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DELHI GOVT TO LAUNCH MAHILA SAMRIDDHI YOJANA **ON MARCH 8, AAP SLAMS**



INDIAN STOCK MARKET ENDS FLAT, **SMALLCAP STOCKS EXTEND RALLY**



KANNADA ACTOR RANYA **RAO HELD AT KIA** WITH 14KG GOLD

BJP's 'Viksit Delhi Budget' to focus on women, BJP MP Bansuri Swaraj Hails 'Jan Aushadhi' As education, and trade, to be tabled on March 24-26 a Visionary Initiative, Highlights Its Benefits

New Delhi

With the BJP-led Delhi government gearing up to present its first budget later this month, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta has ramped up consultations with key stakeholders to shape the 'Viksit Delhi Budget.' Expected to be tabled between March 24 and 26, the budget comes amid mounting political pressure over the BJP's poll promise of financial aid to women.

On Wednesday, Gupta led discussions with women's groups at the 'Mahila Samvad' held at the Delhi Vidhan Sabha, where concerns about security, financial empowerment, education, CCTV installations, and sanitation facilities took center stage. She assured participants that their inputs would be factored into

Gold slips below Rs

89,000-mark, silver

NEW DELHI: According to

the All India Sarafa Associa-

tion, gold price slipped below

Rs 89,000 per 10 grams in the

national capital on Friday due

to subdued domestic demand The price of the precious

metal of 99.9 per cent purity

dipped by Rs 200 to Rs 88,900

However, silver climbed by

Rs 500 to Rs 99,500 per kilo-

gram, extending the gains for

the fourth straight day. In the

past four sessions, the silver had advanced by Rs 3,100.

In futures trade on the MCX.

gold for April delivery slipped

by Rs 50 to Rs 85,983 per 10

On the global front, gold

futures were trading flat at

futures in the Asian market

hours quoted 0.17 per cent

lower at \$33.28 per ounce.

fall in gold prices.

climbs Rs 500

zations to understand their expectations for the 2025-26

budget. Kev issues related to women's empowerment and welfare were discussed, and their recommendations will be given due consideration, Gupta said.

reach strategy, she also en- nounced plans to visit slum argaged with private school eas over the next three days to "We had an extensive dia- associations, reaffirming the interact directly with women logue with women's organi- government's commitment and youth.

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Health and Transport Minis-

ter Pankaj Kumar Singh on

Thursday announced a 100-day

roadmap for sweeping reforms

in Delhi's healthcare system, in-

cluding the implementation of

the Avushman Bharat Scheme

and stricter enforcement of hos-

health department officials at

the Secretariat, Singh confirmed

that no health schemes from the

Following a meeting with them "corrupt." He accused

previous Kejriwal-led govern- MoU with the central govern-

pital regulations.

to improving the education system. "Our vision is to collaborate with schools to ensure that Delhi's education system becomes the best in the country," she said.

Additionally, Gupta met with trade organizations at As part of a broader out- the Delhi Secretariat and an-

"This budget will reflect the aspirations of Delhiites," she asserted, underscoring the BJP's commitment to fulfilling its electoral promises.

Meanwhile, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has escalated pressure on the BJP government, putting up posters across the capital demanding the immediate rollout of the promised Rs 2,500 monthly financial assistance to women by March 8.

Responding to AAP's campaign, Gupta dismissed the accusations of delay. "Nobody needs to remind us how many days are left. We will work according to our agenda; they will not dictate it," she said.

With the BJP securing a decisive victory in last month's Delhi Assembly elections, the upcoming budget—dubbed the "Janta Ka Budget" by Gupta—will serve as a crucial test of the party's governance strategy and ability to deliver on its promises.

facilitate its rollout. Under the

scheme, the Delhi and Central

governments will each cover

5 lakh in treatment costs for

The previous government did

not allow Ayushman Bharat

in Delhi. We will ensure its

implementation. The CAG

report has also revealed that

medicine tenders were awarded

to blacklisted companies. Our

government will ensure quality

healthcare and medicines for

The minister also announced

stricter enforcement of the

eligible patients.

all," Singh said.



uri Swaraj on Friday lauded the 'Jan Aushadhi' initiative as a visionary project that was given a major impetus under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The BJP MP emphasised that the 'Jan Aushadhi Kendras' have not only significantly reduced the cost of medicines for the common people but have also played a crucial role in boosting employment opportunities across the country, particularly through their fran-

(EWS) quota in private hospi-

tals, mandating that 10% of in-

patient admissions and 25% of

OPD consultations be reserved

for EWS patients. Nodal officers

will be appointed to monitor

compliance, with audits every

Highlighting concerns over

maternal and infant healthcare,

Singh noted that 20% of births

in Delhi still take place at home,

posing significant health risks.

To address this, the government

plans to establish dedicated

mother-and-child centers to

improve maternal and neona-

three months.

Bansuri Swaraj also said, today, as we celebrate 'Jan Aushadhi Kendra Day,' it fills me with immense pride to reflect on how this visionary initiative by Prime Minister Modi, has transformed healthcare accessibility for millions of people. The objective was clear - to provide affordable, high-quality medicines to the masses. I am delighted to share that today, over 15,000 'Jan Aushadhi Kendras' are operational across India, making medicines more accessible than

Swaraj was speaking from a 'Jan Aushadhi Kendra' in Karol Bagh, where she highlighted the impressive savings that customers experience.

"For example, medicines for chronic conditions like diabetes and hypertension. Here, the medicines are available at up to 91 per cent lower prices compared to conventional chemists. Even multivitamins and calcium supplements, which are essential for everyone, are 94 per cent cheaper. The 'Jan Aushadhi Kendra' offers more than 2,000 affordable medicines, as well as over 300 surgi-

cal products," she said. $\hbox{``Just today, I purchased some'}\\$ items for my father and myself. At a regular pharmacy, my bill would have been around Rs 1.800, but here, I paid just Rs 700 - and I got so much more for my money." Swaraj stressed that the 'Jan Aushadhi' initiative offers more than just cost-

on American goods will kick in on April 2. "And the big one will be on April 2, when reciprocal tariffs, so if India or China, or any of the countries that really...India is a

nation - it's Canada. Canada

Trump also said right now, the tariffs are "temporary" and "small ones" but "the predominant tariffs" that will be reciprocal in nature will start from April 2 and they will be a "big

by every country in the world, and now whatever they charge us, they charge us 150-200% (and) we charge them nothing. So whatever they charge us, we're going to charge them, and there'll be no getting out of it. So we look forward to April 2. I've been looking forward to that date for a long time. And that'll be something very big,

tional Secretary Manjinder Singh Sirsa said on Thursday that the accused in the 1984 Sikh genocide cases are being brought to the book and punished after four painful decades that the Sikh community has undergone. "It was only after Prime Minister Narendra Modi constituted an SIT in 2014 and people are now getting justice, " he said.

Sirsa said the prime accused Sajjan Kumar has been

"It was Rajiv Gandhi who orchestrated the attack and later gave plum political postings to those who executed his nefarious plans."Delhi minister Sirsa said the plum political postings held prime accused Sajjan Kumar, Jagdish Tytler, H.K.L. Bhagat, Dharam Shastri and Lalit Maken are some of the examples of the way Con- ing on Punjab's resources to gress "adjusted" wrongdoers as prime people.

He added similarly accused Tytler had been convicted despite the Congressled Union Government CBI team having given him clean chit in anti-Sikh riots."The SIT has now filed charge sheet and charges are being framed. The victims of 1984 riots now know that their cases are in the right hands. Had PM Modi not constituted the SIT, the offenders would have continued to hoodwink law and people



Sirsa said in Kanpur after

33 years, 80 people have taken to task who perpetrated the crimes against Sikhs and had gone scot free. "Such offenders had never even dreamt that the law could catch on with them. Now cases have been registered, arrests have been made, witnesses are deposing before courts and justice is

Slamming Arvind Kejriwalled Aam Aadmi Party of lootsaid that having lost their base in Delhi, the entire party has now focused towards Punjab. He said the party was scavengmeet its need for power and

He said the Kejriwal would Minister Bhagwant Mann and take over the cudgels of Punjab.Sirsa added that for the past three years, the AAP had slept over issues of drugs. corruption and law and order in Punjab."It is now trying to prove that it has risen from a Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann has made a mockery of the system by declaring that Rs 1.81 lakh has been seized as drug money.

1984 Sikh genocide accused are being brought to book: Sirsa

CHANDIGARH: BJP na-

convicted in the second case and has been awarded life term after four decades.

would still have been bereft

of justice."

being delivered."

soon show the door to Chief slumber, "Sirsa said.He said

India Signs \$248 Million Defence Deal with Russia for T-72 Tank Engines Rs 50,000 crore by 2029-30. Driven by strong government

the former administration of

blocking the Ayushman Bharat

Scheme in Delhi and said an

ment would continue, calling ment would soon be signed to Economically Weaker Section

NEW DELHI: The Minisper 10 grams, registering its second day of decline. Gold of try of Defence has signed a \$248 million contract with 99.5 per cent purity also went lower by Rs 200 to Rs 88,500 Russia's Rosoboronexport the procurement o Traders said reduced depowerful 1000 HP Engines mand from local jewellers as for T-72 tanks of the Indian well as retail buyers led to the Army, in fully formed, completely knocked down and semi knocked down conditions.

> The deal also includes Transfer of Technology (ToT) from Rosoboronexport to Armoured Vehicles Nigam Limited (Heavy Vehicle Factory), Avadi, Chennai, for integration and subsequent licensed production of engines under ToT to boost the "Make in India" initiative in the defence sector.

The T-72 is the mainstay of the Indian Army's tank fleet \$2,929.30 per ounce. Meanwhich is at present fitted with while, spot gold rose \$10.14 or 0.35 per cent to \$2,921.94 780 HP Engine. Equipping the per ounce. However, silver existing fleet of T-72 Tanks with 1000 HP Engine will enhance the battlefield mobility and offensive capability Aatmanirbhar drive was "yield-



Delhi govt to overhaul healthcare in 100 days, scraps Kejriwal-era schemes

of Indian Army, the Defence Ministry said.

On the back of strong government support India's defence production reached a record high of Rs 1.27 lakh crore in 2023-24, this represents a 174 per cent increase from Rs 46,429 crore in 2014-15. The country aims to reach Rs 3 lakh crore in defence production

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh recently said that India's ing the desired results" and the country was poised to reach Rs 50,000 crore in defence exports by 2029-30.

Rajnath Singh said that the government's efforts of achieve self-reliance are turning out to be highly successful as defence exports, which were around just Rs 600 crore 10 years ago. crossed a record number of Rs 21,000 crore in Financial Year 2023-24. He exuded confidence that the progress will continue and defence exports will reach grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of around 20 per cent during FY24-FY29, according to a CareEdge Ratings report. The collaboration between

support and increasing private

sector participation, India's de-

government and private sector entities in India's defence sector has driven advancements in arms and ammunition, aerospace, electronics, and Naval technologies. This collaboration has been

supported by policies such as 'Make in India' and liberalised FDI norms, which have enhanced domestic manufacturing capabilities, attracted international investments in defence innovation and driven notable growth in exports of military equipment, the report points out.

sador to India, Ono Keiichi, affirmed on Thursday that Japan will support India in achieving its developmental goals for 2047, while emphasising that both countries are poised to expand their economic partnership into emerging sectors such as renewable energy, artificial intelligence,

Speaking on the sidelines of the 48th Joint Meeting of the Japan-India Business Cooperation Committee (JIBCC) and the India-Japan Business Cooperation Committee (IJBCC), Ambassador Keiichi characterised the bilateral relationship as one of

"Japan and India have been natural partners, and for more than 10 years, we have been special, strategic and global partners," he stated.

the robust investment and trade relations between the two nations, expressing confidence in future growth across new eco-



grow in new economic areas like renewable energy, AI, IT, and

exchanges, which he described as a vital component of bilateral relations. On March 5, a 17-member delegation from the JIBCC, led by Chairman Tatsuo Yasunaga, met with Prime Minister

The delegation comprised senior executives from prominent

nomic domains. "I believe it will Japanese corporations spanning various sectors including manufacturing, banking, airlines, pharmaceuticals, plant engineering,

> of the joint committee meeting held in the national capital.

Discussions focused on key strategic areas including the development of high-quality, low-cost manufacturing capabilities in India, expanding manufacturing operations for global markets with particular emphasis on Africa, and enhancing human resource development and exchanges.

'India charges very high tariffs'; Trump reiterates his stand



high tariff nation, US President Donald Trump has said as he reiterated that reciprocal tariffs on countries that impose levies

very high tariff nation," he said. "I'll tell you what's a high tariff

charges us 250% for our milk products and other products,' Trump said in the Oval Office on Thursday as he signed some executive orders.

game changer for our country" "Because we've been ripped off

Trump said.

This is the second time in as many days that Trump has remarked about India's tariffs.

Jaguar Fighter Aircraft Crashes In Haryana, **Pilot Ejects Safely**



fighter aircraft of the Indian Air Force (IAF) crashed in Haryana on Friday but the pilot managed to eject safely, officials said. According to the IAF, the

Jaguar aircraft crashed at Ambala during a routine training sortie after encountering system malfunction. The pilot maneuvered the aircraft away from any habitation on ground, before ejecting safely.

An inquiry has been ordered by the IAF, to ascertain the cause of the accident.

A British-French consor tium-developed supersonic jet attack aircraft, the SEPECAT Jaguar was conceived in the 1960s and began to be manufactured and enter service in various nations' air forces in the 1970s. India started receiving these fighters at the beginning of the 1980s and they were renamed "Shamsher"..

In service with the UK's Royal Air Force till 2007 and the French Air Force till 2005 before being replaced by the Eurofighter Typhoon and the Dassault Rafale, respectively, it was also used by the air forces of Ecuador, Nigeria, and Oman. Currently, India is the

only nation using the vintage fighter, which has also been manufactured and upgraded by the Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd to incorporate new avionics, a remodelled cockpit, and modern armaments.

The Indian Air Force is reported to maintain six squadrons of the aircraft, including two based in Ambala. The other four are based in Gorakhpur and Jamnagar. There are three variants of the fighter jet, including the IB, which is used for training, the IS, and the IM. Apart from ground attack, the IAF envisages a maritime strike operation role for the fighters.

DUPLICATE VOTER IDENTITY CARDS

Congress Rejects ECI's Response, Calls it 'Feeble and Duplicitous'

over 'duplicate' voter identity card numbers, the Election Commission of India (ECI) said it would address the "decades-long" matter in the next three months. However, the Congress has rejected ECI's response, calling it "feeble and duplicitous".

The party has raised concerns over the integrity of the voter lists, which it claims are flawed and dubious.

"The Congress rejects this feeble and duplicitous explanation by the ECI and reiterates its demands to come clean on the sanctity of voter lists in India," the grand old party's Empowered Action Group of Leaders and Experts (EAGLE)

said in a statement on Friday. EAGLE was set by the Congress party to keep a "bird's eye view" of elections in the

duct of free and fair elections by the Election Commission of India".

Maken, Digvijaya Singh, Abhishek Manu Singhvi, Praveen Chakravarty, Pawan Khera, Gurdeep Singh Sappal, Nitin Raut, and Vamshi Chand The Election Commission

of India (ECI) has issued a duplications response on the issue of same voter IDs being allotted to multiple voters. The ECI, in its response, hides behind its processes to offer a feeble explanation," added the statement.

According to the statement, the ECI has been forced to admit that its voter lists are flawed and not trustworthy. ECI speaks of constituting a

The EAGLE statement

further explained that "the

The panel includes Ajay

Election Commission, in a letter issued on September 18th, 2008, to Chief Electoral Officers of all States, had said that 'voter-IDs are unique'. However, the ECI today says, the issue of duplicate voter-IDs is a "decades long issue".

"Which statement of the ECI should the citizens of India believe? Why should an average Indian voter today trust the Election Commission?' the party questioned. "How is it that 17 years later,

body to clean up this process

the ECI then all along misrepresenting to the voters of India that the 'voter-IDs were unique'? If yes, then what are the other processes which ECI has been misrepresenting to its citizens?" the Congress questioned. The Congress leaders said

that the initial response of the Election Commission to these questions was to defend itself by stating that 'this could happen only across states'. "But there are instances with clear evidence of many voters

with the same voter-ID in the same assembly constituency in the same state," the party said, asking: "Is the ECI then lying? As the issue of duplicate voter IDs clearly is not across different states, but rather in the same state and, in many cases, in the same constituencies.

Japan Commits to Supporting India's 2047 Goals, Expanding Partnership to AI, Renewable Energy, & IT

NEW DELHI: Japan's Ambasand information technology.

natural partnership.

The Ambassador highlighted

others. Japanese businesses are keen on building relationships and making investments with Indian businesses," he remarked. Ambassador Keiichi also emphasised Japan's interest in strengthening people-to-people

Narendra Modi.

and logistics. During the meeting, Yasunaga briefed the Prime Minister ahead

AAP, BJP clash over CAG report on Delhi's health infrastructure in assembly

OUR CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi

The final day of the first session of the newly constituted Delhi Assembly witnessed a heated confrontation between the ruling BJP and opposition AAP over the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report on the state's public health infrastructure. The session saw multiple disruptions, with Speaker Vijender Gupta ordering the marshalling out of three AAP MLAs.

The tension escalated when AAP MLA Jarnail Singh was removed from the House for raising slogans about the BJP's unfulfilled promise of paying Rs 2,500 to women in Delhi. His protest occurred while Chief Minister Rekha Gupta was addressing the House. In response, Leader of Opposition Atishi and other AAP MLAs staged a walkout. Earlier, AAP MLAs Anil Jha and Kuldeep Kumar were also marshalled out for using what the Speaker termed "unparliamentary" lan-



fied to PTI that any member expelled or suspended from the House must leave the Assembly premises immediately, failing which they would face an automatic suspension for the remainder of the session.

The CAG report, tabled on February 28, had triggered sharp exchanges between both parties. The debate intensified when BJP MLA Ashok Goel criticized the previous AAP government's handling of the health sector. AAP MLA Anil Jha responded with remarks

guage. The Speaker later clari- ate, prompting Speaker Gupta to demand an apology. BJP MLA Karnail Singh accused Jha of disrespecting Hindu sentiments by likening the debate to a "Ramleela." Amidst the uproar, the Speaker ordered Jha's removal.

 $AAP\,MLA\,Kuldeep\,Kumar$ was also ejected from the House for similar reasons. Meanwhile, Chief Minister Gupta lashed out at AAP, blaming the party for the deteriorating state of Delhi's healthcare system during its 10-year rule. Referring to that were deemed inappropri- AAP's demand for clarity on

women, Gupta retorted, "Inki aukat nahi hai hamse poochne, Rs 2,500 kab doge" (They have no status to question us about Rs 2,500). She asserted that the BJP government would fulfill its promise but would not be dictated by the opposition.

Defending its track record, AAP countered by citing the CAG report's mention of Delhi ranking first in India's health services index. Senior AAF leader Gopal Rai emphasized this point but ended his speech as the Speaker signaled that his allotted time was up. Although Speaker Gupta allowed him to continue, Rai chose not to speak further. AAP MLA Sanjeev Jha challenged the BJP, urging them to focus on improving Delhi's health services instead of blaming the previous government. However, BJP legislators continued to cite lapses highlighted in the CAG report, maintaining that the Kejriwal government had left Delhi's healthcare system

Delhi govt to launch Mahila Samriddhi **Yojana** on March 8, AAP slams delay



OUR CORRESPONDENT New Delhi

Delhi government is set to launch the Mahila Samriddhi Yojana on March 8, International Women's Day, fulfilling its pre-election promise of providing financial assistance to economically weaker women. However, the delay in its approval has sparked criticism from the opposition Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which alleges that the BJP government has failed to act promptly on its commitment.

The Mahila Samriddhi Yojana aims to provide financial assistance of Rs 2,500 per month to women from economically

weaker sections. Women aged 21-60 years with an annual income of up to Rs 2.5 lakh are expected to be eligible for the scheme, according to the draft proposal. The eligibility criteria were discussed in a meeting attended by the Delhi Chief Secretary, an official said. "The income limit for registration under the Mahila Samriddhi Yojana is set at Rs 2.5 lakh. The draft proposal has been prepared and will be presented in the Cabinet meeting

for approval," the official added. Once the Cabinet approves the proposal, the registration process will begin. The scheme is designed to support financially vulnerable women in Delhi by providing them with

direct financial aid. The official Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium on International Women's Day, March 8. BJP National President JP Nadda, Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, and senior party leaders will be present. The event will also mark the beginning of online registration and the symbolic distribution of funds to selected beneficiaries. BJP MP Manoj Tiwari recently announced that the registration process for the scheme will commence on March 8. In its Delhi Assembly election manifesto, the BJP had pledged to implement this scheme upon assuming power, ensuring financial aid reaches eligible women promptly.

Tiwari further stated that a list of beneficiaries will be compiled, and the disbursement process will be completed within one and a half months. Meanwhile, the opposition Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has criticized the BJP government for not approving the scheme in its first Cabinet meeting, despite Prime Minister

Terrorist plotting conspiracy to attack Ram Mandir arrested



A terrorist identified as Abdul

SATISH HANDA Faridabad

Rehman of age around 19 living in a hideout, a tubewell room having no electricity in the agriculture field in Pali village of Faridabad since past three days, plotting a conspiracy to attack Ram Mandir in Ayodhya was arrested late Sunday evening by the Palwal STF team. He was produced before area magistrate Sanchita Singh in the district court and remanded to police custody for ten days by the court. Alleged accused was plotting an attack on the Ram temple. The local police are under fire as to how he found a hideout in the tubewell room in agriculture fields of Pali village for the past three days without having any clue about the terrorist in the fields that remain dark at night. There was no proper way to go there and the question arises why the terrorist chose this lonely place

and stayed there for three days.

Preliminary investigation revealed, this terrorist was

plotting to attack the Ram temple in Ayodhya. However, one or two farmers had spotted him, but thinking him to be drunk, they did not bother him. After the arrest of the terrorist during remand period, a Faridabad police officer said that the accused was constantly receiving messages from his terrorist colleagues and the organization from somewhere, carrying a hand grenade and was going to move forward via Faridabad, who was plotting to attack Ayodhya Ram Mandir. Police sources revealed that the terrorist organization ISIS Khorasan is active in Pakistan and Afghanistan. The source said that this terrorist organization brainwashed Abdul Rehman and others and prepared him to attack the temple by inciting religious sentiments about the temple being built in place of the mosque in Avodhya. Information revealed that Abdul Rehman was in contact with this terrorist organization for the past several months. He was contacted through social

media, after which he was included in the terrorist group Investigation further revealed that videos that were hurtful towards a particular religion were uploaded in the group, and such recorded video messages were also being sent to the people in the group. In these messages, Abdul and other youths like him were told that they have been oppressed in Ayodhya and they have to take revenge for it and were prepared for such an attack. According to the police, Abdul Rehman made a recce of the Ram temple and its surroundings on the instructions of this ISIS terrorist organization and made a video of the Ayodhya Ram Temple place. He also shared many videos with the terrorist organization.

Delhi High Court grants bail to wrestler Sushil Kumar



Court on Tuesday granted bail to Olympian wrestler Sushil Kumar, the prime accused in the murder case of junior national wrestling champion Sagar

As per the bail order passed by a bench of Justice Sanjeev Narula, the murder-accused wrestler will be required to furnish a bail bond of Rs 50, 000 and two sureties of like amount.

Sushil Kumar, along with others, is accused of allegedly assaulting former junior national wrestling champion Dhankar, a resident of Haryana's Rohtak, and his two friends Sonu and Amit Kumar in the parking lot of the city's Chhatrasal stadium, on May 4, 2021, over an alleged property dispute. He has been in judicial custody since June 2, 2021. He was earlier granted interim bail, for performing the undertaking surgery for his torn

Dhankar had succumbed to injuries after being assaulted by Sushil Kumar and his accomplices and according to the post-mortem report, died due to cerebral damage resulting from blunt object impact.

Sushil Kumar was arrested after staying on the run for 18 days after the death of Dhankar. According to Delhi Police officials, Kumar had travelled to Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Haryana during the 18-day-long cat-andmouse chase game. He was finally arrested from Delhi's Mundka area when he had come to collect some cash and also borrowed a scooty from a national-level player. Following his arrest, he was also suspended from his Railways job.

In October 2022, the trial court had framed charges against Sushil Kumar and 17 others, setting the stage for

Fare-Free Public Transport: A game-changer for women's social, economic, and health benefits

In an era where gender equality and economic empowerment are at the forefront of policy discussions, Fare-Free Public Transport (FFPT) schemes have emerged as a critical tool for transforming women's lives. Cities across the world, including Delhi, have implemented FFPT programs to address mobility constraints faced by women. These initiatives have had far-reaching impacts on women's social inclusion, economic participation, and health outcomes. This article delves into the effects of FFPT on women's social mobility, economic and Kanuri (2025). opportunities, and overall

SATISH HANDA

Haryana's Rewari police have

busted an interstate gang of cy-

ber 'thugs' gang. Five members

of the gang who are residents

of Bihar and Orissa have been

arrested by Haryana police

from the same house, from

whom 36 bank passbooks, 55

check books, 35 account kits.

39 mobile phones, 98 ATM

cards and 14 SIM cards have

been recovered. Preliminary

investigation revealed that

82 cases of cyber fraud are

registered against the mem-

bers of this gang across the

country. The arrested accused

have been taken on police re-



well-being, drawing insights from the implementation of such schemes in Delhi, as documented in the working paper Fare-Free Bus Travel Scheme for Women: Lessons from Delhi by Jamba, Devaraj,

Haryana Police arrested 5 cyber criminals from

Bihar committed 82 cases of fraud worth lakh

tion reveals that other cases of

cyber fraud are also expected

from this cyber criminal gang

likely to be exposed during

the police remand. Among

those arrested include Har

Prasad Biswal resident of Puri

district of Odisha, Binu Nayak

resident of Shankarpur village

in Puri district of Odisha, Raju

Kumar resident of Rasulpur

village in Jehanabad district of

Bihar, Manu Kumar resident

of Baloura village in Arwal

district of Bihar and Rahul

alias Sunny resident of Baisani

Tola Ward No. 69 in Patna

Police Dr. Mayank Gupta ad-

dressing a press conference on

Rewari Superintendent of

district of Bihar.

in the court. Police informa- a resident of village Musepur in on the spot.

Mobility and Autonomy Data from the study indicate that women's share of total daily bus ridership in Delhi increased from 33% in 2019 to 42% in 2023. The scheme has particularly benefited women from low-income households, Social Impact: Increased who previously struggled with

his complaint to police said that

he had received a call on Janu-

ary 9. The caller told him that

he is sending him an app, after

facilities will be available on the

mobile phone. After this, an app

was sent to him, after which, Rs

5.23 lakh was debited from his

said that in the case of fraud

of Rs 5.23 lakh, the police had

started investigation by regis-

Dr. Mayank Gupta SP Rewari

bank account.

A significant social benefit is the ability of women to make non-essential trips, such as visiting markets, places of worship, and social gatherings.

These opportunities contribute to mental well-being and strengthen community engagement, reducing the social isolation that many women previously experienced due

er participation in education,

employment, and social activi-

ties, breaking long-standing

mobility restrictions faced by



JAG MOHAN THAKEN Rajasthan

tering a case in Cyber Police The incident of death of a onemonth-old infant girl child al-Station Rewari and all five aclegedly crushed under boots cused have been arrested from Patna. Investigation revealed of Rajasthan police officials, that the amount transferred who rushed into the house of from Ved Prakash's account a Muslim daily wage labourer has gone to the account of Hara in Rajasthan's Alwar district Prasad Biswal resident of Nahar on Sunday, has ignited a fury Road Bajrangpuri, District in of anger among the public. The Patna who is originally from raid was reportedly said to be a part of an ongoing campaign Odisha, on which a team was sent to Bihar from Cyber Police by the police to crack down on Station Rewari. After the police cybercrime. Quoting Razida team reached Bihar, Har Prasad Khan, the mother of the demised child, the media reports, along with other members of the gang Binu Nayak, Raju Kumar, "When I was sleeping on the cot with my infant daughter, Manu Kumar and Rahul alias Sunny were also found residing the policemen arrived all of a sudden and pulled me out and in a house. The police arrested mand after presenting them Tuesday said that Ved Prakash, all the five members of the gang sent me out of the room. They

to mobility constraints. **CPI-M demands justice in** the incidence of onemonth-old infant allegedly crushed to death under



also pulled my husband out.

after 3 days wrapped in a blanket in Haryana transport costs. Survey results show that 14% of women now travel alone more frequently, and 11% travel more often with family and friends. Increased bus access has facilitated great-



Another female body found

SATISH HANDA Bahadurgarh

Three days ago on March 1, the body of a Congress worker Himani Narwal of around 22 was found in a suitcase near a flyover in Sampla in Rohtak district. The matter had not even been solved so far, when now the body of a woman estimated to be of age between 30-32 wrapped in a blanket has been found near the KMP flyover passing through Mehandipur Daboda brutally murdered and many marks of brutality on the body with sharp edge weapons have been found in a blanket in-

stead of a suitcase. Late on Monday night, a passerby noticed a blanket near the KMP flyover passing through Mehandipur Daboda village. When he got suspicious, the blanket highway. Now, the body of was opened, when a woman's a woman has been thrown body soaked in blood was found wrapped in a blanket. After this, the police were informed and the Sadar police station reached the spot do not fear the police. After and started the investigation. committing murders, they The forensic team was also are easily disposing of the called to the spot. According bodies on the side of the to the police, the age of the

deceased woman is estimated to be around 30-32 years and the body has not been identified yet. The woman was brutally murdered, deep injury marks were found on the body. The police started efforts to identify the body and sent information to nearby police stations in the area.

According to residents in

the area the highways pass-

ing through Rohtak, Jhajjar, Bahadurgarh have become dumping spots for dead bodies, the way bodies are eing thrown on the side of the highways to destroy the bodies after murder, raising questions on the police patrolling system. After brutally murdering Rohtaks Congress worker Himani Narwal in Sampla on March 1, in which the accused had put her body in a suitcase and thrown it on the side of the on Jhajjar-Bahadurgarh road after wrapping it in a blanket. It is clear from these incidents that the criminals

Rajasthan is the first state to present a green budget: CM Bhajan Lal Sharma

JAG MOHAN THAKEN Rajasthan

The Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma said that Rajasthan has taken initiative in green technology and sustainable development. Rajasthan is the first state to present a green budget and in this Rs 27, 854 crores has been set aside for green projects. He said that Circular Economy Park and Clean and Green Technology Development Centres are being set up with an investment of Rs 250 crore. The Chief Minister said that the state government will come up with a Circular Economy Incentive Scheme, which will provide assistance of up to Rs 2 crore to MSMEs and startups. Along with this, the disposal of old vehicles will be promoted through Rajasthan

Vehicle Scrapping Policy. CM

Sharma said that we will pro-

mote cooperation between the

government, private sector and



educational institutions through the establishment of Circular Economy Alliance Network to realize the dream of zero waste

The Chief Minister was addressing the 12th Regional 3R and Circular Economy Forum in Asia and the Pacific which was inaugurated Monday in Jaipur. The inaugural session was attended by Manohar Lal Khattar, Union Minister of Housing & Urban Affairs, Bhajan Lal Sharma, Chief Minister, Rajasthan. also for our future.

Mr. Trevor Hedley Manemahaga, Minister of Solomon Islands, Mr. Maina Vakafua Talia, Minister of Tuvalu, Mr. Ahmed Nizam, Deputy Minister of Climate Change of Maldives joined the session. Mr. Asao Keiichiro, Minister of Environment, Govt. of Japan joined the session through a virtual message. Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma mentioned that a circular economy is not just a necessity for today but

Himani Narwal murder case: accused arrested in Congress leader murder has also recovered a mobile

SATISH HANDA Rohtak

Bhupinder Singh Hooda dais, the murder in this manner... is extremely sad and shocking, which in itself is a blot on the law and order of the state. There should be a high-level, impartial investigation into this highly sensitive entire case and the culprits should receive the harshest punishment as soon as possible. Hooda demanded exemplary action so that in the future, anyone with criminal tendencies should think a thousand times before committing such an act. "It is a barbaric incident. I appeal to the state government to catch the culprits at the earliest and punish the guilty," Deniot Congress leader Rohtak MLA B B investigating it. The deceased

Batra said, saying she was an

active party worker. A female's body was found

stuffed in a suitcase near Sampla bus stand in Rohtak Saturday, police arrived at the spot and said, the victim was identified as Himani Narwal. a Congress party worker from the district and a resident of village near Bahadurgarh. Some people spotted the suitcase lying on the highway near a flyover near Sampla bus stand and informed the police. Police team that reached the spot immediately opened the suitcase and found the body of a young female stuffed inside. The body was sent for post mortem examination. Sampla police station in-charge Bijendra Singh said, "It is a murder and we are



has been identified as Himani Narwal. Police contacted her family members. Further investigations are on".

ADGP had a press conference late afternoon on Monday and while addressing said that police have solved the mystery

of Himani murder Police and have arrested the accused in the murder case of active Congress worker Himani Narwal. Police have arrested the accused in the murder case of active Congress worker Himani Narwal identified as Sachin. He said, police

the accused, has got a big success in the investigation of the murder case of Congress worker Himani Narwal, and the police has got a big success in the investigation of the murder case of female Congress leader. This has been confirmed by Sampla police station SHO Bijendra Singh during a press conference. Mother's pain overflows after seeing daughter's dead body in suitcase when she arrived at the spot.It is worth mentioning that talks were also going on about Himani Narwal's marriage, but she was murdered before that. At present, the police are engaged in investigation. The case will further be revealed only after the police interrogate the accused.

phone from the possession of

India expresses concern over Dhaka PM Modi to Visit Mauritius on March 11-12, Confirms MEA releasing 'violent extremists' Day celebrations," said Ramgoolam while addressing the

voiced concerns over Bangladesh releasing certain "violent extremists" and underlined that it is the responsibility of the interim government to protect the Hindus and other minorities as well as their religious institutions.

New Delhi said it supports a "stable, peaceful, inclusive and progressive Bangladesh' in which all issues are resolved through democratic means and by holding inclusive and participatory elections.

"We remain concerned about the deteriorating law and order situation, further exacerbated by the release of violent extremists, who were sentenced for serious crimes, MEA spokesperson Randhir

India has repeatedly underlined that it is the responsibility of the interim government to protect the Hindus and other minorities, as well as their properties and religious institutions, he said.

"However, only 1,254 incidents out of over 2,374 inci-

Rahul Gandhi interacts

with coolies at New Delhi

Railway station, pledges

NEW DELHI: Leader of the

Opposition Rahul Gandhi on

Wednesday expressed deep con-

cern over the rising number of

after interaction with coolies who

helped passengers during the

Saddened by their plight, Ra-

hul Gandhi said he would fight

for their rights with all his might.

In a post on X, he highlighted

the tragic consequences of such

number of stampedes at railway

stations and other public places is

a matter of great concern. Many

innocent people lose their lives

or suffer injuries in these unfor-

tunate events. We need to come

together and find ways to prevent

participation in addressing the

issue, urging people to share their

suggestions on improving crowd

management and enhancing se-

curity at railway stations. "If you

have any ideas to improve crowd

management, strengthen secu-

rity, or suggest any other mea-

sures, please share them. We will

listen to the voice of India!" he

added. Along with his post, the

Congress leader shared a video

of his interaction with coolies

at New Delhi Railway Station,

acknowledging their critical role

in assisting passengers during

emergencies. He met with them

to personally thank them for their

courageous efforts during the

February 15 stampede, which

such tragedies".

February 15 tragedy.

to fight for their rights

dents reported from August 5, 2024 to February 16, 2025 have been verified by the police. Further, 98 per cent of these 1,254 incidents were deemed 'political in nature',' he said. "We expect Bangladesh to thoroughly investigate and bring all perpetrators of killings, arson and violence to iustice without making such distinctions," he added.

There has been a sharp downturn in India-Bangladesh relations after deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina fled Dhaka in August in the face of implementation of some of of mutual interest," he noted.

of a massive anti-government protest. The relations nosedived dramatically after the interim government headed by Muhammad Yunus failed to contain attacks on minori-

To a question, Jaiswal said development cooperation is a priority area for India in the context of its relations with the people of Bangladesh.

ties, especially Hindus, in that

"The recent security situation and long-standing local issues have affected the pace

these projects," he said. "The official discussions therefore focused on rationalising the project portfolio and executing mutually agreed projects in a time bound man-

ner," he said. "Subject to obtaining the committed support and pending clearances from the Bangladesh side, we plan to take these projects forward," Jaiswal added

He also said that the 86th

meeting of the joint committee constituted to oversee the implementation of the Ganga Water Treaty between India and Bangladesh was held on March 6 in Kolkata. "This routine technical

meeting, which is scheduled

thrice annually, is part of an institutional structured mechanism associated with the implementation of the Treaty signed in 1996," he said. "At the meeting, the two

sides discussed technical issues pertaining to the Ganga Water Treaty, measurement of water flows and other issues



ter Narendra Modi will visit Mauritius on March 11-12 and attend the 57th National Day celebrations of Mauritius as the guest of honour, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) an-"PM Modi will be in Mau-

ritius on March 11 and 12 to attend the National Day celebrations of Mauritius, which falls on the 12th of March, as the Chief Guest. A contingent of Indian defence forces will participate in the celebrations along with a ship from the Indian Navy. The Prime Minister last visited Mauritius in 2015. During the visit, the Prime Minister will call on the President of Mauritius, meet with the Prime

Minister of Mauritius and hold several other meetings with important dignitaries and senior leaders from the country," Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal during a weekly media briefing in New Delhi on Friday.

Last month, Mauritius PM Navin Ramgoolam had informed the country's parliament about Prime Minister Modi's forthcoming visit.

"In the context of the celebrations of the 57th anniversary of the Independence of our country, I have great pleasure to inform the House, that following my invitation, His Excellency, Shri Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India, has kindly agreed to be the Guest linkages.

NEW DELHI: Amid a row

over the duplicate Electors

Photo Identity Card (EPIC)

numbers to voters across

different states, the Election

Commission of India (ECI)

on Friday said it has taken

cognisance of the matter and

will resolve the issue in the

"Sample enquiry of over 100

electors reveals that electors

with duplicate EPIC numbers

are genuine electors. Since the

allotment of EPIC series in the

vear 2000 to the States/UTs.

some EROs did not use the

correct series," the Election

Commission said in a state-

ment. It said it has already

aken cognisance of the mat-

ter. "Irrespective of an EPIC

number, an elector who is

linked to the electoral roll of

a particular polling station can

cast his vote at that polling sta-

tion only and nowhere else,"

it said. "The issue of allotment

of duplicate numbers due to

incorrect series across States/

UTs could not have been de-

tected as the States/UTs were

independently managing the

electoral roll databases. The

Commission has now decided

Legislative Assembly on Fri-

dav. It is CM Siddaramaiah's

next three months.

Amid row over duplicate voter IDs,

ECI to resolve issue in next 3 months

ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

"It is indeed a singular privilege for our country, to host such a distinguished personality who is doing us this honour, in spite of his very tight schedule and in spite of his recent visits to Paris and the United States. He has agreed to be here as our special guest. The visit of Shri Modi is a testimony of the close relations between our two nations," the Mauritius PM added further.

PM Modi has underlined New Delhi's unwavering commitment to its special and enduring partnership with Mauritius, calling it terming it as 'special" and "unique".

In July 2024, External Affairs Minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar undertook a two-day visit to Mauritius — one of the first countries that he visited in his current term — holding extensive discussions with not only then PM Pravind Kumar Jugnauth but also Ramgoolam on various aspects of bilateral ties, including the development partnership, defence and maritime cooperation, economic and trade ties, and people-to-people

to resolve this long pending

issue after detailed discussions

within the technical teams and

concerned CEOs in the next

three months by ensuring a

unique national EPIC number

to the existing electors having

a duplicate EPIC number and

West Bengal Chief Minister

for future electors as well."

Mamata Banerjee last week ac-

cused the BJP of manipulating

the electoral rolls with the bless-

ings of the ECI and enrolling

people from Punjab, Haryana

and Gujarat as electors in West

Bengal. She had also asked her

party leaders to find out the fake

voters in ten days. The Elec-

tion Commission said India's

Electoral Rolls are the bigges

database of electors across the globe with over 99 crore regis-

tered electors. "In addition to

the continuous updation of

Electoral Rolls, the Election

Commission conducts An-

nual Special Summary Revi-

sion (SSR) exercise every year

for updation of electoral rolls

which happens during the

period of October-December

every year with the publication

of final rolls in the following

Guarantees not freebies, are strategic investments in

month of January," it said.

BJD leader Chakra and his men loot Gandhamardhan mines in the name of cooperative



ARABINDA MOHAPATRA Bhubaneswar

Chickens are coming home to roost for Biju Janata Dal (BJD) leaders following their ouster from power. The Economic Offence Wing of Crime Branch on Monday grilled BJD leader Raja Chakra for his alleged involvement with office-bearers of Gandhamardan Loading Agency and Transporting Cooperative Society limited in connection with misappropriation of funds to the tune of Rs 35

The EOW had arrested former president Manas Ranjan Barik and secretary Utkal Das of Gandhamardan Agency, which is engaged in loading iron ore from the mines of Odisha Mining Corporation for their alleged role in the scam. They were arrested last month. Chakra was reportedly close to BJD strongman Pranab Prakash Das aka Bobby and IAS officer-turnedpolitician VK Pandian. There are allegations that he enjoyed their blessings.

The Gandhamardan agency was registered in 2006 and engaged in loading of iron ore from the mines in Keonjhar district. Investigation revealed that the operations of the society were monopolised by a handful of influential outsiders who entered into a conspiracy with the office-bearers to misappropriate crores of rupees between 2017 and 2024.

The accused reportedly forged documents pertaining to labour costs, employment provident fund deductions, money spent towards peripheral developmental activities, infrastructural expenses and payments made to the people affected in the mining area. According to EOW sources, a preliminary probe suggests Raja Chakra was one of the beneficiaries of the fraud. It is believed to be a massive scam and requires a thorough probe by agencies like the Income Tax department and Enforcement Directorate. Chakra, a local BJD leader in Keonjhar, is no stranger to controversies. In October 2021 a senior BJP leader had alleged that Chakra was behind the attack zhen two bike-borne n ants had hurled country-made bombs at his car while he was returning from a public meeting

in the district. According to latest reports, the EOW carried out simultaneous raids at six locations linked to Raja Chakra in Keonjhar, Koida, Dhamra, and Gopalpur on Wednesday. It is reported to have seized 200 'benami' accounts and 20 vehicles reportedly belonging to the BJD leader.

Over 15,000 Jan Aushadhi Kendras offering medicines at 50-90 pc lower prices daily: Nadda in sales. Notably, the PMBJP

NEW DELHI: Over 15,000 Jan Aushadhi Kendras across the country are offering medicines at 50-90 per cent lower prices daily, said Union Health Minis-ter JP Nadda on Jan Aushadhi Diwas on Friday. Every year, March 7th is cel-

ebrated as 'Jan Aushadhi Diwas' to raise awareness about the scheme and promote the use of generic medicines. Over 15, 000 Jan Aushadhi

Kendras operate across India, benefiting more than 10 lakh people daily by offering medistampedes at railway stations cines at 50-90 per cent lower prices, saving citizens nearly Rs 30, 000 crore so far, "said Nadda. "Under PM Narendra Modi's leadership, the Pradhan Mantri Jan Aushadhi Pariyoiana (PMBJP) has transformed healthcare and ensures affordable, high-quality medicines incidents, stating, "The increasing for all, "he added. Jan Aushadhi Kendras, set up under

scheme, that provides quality checks, competitive procuremedicines at affordable prices to the masses. Launched in November 2008, the Scheme is being implemented through the Pharmaceuticals & Damp; Medical Devices Bureau of India

The PMBJP offers about "2, 047 drugs and 300 surgical items covering diverse therapeutic needs", Nadda said. The Union Minister added that "the PMBJP maintains sustainabilthe PMBJP, is a public welfare ity through stringent quality

ment and robust supply chain managed by PMBI". Noting that the Kendras are "redefining affordable healthcare", Nadda informed of plans to "open 25, 000 Jan Aushadhi Kendras by March 31, 2027, across the country". Earlier this week, the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers informed that the number of Jan Aushadhi Kendras has increased by 180 times in the last 10 years, and it has also

witnessed a 200 times surge

made sales of Rs. 1, 470 crore (at MRP), leading to a savings of about Rs. 7, 350 crore to the citizens in the financial year

In the current financial year, 2024-25, PMBJP has made sales of Rs. 1, 760 Crore (at MRP) till February 28, the Ministry said. The week-long celebration began on March 1 with Nadda flagging off a Rath and vehicles to promote the PMBJP. Other activities held during the week included Jan Arogya Mela with heritage walks and over 500 health camps for senior citizens; children's participation and distributing nutraceutical products; women's involvement with sanitary pad distribution to showcase the affordability of Jan Aushadhi products; pharmacist awareness seminars in 30 cities; and the Jan Aushadhi Mitra Volunteer Registration Campaign.

Centre Notifies Scheme to Help Sugar Mills Produce More Ethanol for Green Push

NEW DELHI: The Centre has notified the scheme for increasing the financial viability of cooperative sugar mills through interest subvention on bank loans for converting their existing sugarcane-based ethanol plants to multi-feedstock units, according to an official statement issued on Friday.

This conversion allows the sugar mills to use maize and damaged food grains, ensuring year-round ethanol production and improved efficiency. The initiative aligns with the Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) Programme, targeting 20 per cent ethanol blending with pet-

Under this modified Ethanol



Interest Subvention Scheme, the government is facilitating entrepreneurs with interest subvention at the rate of 6 per cent per annum or 50 per cent of the rate of interest charged on loans given to them by banks and financial institutions, whichever is lower. The cost of the interest waiver is being borne by the Central government for five years including a one-year

moratorium, the statement said.

The sugarcane crushing period is limited to 4-5 months only in a year due to which sugar mills can operate for a limited

period of time. This further leads to a reduction in their overall operational efficiency and productivity. To ensure the functioning of cooperative sugar mills throughout the year, their existing ethanol plants can be converted into multi-feedstock-based plants to use grains like maize and damaged foodgrains under the new modified scheme.

future amendments.

On the restoration of statehood, Mir stated that reinstating Jammu and Kashmir's status would empower the chief minister, strengthen democracy, and address several regional concerns. He welcomed Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha's remarks on statehood, saying they had generated fresh hope among the people, and urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to fulfill his commitment to J&K's political future. Ghulam Ahmed Mir also criticized the $central\ government \\ `s\ approach$

cal support.



JAMMU: Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leader Ghulam Ahmed Mir on March 4 strongly advocated for a caste census in Jammu and Kashmir, arguing that it would help determine the exact population of various communities and ensure equitable distribution of benefits.

Speaking during the Motion of Thanks on the Lieutenant Governor's address in the J&K Assembly, Mir also reiterated the Congress's demand for full statehood with legal and constitutional safeguards for locals in government jobs and land ownership. Mir emphasized that the abrogation of Article 370 should not mark the end of J&K's special provisions and urged the government to explore new legal frameworks for safeguards. He pointed out that constitutional amendments continue to evolve and suggested that fresh provisions for J&K could be introduced through

16th budget, the highest by any leader in the state. CM Siddaramaiah sought the permission of the Speaker U.T. Khader to sit and read out the budget after making opening remarks. He began the budget presentation with lines from poets Kuvempu and Gopalakrishna Adiga. He stated, "I am pleased to present the budget for the year 2025-26 before the Assembly. The budget is not merely a lifeless exercise of adding and subtracting numbers. I stand here

social concern: CM Siddaramaiah presents budget BENGALURU: Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday sent out a clear message to continue the guarantees despite the criticism by the opposition and a section of party leaders by announcing that the guarantees are not freebies, they are strategic investments made on economic and social The CM said this while presenting the state budget for the financial year 2025-26 at the

commitment to fulfil the dreams of every citizen of the state, creating hopes for tomorrow, and honouring our promise to Walk the Talk'. It embodies Mahatma Gandhi's vision that the welfare of all is achievable through a sustainable and just economy and showcases the government's dedication to social and economic equality," CM Siddaramaiah stated.

He further said that the principle of the beast, "Survival of the Fittest" is often referred to as 'Social Darwinism'. On the contrary to this, Babasaheb Dr. B.R. Ambedkar framed our Constitution to build a nation founded with the hope of an equal society built on the foundation of humanity. Behind our Constitution lie the dreams of philosophers like Buddha,

Basavanna, Narayana Guru,

and others. Inspired by their vision, we are leading the state with unwavering commitment. Our government is firmly resolved to continue securing the foundation of social justice, "he underlined. "The government has the responsibility to ensure that available resources are accessible to everyone. By balancing economic development with

people's welfare, we are shaping Karnataka's development model through the concept of Universal Basic Income. Many of the welfare programmes we offer, including the five guarantees, are not merely freebies; I can confidently say that these are strategic investments made on economic and social principles,

Controversy over delinking of Biju 'Jayanati' from Panchayati Raj Divas sons of the state who was one

ARABINDA MOHAPÁTRA Bhubaneswar

claimed 18 lives.

A major controversy has erupted over BJP government's decision to delink former chief minister Biju Patnaik's birth anniversary that falls on March 5 from Panchayati Rai Divas. The day has been celebrated as Panchayati Raj Divas since 1993 to honour the late leader's contribution to the strengthening of panchayati Raj institutions.

However, the new BJP government of the state decided to celebrate Biju Babu's anniversary but not as PR Divas because it argues that the national panchayati raj divas falls on April 24 and there should not be a clash between the two.

However, leaders of Biju Janata Dal (BJD), which has been named after Biju Patnaik and is led by his son Naveen Patnaik, have slammed the Mohan Majhi government for delinking his anniversary from PR Divas celebration and described it as petty politics by the saffron party leaders.



over the issue on March 6. Congress, too, disapproved of Mohan Majhi-led government's decision accusing it of disrespecting a towering leader like Biju Patnaik who was among one of the builders of modern Odisha. The BJP government has also scrapped the customary public holiday on March 5.

But it has sought to justify its decision on the ground that observance of March 5 as "Panchayati Raj Divas" in Odisha and celebration of National Panchayati Raj Day on April

overcome this inconsistency at the national and state levels in the celebration of Panchayati Raj Day the state government has decided to no longer celebrate March 5 as Panchayati Raj Day in Odisha and will instead celebrate it on April 24," a statement from the chief minister's office said. However, the government has decided to celebrate March 5 as Biju

Patnaik's birth anniversary. The BJD criticized the move saying that the BJP, which was voted to power on the plank of Odia Asmita (pride), has dishonoured one of the great Patnaik.

of the authors of the three tier panchayati raj system in Odisha and was the first leader to reserve 33 per cent seats for women in these institutions. Later this quota was enhanced to 50 percent by Naveen Patnaik. The BJD has described it as

an attempt to erase the legacy of Biju Babu who was twice the chief minister of the state and was acceptable to leaders cutting across parties. "They think they can erase his legacy by doing this but they are wrong. Biju Babu will always remain in the hearts of the people of Odisha who will give this government a fitting reply in the next elections," said a senior BJD leader.

Former chief minister and leader of opposition Naveen Patnaik, who ruled the state for 24 years before losing out to the BJP in the last elections, also targeted the government for delinking his father's birth

anniversary from PR Divas. " They can't take Biju Babu out of people's hearts," said

Congress demands caste census in Jammu & Kashmir

with the utmost understanding to special status, noting that that I carry a huge responsibility states like Bihar and Andhra of putting forward our promises made to the seven crore people Pradesh had sought and were of the state, breathing the hopes being considered for special packages in exchange for politiof a better life." "This budget reaffirms our



Heal pharma: Restore trust in India's medicine

he pharmacy of the global South is facing a reputation crisis, and recent incidents have put India's pharmaceutical industry under intense scrutiny. The deaths of children in The Gambia, Uzbekistan, and Cameroon due to contaminated cough syrups, and cases of blindness and fatalities in the United States due to tainted Indian-made eye drops, have raised serious concerns about drug safety and regulatory oversight. The latest revelation, uncovered by a BBC Eye investigation, further tarnishes this image, exposing criminal malpractice by Aveo Pharmaceuticals, a Maharashtra-based firm. Aveo Pharmaceuticals was found to be manufacturing and exporting unapproved, highly addictive opioid drug combinations to West Africa, despite these drugs having no legal clearance in India. The company produced a mix of tapentadol (a strong opioid) and carisoprodol (a muscle relaxant), which is not approved as a combination by India's Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO). Even if the State drug authority had granted approval, such a move would still be illegal, as only the CDSCO has the authority to clear new fixed-dose combination (FDC) drugs. While India previously denied the World Health Organization's report on the contaminated cough syrup crisis, the swift action taken by the CDSCO and the State drug authority in response to the BBC's irrefutable video evidence shows a willingness to hold violators accountable. The seizure of 13 million tablets and 26 batches of active pharmaceutical ingredients points to the scale of this illicit trade, making it imperative that criminal action follows. The Indian pharmaceutical industry is globally recognized for its high-quality generic drugs, and it is the responsibility of regulators to ensure that this reputation remains intact. Strict enforcement, stringent penalties, and an unwavering commitment to drug safety are necessary to prevent the industry from becoming synonymous with dangerous synthetic opioids. The integrity of India's pharma sector must not be compromised for illicit profits.

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EDITOR* ABDUL WASEY

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ARINDAM GOSWAMI EXPLAINS HOW INDIA CAN LEARN FROM AI STRATEGIES OF GLOBAL LEADERS

AI infra: The new battleground

e United States has made a bold move in the global artificial intelligence (AI) race with its new federal AI infrastructure policy. What appears to be a domestic initiative to establish AI data centres across federal lands, is actually a well-thought-out strategy to maintain America's technological supremacy in this

field. Other countries have also developed their own AI infrastructure strategies to face this competition. India faces resource constraints. The challenge for India, therefore, lies in adopting a strategy which will work without the deep financial reserves of the U.S. or China. AI can be considered to be a technology in

the mould of general purpose technologies (GPTs) that Jeffrey Ding has described in his GPT Diffusion Theory. It has a pervasive impact on different sectors, and requires a comprehensive infrastructure, including skill infrastructure, to thrive and diffuse.

The U.S. policy aims at national security and AI leadership at its core. This is not just about building data centres. It is about building enough infrastructure domestically to ensure that research and development in this field can progress without any impediments. It can help strengthen America's position as the global AI gatekeeper, if it can control the compute or resources layer of the AI technology stack. However, does not this raise important questions about the future of technological cooperation in an interconnected world? This throws to the wind the traditional concepts of market forces and comparative advantages which should be driving the allocation of resources globally. Are these to be superseded by national security concerns?

The answer is not straightforward. Technonationalism is here to stay, where a country's worth is decided by its technological prowess. The U.S. has already imposed restrictions on the export of high-end AI chips to China. This highlights the geopolitical dimensions of AI infrastructure development.

The world will see a lot of this competitive



one-upmanship in the garb of narratives of self-sufficiency and technological leadership. It would be better for nations to do a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis of such decisions to be able to harmonise national interests with global partnerships.

China also has invested heavily in domestic AI chip manufacturing and governmentbacked AI research. Companies such as Huawei and the Semiconductor Manufacturing International Corporation (SMIC) are at the forefront of developing indigenous alternatives to Nvidia's AI chips, ensuring that China is not entirely dependent on western technology. A lot of this is driven by creative insecurity brought on by the tech and trade wars unleashed by the U.S. In addition, China, too, has aggressively been expanding its data centre networks, integrating AI computing with its broader push for digital infrastructure dominance under the Belt and Road Initiative. These are different models of doing the same thing — establishing AI supremacy. Unlike the U.S., which is leveraging public-private partnerships, China's model is deeply statedriven, with massive subsidies and policy support ensuring rapid progress. One could argue that both are market distorting interventions.

The European Union is also taking AI infrastructure seriously but with a focus on ethics, regulation, and sustainability. They have been

investing in sovereign cloud infrastructure to reduce reliance on foreign multi-national companies. Additionally, it is actively promoting open-source AI models. The aim is to keep AI development transparent and accessible to smaller businesses and researchers.

The issue of sustainability

The U.S. has also dabbled with such an approach. Consider this policy's environmental stance. There is a commitment to power nextgeneration data centres with clean energy. This is not how traditional infrastructure development happens. However, the Trump administration's track record on climate issues has not been great. It has withdrawn from the Paris Agreement, among other such reckless actions. Hence, this policy's environmental stance may indeed change in the future, and needs to be taken with a huge pinch of salt. Recent studies indicate that energy consumption for running AI infrastructure will most likely rise exponentially. Innovations such as the DeepSeek model, which showcased a lot of efficiency improvements, do give a lot of hope that this may not be the case entirely. However, it would be prudent to err on the side of caution, and consider sustainability options.

The U.S. policy also explicitly addresses community interests and worker benefits. It acknowledges that technological advancement must not disregard broader societal interests. If this approach could create new tech hubs beyond Silicon Valley, it could potentially help in spreading the benefits of the AI revolution more equitably across the country. However, the Trump administration did also recently rescind a previous executive order which mandated a bunch of disclosures on AI developers to share the results of safety tests with the U.S. government. The balance between innovation and safety regulation is tough to achieve.

What India must do

For countries such as India, these diverse

approaches offer valuable lessons. The model of utilising government lands for AI infrastructure development through public-private partnerships, by leasing out federal lands, could be particularly relevant, instead of, say, government procuring GPUs. India cannot afford to match the U.S. or China in sheer financial might. It needs to adopt a strategic, targeted and collaborative approach to AI infrastructure development, which leverages its strengths

One of India's biggest strengths is its vast talent pool in AI and software development. India does not yet have a robust AI hardware industry. However, it is already a major hub for cloud computing services, and software engineering. The presence of global AI firms in India, combined with domestic giants such as TCS and Infosys investing n AI, could provide a foundation that can be leveraged. However, for this potential to be realised, India needs to develop the necessary computing infrastructure to support AI innovation at scale.

A major challenge is India not having highend AI chips and large-scale computing power. India could partner with U.S. and European firms to establish joint AI computing hubs in India. It helps India to participate in the lobal AI economy without needing to invest oillions in semiconductor fabs.

The next important factor is India's energy constraints. AI data centres require a huge amount of power. India, at its level of economic development, has to make hard choices between expanding energy access for industrial growth and dedicating power to AI computing. A viable path forward is to integrate AI data centres with renewable energy projects, balancing both imperatives, and creating a sustainable AI growth model.

Arindam Goswami is a Research Analyst in the High-Tech Geopolitics Programme at The Takshashila Institution, Bengaluru. Views are personal.



PHILIP GREEN SAYS AUSTRALIA HAS EXPERTISE, RESOURCES, AND COMMITMENT TO SUPPORT INDIA

Australia-India economic collaboration deepens ustralia believes in India. We believe that India has a bright future economically. We believe that it will be the third biggest economy in the world by 2030. And we believe that India warrants greater political influence as its economy grows — that is why we

back India's claim for a seat on the United Nations Security Council. We also believe that Australia is a natural partner for India's growth because our economies are complementary (we produce the things India needs, and vice versa);

because we are strategically aligned; and

because we are neighbours just across the

The new Roadmap, the next phase of ties

Indian Ocean.

For these reasons, Australian Prime Minlaunched the New Roadmap for Australia's Economic Engagement with India. The Roadmap sets out how Australia can contribute to, and benefit from, India's phenomenal growth. Put simply, the Roadmap says that Australia believes in the Indian growth narrative, and the Roadmap then goes on to articulate how Australia has the skills, the resources and the commitment to support

The Roadmap builds on the successful effort from our last economic strategy in 2018. But a lot has changed since then.

Fuelled by our free trade agreement, the Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA), the India-Australia relationship has grown at the high end of our expectations. Take this one telling statistic.



India's exports to the world have grown by 35% in the last five years. Not bad, right? But India's exports to Australia have grown by 66% — nearly twice as fast as India's exports to the rest of the world

That is because India is growing in ways that are complementary to Australia's own

Australia produces the things that India will need for the next chapter of its growth - the energy to power the Indian economy; the resources (including the critical minerals) to power India's manufacturing drive; and the training capabilities that India needs to skill up the next generation of Indian professionals and workers.

The Roadmap charts the next phase of our partnership, and showcases how Australia can be part of India's economic story. It identifies four sectors — the "Superhighways of growth" — where the Australia-India partnership is most prospective. Those superhighways of growth are: clean energy; education and skills; agribusiness and tourism.

The Roadmap also describes another seven 'major economic roads' to mutual

prosperity: investment; tech; sports; culture and the arts; resources; defence; space and health. These are the fields in which our complementary capabilities can be most naturally leveraged.

In framing our partnership, we are listening closely to India's ambitions. A great example is India's ambition for manufacturing electric vehicles. When India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi talks about the number of electric vehicles growing eight-fold in India by 2030, Australia responds that we have the critical minerals and raw earth metals to realise that goal. Australia is the largest lithium producer in the world, and has the world's second largest reserves of nickel and cobalt.

Support for India's skill needs

We are also listening carefully to Indian India needs to equip two crore Indians every year with the right skills and qualifications to maximise its growth. Australian universities are listening, and are gearing up to provide the high-quality training needed to support Indian ambitions. Australian universities have been the first foreign universities to open campuses here in India — in Gujarat International Finance Tech (GIFT) city, and shortly in Noida (Uttar Pradesh), and more will follow in the coming years.

Australia also boasts a 'super power' when it comes to economic engagement with India. That super power is the Indian diaspora, already 10 lakh strong and the fastest growing population group in our country. Many of these Indian-Australians are prominent leaders in business, government and the

community. And our new Centre for Australia India Relations, with Rs 132 crore worth of support from our government, is, appropriately, headed by two eminent Australians of Indian origin. Our Prime Minister stood beside one of them as he launched the Roadmap

The Indian diaspora is a bridge

The Indian diaspora in Australia is an invaluable asset. Indian-Australians deepen our understanding of each other and spark business opportunities. Because our government understands the value of this human bridge' (as Mr. Modi calls it), we are investing another Rs 22 crore into our hugely successful Maitri grants program. This programme works to maximise the potential of our diaspora links. The Roadmap signals to for further opportunities to partner with

Indian counterparts, for mutual benefit. And as they do that, it becomes even more important that we progress our Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA), building a higher platform for the next stage of our economic partnership.

As the Australian Prime Minister says 'Australia's relationship with India is stronger, deeper and more consequential than it has ever been — but there is much more to come. What is truly exciting is the sheer scale of the opportunities in the near future if we get things right in the present... With this Roadmap, the way ahead looks a lot clearer.'

Philip Green is Australia's High Commissioner to India. Views are personal.



Jadhav's book dives deep into Ambedkar's blueprint for India

arendra Jadhav's Dr. Ambedkar: The Man Who Shaped India's Democratic Republic is an extensively researched and compelling account of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's life, work, and enduring impact on Indian democracy. The book not only delves into Ambedkar's pivotal role in drafting the Indian Constitution but also highlights his lifelong battle for justice, equality, and representation for the Depressed Classes. Jadhav presents a meticulously detailed narrative, making the book an essential read for those interested in constitutional history, social justice, and Indian politics.

The book strongly emphasizes that Dr. Ambedkar's life was inseparable from his work. His mission to introduce fairness and equality into India's political and social framework shaped his every action. Jadhav expertly illustrates how Ambedkar's legal acumen and political foresight made him the most qualified and essential figure in drafting the Indian Constitution. The book is divided into four parts,

each of which explores different facets mechanical exercise of governance of his contributions, from his early advocacy to his chairmanship of the Drafting Committee.

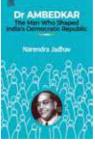
Jadhav simplifies the complex process of constitutional reforms, making it accessible to readers unfamiliar with the subject. He explores the two parallel tracks that influenced India's constitutional evolution—the British legislative process (beginning with the Southborough Committee in 1919) and the Swadeshi movement's constitutional vision (from the Swaraj Bill of 1895 to the Congress's Nehru Report in 1928). Dr. Ambedkar uniquely contributed to both tracks, a fact often overlooked in mainstream narratives.

Despite political opposition and attempts to sideline him, Ambedkar strategically inserted his vision into every available forum, ensuring that the Depressed Classes secured representation and fundamental rights. His political resilience and tactical brilliance ensured that India's legal framework was not just a but a progressive blueprint for social justice.

One of the book's highlights is Jadhav's analysis of the criticisms against the Indian Constitution at the time of its drafting. Many opponents dismissed it as unoriginal, to which Dr. Ambedkar's sharp rebuttal was that constitutional principles are universal, and the real challenge lies in adapting them to the nation's specific needs.

Ambedkar was not just a visionary leader but also a dedicated executor. His work as the Chairman of the Drafting Committee involved gruelling efforts-he was a member of two committees and two sub-committees, particularly on fundamental rights and minority rights, in addition to leading the Constitution's three readings in the Constituent Assembly. In today's terminology, he would be referred to as the chief architect and "penholder" of India's Constitution.

Ambedkar's commitment to democratic values extended beyond



Dr. Ambedkar: The Man Who Shaped India's By Narendra Publishers 264 pages; Rs 1,299.

political governance. His push for comprehensive social reform, particularly women's rights, was evident in his work on the Hindu Code Bill, which proposed: Equal inheritance rights for daughters; The principle of monogamy; and Greater protections for women's legal rights.

Faced with intense opposition from conservative forces, the bill was withdrawn at the last moment, leading to Ambedkar's resignation as Law Minister in 1951. This moment, as Jadhav portrays, was a breaking point for a liberal democrat, highlighting his frustration with entrenched societal resistance to progressive change.

Jadhav's book makes a compelling implicit argument—that Dr. Ambedkar was not only the right person to draft India's Constitution because he represented the marginalized, but also because he was the most qualified expert in constitutional law

and governance. His dual doctorates in economics from Columbia University and the London School of Economics equipped him with a rare combination of legal, economic, and administrative expertise.

One intriguing counterfactual that Jadhav hints at-but does not explicitly explore—is: "What if Ambedkar had been India's first Finance Minis-ter instead of Law Minister?" Given his deep understanding of economic policy, one wonders how India's financial trajectory might have differed under his leadership. Dr. Ambedkar: The Man Who Shaped India's Democratic Republic is not just a biography but a political and constitutional analysis that cements Ambedkar's legacy as the true architect of modern India. Jadhav's accessible writing style, rich historical references, and deep research make this book a must-read for anyone interested in India's democratic foundations, social justice move-

ments, and political evolution. This book does not idolize Ambedkar-rather, it presents a fact-based case for why his role was indispensable. It highlights his challenges, triumphs, and sacrifices, making it a timely reminder of the values that India must uphold today.

SEBI using Technology in Big Way to Trade and Industrial Policy Review **Protect Investors: Tuhin Kanta Pandey**

Tuhin Kanta Pandey said on Friday that the capital markets regulator aims to improve efficiency and transparency to protect investors with the support of technology. Speaking at a media event

here, Pandey said, "SEBI has taken measures to reduce risk in the system to protect investors. Broadly, the reforms are aimed at improving efficiency and transparency in the market. For this, the regulator has used technology in a big way."

He said the capital markets regulator would continue to work on enhancing investor awareness. There is a need to make people aware of risk, wealth management and how to balance the two by knowing how best to allocate their capital across segments, both equity

Electronics Industry

Seeks Zero-Duty Trade

Pact amid US Tariff Hike

NEW DELHI: Industry leaders

expressed optimism on Thursday

regarding the development of a

well-structured Bilateral Trade

Agreement (BTA) between India

and the United States, despite

the impending implementation

of reciprocal tariffs by the US ad-

ministration scheduled for April

2. India currently imposes a 16.5

percent basic customs duty (BCD)

and surcharge on smartphones

and electronics imported from

the United States. Simultane-

ously, the country is building a

robust domestic manufacturing

ecosystem by focusing on four

interconnected pillars: infra-

structure development, techno-

logical modernisation, workforce

skill development, and strategic

market access to drive demand

and growth. Pankaj Mohindroo,

Chairman, India Cellular and

Electronics Association (ICEA),

stated that offering reciprocal

zero duty in the potential BTA

for smartphones, hearables, wear-

ables, color televisions, consumer

electronics, appliances, and light-

ing, "is not an extraordinary step

for us since we already provide

that treatment to FTAs with Ja-

pan, Korea and ASEAN (Viet-



"An informed investor is well protected. SEBI's efforts in the days ahead would be to create awareness among both existing and prospective investors, Pandey remarked.

Pandey acknowledged the role that domestic investors are playing in improving the resilience of the capital markets and said that the regulator also

wants to support foreign investments. He said that, to grow at the speed that is aimed for, "we need both domestic and foreign investments". "We at SEBI are conscious about the need to create conducive environment to attract foreign capital. We will be happy to engage with FPI and AIF industry participants to address their difficulties and further rationalise regulations

he said. Pandey also said that the SEBI won't be aiming for "maximum regulations" but for "optimal regulations" in its approach to oversee the markets.

He said that he looks forward to engaging with all stakeholders to discuss what more needs to be done to encourage voluntary compliance.

Pandey further stated that reforms to improve the functioning of the capital markets need not necessarily be big band reforms as small incremental reforms can also be important. Going forward, SEBI will use a right mix to both to achieve the objective, he added.

He also highlighted that the

number of unique investors in SEBI's ecosystem has surged from 49 million in March 2020,

with over 900 aircraft on order and has the largest recipient of 58 new Airbus aircraft during 2024. However, it also states

related supply chain issues. While 88 per cent of IndiGo's capacity is allocated to domestic markets, international growth is a key part of the airline's strategy with expansion during 2024 fo-

NEW DELHI: Santosh Kumar the United States, European Sarangi, Director-General of Union, and United Kingdom, Foreign Trade has called for a comprehensive review of the country's trade and industrial policies, highlighting significant challenges that threaten the nation's export ambitions.

He emphasised the urgent need for strategic recalibration in light of increasingly competitive global markets.

The export landscape is rapidly changing, with advanced economies implementing aggressive industrial policies.

The United States has introduced the Inflation Reduction Act and CHIPS Act, while the United Kingdom has developed an Advanced Manufacturing Plan, and the European Union has launched its green deal. These developments create a more complex environment for Indian exporters.

The challenges are multifaceted. More than 40 per cent of India's exports are directed to

been instrumental in driving

financial literacy especially

among women", she added

Sharing his insights on

financial inclusion, PR Se-

shadri, MD & CEO, South

Indian Bank Ltd. said, "Fi-

nancial inclusion begins with

access, and we must applaud

the stellar role played by the

nationalized banking system

in making access so ubiqui-

tous. Today, the levels of access

that we have in our country

is significantly higher than

our competitors in a similar

state of being. Interest rates

in the country have moderated

significantly highlighting the

high import tariffs.

Logistics inefficiency further undermines competitiveness, with India's logistics costs reaching 8-9 per cent of GDP, compared to 5-6 per cent in advanced economies.

Exporters face additional hurdles, including low credit coverage, high interest rates, insufficient branding, and limited market outreach. Export credit currently covers only 28.5 per cent of total merchandise exports, amounting to USD 124.7 billion, while the estimated requirement is USD 284 billion for projected exports of USD 437 billion. The government is respond-

ing with targeted interventions. Schemes are being developed to support micro, small, and medium enterprise exporters, including easier credit terms and alternative financing instruments.

The upcoming budget introduces BharatTradeNet, a unified platform for trade documentation and financing solutions.

The Export Credit Guarantee Corporation of India currently provides insurance cover for only USD 44.9 billion of the total export credit, prompting calls to reconsider its monopolistic structure.

As India aims to achieve its ambitious USD 2 trillion export target, a holistic and strategic approach will be crucial in navigating the complex global trade landscape.

SEBI warns Public against Dealing with Sunshine Global Agro's **Properties**



and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) on Thursday warned the public against buying or dealing with any properties belonging to Sunshine Global Agro and

The market regulator issued this cautionary notice after discovering that some individuals or entities were illegally purchasing, encroaching, or trespassing on the company's properties. In a notice issued last week, Sebi stated that no person is allowed to take illegal possession of or trespass on the assets of Sunshine Global Agro and its directors. The regulator also warned that any unauthorised actions would lead to legal consequences under applicable laws. Sebi had taken action against Sunshine Global Agro in July 2014, when it prohibited the company and its directors from raising funds from investors or launching any new schemes. This decision came after Sebi found that the company was mobilising funds through schemes related to the "sale of Jatropha Bush Group and sale

of plant/trees.'

These activities were classified as an unauthorised Collective Investment Scheme (CIS). Later, in February 2019, Sebi directed Sunshine Global Agro and its directors not to sell or dispose of any company assets, except for the purpose of refunding investors. However, since the company failed to comply with the order, Sebi initiated recovery proceedings against it and its directors. Meanwhile, the market regulator in December 2020 ordered the attachment of bank and demat accounts of Sunshine Global Agro and its directors to recover dues of over Rs 1 crore. The action was taken after the company and its directors failed to pay a Rs 1 crore penalty imposed by SEBI in March 2019. The fine was levied after the company was found to have illegally raised over Rs 38 crore from 39,290 investors through unregistered collective investment schemes. In its attachment notice issued in 2020. SEBI instructed banks and depositories not to allow any debits from the accounts of the

IndiGo ranked world's 2nd fastest growing airline in seat capacity

NEW DELHI: IndiGo Airlines has emerged as the world's second fastest-growing airline in terms of seat capacity, which increased by 10.1 per cent year-on-year to over 134.9 million seats in 2024.

India's largest airline has been ranked next only to Qatar Airways, which clocked a 10.4 per cent growth in seat capacity over the previous year, according to the latest data from the Official Airline Guide (OAG). IndiGo has also been ranked as the fastest-growing airline

Financial inclusion encompass-

es key elements such as access

to the payment system, credit,

insurance and investment op-

portunities, all of which require

government policies for an effec-

tive implementation. To achieve

the vision of developed India by

2047, we need a broad-based

and inclusive financial approach

as a crucial wheel for the growth

of the economy and social eq-

uity. Said Anita Shah Akella,

CEO- IEPF Authority & Joint

Secretary, Ministry of Corporate

Affairs, GoI at the 3rdNational

Conclave on Financial Inclusion

FW DESK



in the world in terms of flight frequency growth at 9.7 per cent year-on-year in 2024. The airline recorded a flight frequency of 749, 156 for the year, the figures show. OAG has also recorded that IndiGo holds one of the world's largest aircraft orders,

"The JAM (Jan Dhan, Aad-

har, Mobile) Trinity has made

access to banking so easy and

simple for everyone, making the

world take note. Innovations

both in the public and private

sectors have driven digital fi-

nancial inclusion and policy

measures and initiatives have

been instrumental in making

that the airline does have a large proportion (approximately 80 aircraft) inactive with MRO-

cused on regional Middle East

cessible. Financial institutions

themselves have played a crucial

role in promoting inclusivity,

particularly through the mi-

crofinance services that cater to

the low-income population. The

expansion of the digital trans-

action platforms and services

like the immediate payment

services, IMPS and the digital

wallets have made transactions

more seamless, secure and cost

sion, there is a need for finan-

cial literacy and organisations

such as IEPFA, BSE, SEBI,

RBI are working to spread

financial literacy to the people.

Programs like 'Niveshak Didi'

"Along with financial inclu-

effective, "she said.

Broad-based and Inclusive Financial Approach Crucial for

Economic Growth & Social equity: Anita Shah Akella

markets where domestic manufacturers are becoming increasingly competitive. Additionally, Indian exports are likely to face growing non-

DGFT highlights urgent need for

tariff barriers, including the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism. Manufacturing remains a

critical concern. India's manufacturing sector has stagnated at 13-14 per cent of gross domestic product over the past five years, significantly lagging behind regional competitors.

In comparison, China's manufacturing contributes 26 per cent to its GDP, while Thailand stands at 25 per cent, South Korea at 24 per cent, and Vietnam at 23 per cent.

Structural impediments compound these challenges. The country struggles with insufficient global value chain integration, lack of scale, technological disadvantages, and

Electric Cars deployed at NITI Aayog under CESL's 'EV as a Service'

20 E-Cars deployed by CESL with Drivers at NITI Aayog **TANVIR KAUR** New Delhi

In a significant step towards achieving Govt's target of Net Zero by 2070, 20 E-Cars were flagged at NITI Aayog today. The E-Cars were flagged off by Sudhendu J. Sinha, Advisor, Infrastructure Connectivity & Electric Mobility, NITI Aayog, K. S. Rejimon, Joint Secretary - Administration, NITI Aayog, Vishal Kapoor, MD & CEO, CESL and Rajneesh Rana, Head (Convergence), CESL..

CESL (Convergence Energy Services Limited), a subsidiary of Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL), which operates under the



Ministry of Power, is spearheading this 'EV as a Service' initiative. Under this initiative, New E-Cars are deployed with end-to-end solution including repair & maintenance, while complying with all the rules and regulations related to Motor Vehicle Act, Workmen/Driver/ Labour Laws, Make-In-India, GFR guidelines, etc. There is no upfront cost from the beneficiary and lease payments are made on a monthly basis for a period upto

nam, Thailand, Indonesia etc.)." organised by ASSOCHAM. the financial services more acand "Niveshak Sarthi' have company and its directors. CSK by Pharmaceutical Companies and Engagement with SHGs, NGOs & Foundations

ANGRISH

ased on Sturnover, net worth or profit criteria, pharmaceutical companies comply with the requirements of Section 135 of the Companies Act along with the Companies (Corporate Social Responsibility) Rules, 2014, and spend a certain amount of profits on CSR activities. CSR Committee or CSR & ESG Committee of respective companies is entrusted with the mandate to achieve the objectives. The CSR Policy and too to lay emphasis on specific programs focus on the areas covered under Schedule VII of the Companies Act, 2013 and the CSR Committee on the behalf of a given company strives to create maximum impact by leveraging a company's financial and human resources, networks and ex- NGOs, foundations, trusts, or pertise. Pharmaceutical companies are actively performing government-backed initia-CSR activities on their own or these companies engage Self-help Groups (SHGs), Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs), and their own

Most of these top pharmaceutical companies have created their own foundations/ trusts/Section 8 companies to implement CSR Policy. For example, Sun Pharma has Founand Control of India (FDEC), Divi's Labs has Divi's Foun-Pharma has J. C. Juneja Foun-

Foundations to carry out their

CSR Policy.

Name of the Company | SHGs, NGOs and Foundations Engaged

Sun Pharma	and Foundation for Disease Elimination and Control of India (FDEC), Shantilal Shanghvi Foundation, Sun Pharma Science Foundation, and Foundation for Pharmaceutical Academy for Global Excellence
Divi's Labs	Divi's Foundation for Gifted Children
Cipla	Cipla Foundation, COPD Foundation, Score Foundation, Learning Links Foundation, Agastya International Foundation, Women India Trust, Educate Girls, HelpAge India, and Tata Memorial Centre
Torrent Pharma	The UNM Foundation
Mankind Pharma	J. C. Juneja Foundation, Tata Memorial Cancer Hospital, Radhaka Autism Welfare Society, Oscar for Life Charitable Trust, Give Foundation for acid attack survivors, SAATHI for HIV positive pregnant women, Vidhya Wati Sewa Trust for Education and Health, Impact guru Foundation, M3M Foundation, and Annamrita Foundation
Dr. Reddy's Labs	Dr. Reddy's Foundation, NICE Foundation, Naandi Foundation, Roshni Trust
Lupin	The Lupin Human Welfare and Research Foundation (LHWRF) and Lupin Foundation
Zydus Life	Zydus Foundation, Red Cross Society, Zydus Medical College and Hospital
Aurobindo Pharma	Aurobindo Pharma Foundation, India and Hare Krishna Movement Charitable Foundation
Abbott India	SEWA and Smile Foundation
Source: Compiled from Annual Reports of respective Pharmaceutical Companies	

areas, e.g., Shantilal Shanghvi Foundation and Sun Pharma Science Foundation belongs to Sun Pharma.

In addition to their own foundations/trusts, these pharmaceutical companies also collaborate with many societies besides supporting tives. For example, Dr. Reddy's Laboratories has Dr. Reddy's Foundation as Implementing Agency for multiple CSR projects in the areas of Livelihood and Environment. At the same time, NICE Foundation is the Implementing Agency for Health-related projects - Community Health Inter-

vention Programme (CHIP). CSR activities are being carried out by these pharma dation for Disease Elimination companies in those countries too where these companies have operations. For example, dation for Gifted Children, Lupin Limited partnered with Cipla has Cipla Foundation, Mark Cuban Cost Plus Drug the Torrent Group has the Company and the COPD UNM Foundation, Mankind Foundation to improve access to affordable medications for dation, to name a few. Some Chronic Obstructive Pulmoof these organizations have nary Disease (COPD) patients Independent Assessment by

pharma MNCs having operations in India are carrying out CSR initiatives in India too when their turnover, net worth or profits exceed the prescribed limit.

Just like other Companies, pharmaceutical companies too get Impact Assessment of the CSR Projects done from Independent Agencies, e.g., Soulace, an independent agency carried out Impact Assessment for Zydus Foundation. The Company shared the brief details on the findings of Impact Assessment. Findings indicated that the services provided by Zydus Foundation were comparable to those of top corporate hospitals, and there was no compromise on quality despite being offered free of charge. It was also reported that findings were based on interviews of patients, and Impact Assessment study had revealed a high level of satisfaction amongst patients regarding various aspects such as hos-

pital ambience, affordability

and accessibility of services,

doctors, and nursing staff.

differ in their approach to CSR

in terms of 'what aspects', as well as 'how aspects'. Provisions have been laid down in the Companies Act regarding CSR activities but pharmaceutical companies focus on specific areas of their interest too through their own foundation. 'How aspect' is also important, i.e., to understand whether these pharmaceutical companies are deploying resources through their related entity or through outside bodies such as NGOs, or SHGs.

During FY24, Sun Pharma spent Rs 46.03 Crores on CSR activities including amount spent in administrative overheads, and amount spent on Impact Assessment. Business Responsibility and Sustainability Report (BRSR) cited that the company is engaging with NGOs to facilitate the streamlining of the CSR activities which are undertaken in partnership. Main areas of interest for NGO include employee volunteering, and agile management process. Sun Pharma formed Founda-

ing trust in activities pursued. and Control of India (FDEC), Pharmaceutical companies a wholly owned subsidiary on September 21, 2016, as a Section 8 Company. This subsidiary is dedicated to CSR initiative of the company.

Divi's Labs had a CSR commitment of Rs 57.97 Crores and benefited about 12,28,000 beneficiaries during FY2024. Divi's Foundation for Gifted Children is the trust in which contribution for CSR project implementation is made by the company. In Cipla Limited, their em-

ployees regularly volunteer or participate in crowdfunding campaigns. Over 100,000 hours of volunteering was reported for FY24. Cipla Foundation is the philanthropic arm of Cipla Limited and all CSR activities within the company are undertaken directly by the company or NGOs, SHGs, Foundations through its Foundation. It is the Cipla Foundation that identifies CSR projects as per the CSR Policy of the company and proposes to the CSR of District - Sirmour through Committee. Implementation partner AT India for sustainand monitoring of the projects is also entrusted to the communities, prevention and foundation. The Foundation empowerment of Leprosy and (ZMCH), about 4.50 Lakh



Foundation, there are two mour districts of Himachal other kev entities namely Chest Research Foundation (formerly known as Hamied Foundation) and Cipla Cancer & AIDS Foundation.

The Torrent Group runs formed as a Section 8 Company, the UNM Foundation founder - U. N. Mehta. The UNM Foundation is involved in many initiatives across the areas such as Healthcare, Education, Ecology, Arts, Culture, and social well-being. CSR and social donations for FY24 stood at Rs 44.0 Crore.

Mankind Pharma spent Rs 35.90 Crore in FY24 as CSR Expenditure due to which more than 1,60,000 lives were positively impacted. Range of CSR activities can be observed from diverse or organizations supported through CSR initiatives of the company. A Holistic Development Approach in 10 villages able and resilient mountain

the company. Besides Cipla through Mamta HIMC at Sir-Pradesh are just few notable initiatives.

The Lupin Human Welfare and Research Foundation was established in 1988 by Lupin Founder – Dr. Desh a not-for profit organization Bandhu Gupta. This was set up to promote good health and foster economic growth which is named after the through sustainable livelihood in India's most marginalized regions. Lupin Foundation set up by Lupin Limited served over 1,405 villages across eight states in FY24. Lupin Limited could not set-up a state-ofthe-art Hospital in Mumbai so the company had decided to de-register Lupin Foundation.

Zydus Lifesciences has set up Zydus Foundation, a Section 8 wholly owned subsidiary of the company and has also established Zydus Red Cross Experiential Centre in pany. collaboration with Red Cross Society with an objective to create awareness for blood donation. For FY24, the company spent Rs 13.31 Crore on CSR activities. Through Zydus Medical College and Hospital created multiple foundations in the U.S. In the same way, a third party helps in enhanction for Disease Elimination collaborates with various in- Lymphatic Filariasis Patients persons benefited from CSR

Aurobindo Pharma reported that 8.59 Lakh lives have been impacted through CSR interventions in FY24 itself. In FY24, Rs 37.3 Crore investment has been made in CSR initiatives. Aurobindo Pharma Foundation, India as a Section 8 Company was formed in July 2020 as a wholly owned company, and is philanthropic arm of the company.

Pharma MNCs which operate in India include Abbott India, GlaxoSmithKline, Pfizer and AstraZeneca among top 25 listed pharmaceutical companies. These companies are also actively engaging NGOs and SHGs. During FY24, Abbott India spent at Rs 24.37 Crores on various CSR programs. The company contributed to Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) for quality and affordable healthcare delivery program. It also promoted STEM education and healthy living among children with Smile Foundation.

To summarise, it can be said that pharmaceutical companies are pursuing their CSR activities through their own foundation which is in the form of a Trust or a Foundation registered as a Section 8 Company set up as non-profit organization. Alternatively, these pharma companies rope in those NGOs, or SHGs which CSR and ESG Committee have active involvement in in place. The Company has areas of interest relevant for specific pharmaceutical com-

> 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.

Indian Stock Market Ends Flat, Smallcap Stocks Extend Rally

market saw a volatile trading session on Friday, with benchmark indices managing to stay in the positive territory.

Gains in metal stocks provided support, while smallcap stocks continued their strong rally. This was followed by two consecutive day bull run, when the share market closed in green. The Sensex ended at 74,332.58, down by just 7.51 points or 0.01 per cent. During the intra-day session, the 30-share index moved between a high of 74,586.43 and a low of 74,038.03.

The Nifty, however, managed to end slightly higher, gaining 7.80 points or 0.03 per cent to close at 22,552.50. The index touched a high of 22,633.80 during the day but also slipped to an intra-day low of 22,464.75.

The indices opened weak but recovered as buying interest

Credit Card spending hits

1,841 Billion in Janu-

ary 2025 despite Market

Asit C. Mehta Investment In-

termediates Limited (ACMIIL)

has released its latest insights

into the credit card market for

January 2025, revealing key

trends in credit card spending,

transaction volume, spending

patterns, and market share dy-

namics among leading banks.

Market Overview:Total credit

card spending for the month

reached Rs 1,841 billion, mark-

ing a 2% MoM decline but a

strong 14% YoY growth. The

spending contraction on a M-

o-M basis was primarily due to

seasonality effects, as December

spending was boosted by festive

and year-end expenditures.

Slowdown: Report

FW DESK

Mumbai



stocks, including Tata Motors. near fair valuations, while mid

Oil and gas stocks also contributed to the recovery. Broader markets outperformed, with said Krishna Appala from Capithe smallcap index rising by 1.1 per cent, marking its fourth consecutive session of gains.

"Today's market strength was driven by a broad-based recovadded.

emerged in select blue-chip ery, with Nifty 50 stabilising and small-caps saw continued buying after recent corrections,

> Sustaining this rally depends on earnings recovery and broader market sentiment, the expert

Among the top gainers in the Nifty pack were Tata Motors, Bharat Electronics, Nestle India, and Bajaj Auto.

However, some IT and banking stocks faced mild selling pressure which includes IndusInd Bank, Shriram Finance, NTPC, BPCL and Infosys.

In the broader market, the Nifty Smallcap100 index continued its upward trend, closing 0.67 per cent higher. However, the Nifty Midcap100 index slipped by 0.32 per cent. Sectoral performance on the

NSE was mixed. Nifty Auto, PSU Bank, Metal, Media, and Oil & Gas indices saw gains of up to 1.83 per cent, while other sectors remained subdued. Over the past week, the Nifty

gained 2.1 per cent, while the Nifty Midcap 100 and Nifty Smallcap 250 surged 2.9 per cent and 5.8 per cent, respec-

RBI's Move to Inject Rs 1.9 Lakh Crore Liquidity Seen as Positive for Banks

MUMBAI: The RBI's move to inject Rs 1.9 lakh crore has come as a big positive for banks, which is reflected in the rise in the stock prices of both private and public sector banks, as well as Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) on Thursday.

The Nifty PSU Bank index rose 1.46 per cent, or 86.3 points to hit an intraday high of 5,976.75, while the Nifty Bank index increased 0.72 per cent, adding 349.15 points to hit an intraday high of 48,839.10. Similarly, the Nifty Private Bank index recorded a gain of up to 0.67 per cent in morning trade.

As part of the measures to infuse more liquidity in the banking system, the RBI has announced that it will conduct open market operation (OMO) purchases of government securities worth Rs 1 lakh crore in two tranches of Rs 50,000 crore each. The first auction



the second by March 18.

Besides, the central bank has also decided to hold a dollarrupee buy/sell swap auction of \$10 billion for 36 months to be held on March 24.

The measures are expected to infuse additional liquidity of Rs 1.9 lakh crore. The move comes ahead of an anticipation of tight liquidity conditions by the end the current financial year (FY25) amid tax outflows and banks rushing to meet targets.

The RBI said it "will continue to monitor evolving liquid-

conditions and take measures as appropriate to ensure orderly liquidity conditions," it said in a press release.

These measures will not only address frictional

liquidity tightness in March but also the issue of durable liquidity which has tightened of late, according to Teresa John,

economist at Nirmal Bang In-

stitutional Equities. "While liquidity will likely be neutral by end March, it may move to surplus as we enter into FY26 unless we continue to see dollar sales by the RBI," John said.

Transmission is also likely to improve significantly, she said, adding that corporate bond spreads had tightened despite rate cuts.

SIDBI signs MoU with Federal Bank Limited to Strengthen MSME financing



New Delhi

Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) and The Federal Bank Limited (FBL) signed MoU for financing MSMEs for growth and development of MSME Ecosystem. The arrangement is for providing financial assistance in the field of project finance, machinery/equipment finance, working capital (including letter of credit and bank guarantee), loan against property, etc. Further, joint financing shall also be explored while extending credit facilities to MSMEs. The MoU was signed by Prakash Kumar, Deputy Managing Director, SIDBI and Harsh Dugar, Executive Director, FBL in the presence of senior SIDBI and

PhonePe launches 'insuring HEROES' campaign for Int'l Women's Day



NEW DELHI: PhonePe on Thursday launched its 'insuring HEROES' campaign ahead of the International Women's Day. International Women's Day is observed every year on March 8. As part of the initiative, the company is offering exclusive discounts of up to 30 per cent. specifically for women, on select term life and health insurance plans. It is available on the PhonePe platform until March 9. 2025. Women can avail these exclusive offers on the Phone-Pe app to ensure their overall economic well-being and enjoy long-term stability. Discounts include up to 15 per cent off on health insurance plans, and up to 30 per cent off on term life insurance plans. Through this initiative, PhonePe aims to assist women with greater financial

ht insurance solutions

tailored to their unique needs.

EPFO 3.0: How Can You Withdraw PF Amount from ATMs Soon

ees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) is set to introduce a new system called 'EPFO 3.0'. which will allow subscribers to withdraw their provident fund (PF) directly from ATMs.

Union Labour Minister Mansukh Mandaviya announced this update at an event in Hyderabad, saying that the new system will offer banking-like convenience along with several digital features to make transactions easier.

"In the coming days, the EPFO 3.0 version will come. This means the EPFO will become equivalent to a bank. Like transactions are carried out in a members will no longer have to bank, you (EPFO subscribers) have your Universal Account Number (UAN), and you will



be able to do all your work," Mandaviya said.

EPFO 3.0 is an improved version of the current system, designed to make the withdrawal process faster and more user-friendly.

With this upgrade, EPFO visit government offices or get approvals from their employers to access their PF money.

will be able to withdraw their funds through ATMs, just like withdrawing cash from a bank account.

The sub-

scribers will be

able to manage their accounts using their Universal Account Number (UAN). It is not clear yet what limit will be set for PF withdrawals

from ATMs. Currently, withdrawing PF money involves paperwork and takes a long time to process. EPFO 3.0 aims to change this by making fund withdrawals. claim settlements, and pension transfers much simpler

The EPFO has been making several reforms to improve user experience. Complaints about EPFO services have decreased, and new features like faster claim processing, name correction options, and pension withdrawals from any bank have already been introduced.

The government plans to launch the EPFO 3.0 app by May or June this year. This app will allow users to check their PF balance, track transactions, and make withdrawals

The minister emphasised that since the money in these accounts belongs to the employees, they should have the freedom to access it anytime and anywhere without unnecessary delays.

growth of 6.5 pc in 2025-26

India likely to clock steady GDP

NEW DELHI: India's GDP growth is expected to be steady at 6.5 per cent in fiscal 2025-2026 with the upcoming monsoon season likely to be normal and commodity prices to remain soft.

Private consumption is expected to recover further, while investment growth hinges on private Capex, according to a Crisil report released on Monday. Private consumption is expected improve further, on expectations of healthy agricultural production and cooling food inflation. Softer food inflation should create space in household budgets for discretionary spending, the report states.

Second, the tax benefits announced in the Union Budget 2025-2026 and increased allocations towards key asset and employment-generating schemes are expected to support consumption. Third, easing monetary policy by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is expected to support discretionary consumption, the report further states. The Crisil report also expects the RBI's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) to cut the repo rate by 50-75 bps in fiscal 2026.

liquidity-easing measures and is estimated at 6.5 per cent, security, facilitating their access regulations for nonbanking financial companies the previous fiscal.

are expected to transmit the

benefits from an easier monetary policy to the broader economy, it added. The report points out that investment growth hinges on a sustained pick-up in private corporate investment, as the government normalises Capex to meet its fiscal deficit target for the next year. It further states that risks to the growth outlook are tilted to the downside, given the elevated uncertainty because of the US-led tariff war.

With domestic private consumption expected to hold up, imports are expected to remain healthy in fiscal 2026, while exports growth could be subdued because of potential reciprocal tariffs imposed by the US. The escalating global trade uncertainty could also lead to increased imports from China as a result of trade redirection, the report added.

Citing the official figures, the Crisil report mentions The central bank's recent that GDP growth for 2024-25 slower than 9

Vishwas Bill 2.0 to decriminalise over 100 provisions, will simplify process for business: FM Sitharaman **NEW DELHI:** Finance Minforms', she said the government the government's unwavering ing jobs, strengthening indus-

ister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Wednesday that the government is committed to encouraging global economic partnerships, leveraging technology to strengthen traditional sectors and to significantly enhance the export potential of India.

Addressing a post-budget webinar on the theme 'Regulatory. Investment, And Ease Of Doing Business (EODB) Re- for the year 2025-26.

will now bring up the general Vishwas Bill 2.0 to decriminalise more than 100 provisions in various laws. It will further simplify processes for businesses, the minister said.

The Finance Minister emphasised that the government remains committed to ensuring the timely implementation on capex, Nirmala Sitharall budget announcements



Highlighting the focus laid reforms is complemented by development is already creat- implemented.

focus on capital expenditure as a driver of economic growth. For the year 2025-26, total effective capex is proposed at 15.48 lakh crores, which is 4.3 per cent of the GDP, with 11.21 lakh crore allocated as core capital expenditure by the astructure

tries and laying the foundation for private sector participation in India's growth story.

The Finance Minister also highlighted that budget announcements for 2024-25 such as the hike in the limit under MUDRA loans from Centre, which is 3.1 per cent of Rs10 lakh to Rs 20 lakh and the GDP. This unprecedented the new MSME Credit assessment model have already been

Federal Bank Welcomes Vidya Balan as it's First-Ever Brand Ambassador *This association marks a

significant milestone in the Bank's brand evolution journey *A balanced approach by the Bank to cut across geographies, genders and generations.

TANVIR KAUR Mumbai

Federal Bank, one of India's leading private sector banks with an impressive legacy over the years, today announced the appointment of acclaimed actress Vidya Balan as its firstever brand ambassador. The announcement was made during a special ceremony in Mumbai, where Ms. Balan was presented with a commemorative memento by K.V.S. Manian, Managing Director & CEO of Federal Bank.

This association is an important milestone in the brand's journey as it continues to enhance its market position. The Bank's senior team in a recent analyst meet had laid out clear directional path for the Bank and brand transformation was one of the significant themes.

M V S Murthy, Chief Marketing Officer of the Bank said Ms. Balan was a very strategic choice to capture the attention across geographies, genders and generations. He said, "We are super-stoked to have Ms. Vidya Balan champion Federal Bank. She is versatile, appeals across demographics and gender, has a pan-India fan following, and is multi-faceted. An actor's actor, she becomes the character on camera while continuing to charm us in her interpersonal interactions offscreen. Her preparation, de-



experienced this as we sought to bring her on board. At Federal Bank, too, empathy is our segue to understanding and servicing our customers. It's a universal trait that transcends geographies, generations, and customer demographics. Our NPS scores and Peer Comparison in the Nielsen studies, clearly indicate the stripes we have earned by being a Human at The Core, Digital at The ForeTM Franchise. Much like Vidya, we too make light of our chores and celebrate the wins created through the collective effort of our teams. I am sure Vidya will power prosperity for everyone associated with Federal Bank. Character, Culture and Customers are how we celebrate ourselves and the Brand.'

Vidya Balan, who has earned critical acclaim and a devoted following through her versatile performances in films like 'Kahaani', 'Parineeta',

the partnership. "Being an ambassador for varied Brands in the country, I believe we are telling the India Story to the World. And Federal Bank, makes the cut, in terms of powering our economy from down South to up North. They have a very broad brush when it comes to having a generationally loyal franchise, being the leading employer for Women in the country, creating a work culture where people stay and contribute to all round growth. I am deeply appreciative of their efforts in supporting communities and causes, while continuing to build a very robust business. I genuinely sense the vibe when Federal Bankers tell me that they are Human at the Core, Digital to the Fore TM. Looking forward to a very exciting 'Rishta' with Federal Bank.' The multi-year association

of Federal Bank will span across various marketing initiatives, including television commercials and digital campaigns.

Stock Market-No need of panic, recover soon



fter the

of both Sensex and Nifty on 28th February, there is panic among the presence of SEBI, some small investors, because ing continuously for a few days after 1996 i.e. after 29

spree is continuing.

listed in the Bombay Stock avoided by keeping a constant Exchange (BSE) index Sensex eye on the movement of the and 50 companies are listed in NSE or Nifty. In the stock that one should not try to make market, Indian, foreign insti- investment in the stock market tutional investors, individual foreign investors etc. invest in listed companies. Both the indices are very sensitive. When the shares of a particu- amount in the Indian stock lar company among the listed companies are continuously sold, then the investors' trust in that company decreases second and third place. On Feband the price of the shares of ruary 28, foreign institutional that company decreases, due investors sold shares worth Rs to which the investors have to 11,639 crore, while this year forsuffer losses. For example, if someone has bought 1 share sold shares worth more than of X company for Rs 100 and Rs 1 lakh crore. On the other when the price of that share hand, domestic investors sold falls to Rs 80, then the said shares worth about Rs 8 lakh 88 investor suffers a loss of Rs 20. thousand crore on February 28,

for the fluctuations in the are, the announcement by US price of shares. For example, President Mr. Donald Trump poor financial performance to impose 25 percent tariff on of the company or the com- Canada and Mexico and 10 pany getting involved in some percent additional tax on Chibility, government policies, to a global trade war, weak-

weakening of rupee against the dollar, global uncertainty, fear of trade war, geopolitical crisis, policies adopted by the US central bank Federal Reserve, etc. SEBI is the regulator of

the stock market, but despite cases of artificially bringing Sensex has been declining down the price and then raisfor the last 5 months, and ing it have been seen. This is Nifty has also been declindone to benefit a few special people, in which the biggest loss is suffered by small invesyears. This has created a fear tors. Harshad Mehta scandal in the minds of investors that can be mentioned in this case. their money is not safe in the There is a need to be alert and stock market and the selling understand the market to detect the disturbances in the A total of 30 companies are market. Potential losses can be stock market. It is important a means of livelihood and avoid

excessive greed. Foreign institutional investors have invested a large market, in which the US is in the first place, while Luxembourg and Canada are in the eign institutional investors have There are many reasons the 6 biggest reasons for which



Asian countries such as Hong Kong, China and Japan, the current stance of the Federal Reserve Bank of US, decline in quarterly profits of some listed companies due to decrease in economic activities, the persistence of geopolitical crisis, the rupee being continuously weak against the dollar, etc. Apart from these, overvaluation of shares and psychological reasons are also important factors for the stock market crash. There is a tradition in India to follow the crowd. After seeing some people selling, others also started imitating them. It seems so because on February 28, rate has been reduced after selling was recorded in shares of all sectors like IT, telecom, health, banking, FMCG etc. Therefore, there does not seem to be any scope for tampering with the market.

(GDP) has increased to 6.2 percent in the third quarter of FY 2024-25 from 5.6 percent (revised estimate) in the second quarter. In addition, the GDP growth rate forecast for FY 2024-25 has been raised controversy, political instances goods, which may lead These figures show that the

Due to reduction in prices of food items, the retail inflation rate based on Consumer Price Index (CPI) came down to 4.31 percent in January, which is the lowest in the last 5 months. It was at 5.22 percent in December, while it was at 5.1 percent in January 2024. Earlier in the month of November, the inflation rate was at 5.48 percent.

To boost economic activities, the Reserve Bank of India reduced the repo rate by 0.25 percent in the monetary policy review conducted on February 7, bringing it down from 6.50 percent to 6.25 percent. It is worth noting that the repo about 5 years. The central bank was avoiding reducing the repo rate till now mainly due to inflation.

14 percent and 16 percent Gross Domestic Product in the last two years, overall credit growth has been slowing down for the last few months and in December 2024 it has come down to 11.2 percent. A major reason for this is the high lending rate. Right now, banks do not have cheap capifrom 6.4 percent to 6.5 percent. tal. Therefore, they are forced to lend at expensive rates and pace of growth is accelerating. due to the availability of loans

at expensive rates, common people and businessmen are avoiding taking loans. Because of this, companies are short of capital, due to which they are not able to produce at full capacity.

By cutting the repo rate by

0.25 percent by the Reserve Bank of India, banks will get capital at a cheaper rate and they will be able to lend at a cheaper rate and when loans are available at a cheaper rate, both common people and businessmen will take loans, which will accelerate both investment and savings and consumption will increase as well as economic activities will also increase. In the budget, the govern-

ment has clearly stated that its

aim is to accelerate development. With the GDP growth rate being 6.2 percent in the December quarter, the hope of accelerating the pace of development has increased. Also, to further increase the growth rate, the Reserve Bank of India has cut the repo rate. Due to the reduction in inflation in the month of January, the way has been cleared for cutting the repo rate in the upcoming monetary reviews, which will boost the pace of development of the country and when the economy be-After loan growth between comes strong, there will be less scope for selling in the stock market and it will be possible for investors to get attractive returns on their investments. Therefore, there is no need for investors to panic, instead they need to avoid unnecessary selling.

> $Satish\ Singh, Ahmedabad$ Based Senior Columnist, views are personal.

India charging 70 pc auto tariffs; Denmark rejects Trump's renewed Is Trump's 100 pc claim wrong? Push for Greenland to join US

down on his threats to impose reciprocal tariffs, President Donald Trump accused India of charging tariffs higher than 100 per cent on autos, even though India has slashed the highest rate to 70 per cent.

"India charges auto tariffs higher than 100 per cent, "he said in his address to a joint session of Congress on Tuesday, outlining his policies.

However, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced in her budget last month that the tariffs on luxury cars were being cut to 70 per cent from 125 per cent. She also cut tariffs on high-

end motorcycles from 50 per cent to 40 per cent. Commerce Minister Piyush

Goyal is to visit Washington to discuss tariffs with US officials.

"Countless other nations

charge us tremendously higher tariffs than we charge them, "Trump said, justifying his programme of raising

The reciprocal tariffs would come into effect on April 2.

"Whatever they tariff us, " he

Mexico, and an additional 10 per cent came into effect.

Trump admitted that tariffs would cause "a little disturbance" and "there could be an adjustment period" but asserted that it would make the US richer.

when his 25 per cent tariffs

on imports from Canada and

That was meant to inoculate himself against criticism of the effects of the tariffs.

The stock markets have been down by more than three per cent in the last two days and retailers have warned of impending increase in prices of

Tariffs by India on imports from the US have been one of Trump's favourite talking points. In the past, he has mentioned the Indian tariffs on Harley-Davidson motorcycles and whiskey.

OSLO: Denmark has strongly opposed US President Donald Trump's renewed push for Greenland to join the US, following his remarks during a joint session of Congress two days ago.

Trump declared on Wednesday that his administration would "strongly support" Greenlanders' "right to determine" their future, adding: "And if you choose, we welcome you into the United States of America.'

Acknowledging the uncertainty sparked by Trump's statements, Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen reaffirmed Denmark's position on Wednesday, emphasising that Greenland's future is solely for its people to decide.

"Greenland belongs to the Greenlanders. This is a position that we very strongly support from the Danish government, she said.

Greenlandic Prime Minister

and assistance, Xinhua news

UNHCR called on neigh-

bouring countries to register

all asylum-seekers from the

DRC and provide them with

The spokesman said UN

peacekeepers reported the sit-

uation around Goma remains

highly unstable. The M23

rebels, who invaded Goma

over a month ago, continue

consolidating its city control

with checkpoints and patrols.

continues to restrict the peace-

keepers' freedom of movement

and access to the airport in

Ituri, a patrol was deployed to

Pimbo in the Djugu territory

following an attack by mem-

bers of the CODECO armed

 $\tilde{\text{He}}$ also said the UN mission

in the DRC, known as MO-

NUSCO, sent a peacekeeping

patrol to Matate, northeast of

the provincial capital of Bu-

nia, in response to an attack

by suspected members of the

Zaire militia, which resulted

in two civilians killed and one

The spokesman said that in

Goma, "Dujarric said.

group in the area.

"This, our colleagues say,

agency reported.

documentation.

Mute Egede firmly rejected Trump's claim, saying on social media that Greenlanders have no desire to become part of the US. Danish Defence Minister Troels Lund Poulsen echoed these sentiments, stressing that Greenland Americans. will never be part of the US.

"It is not, and it will never be, the case that the United States can dictate and get a part of the Danish Kingdom, "he said. Greenland, the world's largest island with a population of around 60, 000, was a Danish colony until 1953, when it became an integral part of Denmark with Greenlanders given Danish citizenship. In 1979, Greenland ing greater self-governance while Denmark retained authority over its foreign and

the idea, saying the island is not up for sale. Greenland's Prime Minister Egede said on Wednesday that the Greenlandic people will determine their own future and do not want to be Danes nor

Egede made his comments United States. "We do not want Americans and their leader must understand that, "Egede said in a post on Facebook.

US Likely to Bar Entry of Pakistanis, Impose **Complete Travel Ban Soon**



along with Afghanistan, is likely to feature on top of the list of countries that are expected to face new travel restrictions including a complete ban on citizens of these countries from entering the United States - in the new travel ban plan being prepared by the Donald Trump administration.

Sources in the Pakistani through immigration.

"Afghanistan will be included in the list of recommended countries for a complete travel ban. Pakistan's name would also be recommended for inclusion in the list," said one reliable source who revealed that the new travel restrictions could be implemented within

have valid US visas to travel as soon as possible before the travel

The resettlement of these Afghans is a compensation and commitment made to them during the Biden administration for working with the US during the 20-year war in Afghanistan,'

At least 200,000 Afghans are awaiting their resettlement in

At least 20,000 Afghans hav-

called for implementing new rules of intensive scrutiny and vetting of foreigners seeking entry in the United States and

defence policy. This is not the first time Trump talked about taking over Greenland. Denmark has rejected

in reaction to Trump, who on Tuesday reiterated his desire to make Greenland, currently a semi-autonomous territory of the kingdom of Denmark, part of the to be Americans, nor Danes, we are Kalaallit (Greenlanders). The

British PM announces new 1.6-billion pound deal for Ukraine to buy missiles



LONDON: British Prime Minister Keir Starmer announced that Britain will allow Ukraine to use 1.6 billion pounds (\$2 billion) of British export finance to purchase more than 5,000 air defence missiles

"This will be vital for protecting critical infrastructure and strengthening Ukraine, " Starmer told a press conference on Sunday following a summit with Western leaders in London, Xinhua news agency reported. The goal is "to put Ukraine in the strongest position" so the country can negotiate from a position of strength,

Western leaders, including more than a dozen European heads of state and Canadian earlier survey conducted in 2019. feelings of victims of capital crimes Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, gathered in London on Sunday for a defense summit aimed at advancing a peace plan for Ukraine. Starmer said leaders at the summit had agreed on a four-step plan to guarantee need to deliver together, "he peace in Ukraine: to maintain

conflict continues and increase economic pressure on Russia; to ensure that any lasting peace guarantees Ukraine's sovereignty and security, with Ukraine at the table for any negotiations; to deter "any future invasion by Russia" in the event of a peace deal; and to establish a "coalition of the willing" to defend Ukraine and uphold peace in the country.

military aid to Ukraine while the

The leaders also agreed to meet again soon to sustain the momentum behind these efforts, Starmer said. The prime minister reaffirmed Britain's commitment to supporting the peace plan with "boots on the ground, and planes in the air."

"Europe must do the heavy lifting, "he said, emphasising backing.

"Let me be clear, we agree with Trump on the urgent need for a durable peace. Now we

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan.

establishment told IANS on Thursday that the vetting and scrutiny process for both countries may reveal multiple deficiencies which may lead to a complete travel ban, putting at risk innumerable Pakistanis and Afghans who wish to seek refuge or relocation in the US

the next 10 days. Urging those Pakistanis who

ban gets announced, the source, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, said that Washington's fresh move could have a direct impact on tens of thousands of Afghans who were previously cleared for resettlement in the US after being granted Special Immigrant Visas.

he said.

the US after the Afghan Taliban came to power in August 2021.

ng the Special Immigrant Visa to US are stranded in Pakistan and face deportation to Afghanistan after US President Donald Trump announced a 90-day freeze on refugee admissions and foreign aid that funds their flights on January 20.

detecting national security threats.

Trudeau not willing to lift Canada's retaliatory tariffs if Trump leaves some tariffs on Canada

OTTAWA: Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is unwilling to lift Canada's retaliatory tariffs on the United States if President Donald Trump leaves any US tariffs on Canada, a senior government official told The Associated Press on Wednes-

day. The offi-

cial confirmed

stance on the

condition of

anonymity be-



cause the person was not authorised to speak publicly on the matter. The official said Trump and Trudeau spoke by phone around midday. Other Canadian officials publicly echoed Trudeau's position. "We're not interested in meeting in the middle and having some reduced tariff. Canada wants the tariffs removed," Canadian Finance Minister Dominic LeB-

Ontario Premier Doug Ford, the leader of Canada's most populous province, agreed

cent of Japanese people support

the death penalty, stating that the

existence of the system is "unavoid-

able, "local media reported on

Sunday. This survey is conducted

every five years, and for the fifth

lanc told the Canadian Broad-

casting Corporation.

Spreading eastern Congo violence threatens civilians, aid workers: UN UNITED NATIONS: Increased violence in the three easternmost provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is raising deep

concern for civilians, including

aid workers, a UN humanitarian

official said. Bruno Lemarquis, the UN resident humanitarian coordinator for the DRC, voiced alarm over the recent increase in targeted violence against civilians, including relief workers, and civilian infrastructure in Ituri, North Kivu and South

Kivu provinces.

Lemarquis said in a statement that the attacks, including the abduction of dozens patients from two hospitals, are serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights laws. They threaten operations providing relief to millions of civilians.

In Ituri province, local authorities report that more than 16,000 people fled clashes in the territory of Djugu since Thursday. The area has seen an escalation in clashes and attacks by armed groups, resulting in civilian casualties and displacement.

Stephane Dujarric, spokes- since January.'

per cent in a government poll,

reports the leading news portal,

Kyodo News. In the most recent

survey, it was shown that the ap-

proval for capital punishment

TOKYO: According to a govern- consecutive term, the support for



missioner for Refugees (UN-HCR) issued a new report on displaced people returning to the eastern DRC

declared, "we will tariff them."

"China's average tariff on

our products is twice what

we charge them, and South

Korea's average tariff is four

times higher, "he said, also

His speech came the day

mentioning Brazil.

"They say that Congolese nationals fleeing the conflict, as well as those outside the country who originate from the area affected by the conflict, may need refugee protection under international and regional legal frameworks, " Dujarric said. "Close to 80, 000 men, women and children have fled to neighbouring countries, including around 61, 000 who arrived in Burundi

UNHCR said that around the North Kivu capital of Goma, about 17, 000 people remain in displacement sites. schools and churches, while 414, 000 people have been on the move for the past four weeks, encouraged by the de facto authorities to return to their villages of origin.

The agency said that at least 209, 000 people from the sites arrived spontaneously in Masisi, Nyiragongo, and Rutshuru territories, where basic services are not equipped for the sudden surge of people. Given the widespread insecurity in the provinces and surrounding areas, many more may need to cross borders to find protection

7.5 points, climbing to 16.5 per

cent. The main reason for the sup-

port of the death penalty given by

Over 80 per cent of Japanese people favour capital punishment total of 55.5 per cent said violent of individuals supporting abolition crimes should be paid for with saw a more significant increase of

lives, while 53.4 per cent, raising

concern, stated that the abolition

of capital punishment would lead

to a rise in atrocious crimes.

increased by 2.3 points, reaching 83.1 per cent in comparison to the 66.2 per cent was concern for the

INDIA IS WORRIED

US-Ukraine May Sign Agreement for Minerals



ndia's major HINDALCO and Vedanta, invest-

ing to the tune of the USD two billions in the processing of aluminium are naturally to finally sign the mineral agree-It is going to adversely af-

fect the Indian producers, if the US, Ukraine and Rus- live telecast of the heated Ukraine for manufacturing and Zelanskyy had caused aluminium in Ukraine. At worldwide concerns, however, present countries like Canada, China, India and Russia ex- summit of two chief executives port aluminium to the US. It of the US and Ukraine, but it, is estimated that the Trump Administration has already decided to invest about 150 billion USD in the mining sector of Ukraine.

much-awaited thaw was inald Trump, indicated before Ukrainian President Vladimir Zelanskyy, if he is ready to sign a multidimensional peace and investments in his part of world diplomacy. country for minerals.

cent investments estimated made productive and also for but later it was noticed that

stabilising the political systems in Ukraine. It appeared Trump's agenda for peace sufaluminium fered when Zelanskyy refused producers, to sign the American draft for peace and investments. In spite of the heated ex-

changes recently witnessed

between Trump and Zelan-

skyv at the White House, the be worried, if the US-Ukraine two leaders, who appear to be renegotiating for peace soon. They are expected to meet again on Friday, 7 March. The initial reaction to the sia set up joint ventures in exchanges between Trump

within a few hours it was not a perhaps, was comic interlude. giving a new dimension to the world of diplomacy. For the foreign affairs

scholars in New Delhi, it could The possibility of this be a new experiment in the sensitive field of diplomacy. If dicated on Saturday, 1 March, the Chinese President Xi Jinwhen the US President, Don- ping has been advocating an aggressive form of diplomacy the American media that known as the woolfish aphe was ready to welcome proach in dealing with other countries, Trump and Zelanskyy would be remembered for making comical scenes agreement with the US for during their summit to be a

Initially, the world capitals Trump is keen that the refrom Europe to Asia, perhaps, were stunned for a while that to be USD 500 billion com- the much-awaited peace in mitted to Ukraine must be Europe might remain elusive,



as a comedian before leading his country. Similarly, Trump has done a few successful television shows before becoming the president.

Asked why the Indian media suddenly became critical of the Ukrainian leader, a senior diplomat confided to the Financial World that for most readers and television viewers, the Indian media is just an extension of the entertainment channels. They seldom offer any serious content, but are seen weaving narratives for camouflaging the poor performance of the government of the day. Therefore, their overdrive in criticising Zelanskyy could be an extension of the non-performance

of India's present top diplomat, S. Maldives to Bangladesh. Jaishankar, who is also the political face of the contemporary regime of Prime Minister Narendra Modi as its foreign minister. It, however, is not surprising that the Indian channels are abuzz



sembling parrots painted in attractive colours are being seen portraying the eclipse of Indian foreign policy from her neighbourhood to Washington as a milestone of great successes of the Indian regime. Jaishankar's cowardice was palpable when he gave a subdued statement before the Rajya Sabha that the handcuffing and enchaining of the Indian citizens accused of entering the US was a part of the standard operating system of the US Homeland security. Apart from embarrassing his fellow citizens in India, the Indian foreign minister cannot deny that during his tenure the country's influence has substantially declined from

Indian Interests

During the past 10 years, the Modi regime has made India's capital industries such as steel and aluminium suffer due to the lack of government

support. With the Indian foreign minister behaving like an under secretary of the US State Department, there is disquiet in the industrial sector, whether he would ever care to protect Indian interests and dignity.

With India losing her markets in the West, a bleak future awaits India's steel and aluminium industries. They are being sandwiched between the Chinese threats of dumping its products in India and the changing scenario in the world industries, especially with the US entry in the mineral-rich Eastern Europe and Russia.

It is estimated that the US would soon be accessing and processing 22 minerals, including ferroalloys, nonferro alloys and rare earth metals, such graphites, key components in electrical car batteries and nuclear reactors.

In the case of bauxite, China, which produces 60 percent of the world's production, might find India an ally. However, India's top leadership in the key areas continue to be confused. They want to worship Washington and Beijing simultaneously.

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

Majority of South Korean Firms Expect Significant Economic Difficulties In 2025

SEOUL: A majority of South Korean companies expect the country to undergo significant economic difficulties this year due to deteriorating business conditions, a poll showed on Thursday. In the survey conducted by

the Korea Enterprises Federation (KEF) on 508 companies with over 50 employees in January, 96.9 percent of responding firms said they expect the country to experience economic difficulties in 2025, reports Yonhap news agency.

Among the respondents, 22.8 percent expected the level of economic woes to be more severe



than during the 1997 financial crisis, while 74.1 percent expected significant economic difficulties, though not on the same level as in 1997. When asked about the negative economic impact of the country's ongoing political instability, 47.2 percent cited weakened export competitiveness due to increased foreign exchange volatility, followed by

deterioration of consumer sentiment at 37.8 percent and investment uncertainty 26 percent. Regarding financial burdens and regulatory challenges, 38.4 percent of the businesses cited higher labor costs, while 28.3 percent cited strict industrial safety regulations.

"With the tightening of global trade regulations and domestic political instability, our busiesses are facing an increasingly unpredictable environment," a KEF official said, while urging the government to introduce regulatory reform measures to encourage corporate investment and job creation.

Democrats criticise Trump for public showdown with Zelensky

NEW YORK: Democratic Party leaders have accused US President Donald Trump of batting for his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin during the public showdown with Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky at the White House, on Friday.

Democratic Party's Senate leader Chuck Schumer said in a scorching post on X, "Trump and [Vice President JD] Vance are doing Putin's dirty work. Senate Democrats will never stop fighting for freedom and democracy". Former Speaker and Democratic Party's senior leader Nancy Pelosi called the Oval Office confrontation a "shameful display". "Putin must be overjoyed with today's the-

atrics", she said on X. Engaging in a "dignified man-



ner" with Zelensky "would've been a show of strength for the President of the United States", she added. The Democratic Party leader in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Jean Shaheen said in a statement, "Russia has not been able to break Ukraine's spirit nor its will to fight. We are certain President Trump's childish tantrum will not reach that objective either". She added, "Today's behav-

iour by President Trump and Vice President Vance would be more shocking if it wasn't the new normal". Support for Zelensky flowed

in from Democrat governors who declared, "We, along with millions of Americans, stand united with the Ukrainian people". "Americans must protect our strong democratic values on the world stage instead of undermining President Zelensky's work to fight for his nation and the freedom of his people after being invaded by Russia", the Democratic Governors Association said. Democratic Party leader in

the House of Representatives Hakeem Jeffries said, "Today's White House meeting with the President of Ukraine was appalling and will only serve to further embolden Vladimir Putin, a brutal dictator".

Kannada actor Ranya Rao held at KIA with 14kg Gold belt



ARUN KUMAR RAO

Bengaluru

In a shocking turn of events, Kannada film actress Ranya Rao, daughter of Ramachandra Rao, Director General of Police (Police Housing Corporation), was arrested by Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) sleuths at the Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) on Monday night. The 32-yearold actress was apprehended on charges of gold smuggling, exposing what invessignificant smuggling racket operating through Bengaluru

DRI officials intercepted Ranya as she disembarked from an Emirates flight from Dubai. To their disbelief, she was found wearing a custom belt strapped with 14 kg of gold bars, along with an additional 800 grams of gold ornaments. She was produced before a magistrate on Tuesday evening and has been remanded to 14-day judicial custody. Investigators are now delving into her potential in- expressed deep disappoint- of deception, betrayal, and a tigators believe could be a volvement with an organized ment. "Four months ago, dramatic fall from grace.

ya's frequent international travels had raised red flags. "She had made over 10 trips since the beginning of the year, primarily to the Gulf. Her short stays and the pattern of her travels prompted surveillance," an officer stationed at KIA revealed. During her four previous arrivals within 15 days, the actress had been dressed similarly. Sources suggest that Ranya

may have evaded scrutiny by leveraging bureaucratic privileges. "She was reportedly met by a protocol officer at the terminal and escorted out without the usual security checks. Her baggage went through random screening, but she herself was never frisked, thanks to the official protocol services extended to senior bureaucrats and IPS officers. Shockingly, a government vehicle would even collect her, ensuring a smooth exit from the airport," a source disclosed

Reacting to his daughter's arrest, Ramachandra Rao

Ranya married architect Jatin According to sources, Ran- Hukkeri. Since then, she has not been in touch with us. We are completely unaware of her and her husband's business dealings. This has come as a huge shock. She has let us down, but the law must take its course," he told sections of the media, firmly distancing himself from her alleged activities.

> The DRI team is now scrutinizing footage from Ranya's previous visits to the city to assess whether she might have smuggled gold on other occasions. They are also investigating if she had accomplices within the airport, potentially implicating protocol officers or others who might have facilitated her unobstructed

> may just be the tip of the iceberg. Her arrest could lead to revelations about a larger smuggling syndicate with deep roots in Bengaluru and potentially beyond. As the investigation progresses, the glamour surrounding the actress has faded, leaving behind a story

Authorities believe Ranva

Goa rocks to Global Carnaval



DOMINICK RODRIGUES Panjim (Goa)

Goa rocked for four days to the sights and sounds of the famed international "Carnaval" from March 1 to 4, as dancers and floats representing the environment swayed and sashayed to musical tunes down the streets of the Capital Panjim, Vasco, Margao and Mapuca cities, besides other smaller places.

The message highlighting conservation of wildlife and nature came across strongly as the various tableaux displayed

tigers, bison, turtles and bags not only marine even pangolins that are the victims of poaching gangs across the world.

The Carnaval's lead float was led by the traditional "King Momo" and Carnival Queen as, dressed in their festive best, men and women danced to the popular Goan and Portuguese songs that even had some of the crowds joining in the song-n-dance.

The 50 colourful floats also displayed various themes including the fishing community of Goa whose fishing expertise

creatures, but also draws huge numbers of global tourists seeking to experience the 'Susegad' fish-ncurry culture of the State.

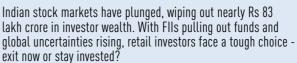
Meanwhile, "Samba

Square" in the Capital of Panjim highlighted culinary experiences in an eclectic mix including Mexican, Jamaican and Lebanese food for tourists and locals. The Carnaval marks the four-day celebrations of merriment before "Ash Wednesday", which heralds the 40-day season of Lent for Chris-

tians the world over.

Talking Points

Narvijay Yadav



he Indian stock marone of their steepest declines in recent history, erasing nearly Rs 83 lakh crore in investor wealth. The Sensex and Nifty have been on a sharp downward trajectory since June 2024, with the past month witnessing an especially brutal fall. This turmoil has left retail investors facing a difficult dilemma -should they stay invested and ride out the storm, or should they cut their losses and exit before things worsen?

The biggest blow to the markets came from renewed global trade tensions. The US, under Trump's leadership, has reintroduced hefty tariffs on imports from several economies, including China. This move has triggered concerns of a global economic slowdown, affecting investor sentiment worldwide. With the possibility of a trade war looming, foreign institutional investors (FIIs) began withdrawing their funds from emerging markets like India.

FIIs have withdrawn a staggering Rs 2.1 lakh crore from Indian equities, causing heavy selling pressure. Domestic economic concerns, including high inflation, sluggish GDP growth, and weak corporate earnings, have further dampened investor confidence. As a result,

stock prices across most sectors kets are experiencing have been plunging, leading to panic selling among retail investors.

The Scale of the Fall: The recent market rout has been severe, with small and mid-cap stocks suffering the most. In February alone, these indices saw a steep 13% decline, and analysts warn that further downside is possible. The Nifty 50, which once hovered near record highs, is now trading at its lowest levels in months. The Sensex has followed a similar trajectory, witnessing sharp corrections.

Most sectoral indices are deep in the red, with IT, real estate, and auto stocks facing the brunt of the sell-off. The only exception has been PSU banks, which have shown relative resilience due to improved earnings and government support. However, with volatility gripping the market, even these stocks may not remain immune to further corrections.

Will the Market Recover: Stock markets operate in cycles, and downturns are an inevitable part of investing. While the current situation looks grim, markets have historically bounced back stronger after every major crash. The speed of recovery, however, depends on multiple factors,

Investors in Panic: Hold or Sell?



including global trade policies, FII activity, and domestic economic stability. With India's strong economic fundamentals and ongoing policy reforms, the long-term growth story remains intact. The current turbulence may present an opportunity for patient investors to accumulate quality stocks at lower valuation

What Should Investors Do: Market crashes can be unsettling, especially for small investors who lack the financial cushion that large institutions enjoy. The temptation to exit during a downturn is high, but history has shown that panic selling often leads to regret when markets eventually recover. The key to surviving such turbulent times lies in adopting a well-thought-out strategy. In such a scenario, investors must first review their portfolios and

assess their exposure to highrisk stocks.

Those invested in fundamentally strong companies with solid earnings and growth prospects should consider holding their positions instead of selling at a loss. For those heavily invested in speculative stocks, rebalancing and shifting towards safer assets may be a wiser approach. Investors with a long-term horizon should continue their SIPs and avoid making impulsive decisions. History has proven that disciplined investors who stick to their strategies tend to benefit when markets stabilize and rebound. Investing is a long game, and those who remain disciplined are often the ones who reap the biggest rewards.

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

MAHE and TENVIC Sports Sign MoU to Revolutionize India's Sports Ecosystem

ARUN KUMAR RAO

Bengaluru

In a significant step towards strengthening India's sports ecosystem, Manipal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE) and TENVIC Sports, co-founded by legendarv cricketer Anil Kumble, have signed a Memorandum years.

of Understanding (MoU) to launch a comprehensive set of academic and infrastructural initiatives. The collaboration aims to develop highly skilled professionals for the sports industry and provide structured career pathways for athletes during and beyond their competitive

high-performance training, Sports will establish an insports infrastructure, and terdisciplinary academic framework integrating sports coaching, management, technology, and sciences to nurture talent for India's rapidly expanding sports sector. The framework will be supported

Hub, fostering innovation in through internships.

by a Research & Incubation

athlete support systems. **High-Performance Sports** Centres across MAHE campuses will provide professional athletes with opportunities to pursue education alongside training and offer

students practical exposure



1

Co-chaired Al Action Summit

Co-chaired with President Macron

Launched India-France Al Roadmap for safe, secure, and trustworthy Al



Dynamic Bilateral Cooperation

PM Modi's sixth visit to France

Inaugurated India's Consulate General in Marseille

India-France Year of Innovation 2026 to be launched in New Delhi France joins India-UAE's Mangrove Alliance for Climate

PM Modi paid tribute to Indian soldiers at Mazargues War Cemetery



Encrypting Defence & Security

India joins Eurodrone MALE Programme as an observer Launched FRIND-X for defense innovation

Strengthened DRDO-ONERA R&D partnership

Enhanced NSG-GIGN counter-terrorism cooperation

Focus on **nuclear energy** collaboration





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MDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY ALGORITHM





PM Narendra Modi with the President of USA, Mr. Donald Trump at the White House in Washington DC

PM Modi's **Adaptive Strategy** with The USA

12-13 February 2025



Initialising New U.S.-India COMPACT Initiative for defense,

trade, and technology

Defence & Security

10-year Framework for U.S.-India Major Defence Partnership

ASIA alliance launched for Al-enabled defense tech

Expanded Tiger Triumph Exercise

Strengthened Indo-Pacific logistics & intelligence sharing

Trade & Investment - 'Mission 500'

■ Target to double trade to \$500B by 2030

Bilateral Trade Affairs negotiations set for fall 2025 *\$7.35B in new Indian investments in the U.S.A.

Technology & Innovation - U.S.-India TRUST Initiative

Al Infrastructure Roadmap

■ INDUS-X for space, energy, and tech partnerships NASA-ISRO: First Indian astronaut to ISS & NISAR Earth-mapping

2

Optimising Energy & Clean Tech

U.S. support for India's full Int. Energy Agency membership Advancing U.S.-India Civil Nuclear Agreement



Evolving Multilateral & Indo-Pacific Security

Strengthening Quad for regional security & trade

Indian Ocean Strategic Venture for infrastructure & commerce

U.S. approves extradition of Tahawwur Rana

Call for Pakistan to act on 26/11 & Pathankot attackers India joins Combined Maritime Forces to secure sea lanes



Reinforcing People-to-People Ties

3,00,000 Indian students contribute \$8Bn to the U.S. economy

Strengthened higher education ties through dual-degree programs Streamlined legal mobility for professionals & tourists

Enhanced cooperation against trafficking, organised crime, & cyber