

politics, where university

and college campuses are

than places of political and

becoming hotspots for

academic growth.

An alarming aspect of the current gang situation in Punjab is the growing synergy between criminal



Davinder Bambiha

3. The Vicky Gounder Gang:



Vicky Gounde

• Originally led by Vicky Gounder, who was killed in 2018, this gang is now managed by close aides Gurpreet Singh Sekhon and Neta Deol.

• The gang is linked to a range of crimes, including the murder of gangster-turned-politician Jaswinder Singh Rocky. 4. The Jaipal Singh Bhullar Gang:



- Led by Jaipal Singh Bhullar, who was killed involving multiple criminal in an encounter in 2021. the gang was involved in highway robberies, extorgangsters. These gangs have tion, and other violent crimes.
 - Bhullar's death led to further criminal activities involving his associates, particularly Gurjant Singh, based in Australia.

5. The Jaggu Bhagwanpuria Gang:





Key Issues and Impacts:

• Inter-gang Rivalries: There have been multiple shootouts and killings due to turf wars, with famous incidents like the murders of prominent individuals such as Gurlal Brar, Vikramjit Singh, and Sidhu Moose Wala. • Extortion and Threats: Several Punjabi singers and actors have been threatened and extorted by these gangs, leading to significant fear within the entertainment industry.

• International Connections: Many gang leaders operate from abroad (Canada, Armenia, Australia) and have established international criminal networks. These gangs, despite their rivalries, often collaborate or turn a blind eye to each other's operations. The situation is further complicated by political ties, terrorism, and links with international drug cartels, making it a significant law enforcement challenge for the region.

A comprehensive look into the lives of families connected to gangsters in Punjab and the broader impact of gang culture in the region provides a serious picture. The experiences shared by family members reflect the complex, often tragic, realities of living with the consequences of criminal activity, while experts and officials highlight the social, political, and technological factors that contribute to the rise of gangsters and youth



Arsh Dalla Gang



Gurmeet Singh Chauhan, IPS AIG, AGTF lifestyle. Cases like Jimmy

Expert Views: Sociologists Rajesh Gill and Prof. Kuldip Singh emphasize the role of a violent, corrupt society in fostering gang culture. The connection between gangs and politics is particularly troubling, as it leads to the normalization of criminal behavior among youth. These experts stress the importance of early intervention to prevent more young people from being drawn into this dangerous lifestyle.

the formation of gangs that later evolved into organized criminal enterprises, especially in the realm of extortion and contract killing.

What Officials Say

Assistant Inspector General of Police of Anti Gangster Task Force (AGTF) of Punjab Police Gurmeet Singh Chauhan says that the student politics especially in universities and colleges which should be producing leaders for future roles in political parties has become more of a breeding ground for gangsters as the students indulge in personal ego clashes with rivals and try to browbeat each other with the use of guns and muscle power eventually pushing them into the world of crime rather than having professional careers in academics, public service or even sports. These gangsters flaunt their flamboyant lifestyle on social media which attracts and encourages youth from relatively poorer backgrounds to emulate and make them as their role models not realising that the money that these so called role models are flashing around is easy money earned through corruption, drugs and through mining mafias.

"The present culture in which the Punjabi youth are growing up is creating a new breed of directionless young men who lack discipline who have the lust for earning fast money in order to have a flamboyant lifestyle, luxury cars, branded clothes, late night parties with drugs and alcohol. This culture has become a challenge for modern day policing and that is why AGTF was created in Punjab. The state police has faced many such challenges in the past and is capable of handling this challenge," he says. Chauhan says that now the people of Punjab have come out in the open to change this.

Conclusion : A State in Crisis

The gang wars in Punjab are at an all-time high, and the state's law enforcement is struggling to contain the violence. With gang members having connections ooth domestically and in

and illege The NCB confirmed that Bhagwanpuria's influence extends beyond Indian borders, with links to criminal groups in Canada, the US. and Pakistan. His detention and relocation to Assam are part of a broader effort to dismantle the ecosystem that supports his criminal activities.

The Murder of Sidhu Moosewala

The killing of Sidhu Moosewala has remained one of the most shocking events in Punjab's recent history.



Murder of Punjabi singer-rapper Sidhu Moosewal

On May 29, 2022, the young star was shot dead by eight assailants who intercepted his vehicle in Mansa district. According to police reports, the attackers fired 30 rounds, ensuring that Moosewala had no escape. This tragic murder is believed to have been orchestrated by Bhagwanpuria and Lawrence Bishnoi, although their relationship later soured

Moosewala's death was preceded by the murder of Vikramjit "Vicky" Middukhera, a student leader who had entered politics. Police suspect that both killings are linked to gang rivalries, with some suggesting that Moosewala's murder was an act of revenge for the death of Middukhera.

A New Breed of Criminals

Punjab is increasingly

to wield influence. The second-in-command members of these gangs are running operations from jails or Lawrence Bishnoi Gang abroad, further complicating

the law enforcement's efforts to contain the situation.

The Power Play of Punjab's Gangs

There are currently eight main gangs operating in Punjab, each with a vast network of associates. These gangs have connections to other states, including Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Delhi, making their reach in-



ter-state. Some of these gangs have even infiltrated the music industry, extorting protection money from singers and actors, who are also engaged in a battle for dominance within the Punjabi music scene. Notable gangsters like

Davinder Bambiha, Vicky Gounder, Prema Lahoria, and Jaipal Singh Bhullar have been killed in encounters with the police, but their successors continue to drive the criminal operations in the state

Gangs and the Music Industry: A Sinister Connection

A disturbing trend has emerged where gangs are investing heavily in the Punjabi music industry and film sector. This involvement often leads to threats and extortion, as gang members

demand money in exchange for "protection." The con-



Jaggu Bhagwanpuria Gang

- Led by gangster Jaggu Bhagwanpuria, whose real name is Jasdeep Singh, this gang operates in Punjab and neighboring regions, known for murder, robbery, and extortion.
- Jaggu was once involved in kabaddi and used his network to expand criminal activities. He's currently imprisoned in **Tihar Jail**

6. The Lakhbir Landa Gang:



- Headed by Canada-based gangster Lakhbir Landa, known for extortion and running a racket in
- Landa is believed to have links with international drug cartels and has faced numerous criminal charges.
- 7. The Arsh Dalla Gang:
- Arshdeep Singh, known as Arsh Dalla, is a fugitive gangster-turned-terrorist based in Canada, with ties to organized crime and terror activities. 8. The Harry Chattha
- Gang: • Led by Supreet Singh, alias Harry Chattha, believed to be operating from abroad and linked to radicals in the US, Canada, and the UK

villagers.

Here are some key take-

aways: Family Struggles: The families of slain gangsters, such

as Jarnail Singh, the father of Shera-Khuban (Gurshaheed Singh), share the emotional toll of their children's criminal activities. Despite being harassed by the police, they often feel marginalized by their communities due to the misdeeds of their sons. Jarnail Singh expresses frustration with the lack of support and understanding from both the police and the

The Role of Social Media: Gangsters are increasingly using social media to claim responsibility for crimes, which is adding a new dimension to law enforcement's challenge. This also allows them to project a flashy, glamorous lifestvle that attracts young people, especially those from lowerincome families, to join gangs for the promise of easy money and power.

Youth Recruitment: Young people, particularly in rural areas, are being drawn into gang culture due to the influence of social media and the allure of a flashy



Vicky Gounder and Prema Lahoria

from Sonipat highlight how easy it is for youth to be lured into criminal activities through connections made online with gangsters.

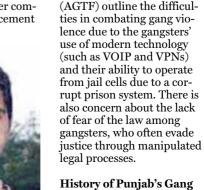
Political Influence: The article mentions how political patronage has played a significant role in the rise of gangsters. Former police officials and experts argue that political figures have used criminals for their own ternationally, they continue to operate with impunity, striking fear in the hearts of the public. The situation is further exacerbated by the infiltration of terrorist elements, creating a complex and dangerous criminal ecosystem.

As the state grapples with this growing crisis, the question remains: will the law enforcement agencies be able to rein in the gangs, or



Sandeep Sinah Sandhu (Sandeep Nagal Ambian)

agendas, leading to a lack of control over gang activities. This has created an environment where gangsters feel untouchable, further complicating law enforcement efforts.



Culture: The rise of gangs in Punjab is rooted in the 1980s, when student politics became intertwined with violence and militancy. Over time, student rivalries led to

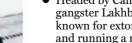
Law Enforcement Chal-

lenges: Officials from the

Anti-Gangster Task Force

will Punjab continue to be plagued by this deadly cocktail of crime and terrorism? The investigation ultimately calls for a multi-faceted approach to tackling the gang problem, emphasizing the need for societal, political, and law enforcement efforts to address the root causes of gang recruitment and activity. It also stresses the importance of creating awareness among parents and communities to prevent further deterioration of youth values and societal norms. This grim picture of Punjab's criminal landscape highlights the complex relationships and operations of these criminal groups, which continue to wreak havoc across the state and beyond.





Bambiha Ganc

- Initially led by Davinder Bambiha, who was killed in an encounter in 2016, the gang is now headed by Gaurav Patial (Lucky) from Armenia
 - Known for extortion, investing in music companies, and issuing threats to Punjabi singers like
 - Mankirt Aulakh. Historically in rivalry with the Lawrence Bishnoi Gang but now shares ties with Harvinder Singh Rinda, a terrorist in Pakistan.

INTERNATIONAL-I

PM Modi unveils 21-point action plan at 6th BIMSTEC Summit

BANGKOK: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday presented a comprehensive 21-point action plan during the sixth BIMSTEC Summit in Bangkok, laying out an ambitious road map for cooperation across diverse sectors.

His proposals reflect India's leadership in revitalising BIM-STEC, aligning with the 'Neighbourhood First' and 'Act East' policies, and dovetailing into India's broader Indo-Pacific vision. Sharing his vision on X, PM Modi stated, "BIMSTEC is an important forum to further global good. It is imperative we strengthen it and deepen our engagement. In this context, I proposed a 21-point action plan covering different aspects of our cooperation.

Emphasising the need for economic integration, PM Modi proposed the establishment of a BIMSTEC Chamber of Commerce, an annual BIMSTEC Business Summit, and a feasibility study on conducting trade in local currencies. "It's time to boost business across BIMSTEC



nations!" he wrote. Focussing on digital transformation, he urged the group to harness the potential of the IT sector and promote technological strength. He called for a pilot study to

assess the needs of BIMSTEC nations for sharing India's Digital Public Infrastructure experience, along with the integration of India's UPI with regional payment systems. Referring to the recent earthquake that impacted Myanmar and Thailand, PM Modi highlighted the importance of regional cooperation and launching of nano-satellites,

and use of remote sensing data for regional planning and development. In the realm of training and capacity building, PM Modi said, "BIMSTEC has the potential to be a shining example of capacity building frameworks. We will all learn from each other and grow!" He announced the BODHI (BIMSTEC for Organised Development of Human Resource Infrastructure) initiative, under which 300 youths from BIMSTEC nations would be trained annually in India.

Scholarships for BIMSTEC students at Forest Research response. He announced the Institute and Nalanda Uniestablishment of a BIMSTEC versity were also announced. Centre of Excellence for Disas-Further, India will conduct annual training programmes ter Management in India and informed that the fourth joint for young diplomats from disaster management exercise BIMSTEC countries, and the will be hosted by India later this Tata Memorial Centre will year. He also stressed upon the support training in cancer need to strengthen cooperation care. PM Modi also declared in the space and security sectors. the creation of a Centre of Ex-Proposals included the first cellence for research in tradi-Home Ministers' meeting to be tional medicine and another to facilitate knowledge exchange, held in India, training through ground stations, manufacturing research, and capacity building

the nega-

tive impact

of uncer-

tainty on

confidence

and global

investment

spending". It also noted that

such a large-scale disruption

to global trade has no historical

precedent. The closest com-

parison is the trade tensions and

tariffs imposed during Trump's

first term, which reduced global

GDP by around 1 per cent over

two years. However, the newly

announced tariffs are broader

and more significant than those

for farmers.

Trump's tariff to slow down global export growth

from 2.9% in 2024 to 1.3% in 2025-26: Report

NEW DELHI: The imposition

of reciprocal tariffs by the US

President Donald Trump is set

to slow down global trade sig-

nificantly, according to a report

in world export volume from

2.9 per cent in 2024 to 1.3 per

The report projects a decline

by HSBC Research.

BIMSTEC Summit: PM Modi and Yunus meet amid strained ties

"

We remain committed

to advancing this

by our common

aspirations for

peace, stability,

based on mutual

concerns"

partnership.

sensitivity to each

other's interests and

the letter, PM Modi recalled

the shared legacy of the Ban-

gladesh Liberation War and underscored the importance

of mutual sensitivity in main-

taining the India-Bangladesh

to you and the people of Ban-

ladesh on the occasion of the

National Day of Bangladesh,

the Prime Minister wrote.

This day stands as a testa-

ment to our shared history

and sacrifices that have laid

the foundation of our bilateral

partnership. The spirit of the

Liberation War of Bangladesh

continues to remain a guid-

ing light for our relationship,

which has flourished across

multiple domains, bringing

tangible benefits to our people,

'he added. "We remain com-

mitted to advancing this part-

nership, driven by our common

aspirations for peace, stabil-

ity, and prosperity, and based

on mutual sensitivity to each

other's interests and concerns.

Please accept, Excellency, the

assurances of my highest consideration, "the letter further

With the BIMSTEC chair-

manship officially transfer-

ring to Bangladesh during the

Summit, the direction of future

India-Bangladesh relations

could hinge significantly on

how both sides navigate cur-

"I extend my felicitations

partnership, driven

and prosperity, and



BANGKOK: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday held a bilateral meeting with Muhammad Yunus, Chief Advisor of Bangladeshi interim government, on the sidelines of the 6th BIMSTEC Summit in Bangkok

This marks their first official engagement since the Yunus-led interim government assumed charge in Dhaka in August last year following the ouster of former Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. The meeting between the

two leaders comes at a critical juncture in India-Bangladesh relations, which have witnessed turbulence since the change in leadership in Dhaka. Following the meeting, Yunus' office posted on X: "Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi join a bilateral meeting on the sidelines of sixth **BIMSTEC** Summit in Bangkok, Thailand on Friday." The timing of this meeting is significant, as it follows Yunus' recent visit to China and his

remarks during a meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping. Yunus had described Bangladesh as "the only guardian of the ocean" in the region and suggested that the landlocked northeastern states of India -- known as the "seven sisters" - could benefit by extending their economic linkages through Bangladesh as part of China's economic sphere. On Thursday, the two leaders had an informal interac-

hosted by Thai Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra for the visiting Heads of State and Government at the BIMSTEC Summit. The official X handle of the Chief Advisor of Bangladesh posted images of PM Modi and Yunus seated next

to each other at the dinner. Bangladeshi media quoted Deputy Press Secretary to the Chief Advisor, Abul Kalam Azad, as saying that the two leaders "met each other" during the dinner event, ahead of their formal bilateral meeting on Friday. The interim government in Bangladesh had been keen to initiate direct

diplomatic engagement with India, and Friday's meeting on the sidelines of the BIM-STEC Summit provided the first opportunity for both sides to recalibrate ties. Bangladesh is also set to take over the BIM-STEC chairmanship, further adding to the significance of the bilateral exchange.

Relations between New Delhi and Dhaka have nosedived since Sheikh Hasina's exit. The new interim government's tenure has seen a rise in attacks on the Hindu minority population in Bangladesh, causing concern in India. The Bangladeshi administration has acknowledged the incidents but maintains they are politically motivated and not religious in nature. Amid the tense political atmosphere, Prime Minister Modi recently reached out to Yunus in a letter marking rent challenges and diplomatic Bangladesh's National Day. In overtures in the months ahead.

Indian pharmaceutical exports get reprieve from Trump's reciprocal tariffs



NEW DELHI: Because of the importance of India's pharmaceuticals to US healthcare, those exports will get a reprieve from President Donald Trump's reciprocal tariffs, according to the White House.

The US is the largest importer of pharmaceuticals from India, bringing in products in the category worth \$8.73 billion during the 2024 fiscal year, according to statistics cited by the India Brand Equity Foundation (IBEF)

IBEF said 31.5 per cent of India's pharmaceutical exports went to the US.

The White House factsheet issued on Wednesday after Trump's announcement of 26 per cent reciprocal tariffs on imports from India said that pharmaceuticals were exempt.

Indian drugs, especially the generics, help hold down the costs of the US healthcare system, which is already one of the most expensive in the world.

Previewing the likely outcomes of the tariffs, ING Bank had warned that "in the absence of a deal with India, we think Trump's tariffs will mostly drive up drug prices for US consumers" because of the wide use of generics for which India is the major supplier.

Given the importance of Indian pharmaceuticals, President Trump has exempted that category even without a deal.

IQVIA, a healthcare data and analytics company, said that four out of ten prescriptions filled in the US in 2022 were from Indian companies.

"Out of the top 10 therapy areas by prescription volume, Indian companies supplied more than half of the prescriptions for five: hypertension, mental health, lipid regulators, nervous system disorders, and antiulcerants", it said. IQVIA estimated that by using generics from India, rather than highpriced branded products, the US nealthcare system saved \$219 billion in 2022 and a total of \$1.3 trillion between 2013 and 2022. These savings dwarf the dollar values of the pharmaceutical imports from India, and 26 per cent tariffs on them would have had a domino effect across

the healthcare system, espe cially Medicare, the government

healthcare insurance system for

seniors, that is already facing

challengee to long-rage viability.

said that copper, semiconduc-

tors, lumber, bullion, energy and

certain minerals that are not

available in the US are also ex-

empt from the reciprocal tariffs.

The White House factsheet

Mandalay Hit Hardest In Powerful Myanmar Earthquake with Over 2000 Killed YANGON: Mandalay in central

Myanmar has been the hardest hit region after a powerful 7.7-magnitude earthquake struck the country, with 2,053 people killed, 2,691 others injured and 210 people still missing, state-run daily Myanma Alinn reported on Friday.

Meanwhile, the country's capital Nay Pyi Taw recorded 511 deaths, 842 injuries, and nine missing, followed by Sagaing region with 471 deaths, 688 injuries and 2 missing, it added. As of Thursday, the death

toll across the country from the earthquake has risen to 3,145, with 4,589 others injured and 221 missing, Xinhua news agency reported quoting the Myanmar Radio and Television.

Meanwhile, Quad members Australia, India, Japan, and the United States collectively committed over \$20 million in humanitarian assistance to support the relief efforts for the earthquake-devastated



Myanmar

With its funding and bilatcent in 2025-26, mainly due to weaker demand in US and eral efforts, the Quad grouping is facilitating the delivery of relief uncertainty affecting global insupplies, deploying emergency vestment and confidence. medical teams and supporting t said "As for world trade, our humanitarian partners working current projection of a marked in Myanmar to provide care for slowdown in world export volthose affected by the earthquake. ume growth from 2.9 pc in 2024 to 1.3 pc in 2025-26 reflects In a joint statement issued by Quad partners on the Myanmar slower US import demand and earthquake response, the governments of Australia, India, Japan, and the United States extended their deepest sympathies and con-

dolences to the people of Myanmar and Thailand following the massive temblor, which caused significant loss of life, injuries, and widespread destruction of infrastructure.

> two countries. Prime Minister Narendra Modi also expressed his condolences on the loss of lives PM Modi In a post on X

time. We also discussed bilateral relations between India and Myanmar, particularly in sectors like connectivity, capacity building, infrastructure development and more.

Prime Minister Modi and his Thailand counterpart Paetongtarn Shinawatra held bilateral litical exchanges, d



PM Modi holds bilateral talks with Senior General of Myanmar the earthquake a few days ago. India's 'Act East' and Thailand's **BANGKOK**: Prime Minisers of Myanmar in this critical ter Narendra Modi on Friday

tion during the official dinner

held a meeting with Senior General of Myanmar, Aung Hlaing where they discussed

seen previously.

and property in the wake of talks on Thursday and discussed the earthquake on March 28. ways to further strengthen po-

stated

'Act West Policies' complement each other extremely well and open several possibilities for bilateral cooperation," PM Modi

stated in a post on X. Meanwhile, India's National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) is actively leading the efforts as part of Operation Brahma, with rescue and perations und

ing which India, being the first

responder in times of crisis in

the neighbourhood, had been

providing vital assistance to the

country.

WASHINGTON: US President 🛛 🛖 🚊 🦞 💆 🍦 🧋

bilateral relations between the **Ukrainian President Zelensky wants** to back out of minerals deal: Trump

aboard Air Force One that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky is looking to back out of a critical minerals agreement with the US.

Trump told reporters on Sunday that he believes Zelensky no longer wants to sign the agreement and warned that his refusal would carry consequences.

"He's trying to back out of the rare earth deal and if he does that he's got some problems, big, big problems, "Trump said, according to a media news portal report.

"He wants to be a member of NATO, but he's never going to be a member of NATO. He understands that.

Ukrainian officials are currently reviewing the latest version of a minerals deal, which reportedly grants the US fund would operate.

Quad to Send \$20 Million Relief Support to Earthquake-Ravaged Myanmar

NEW DELHI: Quad members Australia, India, Japan, and the United States on Friday collectively committed over \$20 million in humanitarian assistance to support the relief efforts for the earthquakedevastated Myanmar.

With its funding and bilateral efforts, the Quad grouping is facilitating the delivery of relief supplies, deploying emergency medical teams and supporting humanitarian partners working in Myanmar to provide care for those affected by the earthquake.

In a joint statement issued by Quad partners on the Myanmar earthquake response, the governments of Australia, India, Japan, and the United States extended their deepest sympathies and condolences to the peoples of Myanmar and Thailand following the massive earthquake, which caused significant loss of life, injuries,



unprecedented control over Ukraine's natural resources through a joint investment fund. Zelensky said on March 28

that he would not sign a minerals deal that interferes with Ukraine's plans to join the European Union.

'Nothing that could threaten Ukraine's accession to the EU can be accepted, " he added.

Bloomberg reported on March 29 that Kyiv was requesting changes to the current proposal, including greater investment from the US and BANGKOK: India and Thaimore clarity on how the joint

and widespread destruction of infrastructure.

The grouping also welcomed recent commitments to temporary, partial ceasefires and called on all parties to implement, extend and broaden these measures, to provide a safe and conducive environment to facilitate a timely delivery of life-saving humanitarian assistance throughout

Myanmar. "We welcome the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' statements

of March 29 and 30, and the support provided by ASEAN and countries in the region to the communities affected," the statement added.

stated, "Met Senior General Min security partnership and stra-Aung Hlaing of Myanmar on tegic engagement between the the sidelines of the BIMSTEC two countries.

They also underlined the Summit in Bangkok. Once again expressed condolences need to enhance connectivity, health, science and technology, on the loss of lives and damage of property in the wake of start-up, innovation, digital, the recent earthquake. India education, culture and tourism is doing whatever is possible collaborations. to assist our sisters and broth-On arrival at the Government

enterprises

ment of Thailand.

House, the Prime Minister was short while ago. Expressed gratitude to the people and Governreceived by the Thailand Prime Minister. ment of Thailand for the warm

"Had a very fruitful meeting welcome and also expressed with Prime Minister Paetongsolidarity with the people of tarn Shinawatra in Bangkok a Thailand in the aftermath of

Elevating Relations to Strategic Partnership, India-Thailand Sign agreements in Key Sectors

land on Thursday agreed to elevate bilateral relations to a Strategic Partnership during extensive discussions held between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Thailand PM Paetongtarn Shinawatra at the Government House in Bangkok.

Both leaders held talks on various areas of bilateral cooperation and later witnessed the signing of several key agreements that add new vigour and dynamism to the longstanding friendship between the two nations. Besides the

Joint Declaration on the establishment of India-Thailand

Strategic Partnership, a MoU was also signed between the Ministry of Digital Economy and Society of Thailand and the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology of India on cooperation in the field of digital technologies.

A MoU between Sagarmala Division of India's Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways and Thailand's Fine Arts Department, Ministry of Culture was signed for development of National Maritime Heritage Complex (NMHC) at Lothal, Gujarat.

Another MoU between In-



cooperation in many fields.

Thailand's Office of Small and Medium Enterprises Promotion (OSMEP) was signed on cooperation in the field of micro, small and medium Two other key MoUs signed

included between the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (MDoNER) and Thailand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and between North Eastern Handicrafts and Handlooms Development Corporaof Thailand. tion Limited (NEHHDC) of

India and Creative Economy Agency (CEA) of the Governstart-ups. In addition to enhancing physical connectivity, both the countries will work to

Pakistan Set to Intensify Deportation of Afghan Refugees Post Eid Holidays

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is set to intensify the deportation of Afghan refugees post Eid holidays as the March 31 deadline for refugees, including Afghan Citizen Card holders, to voluntarily return to their home country, has ended, local media reported on Thursday.

Reports suggest that the repatriation process could not formally begin due to the Eid holidays. The two-day relaxation for Eid holidays led to some confusion among official circles, with some sources suggesting that the deadline for repatriation had been extended.

But Pakistan's interior ministry official denied the claims, maintaining that there has been no extension. "Although the deadline was March 31, the provincial government exte-nded it till April 2, keeping in view Eid. Now, phase 2 will begin from [Thursday] and we have established camps, one each at Landi Kotal and Nasir Bagh Road," Pakistan's leading newspaper Dawn quoted a senior official from Afghan Commi-ssionerate

in Peshawar as saying. The Pakistan government had signalled the start of forcible removals of Afghan refugees and warned of strict legal action against those who failed to leave by the deadline. Meanwhile, a total of 886,242 undocumented Afghan nationals have left Paki-



stan as of April 1, with repatriations continuing, another Pakistani daily, The Express Tribune, reported, quoting official data. Pakistan authorities refused to budge despite calls from the international community to extend the deadline. The government had also dismissed concerns raised by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other agencies regarding the mass repatriation of Afghan refugees and asylum-seekers. UNHCR spokesperson Qaiser

Khan Afridi has stated that the UN agency is concerned regarding the government's directive, as there might be individuals among the Afghan Citizen Card holders who may require international protection.

"In that light, we are urging the government [view] their situation through a humanitarian lens. We also call for engagement between Pakistan and Afghanistan so that the returns can be dignified and voluntary,' Afridi said. The Afghan Taliban government had on Tuesday called upon Islamabad not to start the deportation of Afghan nationals. Mawlavi Abdul Kabir, Afghanistan's Minister of Refugees and Repatriation, urged neighbouring countries, Pakistan and Iran, to halt these deportations and allow Afghans to return home voluntarily.

"He emphasised the importance of humane treatment for refugees, especially in light of reports of mistreatment of Afghans by border nations, including instances where individuals holding legal visas were also deported," Afghan government-run Bakhtar News Agency reported.

tion between Thailand and the North-Eastern states of India. We discussed growing mutual trade, investment, and business exchanges. Agree-

ments have also been made to foster cooperation in the areas of MSME, handloom and handicrafts," PM Modi said during the joint press state-

ment with the Prime Minister We have decided to strengthen cooperation in renewable energy, digital technology, e-vehicles, robotics, space, bio-technology and

In his remarks, PM Modi highlighted that India's 'Act East' policy and Thailand's 'Act West' complement each other very well and open up boost FinTech connectivity," opportunities for bilateral he added.

dia's National Small Industries Corporation Ltd. (NSIC) and We have emphasised on cooperation in the fields of tourism, culture and educa-

INTERNATIONAL-II

Trump's Tariff Challenge & Opportunity for India



FW EDITORIAL BOARD

Niti Aayog views US President Donald Trump's plan to impose reciprocal tariffs as an opportunity for India, particularly in sectors like manufacturing. India's position is stronger than trade partners like China, Mexico, and Canada, which face higher manufactured goods. tariffs

Trump's Tariff Plans: Limited Impact on India

According to Pravakar Sahoo, Niti Aayog's Programme Director, the US president's proposed reciprocal tariffs are unlikely to negatively impact India significantly. While countries like Mexico, China, and Canada-who account for about 50% of the US's total imports-are facing tariffs ranging from 20% to 25%, India is relatively wellpositioned. Sahoo emphasized that, aside from a few sectors. most industries in India stand to benefit if these tariffs are applied universally to all exporters to the US market. "It's a very dynamic situation, but overall, the impact on India will not be severe," he said after the release of Niti Aayog's quarterly trade watch report.

Opportunities in US Trade Policies

Niti Aayog member Arvind Virmani highlighted significant opportunities for India in light of the US's trade policies. He noted that global supply chains are highly concentrated in China, and with the new tariff structure, countries like India could

electronics that are part of a global network.

Expanding India's Global Trade Présence

India's textile sector continues to make a significant contribution to industrial output, employment, and export earnings. However, despite being one of the top 10 global exporters, India holds only a modest 4% share in global trade. To increase this share, a concerted effort is needed to enhance India's global presence

India's trade growth be-tween April and September diversify their manufactur-2024 showed a 5.67% increase ing exports. Virmani pointed compared to the same period out that, compared to China, in 2023, with exports rising by Mexico, and Canada, India is 5.23% and imports by 6.07%. in a much stronger position The USA, UAE, and the Nethto capitalize on this shift. He erlands remain India's leading emphasized the importance export markets, accounting for 33% of total exports. The Nethof diversifying supply chains, especially with a global relierlands' growth has been drivance on a single country for en by exports of smartphones and petroleum products.



Impact of Recent Tariffs

their trade agreement by fall

2025 (September-October).

Sahoo observed that, fol-

US imports declined. Future

and Bilateral Trade Agree-

ments (BTAs) should focus

on creating competitive supply

chains with low or zero tariffs,

tion in the country's vast bu-

across the country.

to the cheaper imports from

USD billion respectively.

in helping start-ups is much

noisier than its actual help

to the entrepreneurs serv-

years, these sectors have been

Rhetoric and Reality

Global Trade Shifts: India's Competitive Advantage

The US has recently im-Former Niti Aayog Viceposed a 25% import duty on Chairman Rajiv Kumar noted steel and aluminum prodthat the 26% tariff imposed ucts, effective from March 12. Additionally, a 25% tariff by the US on certain imports on completely built vehicles is still lower than the 52% ef-(CBUs) and auto parts will fective protection that India be enforced starting April 3. applies to US exports. India's exports to the US will face India and the US are aiming to conclude the first phase of much lower tariffs compared to China (34%), Taiwan (36%), and Vietnam (46%). Despite the challenges, India is in a lowing the 2018 imposition better position than many of duties, five countries, inother countries, including Cambodia, which faces even cluding India, gained market share as China's presence in higher tariffs.

However, Trump's tariff Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) plan raises questions about the future of the World Trade Organization (WTO). The "Most Favored Nation" (MFN) principle, which mandates equal especially for products like tariff rates for all countries, better business conditions.

appears to be undermined by these differential tariffs. This development raises concerns about the potential collapse of the WTO and its longstanding rules-based global trading system.

Challenges for Other Nations

The tariff hike could have severe consequences for countries like Mexico, which exports 80% of its goods to the US, and Canada, where cross-border trade in autos and components is significant. These countries may need to explore new markets to absorb the volume of exports that were once destined for the US. The EU, also affected by tariffs, may retaliate, leading to a potentially destabilizing global trade environment.

For the US, imposing tariffs while striving for economic growth raises difficult questions. The country's high wages compared to trading partners, especially in manufacturing, could lead to challenges in reviving domestic manufacturing. While automation and AI-driven robotization might help, it's unclear whether these strategies will offset the impact of higher tariffs.

Opportunities for India in a Fragmented Trade World

The current fragmented global trading environment presents a potential opportunity for India. The higher tariffs faced by the EU and Canada could open up markets for India's exports. While the impact on India's US exports, which totaled \$77.5 billion in 2023, might be limited, India could take advantage of these higher tariffs imposed on its competitors.

A clear opportunity lies in the 10% tariff concession on Brazilian exports. Indian firms should consider setting up joint ventures in Brazil and shifting high-end garment exports there. The diamond industry, with relatively low capital costs, could also benefit from this shift. Additionally, with Bangladesh losing its import duty-free status, India should welcome garment exporters back and offer them

"reciprocal tariffs" on Chinese exports to the United States, a move that the commission said does not conform to international trade rules, seriously undermines China's legitimate rights and interests, and represents a typical act of unilateral bullying, reports Xinhua news agency. China's Ministry of Commerce said it was adding 11 American companies to its list of "unreliable entities,"

which bars them from doing business in China or with Chi-



impose additional 34 per cent tariffs on all products imported from the United States starting from April 10, the Customs Tariff Commission of the State Council announced on Friday. The announcement follows the U.S. decision to impose

nese companies. The ministry also imposed stringent limits on exports of certain rare earth

elements, including gadolinium and yttrium, which are mined almost exclusively in China and are used in everything from electric cars to smart bombs

US President Donald Trump has announced 54 per cent reciprocal tariffs on China, which



include previous duties already in place. That makes China one of the hardest-hit countries on the tariff list. Global investment bank JP Morgan has said it now sees a 60 per cent chance of the global economy entering recession by 2025 end, up from 40 per cent previously.

According to analysts, the

competitiveness in India's favour in sectors where other regional exporters are more severely impacted. To maximise this advantage, India must not only negotiate with the US to maintain market access but also collaborate with FTA partners in Asia to restructure supply chains and seize new opportunities,'

mainly, China faces steeper du-

ties as high as 65 per cent and

even beyond. For India, the ad-

ditional 27 per cent tariff places

it in the lower half of targeted

countries, creating opportuni-

ties beyond traditional export

sectors like engineering goods,

electronics, gems and jewellery,

The tariffs could also shift

textiles, and apparel.

reciprocal tariffs imposed by according to experts.

Direct Impact of US Tariffs on Indian Our ties with US will never be the same: Sectors Will Largely Be Neutral: Report Canada's Foreign

NEW DELHI: The expected direct impact of US reciprocal tariffs would vary in nature for the sectors in India, with no impact on pharmaceuticals since they are exempt from reciprocal tariffs for now, a

report said on Friday. The impact is expected to be largely neutral for electronics, textiles, agricultural products, chemicals, and automobiles and parts. At the same time, it would be negative for gems and jewellery, according to the report by CareEdge Ratings. During FY24, India's aggregate merchandise exports to the US stood at \$77.5 billion compared to imports from the US at \$42.2 billion. Till now, the US had been charging an average tariff of 3.50 per cent on imports of goods from India, which is now being increased uniformly to 27 per cent in the form of recip-

rocal tariff. Reciprocal tariff imposed by US on other nations who are India's major competitors in most of the above sectors is higher than us — Vietnam at 46 per cent, Bangladesh at 37 per cent, China at 34 per cent, Taiwan at 32 per cent, Indonesia at 32 per cent and Pakistan at 29 per cent, which requirements of the US.



augurs well for key export sectors of India," the report said. In electronics, higher reciprocal tariffs on China would mean a neutral impact for India's electronics exports, it said. Apart from India, the other major textile exporters to the US are China, Vietnam, Bangladesh, and Turkey. Except for Turkey, which has a 10 per cent reciprocal tariff, other nations face reciprocal tariffs higher than 26 per cent, which means the impact of reciprocal tariffs on India's textile sector would be limited.

Additionally, the majority of India's exports are cottonbased garments and home textile products. India's self-sufficiency in cotton production should enable it to largely pass on higher reciprocal tariffs, said the report. India has one of the highest numbers of US FDA-approved manufacturing facilities, which primarily caters to the generic medicine

"This is crucial for meeting the healthcare needs of its population cost-effectively. Although the pharmaceutical sector is currently exempted from the purview of reciprocal tariffs by the US, with no immediate impact, even if

tariffs are imposed, the sector should be well-positioned to pass them on significantly due to its inherent competitive strengths," said the report. India's overall exports of agriculture and allied products to the US are not very high.

Although, reciprocal tariff of 26 per cent is imposed vis-a-vis prevailing weighted average tariff of 5.3 per cent, the reciprocal tariff on the other major competing nations (Vietnam, Indone-

sia, Thailand, Pakistan) on some key agri-exports (sea food, basmati rice) is on the higher side which is expected to negate the impact of tariff imposed by US broadly. "However, Ecuador, being the second-largest exporter of shrimp to the US, it could result in competitive pricing pressure for Indian shrimp exporters, as the tariff imposed on Ecuador is lower at 10 per cent," the report noted

goods industry accompanied

by stiff government regula-

tions. The stiff governmental

controls ushered in the svs-

tem of unnecessary licensing

systems, also in the name

of restraining monopolies in the private sector, the

Monopolies Restrict Trade

Practices (MRTP) Act 1969

was enacted. It dwarfed the

Indian companies, when the

Indian economy was opened

for international investments

during the nineties. These

regulations had dwarfed the

Indian economy, but the pro-

cess of reforms could begin

only during the tenure of the

Prime Minister, P.V. Nar-

simha Rao, 1991-96. Rao was

assisted by Dr. Manmohan

Singh, who was inducted in

the cabinet as the Finance

Admittedly. It was a be-

lated attempt to reform the

Indian economy. Earlier, in

1978, Deng Xiaoping, para-

mount leader of China, had

Minister.

Minister

Canadian Foreign Minister Melanie Jolv said on Friday the relationship between the United States and Canada would never be the same again after President Donald Trump announced a sweeping new tariff regime on Wednesday.

At her arrival for a NATO meeting of foreign affairs ministers in Brussels, Joly added that Canada was putting maximum pressure on the Trump administration.

industry, science and technol-

Offers a Unique Perspective Converging Play of *Economic Forces in Context of the Geopolitics*

GOPAL MISRA Consulting Editor-FW



elected law makers, about 40 per cent of them accused to n 1999, the then US the crimes like murders and President, rape. In the present Lok Sab-**Bill Clinton** ha, of the 241-srong ruling BJP members, 100 members

had facilitated the entry of China in the World Trade Organization (WTO) with a charges in different courts hope that the country's authoritarian communist regime would finally open up. Instead, it has accessed the state-of-the art technologies related to the survival of the evolved backed by scientific inventions to finally become the new center of modernization, now a formidable economic power.

The FW's second phase i.e. after attaining a maturity of 25 years has begun with a holistic approach towards the macro issues related to the international trade and the play of the forces. without ignoring the micro issues weakening the country's robust economy attained during four decades of the planned developments. It cannot be denied that even after having more than two decades of political stability, first, under Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, and now under the 11 years of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's regime, India appears to have been hit by an unprecedented stalemate in the key areas of her economy; hitting hard her cottage, small and medium industries.

ing the small and medium As a publication to serve the vital issues related to sectors. During the past 10 the Indian economy, the FW has been offering a unique dwarfed, made dysfunctional, platform to understand the political rhetoric such as the so-called campaign against corruption leading to the de-

reaucracy serving under the are facing rape and murder It may be noted that it goes to the credit of the FW that it raised the legitimate issues most vulnerable section of the country's rural and agriculture-based industry. With the demonetization, these sectors were denied access to investments, thus, this sector has collapsed, giving full access

China. In 2014, when the starved these sectors by deny-Narendra Modi government ing easy financial assistance. took power, the trade deficit

Therefore, it actually rebetween India and China was sulted in the massive imports USD 45 billion, which his of the Chinese products, government has allowed to which were earlier manuincrease each year. It had factured in the small and peaked in 2022 to 101.28 medium sectors. Even under USD billion. The trade deficit the MRTP Act, the country's with China has recently been big business was not allowed increasing, except in 2020, to compete with them. They it was USD 39.76 billion. In were also providing market 2018, it rose to USD 57.38 access to them. It is yet to billion, in 2021 and 2024, it be explained, says an expert was 69.56 USD billion 85.1 of India's trade, why New Delhi allowed the exodus of hundreds of billions of the USD to sustain and augment

The government's rhetoric the Chinese economy.

Under the Shadows of Fatigue and Seize

In spite of its meagre resources, the FW prepares to pick up the gauntlet exposing irrelevant rhetoric of the if not deliberately forced to powers-that-be in the counclose relations and impacts shutter down. The ruling elite try using media selectively. comprising political leaders, It has adversely affected the ministers and bureaucrats people immediately as well talked about strengthening of as on a long-term basis demonetization of the Indian the country's small business stroying their yearning to currency in 2016. Instead of under the banner of 'make become an economic pow- the country. In New Delhi, developed world led by the US ending the rampant corrup- in India', but they actually erhouse. Amidst these tall graduate engineers are work-

talks, the country's focus towards acquiring stateof-technologies has been blurred amidst this useless rhetoric.

India, thus again finds herself relegated when China is being empowered by unprecedented scientific breakthroughs. Both academia and policy makers, especially the political executive, during this tumultuous period could not redefine India's strategy. The reasons that perhaps dominated the Indian systems could be traced to the inbuilt apathy of the country's political leadership comprising the right-wing parties like the BJP and the left outfits, the Communists, towards computers and information technology.

This confusion in the country's political leadership has adversely affected India's highly qualified trained manpower estimated to be 34 billion to tackle these challenges are being denied jobs and business opportunities in

ing as electricians serving households, and pharmacists are being forced to become Many science graduates are working as security guards.

There is a sense of a strong amiss among the people in contemporary India, especially, when the country has already succeeded in setting up strong fundamentals needed for a quantum jump to join the developed world, even to match the economies of the Asian tigers such as South Korea, Taiwan and now Vietnam. During the past three decades, China appears to have surpassed as the manufacturing hub for the West's economy. With a specific vision and strategy, it has become an economic superpower supported by its new technologies, inventions and patents. India, despite having an edge against her northern neighbor in some of the key areas in the field of science and technology till sixties, it now appears to be poised to overtake the

and Europe.

The FW is keen could to establish live linkages with the academia, the corporate world, the regulators and the policy makers. Indeed, it may appear too ambitious, but being inspired by our former President, Abdul Kalam, who used to tell the country's youth "unless you dream, you cannot fix a target to achieve the cherished goal". It also reminds us of the famous quote of Satish Dhawan, country's one of the most admired and respected space scientists, that human aspirations go beyond the space or cosmos. The FW is representing these ideas in the contemporary era.

In Quest of Renaissance

The FW's focus during the the country had embarked second quarter of its existence is to invent and identify the solution to reinvigorate the Indian economy. It may spearhead its commitment also to obtain technologies for a new renaissance by supporting the hopefuls, adopted the Indian Indusmostly the young people, trial Policy Resolution (IPR) who comprise a majority in of 1956. It enabled the state this 150-strong billion of this to monopolize the capital country. Our generation may delivery boys of Amazon. not be blessed by the physical existence of the scholars and monks like Raja Rammohun Roy, Swami Vivekanand and Aurobindo Ghose who initiated widespread reforms. Later, these efforts were invigorated by Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and other leaders committed to the socialist and Marxist philosophies. In China, Sana-yat-Sen, who is respected as the founder of modern China, had joined the Roman Catholic stream of Christianity to modernize the society.

These tall figures of our country of the recent past, who had reinvented the genius of India, continue to inspire us as a lighthouse even today, asserts China has not only overtaken a media professor to the FW.

On the face of it, the roots of this problem could be traced to the over indulgence of the Indian politicians in false narratives or trumpeting non-existent successes. It is not for the first time that such a stalemate allowed modernization of gitimacy to the contemporary has been witnessed in India. four key areas, agriculture, men in power.

ogy. During his month-long visit to the US during January-February 1979, he offered a unique opportunity to the American capital to use China as a manufacturing hub without the hassle of trade union demands and tax regulations of their home country. During this historical visit, he had met as many as 17 state governors, members of the During the fifties and sixties, Congress, the then secretaries to the key departments such as agriculture and energy in upon a centralized model of Washington. With signing economic development under the socialist agenda. In a bid agreements of cooperation in to earmark state funds and the sensitive fields of science and technology, he, thus, laid a strong foundation of China from the USSR, India had as a formidable economic power.

> On the other hand, the Indian initiative under Rao, which had begun 10 years later after Deng's new economic model, remains unfinished. Instead, the monopoly of the public sector has been replaced by crony capitalism. The basic principle of level playing ground for a fair competition, neutral system of the regulations and transparency in the governance considered essential for a free economy are being compromised.

The current stalemate in the Indian economy could be understood in the context of these half-hearted attempts. The Chinese could reorient their Communist ideology for the fresh infusion of ideas, investments and transforming economy; India on the other hand continues to struggle whether she is committed to a free economy or the worshipper of the holy cow of the socialist ideology of the Nehruvian era. The past wounds of the partition of 1947 are also being opened to give le-

POTPOURRI

Amitabh Bachchan to recite 'Ram Katha' in Ayodhya on 6 April

MEENAKSHI BHATTACHARYA

Amitabh Bachchan is set to recite the 'Ram Katha' for the nation on Ram Navami in 2025. The esteemed Bollywood icon will perform this recitation at the Ram Temple in Ayodhya on April 6. This significant event will be witnessed by the entire country. It has been reported that the program will be live-streamed on Jio Hotstar from 8 AM to 1 PM on that day, allowing people across the nation to engage with the event through technology. Thanks to this technological advancement, millions will have the opportunity to partake in this sacred occasion. Unsurprisingly, Amitabh Bachchan is delighted to take on such an important role.



Amitabh Bachchan expressed, "Participating in such honour in life. Ram Navami transcends being merely a festival; it serves as a moment

faith, devotion, and principles of Shri Ram." Thanks to techa revered event is a profound nological advancements and the capabilities of Jio Hotstar, the entire nation will unite on this day for an extraordinary

Beyond Faith: Why Navratri is the ultimate health hac YOGESH KANT

New Delhi

Navratri, celebrated twice a year at the onset of summer (Chaitra Navratri) and winter (Sharad Navratri), is not just a religious festival but also a scientifically structured period of detoxification for the body and mind.

Ancient traditions and modern medical insights suggest that this nine-day fasting ritual helps individuals transition smoothly between seasons while promoting overall well-being. Whether it is the change of seasons or the desire

for self-reflection, the practice has evolved into a powerful tool for holistic well-being, offering benefits in terms of physical health, mental clarity, and spiritual rejuvenation.

efits of Navratri Fasting The the seasons.

Tucked into ancient texts



The Detoxification Ben-

Navratri fasting stretches back to the Vedic era, a time when sages and farmers alike noticed the body's subtle dance with

like the Puranas, the festival honors Goddess Durga's cosmic



"Twice a year, at the equinoxes, communities fasted-not just to appease the divine, but to recalibrate their systems as summer faded into autumn or winter melted into spring.

These were moments when immunity waned, pathogens stirred, and the body craved a break from the grind of heavy

pressive reactions during her recent event has taken social media by storm. The video, which showcases her playful and candid moments, quickly went viral as fans couldn't get enough of her charming expressions. Whether it's her witty remarks or her infectious laughter, the video captures Kareena at her candid best. At the event, the 'Jab We Met' actress made a style statement in a vibrant purple shirt featuring a bandhani print, which she tucked into high-waisted, light-wash, straight-leg jeans.

Speaking of Kareena Kapoor and Karan Johar's friendship, the two have always shared a close bond. Their friendship has often been the talk of th

ments behind the scenes or

Talking Points

Narvijay Yadav

The most significant risk isn't Al 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.

> rtificial Intelligence relevant skills.

(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. Routine jobs are the first to go. AI-powered chatbots and automation tools replace human roles in customer service, finance, and administrative sectors. Factories are increasingly using robotics, reducing the need for low-skill labor. AI is also impacting traditional jobs like accounting, legal research, and journalism. But there's another side to

this story. AI isn't just eliminating jobs; it's also creating them. Data science, AI programming, machine learning, and cybersecurity are in high demand. Digital marketing, AI-driven healthcare, and remote tech support are booming. India's IT industry is expanding its AI-based services, generating new employment

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 AIintegrated careers. The key is staying ahead of AI rather than competing with it. For enhances rather than replacopportunities for those with instance, rather than fighting es. Renewable energy, smart

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 ap-proaches. Job creation should focus on industries where AI

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

ectors 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 machineit'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.

SM Krishna Tennis Stadium: Honoring a Visionary Leader who Transformed Karnataka's Tennis Landscape

ARUN KUMAR RAO

In a heartfelt tribute to the late SM Krishna, former Chief Minister of Karnataka and long-serving President of the Karnataka State Lawn Tennis Association (KSLTA), the state apex body has officially renamed the KSLTA stadium, nestled in the picturesque Cubbon Park, as SM Krishna Tennis Stadium. This momentous occasion not only immortalized the leader's legacy but also reinforced Karnataka's commitment to



Congress opens doors for professionals with

'Dr Manmohan Singh Fellows Program'

late SM Krishna, along with their daughters Malavika and Shambhavi. Also gracing the occasion were Priyank Kharge, nurturing tennis talent, with Minister of IT, BT, Science & President from 1999 to 2019 scholarships worth Rs 12 lakhs Technology, and Rural Develop- transformed Karnataka's tenanchavat Rai: Senior ment &

clay courts into a state-of-theart tennis stadium, making it a proach ensured that Karnataka

world-class facility in the heart of the city. As the Life President of the All India Tennis Association (AITA) from 2015 to 2023, Krishna played a crucial role in elevating Indian tennis at both national and international levels. His visionary apbecame a premier destination for global tennis events, attracting top-tier tournaments like Govinda Raj; and Secretary of the Legends Tour, ATP World An ardent tennis enthusiast, Doubles Championships, and SM Krishna's tenure as KSLTA the WTA Indian Open, where tennis greats Serena and Venus Williams dazzled Bengaluru's sports enthusias Taking Tennis Beyond BengaluruSM Krishna believed in democratizing access to tennis. ensuring that the sport extended beyond Bengaluru to tier-2 cities and districts across Karnataka

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. he hao been struggling with





The reports also indicated that **MUMBAI**: Kareena Kapoor dia. Taking to his Instagram lighthearted moments in a fun-Kareena from a recent event town. Whether it's sharing mofilled banter, offering a glimpse where she asked for a tea into their strong friendship. without sugar. Sharing this Known for their witty exvideo, Karan wrote, "It's her changes, the duo engaged in tea time!!!Bebo and added a sweet banter on social me- rofl emojis. Bebo was quick to fails to steal the limelight.

in fun banter over tea and toast

the operation.

J&K Police book actor

Shreyas Talpade in

financial fraud case

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and

Kashmir Police have registered a financial fraud case against 15 individuals, including Bol-lywood actor Shreyas Talpade,

for allegedly deceiving people

through a chit fund scheme.

Cooperative Society Limited.

which promised villagers high

returns on their investments.

Agents of the company al-

legedly 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 sta-

tion, and an investigation is

underway to determine the

full extent of the fraud. Legal

action will follow based on

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 alleg-

edly defrauding investors of

over ₹9 crores. They were also

implicated in a similar case

in Sonipat, Haryana, linked

to a multi-level marketing

scheme. Reports suggest that

both actors endorsed the co-

operative society's investment

plans, adding credibility to

the findings.

According

to reports, the

accused were

associated

with The Loni

Urban Mul-

tistate Credit

and Thrift

take a note of it and replied, writing, "I should have asked for my cheese toast too." A video of Kareena's ex-Bengaluru

decompensated liver cirrhosis in recent months, which had worsened his health. The legendary actor was ad-

mitted to the hospital on February 21, 2025, when his health deteriorated. Dr Santosh Shetty CEO and Executive Director at Kokilaben Ambani Hospital, said in a 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 actordirector. 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. Born as Harikrishan Goswami on July 24, 1937, in Amritsar, Punjab, Manoj made a lasting impact on Hindi cinema. His memorable performances in films such as "Shaheed", "Upkar," and "Rang De Basanti" struck a deep chord with the patriotic spirit of the Indian audience. Manoj Kumar, one of the most successful actors of the 60s and 70s, worked in multiple iconic films like "Shor," "Do Badan", "Roti Kapda Aur Makaan," "Purab Aur Paschim," and many others. Apart from his acting career, he was also a director and producer. He directed

several hit films like "Upkar,"

"Kranti," "Clerk," and others.

engaging in playful exchanges during interviews, Kareena and Karan's camaraderie never

awarded to 10 promising young players from the state.

The grand unveiling was led by Opposition Party Leader and KSLTA President, R Ashoka, in the esteemed presence of Prema Krishna, wife of the

Vice President of KSLTA and international tennis ace Rohan Bopanna, who also serves as KSLTA Vice President; Minis-

with an unprecedented chal-

lenge as a new World Econom-

ic Order was being unleashed

by the United States under

resident Donald Trump.

missed a leader like Dr Man-

mohan Singh today, who had

navigated the economy through

many storms so successfully, it

was time to follow his advice. He

disclosed that during one of his

He said, while the country

nis landscape. His unwavering commitment to the sport saw him spearheading numerous initiatives that placed Bengaluru on the global tennis map. His ter Radha Krishna; Karnataka leadership led to the renovation Olympic Association President of KSLTA's once-dilapidated

Sports, Randeep D.

Reels are now putting your eyes in danger: Doctors issue urgent warning

OUR CORRESPONDENT New Delhi

Ophthalmologists have raised children and young adults alarms about 'Reel-Induced suffering from blurry vision Eye Damage,' linking excesand eye irritation due to prosive screen time-especially longed reel-watching. "A stubinge-watching reels-to risdent's eyes stopped producing ing cases of digital eye strain, enough tears because of excesdry eye syndrome, and myopia. sive screen exposure," he said. Speaking at the Joint Meeting Dr. Harbansh Lal, Chairman of the Organizing Committee of the Asia Pacific Academy of Ophthalmology (APAO) and the and Past President of AIOS, All India Ophthalmological Soexplained that reels reduce ciety (AIOS) at Yashobhoomi blink rates by 50%, leading to dry eyes and difficulty shifting India International Convention & Expo Centre, experts warned focus between near and distant of an impending vision crisis. objects Dr. Lalit Verma, Congress

Experts are particularly con-

President of APAO, described the situation as a "silent epidemic." He cited cases of

> cerned about increasing myopia in children glued to reels for hours daily. "By 2050, over 50% of the world's population could be myopic, a leading cause of irreversible blindness," Dr. Lal warned. He added that fluctuating lens prescriptions, once observed until age 21, now persist until 30 due to excessive screen exposure

to be chosen every year for full time politics

50 mid-career professional

Kavita Sharma

NEW DELHI: The Congress party has formally opened its doors for professionals across the country to join the party under the fellowship programme named after former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh.

Announcing the programme senior Congress leaders Pawan Khera, Praveen Chakravarty and K Raju disclosed that every year 50 professionals will be chosen as 'Dr Manamohan Singh fellows', who will be nurtured and groomed as full time politicians.

Welcoming the initiative, political leaders. They will be the Leader of Opposition in mentored and groomed by Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, the party leaders who have come from professional backurged the professionals to grounds. Giving details of the fellowship, Praveen Chakravarty disclosed that India was faced

The Dr. Manmohan Singh Fellows program is our call to mid-career professionals-step into public life, lead with integrity, and help build a progressive and inclusive India".

ess party has an unmatched history of promoting and encouraging professionals right from the days of Pandit Moti Lal Nehru to Dr Manmohan



Singh. He said the Congress meetings with the former PM party will act as an "incubator" when the Russia-Ukraine War for these mid-career profesbroke out, he had sought his sionals to graduate as full time opinion as to what the country should do. To that, he quoted Dr Singh saving that he should take the opinion of younger professionals.

Chakravarty said under the initiative, launched with due consent of Dr Manmohan Singh's family, the Congress will identify and choose 50 mid-career professionals across the country every year.

He said, those who are passionate about building a modern, progressive and prosperous India will be chosen by an eminent panel through an intense selection process.

They will be mentored by senior leaders of the Congress who have themselves come from

different professions, he said, adding, Dr Manmohan Singh Fellows Program is a commitment to enter politics with a firm belief in progressive and secular politics. Speaking on the occasion, Dr

K Raju said, "Dr Manmohan Singh Fellows" programme was a long felt need many in Congress thought about. He said, when he worked in the National Advisory Council under Ms Sonia Gandhi he came across many professionals who wanted to join politics.

He observed, it was felt that there should be some structural mechanism that should facilitate the entry of such professionals into politics and today that need has been fulfilled by 'Dr Manmohan Singh Fellows' programme.

Starbucks India expands its footprint with 50th Store in Bengaluru, Introduces 1st Drive-Thru

ARUN KUMAR RAO Bengaluru

Starbucks India has marked a significant milestone with the launch of its 50th store in Bengaluru, unveiling the city's first-ever Drive-Thru at Electronic City. This expansion underscores the brand's commitment to deepening its presence in one of its fastestgrowing markets, reinforcing Bengaluru's status as a coffee capital

The new Drive-Thru is designed to provide the full Starbucks Third Place experience, integrating convenience with a



community-inspired ambiance. The store's aesthetic blends Bengaluru's cutting-edge tech culture with its traditional coffee heritage, featuring a warm material palette, bilingual signage in English and Kannada, and

curated artwork that enhances the inviting environment. Indoor and outdoor seating op-

Arabica coffee with beloved local flavors such as masala chai and filter coffee, catering to diverse customer preferences. Since debuting in Bengaluru with its first store in Kora-

mangala in 2013, Starbucks has become an integral part of the city's coffee landscape. Its presence spans key locations. including the coffee-centric Vittal Mallya Road store, the Prestige Trade Tower store, and high-footfall hubs like Phoenix Marketcity and Kempegowda International Airport.

tions encourage moments of connection, while the menu seamlessly combines premium

apply now. Writing on 'X', he observed, "It's time India's brightest minds brought their power to politics.

Khera pointed out, the Con-