

REGION **2**



DELHI GOVT APPROVES ₹4,000 CR FOR YAMUNA CLEANING, HIGH-SECURITY JAIL AND EV INFRA

CM Rekha Gupta Inspects Minto Bridge, Directs Measures for 'Zero Waterlogging'

NEW DELHI: Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Friday inspected Minto Bridge and two other waterlogging-prone points for preparedness to tackle waterlogging, promising that her team was working on war footing to save the city from coming to a standstill due to marooning in monsoon. "We are installing automatic pumps and laying a 2.5-km pipe to prevent water collection under the bridge," she said, during an inspection in which she was accompanied by Minister Parvesh Verma, responsible for irrigation, flood control and water.

Inspecting the provisions for rainwater inlet and pumping facilities at the colonial-era Minto Bridge, CM Gupta said the government is working in a time-bound manner and conducting checks in advance to "ensure that not even a drop of rainwater" gets collected during rains.

She pointed out that during the last monsoon, the area got submerged in water, and the pump operator could not reach



the spot on time. "We will ensure the presence of an operator round the clock and also activate automatic pumping if the water reaches a particular level," said CM Gupta. The CM and Minister Verma also inspected the facilities to check

waterlogging at Ring Road near the WHO office and Pul Prahladpur near Tughlakabad in southeast Delhi.

She said that at the Minto Bridge, trial runs were conducted with water tankers to see if the channel for carry-

ing away water is without any blockage.

"A list of points prone to waterlogging has been prepared, and Minister Parvesh is ensuring that all of them get a solution well in time," she added.

The Chief Minister said the Government is working diligently to ensure that waterlogging does not take place and traffic jams do not occur during the rains.

Minto Bridge is a railway underbridge, and the road passing under it connects the central business district of Connaught Place to the Ajmeri Gate side of the New Delhi Railway Station.

The point is notorious for waterlogging and has featured in many news items over the decades, showing public transport buses marooned in rainwater that tends to rise to 10 feet during heavy rainfall.

Over the years, the prevention of waterlogging at this point in the monsoon has been considered a certificate of efficiency for civic agencies.

BANKING & FINANCE **6**



NO PLAN TO LEVY GST ON UPI TRANSACTIONS OVER RS 2,000, SAYS FINANCE MINISTRY

POTPOURRI **8**



ON WORLD LIVER DAY, DOCTORS EMPHASIZE: 'FOOD IS MEDICINE' TO PREVENT RISING LIVER DISEASE BURDEN

Fitch Projects India's GDP Growth at 6.4 % for FY26, Retains 6.3 % for FY27



NEW DELHI: Fitch Ratings on Thursday projected India's GDP growth at 6.4 per cent for FY26 amid global uncertainties, while retaining the projections for the next financial year (FY27) unchanged at 6.3 per cent.

For India, the global ratings agency reduced GDP growth estimates for both the 2024-25 fiscal year and the current 2025-26 fiscal year by 10 basis points to 6.2 per cent and 6.4 per cent, respectively, amid fears of a global trade war.

The growth forecast for the 2026-27 fiscal year remains at 6.3 per cent, according to Fitch. In addition to India's re-

vised growth forecast, Fitch also lowered its global growth projections for 2025 by 0.4 percentage points and cut growth estimates for China and the US by 0.5 percentage points, from its March outlook.

"It is difficult to predict US trade policy with any confidence. Massive policy uncertainty is hurting business investment prospects, equity price falls are reducing household wealth, and US exporters will be hit by retaliation," Fitch stated in its special update to the quarterly Global Economic Outlook.

The US GDP growth rate is expected to stay positive at 1.2

per cent for 2025. Meanwhile, China's growth is projected to fall below 4 per cent both this year and next, and growth in the eurozone is anticipated to remain well below 1 per cent, according to Fitch's projections.

The large size of India's domestic market, which reduces reliance on external demand, is expected to insulate the country from the US tariff hike, according to the global ratings agency.

A recent Morgan Stanley report had also stated that India is the "best placed country in Asia", amid the global uncertainty triggered by US President Donald Trump's threat to jack up tariffs, because of the nation's low goods exports to GDP ratio and strong fundamentals.

"While India is exposed to direct tariff risks, we believe on balance India is less exposed to global goods trade slowdown, considering that it has the lowest goods exports to GDP ratio in the region," the report stated.

Waqf (Amendment) Act row: No fresh appointments or de-notification of existing waqfs, Centre assures SC



NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on April 17 recorded the undertaking given by the Union government that no fresh members would be appointed to waqf boards and the Central Waqf Council in terms of the Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025 till the next date of hearing.

In its interim order, a bench headed by CJJ Sanjiv recorded the assurance given by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta that the status of existing waqfs, including waqf by user, will not be changed or identified.

The Bench, also comprising Justices Sanjay Kumar and K.V. Viswanathan, asked the Centre to file its reply to the petitions seeking stay and challenging the validity of the recent amendments introduced to the Waqf Act, 1995, within a period of seven days. In view of the multiplicity of the petitions, the apex court told the petitioners to choose five lead pleas to be decided by the apex court, adding that the other petitions may be treated as applications or deemed to be disposed of.

The apex court directed its registry to rename the matter as "In Re: Waqf Amendment Act". It also ordered the appointment of nodal counsel to facilitate the filing of pleadings and written submissions before the apex court. The matter is likely to be listed next on May 5 for further hearing. On Wednesday, the CJJ Khanna-led Bench indicated that it would pass an interim order but deferred the proceedings after SG Mehta urged that the Union government should be given a hearing before any interim order is passed.

Multiple petitions have been filed before the Supreme Court challenging the constitutional validity of the recent amendments introduced in the Waqf Act, 1995. After the legislation was passed by Parliament in the first week of April, the Congress announced it will challenge the Waqf (Amendment) Bill (now an Act after the Presidential assent) before the Supreme Court, claiming that it was an attack on the basic structure of the Constitution and was aimed at "polarising" and "dividing" the country on the basis of religion.

On the other hand, the government said that crores of poor Muslims will benefit from this legislation, and in no way does it harm any single Muslim.

FM Sitharaman Says India will Tackle Global Trade Disruptions with Agile Policy, Investments



MUMBAI: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday expressed confidence that India would tackle the challenge posed by the global trade war with the right mix of policy agility and long-term investments to strengthen the domestic economy.

Addressing the celebrations here to mark 150 years of the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE), the Finance Minister said: "The intensification of tariff wars and the rise of protectionist policies have the potential to disrupt global supply chains, increase production costs and create uncertainty in investment decisions across borders as well."

However, amidst this volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous world, the strength of India's economic fundamentals and macroeconomic prudence stands out, she added. "We offer investors a combination of policy stability and growth, governance and innovation," she remarked. "We will navigate the global disruptions with policy agility and long-term investments," she remarked.

Panipat: world's largest thread hub producing 10 cr kg of thread every month

SATISH HANDA
Panipat

has set a record in the yarn sector, leaving behind Italy. Textile City Panipat has become the world's largest yarn hub where nearly 10.5 crore kg of thread is produced every month since the last two years thus has made a world record in the field of thread, now said to be the world's largest thread hub, surpassing Italy. Thread manufactured in Panipat is being exported to the entire world, which has increased to about 10 lakh kilograms producing 20-25 lakh kilograms of thread daily in the town having 200 units of yarn in the textile city has now set a record in the yarn sector becoming the world's largest yarn hub. Panipat is making yarn from rags and exporting it all over the world and has surpassed Italy in the field of yarn production.

Information reveals, during



the recent past period, nearly 50 new yarn units have also been set up in Panipat. The quality of yarn produced in Panipat is better than the yarn of other countries since the yarn mills in the town are using the most modern machines made in Germany. Sources reveal, nearly 510 machines installed in Panipat industry producing yarn in these mills has brought about a revolution in the yarn industry. While talking to

media persons, Sanjay Garg President of Northern India Ruter Organization said that the government should withdraw the increased electricity rates to promote the yarn industry in the area. Meanwhile, Vinod Khandelwal, Chairman of the State Chamber of Commerce, said that Panipat is a hub of rugs and the government should make recycled yarn tax free. He said, the entrepreneurs here make thread from rags. "Recycled thread is tax free in foreign countries. The government should make recycled thread tax free because the waste cloth that comes to Panipat has already been taxed. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has also praised the Panipat textile industry at different occasions."

Panipat is a hub of recycling. Panipat collects waste from all over the world. The recycling business here is worth six thousand crore rupees annually. Waste comes here from about

80 countries. Entrepreneurs make thread from this waste. It is also called recycled cotton yarn. Now after getting exemption in US tariffs entrepreneurs have doubled the speed of production. Now the yarn industry is in danger, the government has increased the electricity rates in industries by 56 percent which will affect 200 yarn units of the district. Earlier the price of one kilowatt was Rs. 165, now it has been increased to Rs. 290. According to Panipat entrepreneurs, industries where the bill for a 1000 kW meter used to be Rs 1.65 lakh, now their bill will be Rs 2.90 lakh per month, whereas the entrepreneurs earn a profit of only Rs 2 on one kilogram of thread. Now due to increase in electricity prices, the production of one kilogram of thread will become costlier by Rs 3. Under such a situation, thread mills will incur losses, they regretted.

Delhi Government's Excise Revenue Climbs to ₹7,766 Cr in 2024-25



OUR CORRESPONDENT
New Delhi

The Delhi government's excise revenue rose to approximately Rs 7,766 crore in 2024-25, marking a recovery from previous setbacks linked to the scrapped 2021-22 excise policy, officials said on Thursday.

The revenue—comprising excise duty and Value Added Tax (VAT) on liquor—stood at Rs 6,762.61 crore in 2021-22. It gradually increased to Rs 6,830 crore in 2022-23 and Rs 7,430.97 crore in 2023-24. The current year's collection of Rs 7,765.97 crore is based on figures available up to February and may increase slightly, officials added.

Last month, the Delhi government extended the existing excise policy for another three months, as work continues on drafting a new policy. The ongoing policy, first reinstated in September 2022 after the previous one was scrapped due to allegations of irregularities, has been extended multiple times since.

Chief Minister Rekha Gupta recently stated that her administration is formulating a transparent and robust excise policy, drawing on successful models from other states to further boost revenue.

Under the extended policy, over 700 retail liquor outlets across Delhi are operated by four government-run corporations.

PM Modi to Flag off India Steel 2025 Global Conference in Mumbai on April 24

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate India Steel 2025, the 6th edition of the biennial international exhibition and conference scheduled to take place from April 24 to 26 at the Bombay Exhibition Centre in Mumbai, according to a statement issued by the Ministry of Steel on Thursday.

The event will bring together leading stakeholders from across the global steel value chain to



discuss the future trajectory of the sector, with a sharp focus on growth, sustainability, resilience, and innovation.

India is on a trajectory to achieve a production capacity

of 300 million tonnes and a per capita consumption of 160 kg by 2030, in line with the National Steel Policy. Keeping in view this ambitious growth in the steel sector, the conference is being organised to unlock new opportunities for inter-state and international collaboration, facilitate knowledge exchange, and showcase India's policy reforms and infrastructure initiatives aimed at enhancing the ease of doing business across the

steel value chain, the statement said. Prime Minister Modi will flag off the premier event on April 24 through video conferencing. The conference will be attended by Union Steel and Heavy Industries Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy, Minister of State for Steel and Heavy Industries Bhupathi Raju Srinivasa Varma, Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishu Deo Sai.

NCLAT dismisses Byju's Settlement Plea, Upholds Insolvency

CHENNAI: The National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) has set aside the appeals filed by the BCCI and Riju Raveendran, brother of Byju Raveendran, seeking withdrawal of insolvency proceedings against Byju's and to consider the settlement between the beleaguered edtech company and the BCCI.

They had challenged the order passed by the Bengaluru bench of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), which had on February 10, 2025 directed to place their settlement offer before the new Committee of Creditors (CoC), in which US-based Glas Trust, the trustee for lenders to which Byju's owes \$1.2 billion, is a member.

The Chennai bench of the NCLAT upheld the directions passed by the NCLT. It said that the settlement proposal was filed after the formation of CoC, hence as the provisions of section 12 A of the Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code, it requires the approval of the lender's body.



The Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP) against Byju's was initiated on July 16, 2024, by the NCLAT, admitting a Rs 158.90 crore claim from the BCCI as an operational creditor of edtech major. An IRP was appointed also by the NCLT in this matter.

Later, a settlement was reached between the parties, and Byju Raveendran approached the NCLAT.

The appellate tribunal set aside the insolvency proceedings against Byju's on August

2, 2024, after approving a dues settlement with the BCCI, which had entered into a Team Sponsor Agreement with the cricket body in 2019.

This was challenged by Glas Trust before the Supreme Court. Glas Trust, a financial creditor, had also filed a separate petition before NCLAT seeking resolution of its debt of \$984.3 million.

Meanwhile, Byju's Alpha, a special purpose financing vehicle established by Byju's in the US to receive proceeds of a \$1.5 billion Term Loan B, last

week sued Byju Raveendran, co-founder and his wife Divya Gokulnath for "orchestrating theft of \$533 million".

Byju's Alpha said that following the \$533 million judgment of the United States Bankruptcy Court for the District of Delaware against Riju Raveendran and Byju's ultimate corporate parent in India, the company has now filed a lawsuit against Byju Raveendran, his co-Founder and wife Divya Gokulnath, and his consigliere (advisor), Anita Kishore.

The lawsuit states that each of them co-orchestrated and executed a lawless scheme to conceal and steal \$533 million of loan proceeds (the 'Alpha Funds'), according to a press release.

They further stated that "it is clear that Byju, Divya, and Anita deliberately hid the assets of BYJU's Alpha and repeatedly were deceptive about the location of the money in order to steal funds rightfully owed to the Lenders".

SEBI Chief urges Corporates to Raise the Bar on Governance

MUMBAI: SEBI Chairman Tuhin Kanta Pandey on Thursday said corporates must ensure high governance standards as any failure can trigger ripple effects across the market economy.

Addressing the CII Corporate Governance Summit here, the market regulator chief said that preventing failures in corporate governance is essential for maintaining financial stability.

He highlighted that the SEBI will continue to expect a higher bar on governance, but true and lasting change must come from within the corporate boardrooms.

Pandey noted that to ensure transparency in the market, the SEBI has specified periodic disclosures of certain information, such as quarterly disclosure of shareholding pattern, compliance with



corporate governance requirements, financial results, and the movement of funds.

"By mandating disclosures, board structures and oversight mechanisms, we aim to create a self-regulating environment that encourages ethical and responsible corporate behaviour," he said. The SEBI chief emphasised the need for industry to adopt Reg Tech solutions to improve compliance, reporting, streamlining processes

and improving operational efficiency of enterprises. Reg-Tech solutions help businesses, leverage technology like AI, machine learning, and cloud computing to automate compliance process-

es, reduce costs, and improve risk management. RegTech tools can identify potential risks, monitor compliance in real-time, and provide early warnings for non-compliance, thus, minimising penalties and reputational damage.

Pandey highlighted that SEBI and the market exchanges are using suit-tech solutions for effective and enhanced supervision.

The use of technology by

regulators has been very helpful in detecting early signs of market abuse and non-compliance. Harnessing technological advancements could further reduce the potential blind spots, market misconduct, and instil a culture of continuous compliance amongst regulated entities, he added.

He also said that there was a need for a balance between regulation and ease of doing business.

"We are conscious that over-regulation can stifle growth and innovation. At the same time, too little regulation can also lead to a decline in trust of stakeholders and adversely impact growth. Hence, optimum regulation is required."

The SEBI chief also came out in favour of rationalising regulations by removing clauses that are no longer relevant and reducing overlaps.

Delhi govt approves ₹4,000 cr for Yamuna cleaning, high-security jail and EV infra

OUR CORRESPONDENT
New Delhi

In a major push towards infrastructure development and environmental conservation, the BJP-led Delhi government on Wednesday approved projects worth Rs 4,000 crore in the first meeting of its Expenditure Finance Committee (EFC), chaired by Chief Minister Rekha Gupta.

The approved proposals include Rs 3,140 crore for the construction of 27 decentralized sewage treatment plants (STPs) and laying of sewer lines across the capital to support the ongoing mission to clean the heavily polluted Yamuna river.

Highlighting the Yamuna's significance as the city's lifeline, CM Gupta said the rejuvenation of the river is a top government priority. "The effort is not just an environmental commitment but a responsibility to future generations," she said during



An event.

The EFC meeting was attended by Cabinet Ministers Parvesh Verma, Ashish Sood, Kapil Mishra, Pankaj Singh, and senior officials. The sanctioned plan includes the construction of decentralized STPs, a 10 MGD terminal STP at Delhi Gate, and supporting works such as operation and maintenance, laying of sewer lines, and providing household sewer connections.

The decentralized STPs are slated to come up in areas including Wajidpur Thakran, Mundka, Narela, Bawana,

Auchandi, Tajpur Khurd, Kanjhawala, Majri, Ghevda, Jaunapur, Bijwasan, Salahpur, Punjab Khor, Qutubgarh, Tikri Kalan, Mohamadpur Majri, Nizampur, and Jaunti. The government has directed departments to adopt a mission-mode approach and deploy modern technologies to complete the project within 18 months after tenders are issued.

To further bolster public infrastructure, the committee also cleared a Rs 148.58 crore proposal for setting up a high-security prison in Na-

rela. Spread across 40 acres, the facility will have the capacity to house 256 inmates. The project is part of the government's plan to eventually shift the Tihar Jail complex to the city's outskirts.

In another key decision, the EFC approved Rs 107.02 crore for establishing electric bus charging stations at DTC and Cluster Bus depots in Dwarka and ISBT Sector-22. BSES Rajdhani Power Limited will implement the project, which is aimed at strengthening the city's electric mobility infrastructure.

The government emphasized that the Yamuna cleaning project will address issues like foul odor, water pollution, and declining groundwater levels in residential areas. "No untreated sewage should enter the Yamuna," the official statement reiterated, stressing a multiphase, multi-agency plan focused on drain treatment, expanding the sewer network, and building modern STPs.

Air Hostess Sexual Assault Case: Police Nab accused after analysing 800 CCTVs' footage



GURUGRAM: A day after its formation, the Gurugram police's Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the air hostess ICU sexual assault case on Friday nabbed the accused, after analysing the footage from at least 800 CCTV cameras installed inside and outside of the private hospital, police said.

The accused was identified as Deepak, 25, a native of Bihar's Muzaffarpur and working as a treatment machine technician in the ICU of the hospital for the past five months. The accused will be produced before the court on Saturday, and police will seek police custody for further investigation, a police official said.

An official privy to the matter said the accused, arrested in the Sadar Police Station area on Friday, has confessed to his crime.

"While investigating the incident, eight police teams checked the footage of 800 CCTV cameras installed in the hospital, and around 50 hospital staff, including doctors, were questioned about the incident. Keeping in mind the seriousness of the incident, the police teams investigated every angle and collected a lot of information related to the incident, as a result of which the police got great success in identifying the accused who committed the crime," DCP, Headquarters, Arpit Jain.

On Thursday, Gurugram Police Commissioner Vikas Kumar Arora had set up the SIT for the identification and arrest of the accused. The SIT, headed by DCP Jain, had eight different police teams which were given special directions and deployed to collect information and evidence related to the incident.

The eight different teams, including those headed by ACP, Sadar, Yashwant, ACP, CAW, Kavita, Sadar SHO, Inspector Sunil Kumar, SHO, Women Police West, Inspector Geeta, CIA in charge Sector 40, Inspector Amit Kumar and the investigation officer, Assistant-Sub-Inspector Sonika collected various information related to the matter.

The 46-year-old air hostess had alleged in her complaint that she was sexually assaulted when she was on ventilator support in the intensive care unit (ICU) of a noted private hospital in Gurugram on April 6. The matter came to light on April 13 when she told her husband about the sexual assault, who alerted the police and filed a complaint.

HC directs MCD, Delhi govt to act against encroachments on Yamuna Pusta road



OUR CORRESPONDENT
New Delhi

The Delhi High Court directed the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) and the city government to take prompt action against widespread illegal encroachments along Yamuna Pusta Road—a vital stretch connecting Wazirabad to Hiranke and serving as a key route for local commuters and residents.

Justice Sachin Datta, heading the Bench, on Thursday instructed the concerned executive engineer of the MCD to address the grievances raised in the public interest petition within eight weeks, in coordination with members of the Yuva Samiti—a registered society working for the welfare of Jagatpur Village and surrounding areas.

While disposing of the petition filed under Article 226 of the Constitution, the court clarified that it had not examined the merits of the case. However, it allowed the petitioners the liberty to file a fresh plea if the issues remain unresolved.

The petition, filed by advocate Ashu Bidhuri, highlighted that Yamuna Pusta Road is severely affected by unauthorized food stalls, illegally parked vehicles, and roadside commercial storage units, causing chronic traffic jams, infrastructure damage, and posing significant risks to public safety.

It also pointed out the presence of unremoved natural obstructions such as trees and overgrown shrubs that were not cleared during road construction. These hazards, the plea stated, become even more dangerous at night due to the lack of functional street lighting.

"The entire stretch remains in darkness after sunset, heightening the risk of accidents—especially at sharp turns—and fostering criminal activities such as theft, chain snatching, and molestation, endangering women, children, and the elderly," the petition read.

Additionally, the plea raised concerns over oversized, overflowing dustbins placed indiscriminately on the motorable sections of the road. These not only obstruct vehicular movement but also contribute to pollution and attract stray animals, including cows, pigs, dogs, and buffaloes.

The petitioner alleged that despite repeated complaints and representations to the Chief Minister, municipal authorities, and the police, no effective action has been taken so far.

Delhi govt extends EV policy by 3 Months, continues power subsidy for key categories



OUR CORRESPONDENT
New Delhi

The Delhi government has approved a three-month extension of its Electric Vehicle (EV) policy and announced the continuation of power subsidies across key categories. The decisions were taken during a Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Tuesday.

The power subsidy will continue to benefit four specific groups: domestic consumers, farmers, lawyers with chambers, and victims of the 1984 anti-Sikh riots. Addressing a press conference at the Delhi Secretariat, Transport Minister Pankaj Singh clarified that there is no proposal to ban auto-rickshaws or any other category of vehicles. "There are many things the government wants to do for its residents, and we will incorporate those in the revised EV policy," he said, confirming the current policy will remain in effect for approximately three to four more months.

Three including 2 young females arrested allegedly involved in prostitution in hotel



SATISH HANDA
Rohtak

Team of crime branch Rohtak police exposed a racket involved in prostitution in a hotel located on Delhi Bypass at Rohtak during a raid, on information that forcible prostitution has been going on there since a long time. Team of Shashi Shekhar ASP freed a young girl and arrested two youths involved in illegal sex trade, whereas two girls were rescued from the net of criminals when they were being forced into this illegal business. Police arrived as customers on the instructions of Superintendent of Police Narendra Bijarnia. The hotel owner is still absconding and the search for him is going on. ACP said that Police had received secret information that prostitution was going on in the hotels of Delhi Bypass. As per the orders of Superintendent of Police Rohtak Narendra Bijarnia a special team was formed under the leadership of DSP Gulab. The police team confirmed the situation by sending fake customers to the hotels. After this, teams of police station Urban Estate and women police raided different hotels simultaneously.

During the raid, the police also rescued two girls who were being forced into prostitution and the statements of the rescued girls have been recorded before the judicial magistrate. The hotel owner managed to flee from the spot, the police are currently searching for him. The raiding team had found females and a youth nude condition.

Govt cracks down on fee hikes as court slams DPS Dwarka for student mistreatment

Audit of 600 schools in 7 days; 10 institutions receive notices; High Court rebukes DPS for locking students over dues

OUR CORRESPONDENT
New Delhi

In a sweeping crackdown on arbitrary fee hikes by private schools, the Delhi government has completed audits of 600 schools within just seven days and issued show-cause notices to 10 institutions for violating norms. The move coincides with the Delhi High Court's sharp criticism of Delhi Public School (DPS) Dwarka, where students were allegedly locked in a library and barred from classes over unpaid fees—an action the court condemned as "inhumane" and "unforgivable."

Delhi Power Minister Ashish



Sood called the development a turning point in the capital's education reform. "For the first time, a committee led by the District Magistrate has taken firm action against a school like DPS, which had challenged our orders in court. The court upheld our stance and directed the DM to ensure that students are not deprived of education," he said.

Sood said previous govern-

ments failed to act, allowing schools to raise fees unchecked. "Only 75 schools were audited annually earlier. We have secured audit reports from 600 schools in just seven days, already served 10 notices, and are on track to audit all 1,670 private schools in Delhi," he added. The government also plans to probe financial records and enforce accountability across the sector.

Air Hostess patient on ventilator alleges sexually assaulted by the attendant of a reputed Gurugram hospital

Meanwhile, Aam Aadmi Party leaders have accused the BJP-led Delhi government of shielding private school managements. Senior AAP leader Manish Sisodia said fee extortion in schools has reached alarming levels. "Parents are being looted, and children are being treated like criminals for not paying hiked fees. On Tuesday, students were reportedly locked inside classrooms, and on Wednesday, some were denied entry," he said, calling the BJP government "a protector of education mafias."

AAP Delhi convener Saunabh Bhargava echoed similar concerns and shared videos of protests outside schools, including one in the Chief Minister's own constituency. "Why is the government watching silently when parents are out on the streets?" he asked.



SATISH HANDA
Gurugram

A case of sexual harassment of an air hostess, a female patient has come to light at Medanta Hospital in Gurugram. The victim alleged that a hospital staff misbehaved with her while she was on the ventilator in ICU. The woman said the incident took place on 6 April, a day after she was admitted to the hospital. The police have registered a case and started an investigation, CCTV footage was scanned and the police said the accused will be arrested soon. It is said that the 46-year-old woman a resident of West Bengal, presently staying in a hotel in Gurugram since past few days ago brought for the treatment at Medanta Hospital, since her health deteriorated after drowning in the swimming pool and she was unconscious during the incident and she was treated at Medanta hospital for about a week.

On April 13, the woman had lodged a complaint at Sadar police station about sexual harassment by the staff of Medanta Hospital. The woman in her complaint said that she was on a ventilator at that time, so she could not speak anything and was very scared. She was unconscious during the incident. Meanwhile, Sadar police station has started investigating after register-

ing the case. Sadar police station said that the victim's statement has been recorded before the magistrate. As per the FIR, the woman was not in a condition to speak or resist the man's advances because of her weakened condition. She said, there were two nurses in the room, but they did not intervene, read the FIR.

The police team is examining the footage of the hospital's CCTV cameras to identify the accused. The accused will soon be identified and arrested. However, the sexually harassed victim remained under medical care until she was discharged on April 9. After returning home, she informed her husband about the incident, and the couple then approached the police when a First Information Report (FIR) had been filed at the Sadar police station against unidentified hospital staff. The police spokesperson assured that the accused would be arrested soon. Meanwhile, in a statement, Medanta Hospital said, "We have been made aware of a complaint from a patient and have been fully cooperating with the investigations conducted by the police authorities. At this stage, no allegations have been substantiated, and all relevant documents including CCTV footage from the hospital for the time period in question, have been handed over to the police."

Uttarakhand CM honoured by Dr Ambedkar Mahamanch for implementing UCC

HARIDWAR: Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami was honoured by Dr B.R. Ambedkar Mahamanch at a program in the city for implementing the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in the state.

The event was organised at BHEL Ground in Haridwar on the occasion of the 135th birth anniversary of Bhimrao Ambedkar, the chief architect of the Constitution and saw the enthusiastic participation of a large number of local people despite the scorching heat.

Expressing gratitude for the honour, CM Pushkar Singh Dhami said that the massive public turnout clearly indicates that people have shown trust in this bold decision. He said that the honour was not for one individual but for the ideology that has long raised the voice of justice and equality in Indian



society. Chief Minister Dhami described Baba Saheb as a visionary, saying, "Ambedkar believed that true equality in society is not possible until every citizen of the country is granted equal rights."

CM Dhami further said that it was this belief that inspired him to include revolutionary concepts like the Uniform Civil Code. The Chief Minister clarified that the Uttarakhand government has not just implemented a law but

has taken a major step toward social justice and equality. Chief Minister Dhami said that Baba Saheb was neglected for years, and his ideas were sidelined. "But today's India is moving towards realising his dreams. This is a new India, one that not only respects its heritage but also sets new standards by making bold decisions," he said.

The CM said that the crowd gathered in Haridwar is not just a

gathering of people, it is a public voice that says the people trust the Chief Minister's decisions, and now this echo is being heard beyond Uttarakhand across the country. He credited this historic decision to the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the government's strong political will.

"Uttarakhand is once again showing the way to the country, where equality is no longer just written in books but has now taken the shape of law and is being implemented on the ground. This is not just the implementation of a law, it is a decisive step toward a new India," the Chief Minister said. CM Dhami also announced the construction of the Baba Saheb Samrasata Sthal in Haridwar to educate future generations about the lives and histories of social reformers from the Scheduled communities, along with the Indian Constitution.

Expensive liquor was being smuggled in fake handloom products invoice wrapped in blankets consignment

SATISH HANDA
PANIPAT

A handloom businessman in Panipat exposed a big liquor smuggling racket going on in which handloom products were being despatched from Panipat to Gujarat from through transport. The unknown accused used to supply the handloom goods, mainly blankets in which expensive liquor bottles were being wrapped through transport by raising fake bills in the name of the handloom businessman's firm. On receiving the information, the handloom businessman reached the transport office, where his firm's bills were found and expensive liquor was packed in the consignment of a. On the complaint of the businessman,



Vipin, a resident of Yamuna Enclave having a firm by the name of Arijana Handfabin Panipat, Chandnibagh police station, registered a case against the unidentified accused.

He works in a handloom shop in Noorwala. On Thursday, the complainant received information that an unknown person was sending goods to the transport centre in Sector 25 by making fake bills

in the name of his firm. On receiving the information, he reached the transport centre and found two bills in the name of his firm, which were found to be fake and raised by an unknown person in the name of his firm. Information revealed that a rickshaw driver Babu had brought the goods for booking containing three bags delivered to the transport on these bills. He said that these goods have not

been booked by him. When he asked the rickshaw driver, Babu, he said that he had also delivered two bags of goods on the bill of the same firm at Gujarat Transport Sabzi Mandi, Shiv Chowk., which were also found booked on a fake bill too. Police suspected that an unknown person was sending illegal liquor or narcotics to Gujarat on the basis of fake bills.

ASI Dheeraj said that he and his colleague were on patrol near Mittal Mega Mall, when they got information that goods were being sent to Gujarat by preparing fake bills of some company at Asher Green Transport located in Sector 25. When his team reached the spot, they found the firm's owner Vipin, transport manager Brijmohan and e-rickshaw driver Babu.

Police, lawyer and nurse together running honeytrap racket to cheat a doctor

They all were extorting lakhs of rupees by threatening a rape case against him

SATISH HANDA
Palwal

Shockingly, a honeytrap case has come to light in Palwal district Haryana, in which a woman lawyer, an Police Assistant Sub Inspector) and a nurse have been arrested allegedly extorting Rs 10 lakh rupees from a doctor Bijendra Singh, who runs a nursing home located on Dighat Road from village Bannikheda in Palwal district. These three are accused of trying to extort a ransom of Rs 10 lakh from the nursing home operator threatening in case of not paying the money, to implicate him in a false sexual harassment case and defame him in the area as



well as him on social media. According to the victim, he received a call from a woman about two days ago who introduced herself as advocate Poonam Rao and said that Priyanka, a nurse working in his nursing home has complained of molestation by him which will tarnish his image in the area. It was alleged that he will have to pay Rs 10 lakh to suppress the matter, otherwise a rape case will be registered against him, for which he can be sentenced

for several years. Dr. Singh informed Sadar police station in-charge IPS officer Ayush Yadav about the entire incident immediately, after this a special team was formed on the instructions of SP Chandra Mohan. As per the plan, Dr. Singh and one of his associates reached the house of advocate Poonam Rao, where Rs 6 lakh was given in cash and when the remaining amount was demanded by Dr. Singh sent Rs 60,000 through Paytm and said that he would pay the remaining amount later.

As soon as the money transaction was completed and they came out, the police immediately raided and arrested advocate Poonam Rao on the spot.

After 40 Years, First Indian Astronaut to Travel into Space in May: Jitendra Singh

NEW DELHI: India will send an astronaut to space next month, a feat to be repeated 40 years after Rakesh Sharma's iconic 1984 flight aboard a Soviet Soyuz spacecraft, Union Minister of State for Science and Technology Jitendra Singh said on Friday.

Union Minister Jitendra Singh said Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla of the Indian Air Force is all prepared to fly to the International Space Station (ISS) next month as part of Axiom Space's Ax-4 mission.

"India is ready for its next space milestone," said Singh, underscoring the significance of the upcoming human spaceflight and a series of critical ISRO missions. He said the mission will mark the visit of the first Indian to the ISS and make Shukla the first Indian to travel into space in over four decades after Rakesh Sharma.

The Minister made the announcement after a high-level meeting held to review major future plans of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)



Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla

in the coming months.

Singh said that the collaboration with international partners and the strategic momentum of projects like Gaganyaan reflect India's commitment to becoming a global leader in space technology.

The Minister emphasised that these efforts are not only scientific in nature but also aligned with the vision of a developed and self-reliant India.

ISRO Chairman Dr V. Narayanan said Shukla is fully

prepared for the mission, which is expected to provide valuable hands-on experience for India's future crewed missions, including the Gaganyaan project.

A decorated test pilot with the IAF, Shukla was shortlisted under ISRO's Human Spaceflight Program (HSP) and is among the top contenders for the Gaganyaan mission, India's first indigenous crewed orbital flight.

His journey aboard the Ax-4 mission is expected to provide critical hands-on experience in

spaceflight operations, launch protocols, microgravity adaptation, and emergency preparedness — all essential for India's crewed space ambitions.

What sets Shukla's mission apart is its strategic importance. Unlike the symbolic undertones of India's first human spaceflight, this time the focus is on operational readiness and global integration. His participation underscores India's growing engagement with public-private international partnerships in space and its resolve to emerge as a serious contender in human space exploration.

Congress welcomes SC interim relief on Waqf Amendment Act

KAVITA SHARMA
New Delhi

The Congress today welcomed the Supreme Court interim relief on the recently passed Waqf Act. The party said the Act was not aimed at improving but "infiltrating" and "controlling" the institutions.

Addressing a press conference at the AICC office here today, Chairman of the Law, Human Rights and RTI Department in the AICC and MP Dr Abhishek Manu Singhvi and senior party leader and MP Imran Pratapgarhi said, "we are extremely grateful to the Supreme Court for having spent considerable time and passed an interim order which will of course be subject to further hearing".

Dr Singhvi tore into the government's claims of reform, saying, "it is retaliation in the guise of the reform. It is retaliation meticulously scripted, strategically timed and constitutionally questionable".

The Waqf Amendment Act, the senior Supreme Court lawyer said, is not an exercise in efficiency as it pretends to be. "It is



Today, it is the Waqf; tomorrow it could be your shrine, your institution, your faith and even your voice", he warned, adding, "the Act is not just legally flawed, it is morally vacuous, it is morally vacant, it takes the soul of religious freedom."

Dr Singhvi asserted that the "Waqf Amendment Act is not an amendment, it is an assault on autonomy, on identity, on constitutional values. You cannot amputate Article 26 and call it administrative efficiency".

He observed that "a board with a token Muslim presence is not representation - it is appropriation". He said, this is not just about Muslims. "It is about the message that minority institutions are fair game for state takeover".

Putting up a strong case against the Waqf Amendment Act, the eminent lawyer warned, "today it is the Waqf, tomorrow it could be your shrine, your institution and even your voice".

The constitution, he said, "is not a buffet where you pick the rights you like and ignore the ones you don't".

ED files charges in court against Sonia, Rahul in National Herald case



NEW DELHI: Taking a big step against political heavyweights, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) filed a prosecution complaint in a Special Delhi court against Congress MPs Rahul Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi in the alleged National Herald or Associated Journals Limited (AJL) money laundering case, a lawyer said on Tuesday.

The Special Court has fixed April 25 for hearing arguments on taking cognisance of the prosecution complaint. Others named in the chargesheet include Congress Overseas Chief Sam Pitroda, Suman Dubey, and others. The fresh trouble for Congress-controlled AJL comes close to the ED serving notices to registrars of property in Delhi, Mumbai and Lucknow to take possession of attached properties worth Rs 661 crore.

These properties were attached after the investigation revealed significant generation, possession and use of proceeds of crime to the tune of Rs 988 crore. In Delhi, notices were pasted on the wall of AJL property-5 (A), Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg in Central Delhi, which is home to media houses and newspaper offices. The notices were served on Friday in compliance with Section 8 of PMLA, 2002 and Rule 5(1) of the Prevention of Money Laundering (Taking Possession of Attached or Frozen Properties Confirmed by the Adjudicating Authority) Rules, 2013.

In Mumbai, a notice was also served on Jindal South West Projects Limited, which is occupying the 7th, 8th, and 9th floors at Herald House, Bandra (East). Jindal South West Projects was directed to transfer the rent/lease amount every month in favour of the Director, Directorate of Enforcement. In Lucknow, notices were pasted on property number 1, Bisheshwar Nath Road. Earlier, the ED conducted searches and seizures at multiple locations, uncovering incriminating documents linked to the alleged money laundering activities. Investigation revealed that Young Indian, a private company beneficially owned by Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi, acquired AJL properties worth Rs 2,000 crore for a mere Rs 50 lakh, significantly undervaluing its worth.

CJI Sanjiv Khanna recommends appointment of Justice BR Gavai as next CJ



MEENAKSHI BHATTACHARYA
New Delhi

The Chief Justice has recommended to the Ministry of Law that Justice B.R. Gavai to be appointed as the new Chief Justice of India (CJI). Justice B.R. Gavai is set to become the 52nd CJI of India and is expected to take the oath of office on May 14, with President Droupadi Murmu administering the oath. Current Chief Justice Sanjeev Khanna made this recommendation on Wednesday for Justice B.R. Gavai, a senior judge of the Supreme Court, succeeded him. Born on November 24, 1960, in Amravati, Justice Gavai was admitted to the bar on March 16, 1985. Chief Justice Sanjeev Khanna assumed his position in November 2024.

Road to Congress' success goes through Gujarat says Rahul Gandhi

KAVITA SHARMA
Gujarat

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi has said that the road to Congress' success goes through Gujarat. He also said that the entire country knows that only the Congress can defeat the RSS and the BJP.

Addressing a District Workers' Convention in Modasa Gujarat, Rahul Gandhi said the party needs to engage and involve the new generation and those leaders who are connected with the masses. At the same time, those who are aligned with the BJP need to be sidelined decently, he added.

The senior Congress leader said it was not only a political fight, but also an ideological



battle which was going on in the country. He said there were only two ideological parties in the country: Congress and the BJP-RSS. "The entire country knows only the Congress can defeat the BJP," he remarked,

while adding, "road to Congress' success lies through Gujarat."

Gandhi said the Congress must return to its original foundation. "Our party started from Gujarat," he pointed out, while referring to two great

leaders of the party — Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Patel — both of whom were from Gujarat. He asserted that Congress' comeback was not a difficult task in Gujarat and assured that the party will take the mission to its logical conclusion. He said, unlike in the past when local district leaders were not involved in the decision-making process, now they will be involved in all activities including the selection of the candidates for elections.

Rahul Gandhi said the District Presidents will be empowered with more responsibility and the districts will be run from the district headquarters and not the state capitals — suggesting that no decisions will be imposed from the top.

BJP holds key meet in Delhi at PM Modi's residence, discuss organisation reshuffle



NEW DELHI: The top BJP leadership held an important meeting on Wednesday in Delhi regarding the party's organisational elections, in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The meeting, held at the Prime Minister's residence, was attended by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, and BJP's National General Secretary (Organisation), B.L. Santhosh. The organisational reshuffle is expected to have a significant impact on the BJP's electoral strategy ahead of upcoming polls. Discussions also focused around the upcoming election for the BJP President.

According to party sources, the announcement regarding the election could be made within a week. In addition to deliberating on the national

leadership, the meeting also focused on organisational changes at the state level. Sources said that the names of new state BJP presidents for states like Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, and Madhya Pradesh were discussed.

The election for the BJP President was to be completed by February 2025, but was delayed due to state elections, including Haryana, Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Delhi. The party may announce around half a dozen state unit presidents in the next two to three days. "The election process for choosing the BJP President could begin any time after April 20," the party sources said. The election for the BJP President was supposed to take place in January. However, with April halfway through, it remains pending.

PM Modi pays tributes to Jallianwala Bagh massacre martyrs

NEWDELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid tributes to the lives lost in the Jallianwala Bagh massacre as India commemorates the 106th anniversary of the dark day on Sunday.



The massacre occurred on April 13, 1919, when Colonel Reginald Dyer ordered British Indian Army troops to open fire on a peaceful gathering of thousands at Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar. Taking to X, PM

Modi posted, "We pay homage to the martyrs of Jallianwala Bagh. The coming generations will always remember their indomitable spirit. It was indeed a dark chapter in our nation's history.

Rising of Dalits: Why Irritates Upper Strata?

JAG MOHAN THAKEN

The persistence of caste stigma against Dalits in India is a complex issue rooted in historical, social, economic, and political factors established through a very long journey categorised by the upper caste strata by some selfish groups to give self a rise and higher status with the ill intention to suppress the innocent people categorised as the Shudras by the so-called self-proclaimed custodians of the religion.

The caste system was weaved by these cunning groups in ancient Indian society, grouping these innocent people in the self-created untouchable category keeping them at the bottom and tied to occupations deemed impure. Despite legal abolition, these hierarchical notions linger in cultural practices and mindsets, reinforced over centuries.

Indian Constitution under the chapter 'Fundamental Rights' has guaranteed the citizens of India some fundamental rights which cannot be violated or snatched except directed by the law of the land and are enforceable in a court of law. However, this does not mean that they are absolute or immune from Constitutional amendment.

These rights also have been aimed at overturning the inequalities of pre-independence social practices. Specifically, they have also been used to abolish untouchability and hence prohibit discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth.

But, did we succeed in abolishing the stigma of untouch-

ability and discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth? The answer is - only up to some extent.

Let us quote some instances, where the caste stigma still hinders the fundamental rights of the lower strata.

In village Mauli, under Panchkula district of Haryana, hundreds of policemen were deployed at a 'Baraat' (wedding procession) in the first week of this April, though it was neither due to the presence of any protected VIP person in the event nor the groom was any gangster or most wanted person. The groom was just a member of Dalit caste and he came to Mauli with his Baraat to marry a Dalit girl of this village.

Now the questions pop up in mind - "Why so much police force had to cover the wedding procession? Who asked for the police? What was the bone of contention?" Media Reports state that the family of the groom had to involve the police after some upper caste villagers having a strong majority in the village tried to stop the procession of the groom for being a Dalit.

Why was the wedding procession obstructed? The groom's riding on the Ghor-Buggi (Horse Cart) was the main cause of discord. In India, at some places, the tradition of riding a horse or a horse cart, well-decorated for such special occasions, is considered a symbol of pride and dignity, but the villagers of upper caste strata who objected to the procession were not willing to accept this tradition being practised by a Dalit groom. They consider riding on horse in wedding procession as their monopoly and sole right and using this right



by a person from a lower caste is an insult to them.

Another incident of insulting and obstructing a Dalit to perform some religious rituals that has drawn the attention of even National Media and also became an agenda of speech during All India Congress Committee (AICC) session on April 9, where Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge and former party president Rahul Gandhi both mentioned the most stigmatic incident of "washing" of a temple after a visit by Tika Ram Jully, the Congress Leader of the Opposition in Rajasthan assembly.

Addressing the congress workers, Gandhi said, "They don't give rights to Dalits to enter temples, and when one goes, they clean the temple. This is not our religion... Our religion respects every individual. This thing - be it against Dalits or backwards - is hidden in the hearts of every BJP worker", Indian Express reports the statement.

Why are the congress leaders alleging of the BJP for the incident? The Indian Express adds that the person, Gyandev Ahuja a former three-time MLA of BJP, who reportedly sprayed the Ganga Jal (Water of pious river Ganga) for purifying the temple after the visit of Dalit congress leader, Tika

Ram Jully, had been associated throughout his political journey with BJP's wings - RSS, Hindu Jagran Manch, Bhartiya Mazdoor Sangh and ABVP since his childhood.

What is the issue was? Dalit congress leader Tika Ram Jully, on the auspicious occasion of Ram Naumi, 6th April 2025, visited the temple to worship the lord Ram, but as alleged that after the visit of the Dalit leader BJP leader purified the temple by sprinkling Ganga Jal. Congress@INCIndia on April 7 reacted sharply against the act of the BJP leader and commented that the anti-Dalit face of BJP has come to the fore once again.

"Leader of Opposition in Rajasthan Assembly, Tika Ram Jully ji, comes from the Dalit community. He went to visit the Ram temple on Ram Navami. After this, former BJP MLA and Narendra Modi's favourite, Gyandev Ahuja washed the Ram temple with Ganga Jal."

INC further tweeted, "Ahuja says that Dalits are impure. Impure people had entered the temple, so we washed the Ram temple with Ganga Jal." INC alleged, "This is not the first case, BJP and RSS people have been continuously insulting Dalits. What Modi's close aide Gyandev Ahuja has

done is a living proof of BJP's anti-Dalit mentality."

The sufferer, Tika Ram Jully on April 7, explains the incident @TikaRamJullyINC, "The statement of senior BJP leader Shri Gyandev Ahuja is indicative of BJP's mentality towards Dalits. I had raised the voice of Dalits in the assembly and talked about running a campaign against untouchability, but BJP's mentality is that they are talking about washing the temple with Ganga Jal if I visit the temple because I am a Dalit. This is not only an attack on my personal faith but also a statement promoting the crime of untouchability. Does BJP hate Dalits so much that it cannot even see us doing puja? Do only BJP leaders have the right over God?"

The Chief Minister and BJP State President should clarify whether they support the statement of washing the temple with Ganga Jal if Dalits visit the temple? asks Jully.

Month of March also ended with some unfortunate note, when some miscreants allegedly vandalized Veer Tejaji Maharaj's statue at Jaipur, Rajasthan on March 29, which sparked outrage among locals, who took to the streets on Saturday, hampering the vehicular movement on the Tonk Road as a mark of dissent. Tejaji or Veer Tejaji is a Rajasthan folk deity. He is considered to be one of the eleven major incarnations of Shiva and is worshipped as a deity in the states of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana by mostly the farmer community and other backward caste (OBC) people and any perceived disrespect to his legacy is seen as an insult to

cultural sentiments.

These nefarious incidents clearly indicate the growing challenges faced by Dalit and other backward communities in India as social and cultural norms framed by the higher caste strata are often used to remind the Dalits their actual place in social fabric. And they always display a message, through all the platforms by doing some nuisance activities now and then - 'Never Forget That You Are A Dalit', so that the lower strata feeling fear of social and physical harassment can never rise their heads before these so-called dictatorial people or social groups belonging to the upper caste higher strata.

On one hand the so-called 'Hindu Vadi' forces growing abruptly in India claim that they are staunch supporter of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' (The world is one family) and on the other hand they even discriminate between Hindu and Hindu on caste and creed basis by insulting the lower strata. Are the lower strata people not the Hindus or are they Hindus only when the trumpet of elections starts sounding?

However, due to education, city-based jobs available to Dalits, Indian Constitution and Dalit movements, like those led by figures such as Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, have pushed for rights and visibility and have made some positive changes in the lives of Dalits, but the systemic change is slow and dismantling the centuries-old prejudices requires sustained effort across society. (Ground Post)

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

SC sets deadline for President of India to decide on bills

MEENAKSHI BHATTACHARYA

In a pivotal ruling, the Supreme Court determined that the President does not possess the authority of an absolute veto. This landmark decision pertains to legislation approved by state legislatures. The court has set a three-month timeframe for the President to render a decision on the issue. Furthermore, the Supreme Court emphasized that if there is a delay beyond this stipulated period, justifiable reasons must be presented, and the relevant state should be duly notified.

The Supreme Court has established a three-month timeframe for the President to make decisions on bills passed by state legislatures for the first time. This ruling pertains to a case involving the Governor of Tamil Nadu, R.N. Ravi. The court declared the actions of Governor R.N. Ravi as unlawful and erroneous.

The bench stated in its 415-page ruling, "The President is not an exception to this default rule that permeates our entire Constitution. Such unchecked powers cannot reside in any of these constitutional positions." Justice Pardiwala, who authored the decision on behalf of the bench, remarked that any delay by the President in making a decision regarding the reference under Article 201, without justification or necessity, would contravene the fundamental constitutional principle that the exercise of power should not be arbitrary or capricious.

In November 2023, Governor R.N. Ravi submitted ten bills to the President for consideration, despite the fact that the state assembly had already reviewed them. The bench, comprising Justice J.B. Pardiwala and Justice R.



Mahadevan, stated that the governor does not possess the authority to exercise a full veto on any bill, adding, "We see no reason why the same standard should not apply to the president under Article 201."

The Supreme Court elaborated on the characteristics of Article 201 that have historically led to disputes in the relationship between the center and the states. The bench stated that there is no specified timeframe for the President to announce approval or disapproval of a bill after it has been reserved for consideration by the Governor under Article 201. The bench remarked, "There is no obligation on the President to necessarily approve a bill under Article 201. If the governor, exercising discretion, reserves a bill for the president's consideration, it would render the passage of that bill by the state assembly meaningless, especially if the president keeps the bill pending or refuses to grant approval."

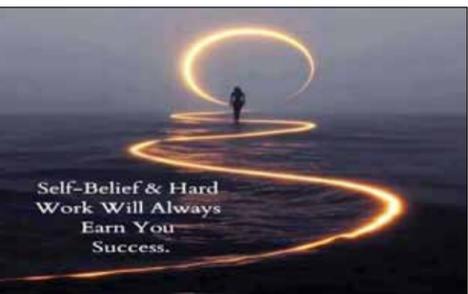
The document dated April 4, 2016, outlines the significant developments in the field of research and innovation. It emphasizes the importance of collaboration among various stakeholders to enhance the effectiveness of initiatives aimed at fostering growth and advancement in this sector. The report states, "The integration of diverse perspectives and expertise is crucial for driving innovation forward. It is essential that all parties involved work together to create a conducive environment that supports the exchange of ideas and resources."

RBI's rate cut: A timely boost for a fragile economy

The Reserve Bank of India's Monetary Policy Committee has offered a much-needed reprieve with its unanimous decision to cut the repo rate by 25 basis points, bringing it down to 6%. At a time when India's exporters are grappling with uncertainty stemming from US trade policy shifts, this move signals cautious optimism. President Donald Trump's aggressive stance on "reciprocal" tariffs, though temporarily paused for 90 days, still looms large. Against this backdrop, the RBI's shift from a "neutral" to an "accommodative" policy stance is both timely and pragmatic. The immediate impact is evident. Banks have already begun passing on the rate cut to consumers, providing relief to businesses, homeowners, and retail borrowers alike. In doing so, the RBI seeks to maintain liquidity and investment momentum in a global climate shadowed by volatility. However, the decision is not without its sobering signals. The central bank's downward revision of GDP growth estimates — from 6.7% to 6.5% — reflects deep-rooted concerns over the economy's resilience amid external shocks. Global trade tensions, particularly the escalating US-China tariff war, evoke historical parallels. The Smoot-Hawley Act of 1930, aimed at protecting American industries, ultimately deepened the Great Depression. Today's policymakers would do well to remember that economic nationalism, while politically expedient, risks long-term global damage. Sustainable growth demands more than reactionary tariffs; it rests on embracing one's competitive advantages. For the US, that means strengthening research, education, and innovation — not retreating behind protectionist barriers. India, for its part, must continue diversifying its export markets and fostering a stable, forward-looking economic environment. The RBI's intervention is a vital step, but broader strategic resilience remains the ultimate safeguard against global instability. At the same time, India must intensify its efforts to boost domestic demand, invest in infrastructure, and support innovation-driven industries. A vibrant internal economy, coupled with strong external trade relationships, will provide the cushion needed to navigate the uncertainties of global markets. Strategic economic management, rather than reactive measures, will determine India's future trajectory.

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DEVAYANI TIRTHALI & PARAG WAKNIS BELIEVE CROSS-DISCIPLINARY LEARNING AS A FOUNDATION FOR INNOVATION

Reimagining higher education



The National Education Policy proposes to change India's siloed higher education system by establishing large multidisciplinary educational institutions. The emphasis will be on having a more cross-disciplinary education, a pedagogical shift towards "communication, discussion, debate, research, and opportunities for cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary thinking", and interdisciplinary research.

How do we transform the existing system of universities, colleges, and the research ecosystem in India to achieve these objectives? The answer: a progression from a multidisciplinary campus or university space to a cross-disciplinary collaborative teaching and research practice, interdisciplinary thought and also research based on integrated disciplinary frameworks.

Multidisciplinarity is the existence of multiple disciplines in a single project or programme without seeking interaction. Disciplines exist parallel to each other, with each applying their own disciplinary methods and perspectives and maintaining boundaries. Cross-disciplinary approach expects collaboration between different disciplines without emphasising knowledge integration. It works towards creating connections and fostering dialogue between disciplines. An example would be an educationist and an economist writing this article. An interdisciplinary approach on the other hand, integrates insights, methods, and concepts from different disciplines to address complex real-world problems. It goes beyond collaboration, leading to the synthesis of knowledge across disciplinary boundaries.

The multidisciplinary campus

Phasing out single stream institutes of higher education (IHE) to establish a multidisciplinary campus can work in two ways. First, by adding departments to expand the existing core disciplinary focus — for example, the

Indian Institutes of Technology are adding or strengthening their humanities and social sciences, offering integrated masters programmes in economics and allied disciplines. Second, creating university clusters by connecting existing institutions — for example, a commerce college can collaborate with an arts and science college to create a cluster university. This requires administrative streamlining and not just academic collaboration. Clustering single stream institutions might be a cost effective and time efficient way of creating large multidisciplinary institutions in the short term. However, according to the 2020-21 All India Survey of Higher Education (AISHE), a significant proportion of institutions are undergraduate colleges, 35% of these are single stream, and many of these are only B.Ed colleges, making it difficult to find appropriate disciplinary variety nearby that is suitable for clustering.

In addition to repurposing existing IHEs, new multidisciplinary universities will have to be established to reach the goal of having "at least one in or near every district" by 2030. It would be wise to establish a single multidisciplinary campus in a district rather than have one institution with multiple campuses across

districts to maximise educational and research efficiency. Research shows that while public universities have a higher educational efficiency, they have lower research efficiency because they need to manage multiple campuses.

Cross-disciplinary learning and practice

The university of the future cannot be just a collection of multiple departments. It needs a disciplinary faculty that is open to collaboration and diverse points of views, and experienced in working across disciplines. To achieve this in the long run, students (i.e., faculty of the future) and current faculty need exposure to different disciplines. This cross-disciplinary approach to learning starts with students taking courses across departments outside their core discipline. The next step is to encourage and facilitate cross-disciplinary research and projects to solve complex problems.

At this stage, faculty and students are expected to bring in their disciplinary knowledge, collaborating and fostering dialogue between the disciplines. This can lead to the creation of cross-disciplinary courses — for example, a course titled 'Economic changes and class structures as seen in Indian cinema, in collaboration with the economics, sociology, and film studies faculty'.

Incentivising such cross disciplinary courses, projects or centres needs additional funding to sustain it over multiple years. The National Science Foundation's (NSF) Integrative Graduate Education and Research Traineeship (IGERT) programme in the United States is a good example of substantial investment in having teachers and researchers of the future with a "breadth of skills, strengths, and un-

derstanding to work in an interdisciplinary environment while being well grounded with depth of knowledge in a major field".

On inter-disciplinary thought

Cross-disciplinary learning and practice expects collaboration between disciplines. On the other hand, interdisciplinary thinking and research requires drawing deeper connections between disciplines and the creation of integrated frameworks. Can cross-disciplinary research and practice really reach this ideal? In the experience of the writers of this article of the Integrated Graduate Research Traineeship (IGERT), this was achieved in some cross-disciplinary combinations such as biotechnology, medicine, chemistry and biology. However, for disciplines such as engineering and architecture, participating students reported challenges in finding publication venues for integrated research, securing and advancing in academic employment, as they did not fit in any particular discipline. Thus, to avoid interdisciplinarity from sliding into traditional practice, there is a need to overhaul funding and the publication ecosystem as well as faculty hiring/promoting practices.

The cost implications of all these changes will be enormous and staggered over several years. This will require reprioritising public spending. The governance and regulatory changes to achieve this also need to be carefully thought out. The fact is that we are trying to create a higher education structure that broadly resembles the American system at its zenith, which has organically grown over a century, in one of the most unregulated and competitive environments.

Devayani Tirthali is an educational researcher and research design consultant. Parag Waknis is a faculty of economics at the Dr. B.R. Ambedkar University Delhi. Views are personal.



RENJINI RAJAGOPALAN WONDERS WHY FRAGMENTED WELFARE BOARDS FAIL INFORMAL WORKFORCE

Gig economy spurs social security reforms

India's efforts to establish social security for online (app-based) gig workers are gaining momentum, with the central scheme awaiting Cabinet approval. Benefits announced include health coverage under Ayushman Bharat, registration on the eShram portal for access to various social security schemes, and a transaction-based pension policy, where a universal account number assigned to each gig worker helps track their earnings across platforms for deductions and company contributions. This pension scheme is particularly notable because, in a way, it acknowledges that gig workers (operating outside traditional employee-employer relationships) can have multiple employers, and ensures that each contributes, albeit in a limited capacity, towards worker welfare. In a country where social security is typically tethered to formal employment and informal workers are excluded or otherwise disadvantaged, this is clearly a step forward.

However, this progress highlights the reactive nature of current social protection systems which tend to respond only when new worker categories emerge. This underscores the need for India to proactively reimagine its social security framework to address these evolving challenges.

The flaws in the existing system

Despite being a founding member of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), India is yet to ratify the Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102). The ILO's Convention aimed at establishing basic social security principles. India's Code on Social Security (Code), one of its four new Labour Codes, enacted



India's Sugar Production Touches 254.97 Lakh Tons in Current Season

NEW DELHI: Sugar production in the current sugar season touched 254.97 lakh tons, as on April 15, with 38 factories operating across the country, according to a statement issued by the Indian Sugar and Bio-energy Manufacturers Association (ISMA) on Thursday.

Around 35 lakh tons of sugar is expected to be diverted towards ethanol production this year, compared to last year's diversion of 21.5 lakh tons, the statement said.

As many as 22 factories are still operational during the current season in Uttar Pradesh, out of which 16 factories are operating in western UP.

Owing to the improved yield of plant cane, cane availability has improved in UP, and these factories are expected to remain in operation up to late April 2025 or May 1st week. Moreover, sugar recovery has also shown improvement in the second half of the season,



resulting in better output of sugar, the statement said.

In Maharashtra, one sugar mill in Pune district is expected to remain in operation up to the 2nd week of May this year.

At the same time, some factories in south Karnataka are expected to restart operations during the special season from June/July to September 2025.

Historically, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu collectively contribute around 4-5 lakh tons

of sugar in the special season. ISMA is also optimistic on the outlook for the 2025-26 sugar season due to better crop prospects in the southern and northern states.

The crop outlook has improved in the south, due to a favourable southwest monsoon in 2024, and sugarcane planting for the 2025-26 season has shown notable improvement in key producing states like Maharashtra and Karnataka.

Consequently, the crushing season is anticipated to begin as per schedule in October 2025, ensuring adequate supply.

Both cane and sugar yields are also expected to go up in the north. In Uttar Pradesh and other northern regions, ongoing varietal replacement initiatives are delivering encouraging outcomes. These advancements are expected to enhance both cane yield and sugar recovery rates, thereby strengthening overall production performance in the upcoming season.

Seasonal forecasts from both the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) and Skymet project a normal southwest monsoon for 2025. This reinforces confidence in a favourable agro-climatic environment, supporting a healthy sugarcane crop and robust production potential for the 2025-26 season, the ISMA statement added

MSME Ministry Holds PM Vishwakarma-National SC-ST Hub Conclave in Odisha



NEW DELHI: On Wednesday, the Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSME) organised the 'PM Vishwakarma-National SC-ST Hub Conclave.'

The event aimed to promote and empower MSMEs in the state and foster synergy among stakeholders.

The conclave, held at Maharaaja Sriram Chandra Bhanja Deo University in Baripada, Mayurbhanj, Odisha, was co-chaired by Union MSME Minister Jitan Ram Manjhi and Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Manjhi. Other dignitaries included Gokulananda Mallick, Minister of State (Independent Charge), MSME,

Fisheries & Animal Resources Development, Govt. of Odisha; Hemant Sharma, Additional Chief Secretary, Industries & MSME Department, Govt. of Odisha; and several MPs and MLAs from the region. The event commenced with the inauguration of an exhibition, followed by experience-sharing sessions from beneficiaries of the PM Vishwakarma, Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP), and National SC-ST Hub initiatives.

E-certificates and credit cheques were distributed to beneficiaries, recognising their achievements and encouraging further growth. In his address, Minister Manjhi emphasised

the significant role of the MSME sector in job creation and improving livelihoods.

He highlighted the importance of the PM Vishwakarma and National SC-ST Hub schemes, along with contributions from the Coir Board and Khadi, in empowering individuals. He expressed confidence in India's trajectory towards becoming the world's third-largest economy by 2027-28.

Chief Minister Manjhi acknowledged the positive impact of the PM Vishwakarma and National SC-ST Hub schemes on the state's populace, noting the special focus given to Odisha by the Ministry of MSME.

Launched on September 17, 2023, the PM Vishwakarma Scheme supports traditional artisans and craftspeople with skill development, financial aid, and toolkits. The National SC-ST Hub, initiated in October 2016, empowers SC/ST entrepreneurs through capacity building, market linkages, and access to technology and credit.

US Tariff Exemption Makes Indian Electronics 20% Cheaper than Chinese: ICEA



NEW DELHI: Indian exports of smartphones, laptops and other electronics to the United States are expected to become 20 per cent cheaper compared to those from China following the Trump administration's decision to remove tariffs on a range of consumer electronics, according to the India Cellular and Electronics Association (ICEA).

The exemption, announced over the weekend, covers smartphones, tablets, laptops, flat-panel monitors and certain semiconductor components that were previously subject to reciprocal tariffs imposed on countries including China, India, and Vietnam. Industry experts view this development as a significant boost for India's growing electronics manufacturing sector.

"China still has 20 percent tariffs on iPhones, laptops, tablets, and watches. Only reciprocal tariffs have been removed for China. India has zero tariff on iPhones and all smartphones, laptops and tablets exported to the US," explained Pankaj Mohindroo, Chairman, ICEA.

He added that Vietnam enjoys similar advantages, with both countries now holding a 20 per cent tariff advantage over China on these products.

The ICEA, which represents major companies like Apple, Foxconn, and Dixon, expressed relief after weeks of concern over potential export disruptions. "Now there will be no extraordinary disruption," Mohindroo stated.

"The incredible shock of the last few weeks is in itself a tectonic event and the realignments are bound to happen without too much blood spilt in our category," he mentioned.

India has emerged as a key manufacturing hub for Apple, with iPhone exports reaching approximately Rs 1.5 lakh crore in 2024-25, according to Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw.

Total mobile phone exports from India exceeded Rs 2 lakh crore this year, representing a 55 per cent increase from the previous fiscal year. Ashok Chandak, President, India Electronics and Semiconductor Association (IESA), described the tariff exemption as a significant but potentially short-term reprieve for global tech manufacturers.

Airtel Partners with Blinkit to Deliver SIM Cards to Customers' Doorsteps in Just 10 Minutes in Bengaluru



ARUN KUMAR RAO
Bengaluru

In a game-changing move that redefines customer convenience, Bharti Airtel has partnered with Blinkit, the leading quick commerce platform, to deliver SIM cards to customers' homes in Bengaluru within just 10 minutes. This first-of-its-kind initiative by a telecom provider in India reflects Airtel's ongoing commitment to innovation and customer-centricity.

Through this unique collaboration, customers in Bengaluru can now receive their new Airtel SIM cards at their doorstep with lightning speed—paying just a nominal convenience fee of ₹49. Once the SIM is delivered, users can activate it easily via a secure Aadhaar-based self-KYC process, right from the comfort of their homes. The service supports both prepaid and postpaid plans and also allows users to port their existing numbers to the Airtel network using the Mobile Number Portability (MNP) option.

Wipro ends FY25 on a Profitable Note despite Revenue Headwinds: Q4 Net Jumps 26%

ARUN KUMAR RAO
Bengaluru

In a quarter marked by cautious client spending and global tech uncertainty, Wipro has managed to end FY25 on a high note—delivering a stellar 26% year-on-year rise in net profit for the January-March quarter. The Bengaluru-headquartered IT major reported a consolidated net profit of ₹3,570 crore, significantly higher than analyst estimates of ₹3,290 crore, and up from ₹2,835 crore in Q4 FY24.

While revenue growth remained modest—up 1.33% YoY to ₹22,504 crore—the sharp jump in profitability underscores Wipro's strategic focus on operational efficiency and margin protection amid tough macro-economic conditions.



Flat Topline, Strong Bottom-line Revenue from operations for the quarter edged up marginally from ₹22,208 crore a year ago. However, a deeper look reveals that Wipro's core IT services business continues to face pressure. IT services revenue fell 1.2% sequentially and 2.3% YoY to \$2,596.5 million. In constant

currency terms, the segment saw a 0.8% QoQ and 1.2% YoY decline. Despite the tepid topline, Wipro's operating margin in the IT services segment improved 110 basis points YoY to 17.5%, holding steady sequentially. This signals the company's growing discipline around cost control

and strategic execution.

Mega Deals Reflect Strong Client Confidence

Perhaps the most encouraging sign for investors and analysts is the company's surge in large deal bookings. Wipro reported a massive 48.5% YoY jump in large deal signings, amounting to \$1.76 billion. Total bookings for the quarter stood at \$3.96 billion, up 13.4% sequentially in constant currency terms.

Wipro CEO Srinu Pallia attributed the performance to a combination of strong execution, client-centric innovation, and deepening customer relationships. "We closed FY25 with two mega deal wins and growth in our top accounts. Client satisfaction scores improved, reflecting strong execution and engagement," he said.

Economic Uncertainty Push Govt Bond Prices Hit 3-Year High



NEW DELHI: Indian government bond prices climbed to their highest levels in over three years on April 15, with short-term bonds leading the gains after the Reserve Bank of India announced a new liquidity injection.

Market participants now anticipate continued durable liquidity injections throughout the year, following the central bank's latest move and guidance on banking system liquidity. The Reserve Bank of India plans to purchase bonds worth Rs 40,000 crore and will also conduct a 43-day repo operation for Rs 1.50 trillion on Thursday. This follows the central bank's second consecutive repo rate reduction last week, accompanied by a shift to an accommodative monetary policy stance. RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra stated last week that the central bank aims to maintain sufficient surplus in the banking system to ensure effective policy transmission, targeting a level of ap-

proximately 1 percent of deposits. This translates to a range of Rs 2.20 trillion to Rs 2.50 trillion, while the daily average banking system liquidity surplus has remained around Rs 1.70 trillion for the current month. With the central bank in the midst of its rate-easing cycle, market participants believe comfortable liquidity conditions are essential for quicker and more effective monetary policy transmission to support economic growth.

The yield on the 10-year benchmark bond declined by 3 basis points to 6.41 percent, while three-year and five-year bond yields fell more substantially by 5-6 basis points to 6.12 percent and 6.17 percent respectively. A. Prasanna, Head of Research, ICICI Securities Primary Dealership, commented, "The indicative commitment may still require (net) durable liquidity injection of around Rs 3 trillion. Out of this, we expect around 90 percent to be via OMO purchases and balance via fx swaps."

Panopto appoints Stephen Laster as Chief Executive Officer

Veteran tech executive to lead Panopto's next chapter of innovation and global expansion

FW DESK
New Delhi



enterprise software.

Laster joins Panopto from D2L, where he most recently served as President. His career spans senior leadership roles at McGraw-Hill Education, Ellucian, Harvard Business School, and Babson College where he has led large-scale teams,

developed category-defining products, and built platforms that have redefined how millions of learners and professionals experience education. At Panopto, Laster will lead the company's next chapter as it scales its platform and continues to enable AI-powered video across learning, training, and communication environments around the world.

"Panopto is uniquely positioned at the intersection of video, knowledge management, and education," said Laster. "I am thrilled to join a company with such a strong foundation, an exceptional

team, and a powerful mission. As video becomes increasingly critical to how organizations learn and operate, Panopto is poised to play an even greater role in enabling success for its customers."

Panopto's enterprise-grade, open platform is trusted by leading global institutions and organizations - including Duke University, Kimberly-Clark, Harvard University, HubSpot, Nikon, Oxford University, Qualcomm, and Stanford University - to harness video at scale for skill building, training, onboarding, compliance, and knowledge sharing.

Factoring Inflation in Medicine Prices: Need for a Sectoral Index in India



DR. ANIL KUMAR ANGRISH

Through Order dated March 27,

2025, the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) fixed the ceiling prices exclusive of Goods and Services Tax applicable, in respect of the Scheduled Formulations. Manufacturers of scheduled formulations have been allowed an increase of (+) 1.740228%. The ceiling prices have been made applicable with effect from April 1, 2025. The NPPA listed 748 medicines, along with their dosage form and strength, and Units (tablet, capsule, vial, dose in mL, GM, Metered dose, etc. as applicable). Where strength varies, the ceiling price is to be revised in same ratio, e.g., NPPA highlighted that the ceiling prices fixed for Paclitaxel Injection 30 mg/ 5 mL and 100mg/16.7 ml at S. No. 554 are also applicable to any other strengths (300mg/50ml, 260mg/41.7ml, 200mg/33.4ml etc.) of the Paclitaxel with same ratio, i.e., 6mg/ml.

Further, all manufacturers of scheduled formulations, selling branded or generic or both the versions of scheduled formulations at price higher than the ceiling price (plus GST) so fixed and notified have to revise the prices of all such formulations downward. All the existing manufacturers of these scheduled formulations

having Maximum Retail Price (MRP) lower than the ceiling price notified may revise the existing MRP of their formulations, based on WPI announced for the year 2024 over 2023. Underlying reason behind the revision in the prices of scheduled formulations on yearly basis in India is to reimburse manufacturers for the increase in input costs due to inflation.

Revision in the prices of scheduled formulations is allowed as per the paragraph 16 (2) of the Drugs (Prices Control) Order, 2013. Scheduled formulation means any formulation which is included in the First Schedule of DPCO, 2013. National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM) that is published by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare as updated and revised from time to time is included in the First Schedule of the DPCO, 2013.

Revision in the prices is based on the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) data which is provided by the Office of the Economic Advisor, Department of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry. Paragraph 16 of the DPCO provides for revision of the ceiling prices of scheduled formulations as per the annual WPI for preceding calendar year or before April 1 of every year. In 2025, the Order came on March 27, 2025. There is always a time lag between the revision in the ceiling prices and the

Table 1: Price revision in Scheduled Formulations (2020-21 to 2025-26)

Year	Price Increase allowed in Scheduled Formulations (In %)
2020-21	4.26
2021-22	1.88
2022-23	10.70
2023-24	12.12
2024-25	0.005551
2025-26	1.74

Source: Compiled from NPPA notifications for respective years

availability of these scheduled formulations with the revised prices in the market place. Existing stock levels also play an important part in the supply chain.

For 2023-24, prices of essential medicines had seen the highest annual increase. For two years in a row, i.e., for 2022-23, and 2023-24, the increase was more than 10 per cent. In 2024-25, the increase was negligible. Pharmaceutical companies asked for one-time exemption on negligible increase by citing administrative burden through printing new prices. Manufacturers of scheduled formulations also cite increase in the cost of inputs while asking for higher increase as in non-scheduled formulations, increase is allowed up to 10 per cent. Pharmaceutical industry also faces increase in cost of inputs like any other industry. If increase is inadequate then it has implications for the quality of pharmaceutical products in addition to availability of essen-

tial medicines. The Regulatory body has to ensure availability, accessibility, and affordability of medicines.

For 2025-26, the price revision will lead to increase of 1.74 per cent in the prices of scheduled formulations. But question is: Is 1.74 per cent increase representative increase given the fact that WPI does not give weightage to only pharmaceutical products. In July 2024, the Office of Economic Advisor in the DPIIT had suggested the shift towards a Producer Price Index (PPI) instead of the existing WPI. The idea was that the PPI will act as an indicator to measure the average change in the prices which producers receive for their products manufactured or services rendered. Prices captured are those that reflect prices at their factory gate or at the site of service providers. Essentially, elements such as taxes, trade margins, transportation cost, etc. gets excluded. But this will not be essentially

capturing the essence of pharmaceutical sector.

January 2025 data on WPI shows that respective weightage of three major groups: Primary Articles with 22.62 per cent weightage, Fuel & Power with 13.15 per cent weightage, and Manufactured Products with 64.23 per cent weightage. Within Manufactured Products, manufacturing of Chemicals and Chemical Products and Manufacturing of Pharmaceuticals, Medicinal Chemical and Botanical Products are considered and these two sub-sectors have relevance for pharmaceutical sector. Out of 100, Manufacturing of Chemicals and Chemical Products have weightage of 6.47 per cent, and Manufacturing of Pharmaceuticals, Medicinal Chemical and Botanical Products have 1.99 per cent weightage.

This reflects the limitation of WPI in pharmaceutical sector. Sectoral indices can serve important purposes, e.g., the National Housing Bank

(NHB) came up with the NHB RESIDEX in July 2007. It was India's first Official Housing Price Index. The scope of the index has been widened under NHB RESIDEX brand. Now, it includes Housing Price Indices (HPI), Land Price Indices (LPI), and Building Materials Price Indices (BMPI), and also Housing Rental Index (HRI).

Sectoral Index for capturing inflation regarding pharmaceutical products is a complex issue. The very first transaction is between the manufacturer and the wholesaler. This has the variation in pharmaceutical sector as a manufacturer may have a captive plant of Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs) or APIs may be procured from outside including imports. Alternatively, in case of contract manufacturing, it is between manufacturer and marketer. This price is relevant for Producer Price Index. Next in the chain falls Wholesale Acquisition Cost (WAC). The WAC considers manufacturer's list price for formulations to wholesalers. At this stage, there is role of rebates or incentives offered. Next transaction is between the wholesaler and the retailer. Final stage is when a patient/end consumer is purchasing the pharmaceutical product from the retailer.

DPCO, 2013 recognizes manufacturer (any person who manufactures or imports or markets drugs for distribution or sale in the country), wholesaler (a dealer or his

agent or a stockiest engaged in the sale of drugs to a retailer, hospital, dispensary, medical, educational or research institution or any other agency), retailer (a dealer carrying on the retail business of sale of drugs to customers).

The Drugs (Prices Control) Order, 2013 refers to "maximum retail price" which means the ceiling price of a new retail price plus local taxes and duties as applicable, at which the drug shall be sold to the ultimate consumer and where such price is mentioned on the pack. The DPCO, 2013 provides for calculation of ceiling price of a scheduled formulation by considering "Average Price to Retailer" and provides a margin to retailer. Percentage margin to retailer is 16 per cent. "Price to Retailer" is referred as the price of a drug at which it is sold to a retailer which includes duties and does not include local taxes.

Sectoral price index will be helpful in fixation of ceiling price of a drug under certain circumstances (Para 19 of the DPCO, 2013) when it is considered necessary to do in public interest, and an increase or decrease is to be allowed in the ceiling price or the retail price. Such an increase or decrease is allowed irrespective of annual wholesale price index for that year. This essentially reflects shortcoming of capturing inflation in existing framework. Prices of non-scheduled for-

mulations are also monitored. Para 20 of the DPCO, 2013 deals with ensuring that no manufacturer increases the MRP of a drug more than ten per cent of MRP during preceding twelve months. Appropriate sectoral price index that captures sectoral inflation can provide a sound basis for allowing the increase. Fixation of retail price of a new drug which is not available in domestic market requires application of principles of "Pharmacoeconomics" through involvement of the Standing Committee of Experts.

To conclude, sectoral index in pharmaceutical sector can be a better measure to factor inflation for pharmaceutical products rather than Wholesale Price Index which is being applied presently. Through sectoral index, inflation pertaining to pharmaceutical sector-specific variables can be captured appropriately rather than including the weightage of those items which are not directly relevant to pharmaceutical sector but included in WPI. The scope can be widened over a period to make Pharma Sector-specific Index more comprehensive.

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.

No plan to Levy GST on UPI Transactions over Rs 2,000, says Finance Ministry

NEW DELHI: The Finance Ministry on Friday made it clear that the government is not considering any proposal to levy Goods and Services Tax (GST) on UPI transactions over Rs 2,000.

"The claims that the Government is considering levying Goods and Services Tax (GST) on UPI transactions over Rs 2,000 are completely false, misleading, and without any basis. Currently, there is no such proposal before the Government," the Finance Ministry said.

GST is levied on charges, such as the Merchant Discount Rate (MDR), relating to payments made using certain instruments. Effective January 2020, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has removed the MDR on Person-to-Merchant (P2M) UPI transactions through the Gazette Notification dated December 30, 2019. Since currently no MDR is charged on



UPI transactions, there is consequently no GST applicable to these transactions, the Ministry said. The government remains committed to promoting digital payments via UPI. To support and sustain the growth of UPI, an Incentive Scheme has been operational from FY 2021-22. This scheme specifically targets

low-value UPI (P2M) transactions, benefiting small merchants by alleviating transaction costs and promoting wider participation and innovation in digital payments, the official statement explained.

The statement pointed out that the total incentive payouts under this scheme over the years

reflect the government's sustained commitment to promoting UPI-based digital payments. Allocation under the scheme over the years includes Rs 1,389 crore for FY2021-22, Rs 2,210 crore for FY2022-23, and Rs 3,631 crore for FY2023-24. These measures have significantly contributed to India's robust digital payments ecosystem. According to the ACI Worldwide Report 2024, India accounted for 49 per cent of global real-time transactions in 2023, reaffirming its position as a global leader in digital payments innovation. UPI transaction values have seen an exponential increase, growing from Rs 21.3 lakh crore in FY 2019-20 to Rs 260.56 lakh crore by March 2025. Specifically, P2M transactions have reached Rs 59.3 lakh crore, reflecting growing merchant adoption and consumer confidence in digital payment methods, the statement added.

IDFC FIRST Bank's Board Okays Rs 7,500 Cr Fundraising from Warburg, ADIA

MUMBAI: The board of IDFC FIRST Bank on Thursday approved raising up to Rs 7,500 crore from Warburg Pincus and Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA) amid global uncertainties.

The board approved a preferential issue of equity capital (CCPS) amounting to approximately Rs 4,876 crore to Current Sea Investments, an affiliate company of global growth investor Warburg Pincus and approximately Rs 2,624 crore to Platinum Invictus Limited, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA) managed by its Private Equities Department.

The proposed issues are subject to shareholder and regulatory approvals. The rationale behind this fundraising is that the bank plans to scale up its optimal profitability and aims to grow the overall loan book at 20 per cent for the next few



years, the bank said in an investor presentation.

Over the last six years, IDFC FIRST Bank has undergone a successful transformation from its legacy as an infrastructure-focused DFI to becoming a modern, technology-driven, universal bank. During this time, deposits grew 6x, loans and advances doubled, and CASA ratio has significantly improved from 8.7 per cent to 47.7 per cent. PAT rose from a loss of Rs 1,944 crore in FY19 to a profit of Rs 2,957 crore in FY24.

"However, profitability dipped in 9M FY25 due to in-

dustry wide challenges in microfinance, which the bank has navigated well. With this fund raise, the overall capital adequacy will increase from 16.1 per cent to 18.9 per cent," said the bank in a regulatory filing.

"The Bank has firmly moved into profits and is now at a pivotal stage, where our income growth is expected to consistently exceed OPEX growth, leading to improved operating leverage. We expect many businesses which are in the investment stage to turn profitable with scale," said V Vaidyanathan, Managing Director and CEO, IDFC FIRST Bank.

"It is great to have Warburg Pincus back and to welcome a wholly owned subsidiary of ADIA as our shareholder. We thank them both for believing in us and our future growth plans and for investing in us even under volatile global situations," he added.

India's Economic Fundamentals are Strong, Growth to Continue: Industry Leaders



NEW DELHI: India's economic growth story is expected to strengthen further, backed by strong fundamentals, robust policymaking, and a skilled talent pool, top industry leaders said.

Speaking to national media on the sideline of 120th anniversary celebrations of the PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI) here, they expressed optimism about the country's economic trajectory in the third term of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government.

JK Tyre & Industries Limited Chairman and Managing Director Raghupati Singhania said: "So far, so good — and I'm sure it will continue to grow because our fundamentals are good and sound." "The government is keen and working earnestly on building strong bilateral ties and exploring opportunities for further collaboration globally," Singhania told to media.

Echoing the sentiment, PHDCCI President Hemant Jain highlighted that India is in a "sweet spot" on the global map. "Inflation is under control, the market is looking good, and we have one of the most stable governments in the region. India is now the centre of attention globally," Jain added that strong ties between global leaders, including PM Modi and the US leadership, would ensure further progress in trade relations. He expressed confidence that India would continue to benefit from global shifts in trade patterns.

Jain noted that India already has the skills and knowledge base to become a global leader in AI. "It's about directing our talent towards building platforms and assuming leadership over time," he said. Khaitan & Co Founder and Managing Partner, Suman Jyoti Khaitan, also stressed that India's growth will continue due to sound basics and strong policy support. "India has substantial infrastructure improvements, focused policymaking, and entrepreneurial talent. We are in a good position to benefit from changes in the global economy,"

He also welcomed the government's focus on skill development and the rollout of internship programmes.

UP Govt signs MoU with NSE to boost MSME Funding



LUCKNOW: Uttar Pradesh government has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the National Stock Exchange (NSE) on Wednesday, creating a pathway for the state's 96 lakh micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to access capital-raising opportunities. Under this agreement, these enterprises can now secure funding by launching Initial Public Offerings (IPOs) through the NSE Emerge platform. An official spokesperson confirmed that the state government remains dedicated to strengthening these enterprises both financially and technically. "As part of the MSME Policy 2022, financial assistance of up to Rs 5 lakh is being offered to support MSMEs in getting listed on the stock exchange," the spokesperson explained. This partnership represents a crucial development in the state's ongoing efforts to empower its MSME sector by facilitating capital access and expanding market presence.

Moreover, retail inflation dipping to a nearly six-year low also raised hopes for a third rate cut by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), according to market experts.

In the last four trading days, the BSE benchmark index jumped 4,706.05 points or 6.37 per cent, and the NSE Nifty surged 1,452.5 points or

Market benchmarks surge over 6% in past 4 days; investors' wealth rallies by Rs 25.77 lakh crore

MUMBAI: Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty surged more than 6 per cent in the last four trading sessions, as a temporary pause on tariffs by the US, return of foreign investors to the domestic market, and prediction of an above-normal rainfall in the upcoming southwest monsoon season lifted investors' sentiments.

Accordingly, investors' wealth rallied by Rs 25.77 lakh crore to Rs 4,19,60,046.14 crore (USD 4.90 trillion) in the past four days. Stock markets are closed on



Friday for 'Good Friday'.

According to Vishnu Kant Upadhyay, AVP, Research & Advisory, Master Capital Services, several factors like foreign fund inflows, temporary pause on tariffs by the US and further

monetary easing by the RBI have converged to drive the recent sharp rally in the Indian markets despite global trade uncertainty.

"In the last three trading sessions, foreign portfolio investors purchased over USD 1 billion worth of Indian equities after a prolonged selling streak. Further, the announcement of a temporary pause on tariffs by the US and potential negotiations with countries also led to the relief rally," Upadhyay said.

Moreover, the RBI's 25 bps rate cut on April 9, and its shift of stance from "neutral" to "accommodative" added fresh momentum to the equity market, as investors priced in further monetary easing, he noted.

Indian Banks Seek Power to Freeze Fraudulent Accounts without Court Approval

NEW DELHI: Indian banks are pushing for greater authority to freeze accounts suspected of being used in cyber fraud operations without requiring prior approval from courts or law enforcement agencies.

This recommendation comes from a working group established by the Indian Banks' Association, which plans to present this proposal to the Reserve

Bank of India for consideration. Currently, financial institutions face legal constraints under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, which does not grant them independent authority to freeze or block customer accounts without proper authorisation, although they can implement blocks based on internal alert systems. Fraudsters frequently utilise



mule accounts to channel illegal funds through the banking

system. Despite banks freezing numerous such accounts annually, criminals have found ways to exploit system vulnerabilities to rapidly open new accounts.

The working group's report recommends that banks enhance their identification and monitoring of accounts that show characteristics making them susceptible to misuse as mule accounts.

One needs to be cautious while taking loans from credit cards and loan apps



SATISH SINGH

The number of credit cards issued by 10.88 crores increased to 10.88 crores from 9.95 crores in January 2024, indicating a significant increase in credit card use. However, with the rise in the number of credit cards, non-performing assets (NPAs) in this segment increased by 28.42% to ₹6,742 crores by December 2024 from ₹5,250 crores in December 2023. The 91-180 days outstanding liability rate also increased to 7.6% by June 2024 from 6.5% in June 2023.

The main reason for the increase in NPA in the credit card segment is not properly checking the credit eligibility of the applicants while issuing credit cards. Nowadays, there is so much pressure on credit card issuing banks to increase their business that they ignore the guidelines for issuing credit cards. They also give credit cards to people who do not have regular income; if they have income, their liabilities are high. Due to this, the percentage of defaults in the credit card segment is constantly increasing.

There are many reasons for the increase in the percentage of NPA in credit cards, including economic growth rate slowing down to 6.4% in FY 2025, decrease in job creation, retrenchment of workers in IT and other sectors, higher interest rates charged by credit cards per year in case of default, most customers unaware of the nuances of credit card repayment cycle,

people getting lured by the offer of attractive discounts on purchase of online and offline products through credit card, etc. For these reasons, borrowers are trapped in the debt trap.

It has been seen many times that people take loans from loan apps to repay credit card debt or other loans, which charge interest rates ranging from 18% to 70% on the outstanding loan amount, due to which they get trapped in the vicious cycle of debt. Generally, most people take loans from loan apps like Hero Fin corp, CreditBee, InCred, IFIL, Tata Capital, Moneyview, MoneyTap, Mpocket, Zest Money, TrueBalance, PaySense, etc. However, one can avoid getting trapped in their trap by understanding the interest rate, charges, and other terms of the loan. To reduce rising defaults and save people from the vicious circle of debt, the Reserve Bank of India has increased the risk weight on consumer loans, credit card receivables and non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) by 25% to 150% in November 2023, so that customers also transact with caution.

36 Chinese apps were banned in India in 2020 and returned in 2025. The government banned these apps for privacy and security reasons. Now, they can be downloaded from the Google Play Store and the Apple App Store. Many such apps have shifted all their operations to India and store data on Indian servers. Many Chinese apps run entirely on the franchise model, whose entire operations are being looked after by Indian companies. It has also been observed



that when customers cannot pay their credit card dues, the bank gives them a one-time settlement opportunity, and under this, they are given a discount of a certain percentage of the amount when paying the dues. This allows the loan to be repaid in a smaller amount, but the customer's credit score is affected, and the status turns into a settled loan. If your credit report shows a "Write-off" or "Settled" status, most banks consider you a high-risk customer. It reduces the chances of the defaulter getting a loan. Therefore, instead of settling the dues in a one-time settlement, the customer should contact the bank and request that it relax the repayment terms.

Further, after default, the customer's credit score drops significantly. Most banks prefer to lend to a proposed borrower with a CIBIL score above 750. Banks avoid lending to such defaulters if the CIBIL score is 600 or less.

Credit card or loan app defaulters can become eligible for loans despite their settled status, but only with certain conditions. Defaulters have limited loan options. For example, they can take gold loans, loans against property,

etc. They can also take loans with the help of a co-applicant or guarantor, or with the help of someone with a good credit score. In this connection, NBFC or fintech lenders are more lenient but charge higher interest on the loan.

If you have a credit card, you need to be cautious at many levels, such as, keep card information safe, do not share your card number, CVV, PIN or OTP with anyone, use your card only on secure websites, access websites only after looking for HTTPS and padlock icons, check account statements regularly, set transaction alerts via SMS or email for immediate updates, do not use public Wi-Fi for online shopping or banking, do not save card information on websites or browsers unless absolutely necessary and safe, use strong passwords and two-factor authentication, protect your online banking and card-related accounts with unique passwords, report loss or fraud to the bank and cyber police immediately, if your card is lost or stolen, immediately report it to the issuing bank to block it, immediately inform your bank about suspicious transactions, do not click on suspicious links or respond to emails, texts or calls asking

for card details, always check the sender before giving any information. Verify by talking to the customer, Avoid using the card physically, Be cautious while handing over your card at public places like restaurants, theatres etc., Use contactless payments or mobile wallets as far as possible for added security, Set spending limits, Cut off the chip and magnetic stripe of old cards to prevent misuse, Use verified payment gateways, Use only trusted payment portals while shopping online, Avoid entering card details on pop-ups or unfamiliar pages etc.

In the light of the above, it would be appropriate to say that defaults in credit cards and loan apps are increasing due to reasons such as slow-down in the pace of development, lack of employment generation, high interest rates of credit cards and loan apps, ignorance of the credit card repayment cycle, tendency to spend more, high liabilities of credit card holders, falling prey to attractive discounts, addicting to online gaming, dugs or watching porn videos online etc. After becoming a defaulter, one should repay the default amount, get a 'No Dues Certificate', and gradually improve their credit score by managing loan accounts. Although regulatory measures have been implemented in this matter, many challenges remain in the unsecured loan sector, the solution of which does not seem to be emerging shortly, due to which the possibility of improvement in the state is low.

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

TDB to Fund Dvipa Defence to Produce Assault Rifles for Indian Army

NEW DELHI: The Technology Development Board (TDB), operating under the Ministry of Science and Technology, has announced significant financial assistance to Hyderabad-based M/s dvipa Defence India Pvt. Ltd. (formerly M/s dvipa Armour Pvt. Ltd.) to advance the domestic manufacturing of small arms in India.

The funding will support the 'Development and Commercialisation of 7.62 mm x 51 mm Assault Rifles'—a project aimed at producing high-performance rifles that meet the Indian Army's General Staff Qualitative Requirements (GSQR).

This financial backing will facilitate the development, testing, and commercialisation of the UGRAM rifle, while also enabling the establishment of an advanced in-house manufacturing facility equipped with integrated quality assurance and testing infrastructure.

The initiative represents a strategic move toward reducing



India's longstanding dependence on imported small arms.

For many years, India has relied heavily on foreign suppliers for small arms, resulting in substantial foreign exchange expenditure and creating interoperability challenges across various armed forces that complicate both training and logistics operations.

The INSAS rifles, developed through previous collaborative efforts, have increasingly been considered inadequate for contemporary combat scenarios. Recognising these limita-

tions, the Government initiated a policy change in 2017 to replace aging weaponry with more advanced and reliable rifles chambered for 7.62 mm x 51 mm NATO-standard ammunition. As one of the first companies to receive licensing for small arms and ammunition production, dvipa Defence collaborated with the Armament Research & Development Establishment (ARDE) in Pune, a division of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), to develop UGRAM, a fully indigenous assault rifle.

India's WPI Inflation declines to 2.05% in March 2025

NEW DELHI: India's annual rate of inflation based on the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) slowed to 2.05 per cent in March, down from 2.38 per cent in February, according to data released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry on Tuesday.

The positive rate of inflation in March is primarily due to an increase in the prices of manufactured products, the figures showed. The month-over-month change in WPI for March was in the negative zone at (-) 0.19 per cent as compared to the previous month of February, reflecting the declining trend in inflation.



There was a decline in the prices of food as well as fuel and power groups compared to the previous month, which resulted in the overall month-on-month inflation rate turning negative.

Meanwhile, retail inflation has also been on a declining trend. The Reserve Bank's Monetary Policy Committee has re-

duced its inflation forecast for 2025-26 to 4 per cent from 4.2 per cent earlier as the "outlook for food inflation has turned decisively positive," RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra said last week. "Headline inflation moderated during January- February 2025 following a sharp correction in food inflation. The outlook for food inflation has turned decisively positive. The uncertainties regarding rabi crops have abated considerably, and the second advance estimates point to a record wheat production and higher production of key pulses over that last year," the RBI Governor said.

Death Toll from US Airstrikes on Yemeni Fuel Port Rises to 38: Houthis

SANAA: The death toll from US overnight airstrikes on the Yemeni fuel port of Ras Isa has increased to 38, with 102 others wounded, Houthi-run al-Masirah TV reported on Friday, citing Houthi-controlled local health authorities.

According to al-Masirah, the casualties include five paramedics who were killed upon arriving at the scene, when the US military launched another wave of airstrikes on the port just minutes after the first on Thursday night.

More than 14 airstrikes on the fuel port were reported during the two waves, igniting massive fires in tanks storing imported fuel. The fires were extinguished within hours, said the report.

The US Central Command said earlier in a statement that it struck and destroyed the Ras Isa port on Thursday to "eliminate this source of fuel for" and "degrade the economic source of power of" the Houthis, Xinhua news agency reported.

In mid-March, US President



Donald Trump ordered "decisive and powerful military action" against the Houthis after the group announced plans to resume attacks on Israeli vessels in the Red Sea, citing Israel's blockade of humanitarian aid to Gaza as the reason.

Earlier on April 17, Yemen's Houthi leader Abdulmalik al-Houthi had said his group had launched 26 attacks against Israel and 33 strikes on the US aircraft carrier and warships in the Red Sea since March 15.

In a televised speech aired by

the group's al-Masirah TV on Thursday, the Houthi leader said the attacks on Israel were carried out using "30 ballistic missiles and drones," while those targeting the USS Harry S. Truman aircraft carrier and its escorts involved "122 ballistic and cruise missiles, as well as drones".

However, the Israeli military has reportedly intercepted many of the Houthi projectiles before they reached targets, Xinhua news agency reported.

The US Central Command

dismissed the Houthi claims of daily attacks on the US aircraft carrier as "outlandish" in a post on the social media platform X.

Meanwhile, the Houthi leader noted that the US military had conducted more than 900 airstrikes against his group's positions across northern Yemen during the past 30 days.

Tensions between the Houthi group and the US military have escalated since Washington resumed airstrikes on Houthi targets in Yemen on March 15 to deter the group from attacking Israel and US warships in the Red Sea.

The Houthis, which control much of northern Yemen, said their attacks aim to press US-backed Israel to stop the offensive against the Gaza Strip and allow humanitarian aid into the Palestinian enclave.

Israel's Channel 12 News reported last Saturday that a Yemeni drone was intercepted near the Dead Sea within the Jordanian airspace before it could reach Israel.

Finland President dials PM Modi, discusses ongoing collaborations in digitalization, mobility



NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Finland President Alexander Stubb reiterated their commitment to further strengthen and deepen the partnership between the two countries, including in the areas of quantum, 5G-6G, AI and cyber-security during their telephonic conversation, on Wednesday.

"Had a fruitful conversation with President Alexander Stubb. Finland is an important partner country in the EU. We are committed to elevating our ties. Exchanged our perspectives on regional and global issues, in-

cluding the situation in Ukraine, "PM Modi posted on X after the phone call.

According to the Prime Minister's Office, the two leaders reviewed the ongoing collaboration between the two countries including in the areas of digitalization, sustainability and mobility besides also exchanging views on regional and global issues of mutual interest, including the situation in Ukraine.

As the two leaders agreed to remain in touch, Finland's President expressed his country's support for closer India-EU relations and conclusion

of a mutually beneficial FTA at the earliest. "Had a good phone conversation today with Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi. We discussed, among other things, bilateral relations, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, and the geopolitical shifts and their implications for the multilateral system. In these turbulent times, the friendship between Finland and India is more important than ever," Stubb wrote on X.

On Tuesday, PM Modi spoke with Denmark PM Mette Frederiksen, emphasising that both countries continue to work extensively together in several fields, including the Green Strategic Partnership. "Glad to speak with PM Mette Frederiksen today. Reaffirmed our strong support for the India-Denmark Green Strategic Partnership and enhancing cooperation across sectors for the benefit of our people. We also discussed regional and global developments of mutual interest," PM Modi posted on X after the phone call.

President Trump threatens to strip Harvard University of its tax-exempt status



WASHINGTON: The row between Harvard University and US President Donald Trump escalated further after the elite university refused to accept far-reaching policy changes ordered by the White House, and Trump threatened to strip it of its tax-exempt status.

As it is Harvard University is facing a major financial setback after the Trump administration imposed a freeze on \$2.2 billion in federal funding, following the university's refusal to comply with a list of sweeping demands related to governance, campus policies, and civil rights enforcement.

Now, Trump has said that Harvard "should lose its Tax Exempt Status and be Taxed as a Political Entity" if the premier college does not agree to his demands to change how it runs itself, which would include a selection of students and authority for professors.

Tax-exempt status is "totally contingent on acting in the PUBLIC INTEREST," he said in the post on Truth Social.

The demands, originally issued in early April, called for the dismantling of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) offices, cooperation with immigration authorities in screening international students, and sweeping reforms to hiring, admissions, and internal governance. On Friday, the Trump administration escalated the situation by sending a more detailed list of requirements, including an audit of student and faculty political views. Harvard responded by publishing the letter and rejecting the proposed terms. In a public letter addressed to students and faculty, Harvard President Alan Garber affirmed the university's refusal to yield to government pressure.

Punjab-born surgeon, 3 family members killed in US plane crash



NEW YORK: A Punjab-born surgeon, her two children and their partner who piloted a small plane that crashed in New York state. Joy Saini's family confirmed their deaths in a statement to the media on Sunday. National Transportation Safety Board investigator Albert Nixon said on Saturday while their Mitsubishi MU2B aircraft was trying to land at the Columbia County Airport, about 200 km from New York City. Speaking at a news conference in Albany, he said that the pilot missed the approach for landing and asked to make another try, but the air traffic controller noticed it was flying at a low altitude and unsuccessfully tried to alert the pilot. The plane, which had taken off from Westchester Airport in a New York City suburb, went down about ten miles from the airport near the border with Massachusetts State. Saini immigrated to the US with her parents and received her medical degree from the University of Pittsburgh where she met her husband, Michael Groff, who was a neurosurgeon.

B'desh Demands US\$ 4.32 Billion, Apology for 1971 Genocide from Pak

DHAKA: Bangladesh on Thursday raised the issue of financial claim to the tune of USD 4.32 billion from Pakistan as a fair share from the assets of undivided Pakistan before 1971 besides also seeking a formal apology for the genocide committed by the Pakistani armed forces during the Liberation War.

The issues were raised during the Foreign Secretary-level Foreign Office Consultation (FOC) held in Dhaka between the two countries after a gap of 15 years. Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Jashim Uddin led the Bangladesh delegation while the Pakistani side was represented by its Foreign Secretary Amna Baloch. During the meeting, Bangladesh also demanded USD 200 million – the foreign aid from countries and agencies to East Pakistan – during the extremely deadly Bhola cyclone.

"We said that as a friendly neighbour of Bangladesh in South Asia, we seek Pakistan's cooperation in building a strong, welfare-oriented and forward-looking relationship with Pakistan by resolving the existing historical unresolved issues at the earliest and we emphasise on working together towards this end," Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Jashim Uddin told reporters at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs after the talks. "These issues need to be resolved for having a solid foundation



of our relations," he added. Interestingly, the local media reported that the Pakistani side refused to comment on the outcomes of the meeting. During her visit, Baloch held separate meetings with Bangladesh's interim government's Chief Advisor Muhammad Yunus and Foreign Affairs Advisor Touhid Hossain, where they discussed issues of mutual interest.

During his meeting with the visiting Pakistani Foreign Secretary, Yunus called for strengthening ties with Pakistan to boost mutual cooperation and explore trade and business potentials. "There are certain hurdles. We have to find ways to overcome those and move forward," Yunus said after Baloch called on him at the State Guest House Jamuna. Referring to the past, Baloch said Bangladesh and Pakistan must find ways to "harness the potentials between the two countries". "We have huge intra response markets on our own rights. We should use it. We can't miss the bus every time," Baloch said.

Pakistan's Punjab celebrates Vaisakhi, Sikh pilgrims mark Khalsa's founding

LAHORE: The age-old agrarian festival of Vaisakhi, marking the start of the wheat harvest, was celebrated in Pakistan's Punjab on Sunday. Observed annually on April 13, and sometimes on April 14, the festival remains deeply rooted in cultural fabric of rural Punjab, straddling both sides of the India-Pakistan border.

For farmers, it signifies the end of months of crop-watching and the joyous beginning of the harvest season, a day when hard work yields its long-awaited reward, the News reported.

Before the Partition, Vaisakhi festivals were vibrant festivals steeped in folk tradition and farmers gathering to dholak beats, kick-starting the harvest, with menfolk performing the bhanga in the fields, while the women sang tapay and mahiye.

Now, mechanisation has altered the customs, with combine harvesters and threshers replacing the communal harvest,



and has drained the day of its vibrancy, the News said. Vaisakhi also holds profound religious significance for the Sikh community, commemorating the founding of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699. Post-Partition, the festival became more closely associated with Sikhism, and it is now marked by a special ceremony held at Gurdwara Panja Sahib in Hasan Abdal in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province. However,

this year, the central celebration is being held at Gurdwara Janam Asthan in Nankana Sahib, the birthplace of Guru Nanak.

Ahead of Vaisakhi, the district administration of Nankana Sahib announced school holidays that all educational institutions in the district will remain closed from April 12 to April 16 as thousands of Sikh pilgrims began arriving from India to take part in the Vaisakhi celebrations,

foreign ministry spokesman Lin Jian said. White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said yesterday that President Trump is open to making a trade deal

with China but believes Beijing should make the first move. "The ball is in China's court: China needs to make a deal with us, we don't have to make a deal with them," Leavitt told a press briefing, adding that Trump had given her that statement directly in an Oval Office meeting.

"China wants what we have... the American consumer, or to put another way, they need our money," Leavitt said. Although Trump has described Chinese President Xi Jinping in admiring terms in the past, neither leader has backed down in the escalating trade war between the world's two largest economies. "The president, again, has made it quite clear that he's open to a deal with China. But China needs to make a deal with the United States of America," Leavitt emphasised.

US-China Trade Tensions Escalate as Tariffs Reach 245% on Chinese Imports

NEW DELHI: China now faces up to 245 per cent tariffs on imports to the US as a result of its retaliatory measures, according to a White House fact sheet.

This significant increase comes after China ordered its airlines not to take any further deliveries of Boeing jets in response to the earlier US decision to impose 145 per cent tariffs on Chinese goods.

Beijing also instructed Chinese carriers to halt any purchases of aircraft-related equipment and parts from US companies. "If the US really wants to resolve the issue through dialogue and negotiation, it should stop exerting extreme pressure, stop threatening and blackmailing, and talk to China on the basis of equality, respect and mutual benefit,"



foreign ministry spokesman Lin Jian said. White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said yesterday that President Trump is open to making a trade deal

with China but believes Beijing should make the first move.

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ATTACKS ON AMERICAN EATING JOINTS IN PAKISTAN

Jihadists' Violence Upsets Prompt US Assistance in Weeding Out Advanced Weapons from the Region

GOPAL MISRA

During a recent visit of a few American journalists, the public relations outfit of the Pakistani army shared the details about the weapons being recently recovered from the Baluch rebels and the TTP or Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan; a few days later, Pakistani foreign minister, was assured by the US Secretary of State Marco Rubio during a telephonic conversation that the US would soon be assisting Pakistani army in resolving this issue. These weapons were left behind in Afghanistan.

According to a 2023 report by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, or SIGAR, when the Taliban took control of Afghanistan in August 2021, over \$7 billion worth of American military equipment was still in the country. It is being estimated that more than a quarter-million rifles were left behind by US forces during their withdrawal from Afghanistan, enough to arm the entire US Marine Corps as well as nearly 18,000 night-vision goggles.

The bigger guns or missiles are being well-protected by

the Taliban government in Kabul, but a large number of light machine guns and assault rifles have been pilfered and being sold in the open market. They include M-4 guns, which are considered more lethal than the AK-47. These guns are equipped with a laser system with a night vision to target the enemy with a rare precision. They could be obtained from the armament bazar at a price of 5000 USD. Similarly, the Americans have also left highly effective Polish and Swedish guns.

Even if the Afghan Taliban are not supplying these weapons to the Baluch and TTP rebels, they are now being used against the Pakistani army.

Meanwhile, the Pakistani army has briefed the Washington Post offering details about the American weapons being used by the rebels. They have also claimed that the Baluch rebels had used the American weapons in the recent hijacking of a train in southwestern Pakistan. It is being further stated that the Baluch Liberation Army (BLA) had stormed the ill-fated Jaffar Express train in holding hundreds of passengers hostage. It took 24 hours to rescue them, 33 rebels were killed and 31 others, including a few soldiers, succumbed in the operation.



In its report, Washington Post has stated that the US Army and the Pentagon confirmed that 63 weapons shown to reporters had been provided by the US government to Afghan forces. Meanwhile, a Pakistan Army major, Zaheer Hassan, has claimed that the rebels have successfully paired night vision and thermal equipment with small drones to attack troops with more precision.

The Assurance and the Sabotage During his telephonic conversation, Marco Rubio is believed to have assured Ishaq Dar, a confidant of the GHQ in Pakistan and presently deputy prime minister holding the foreign portfolio that the US administration would try to end this pilferage. He also had profusely thanked Pakistan for the arrest and transfer to the United States

of ISIS-K operative Mohammad Sharifullah.

They also discussed briefly about Pakistan's cooperation on law enforcement and addressing illegal immigration, and also issues related to the U.S. reciprocal tariffs on Pakistan and how to make progress toward a fair and balanced trade relationship. Rubio also raised prospects for engagement on critical minerals and expressed interest in expanding commercial opportunities for U.S. companies.

Before this warming up of the relations between the old allies could move forward, the series of attacks on outlets of American fast food restaurant chains from Karachi to Lahore and Rawalpindi hit the headlines. It was being camouflaged as a part of an anti-Israeli campaign.

It may be noted that these attacks were being made in

the well-secured areas of the prominent urban centres in Pakistan and the police did not care to book the miscreants. They had stormed an American fast food restaurant chain in Lahore's Defence Housing Authority (DHA), American food outlets in Karachi and later now in Rawalpindi just near the headquarters of the Pakistani army.

The video clips on social media have shown a group of people attacking the KFC restaurant in the DHA's Phase IV but there were no police to stop them. According to some eyewitnesses, when most of the attackers carrying clubs entered the KFC, shattered the glass doors and window panes, the staff and customers ran to save their lives. Interestingly, the Rawalpindi police has claimed that vandals involved in the attack have been traced through the close-circuit television cameras, but no arrests could be made.

Thus, the issue of American weapons is now again being buried under the Jihadists violence.

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

NASA sacks Indian-origin DEI Chief Neela Rajendra following Trump's executive order

WASHINGTON: Neela Rajendra, the Indian-origin head of NASA's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) efforts, has been officially dismissed from her position in compliance with US President Donald Trump's sweeping executive order aimed at dismantling DEI initiatives across all federal agencies.

Rajendra's removal comes after weeks of internal efforts at NASA to retain her by rebranding her role. In March, NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) reassigned her as the head of a newly-created department, the "Office of Team Excellence and



Employee Success," in a move widely seen as an attempt to shield her from the implications of the executive directive. While her title changed, her core responsibilities, overseeing employee support programs and managing affinity groups like the "Black Excellence Strategic Team," remained largely the same. However, the Trump

administration's renewed crack-down on DEI programs earlier this month led to her dismissal, despite NASA's attempts to preserve her position under a new title. An internal email circulated at JPL last week confirmed her departure, stating, "Neela Rajendra is no longer working at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory. We are incredibly grateful for the lasting impact she made to our organisation. We wish her the very best." The message, reportedly sent by JPL Director Laurie Leshin, marked the end of Rajendra's years-long tenure at the space agency.

Russia lodges protest over Japan's upcoming military drills

MOSCOW: Russia lodged a strong protest with Japan over Tokyo's plan to conduct anti-ship missile drills near Russia's borders, the Russian Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

Russia lodged a protest with the Japanese Embassy in Moscow over Japan's plans to hold training exercises with the SSM-1 anti-ship missile systems, equipped with the Type-88 missiles on the Hokkaido Island near the Russian border in June, the Russian Foreign Ministry said on Thursday in a statement.

It said that Moscow considers such "provocative" military activity near Russia's borders "a potential threat to its national security," adding that Tokyo's actions heighten tensions in Northeast Asia and the Asia-Pacific region, Xinhua news agency reported.

"Russia reserves the right



to take all necessary counter-measures" to ensure its security on its Far Eastern borders, the Foreign Ministry warned.

Earlier reports indicated that Japan's Self-Defense Forces are planning to conduct live-fire training exercises using anti-ship missiles at the Shizunai range in Hokkaido, a region bordering Russia, this summer.

The exercise will utilise Type 88 surface-to-ship missiles.

While Japan previously conducted similar drills beyond the national borders due to the missile's range -- nearly 150 km

or more -- which might endanger safety on the sea and in airspace, it has now decided to hold exercises within Japanese territory with specific range restrictions.

The Shizunai range, situated on Hokkaido's southern coast overlooking the Pacific Ocean, will host the drills.

Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi has confirmed that preparations for these exercises are underway.

Russian and Chinese warships recently held joint drills in the Sea of Japan, part of a major naval exercise that Russian President Vladimir Putin said was the largest of its kind in three decades. Then last week, a Chinese aircraft carrier sailed between two Japanese islands near Taiwan for the first time.

On world liver day, doctors emphasize: 'Food is Medicine' to prevent rising liver disease burden

OUR CORRESPONDENT
New Delhi

As India observes World Liver Day 2025, medical experts are sounding the alarm over the growing incidence of liver diseases across both urban and rural populations. With this year's theme, "Food is Medicine," doctors are urging citizens to recognize the powerful impact of dietary choices on liver health, warning that up to 50% of liver disease cases could be prevented simply through improved nutrition and lifestyle changes.

Dr. Sanjiv Saigal, President of the Liver Transplantation Society of India (LTSI), underscored

the liver's remarkable ability to heal itself. "Half of all liver disease cases can be avoided by shifting to a healthier diet and making better food choices," he said. "Damage caused by alcohol, processed foods, and poor nutrition is reversible—if we act now. A diet rich in fresh fruits, green vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins not only prevents liver disease but also supports regeneration."

He urged people to begin by reading food labels and cutting down on ultra-processed items. "We've seen countless patients recover liver function, regain energy, and improve long-term outcomes just by making simple dietary changes," he added.

While liver diseases have traditionally been associated with excessive alcohol use, doctors are increasingly seeing a sharp rise in non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD)—driven by high-calorie diets, sugar-loaded beverages, lack of exercise, and obesity.

Backed by science, the urgency of the message is reinforced by a recent study published in *Frontiers in Nutrition*. The research, which analyzed data from over 121,000 participants in the UK Biobank, found that people with pro-inflammatory diets—measured by the Dietary Inflammatory Index (DII)—faced a 16% higher risk of developing chronic liver disease.



In contrast, those who followed anti-inflammatory eating patterns like the Mediterranean diet or scored high on the Healthy Eating Index 2020 had a significantly reduced risk. Dr. Abhideep Chaudhary, President-Elect of LTSI and

Vice Chairman, Department of HPB and Liver Transplantation at BLK-Max Hospital, warned that liver disease is increasingly becoming a silent epidemic. "One in three Indians is now at risk of fatty liver disease—and many are unaware of it. It often

has no symptoms until it reaches an advanced stage," he said.

He stressed that early intervention through diet and exercise is key. "Even those with early-stage damage can reverse it. Avoiding sugary drinks, junk food, and processed snacks while choosing home-cooked meals, fresh produce, and staying hydrated can make a dramatic difference," he said.

Concerns over pediatric liver health are also growing. A recent study in the journal *Nutrients* drew attention to the rising cases of metabolic dysfunction-associated steatotic liver disease (MASLD) in obese children—largely fueled by high fructose intake from sugary beverages

and packaged snacks. The study revealed a strong association between excess fructose, liver fat accumulation, and insulin resistance, calling for an immediate overhaul in children's diets. Beyond individual choices, experts are calling for systemic interventions. Dr. Saigal called for food labeling reforms, improved school meal nutrition programs, and taxation on sugary drinks and ultra-processed foods. "We urge parents, educators, and young adults to stop viewing food as mere fuel. Food is medicine, and it can protect the liver—the body's detox powerhouse—when chosen wisely," he said.

Echoing the urgency, Dr.

Chaudhary emphasized the liver's vital yet often overlooked role. "The liver silently performs over 500 critical functions—from detoxification and digestion to immunity and metabolism. We must stop taking it for granted. With informed food choices, reduced alcohol intake, and regular exercise, we can prevent most liver diseases and reduce the burden on India's healthcare system," he said.

As World Liver Day shines a spotlight on this silent but life-sustaining organ, doctors are pushing for a national movement rooted in nutrition-first preventive medicine—urging citizens to make every meal a step toward better liver health.

WS Audiology Amplifies Presence in India with State-of-the-Art Hub in Bangalore

ARUN KUMAR RAO
Bangalore

In a resounding step towards transforming hearing healthcare in India, WS Audiology (WSA), the global leader in hearing solutions, has unveiled its brand-new commercial and production hub in Bangalore. This strategic expansion marks a significant milestone in WSA's commitment to making hearing care more accessible, affordable, and effective for millions across the country.



The new facility—operating as WS Audiology India—

will serve as a powerhouse of innovation, bringing together

cutting-edge production capabilities, robust commercial operations, and a growing talent pool under one roof. This move further strengthens WSA's footprint in one of its fastest-growing markets in the Asia-Pacific region.

"India has been one of our most dynamic markets," said Avinash Pawar, Country Manager, WSA India. "What started with a small team has now grown into a network that includes offices in Delhi, Hyderabad, and now this new flagship in Bangalore.

Infosys Ends FY25 with Profit Dip but Strategic Focus on AI, Cloud and Cybersecurity Signals Resilience

Final dividend of ₹22 per share announced; muted FY26 revenue guidance reflects global uncertainties

ARUN KUMAR RAO
Bangalore

India's second-largest IT services firm, Infosys, wrapped up the financial year 2024-25 with a mixed performance — one that balanced operational resilience with strategic foresight. For the quarter ended March 31, 2025 (Q4FY25), Infosys reported a 12% year-on-year (Y-o-Y) decline in net profit to ₹7,033 crore, even as revenue rose 7.9% Y-o-Y to ₹40,928 crore.

The Bengaluru-based tech giant, led by CEO Salil Parekh, attributed the dip in profits to shifting client priorities, ongoing macroeconomic headwinds, and a broad recalibration of discretionary tech spending in key markets, including the U.S. and Europe. However, the company highlighted solid progress in margin expansion, free cash generation, and deal ramp-ups—marking it as a year of strategic repositioning more than one of just topline growth.

"We have built a resilient organisation with a sharp focus on client-centricity and responsiveness to the market," said Parekh in a post-results statement. "Our depth in AI, cloud and digital, and our strength in cost efficiency, automation, and consolidation position us well for the evolving needs of our clients."

Dividend Declaration and Shareholder Cheer

Despite profit pressures, Infosys' board approved a final dividend of ₹22 per equity share for FY25, underscoring its commitment to shareholder returns. The record date for the



dividend and the Annual General Meeting (AGM) is May 30, 2025, with payouts scheduled for June 30, 2025. On the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE), Infosys shares showed mild volatility during the day's trade, opening at ₹1,404.85 and dipping to ₹1,378.60 before recovering to close at ₹1,428.10 — a 1.07% gain. However, the stock remains down by 25% year-to-date, largely due to a sector-wide drag caused by US tariff policies and delayed enterprise IT spending cycles.

Performance Snapshot: Quarter and Year in Review

The company posted a sequential profit growth of 3.3%, even as quarter-on-quarter (Q-o-Q) revenue dipped 2%. A comparison with the previous quarter (Q3FY25) paints a fuller picture: net profit stood at ₹6,806 crore in Q3, while revenue was ₹41,764 crore — suggesting a modest Q4 decline in topline despite profit resilience. For the entire fiscal year (FY25), Infosys reported a 4.2% growth in revenue, missing its lower-end projection of 4.5-5%. The subdued performance reflects the cautious environment in which the firm operated, as clients scrutinized budgets, delayed large transformation projects, and leaned towards vendor consolidation. "The environment is uncertain, and we will execute our plans with agility by keeping a close watch on the changes," Parekh stated. "We are seeing the deals that we did in

the recent quarters are continuing to ramp up."

Weak Guidance, Strong Vision

Infosys' forward guidance for FY26 has set a conservative tone, with projected revenue growth between 0% and 3%, one of the lowest forecasts in recent years. The company cited macroeconomic uncertainties, tariff-related anxieties, and limited demand visibility as key constraints. However, it reaffirmed its operating margin guidance of 20-22%, signaling a strong internal cost structure and efficiency-focused delivery. While the stock outlook led to Infosys' American Depository Receipts (ADRs) sliding around 3% in early NYSE trade, industry watchers believe the company's long-term strategy remains intact. Strategic Bets: AI, Cybersecurity, and Energy Trading—Infosys continues to invest in high-growth, high-value segments — with a clear bias towards AI-driven services, cloud infrastructure, and cybersecurity. During Q4, the company announced two targeted acquisitions to bolster its digital capabilities:

MRE Consulting (USA) — Acquired for \$36 million, this Houston-based firm specializes in energy and commodity trading and risk management (E/CTRM). The acquisition is expected to deepen Infosys' presence in the energy sector and offer advanced analytics for trading operations.

The Missing Link (Australia) — Acquired for \$58 million, this cybersecurity firm brings to Infosys specialized expertise across Red Team, Blue Team, and GSOC (Global Security Operations Centre) domains. The deal is expected to expand Infosys' managed security services and incident response capabilities globally.

Both acquisitions reflect Infosys' evolving portfolio strategy: move up the value chain, capture niche markets, and offer end-to-end digital trust solutions.

Industry Trends and Market Sentiment—Infosys' cautious commentary mirrors a broader sentiment across the IT industry, where top players are seeing a slowdown in digital transformation spending and a rise in demand for cost-efficient, AI-enabled solutions. With enterprise clients revisiting their tech budgets and evaluating returns more closely, Indian IT majors are pivoting towards automation-first delivery models, platform-based services, and AI-powered IT operations. While Infosys may be entering FY26 with lowered expectations, analysts point to a robust deal pipeline, internal cost levers, and a disciplined approach to expansion as reasons for cautious optimism.

CONCLUSION: A Pause, Not a Retreat—Infosys' Q4 and FY25 results reflect a company recalibrating amid complexity — balancing short-term headwinds with long-term positioning. With sustained investment in strategic capabilities and a strong balance sheet, Infosys is not retreating, but rather consolidating and preparing for the next wave of tech disruption. For investors and analysts, the message is clear: Infosys may be moving slower today, but it's steering steadily towards a future-ready, AI-led digital enterprise model.

Oscar-winner AR Rahman talks about the potential misuse of AI in music

MUMBAI: Oscar-winner AR Rahman says there are both good and bad aspects to the use of artificial intelligence in music, but there will be chaos if it is not controlled. The musician is not averse to new technology in music and, in fact, used an AI software to recreate the voices of late singers Bamba Bakya and Shahul Hameed for a track, Thimiri Yezhuda from Rajinikanth-starrer Lal Salaam. But he did that with proper permission from the family of the musicians.

Rahman acknowledged that the use of AI in music had "gone wild." "I don't know what's going to happen. Some of the songs are so filthy, yet they come out with the voices of popular singers. It needs to be controlled because if it's not, there'll be chaos," the musician said.

The music maestro, who has two Oscars, a Golden Globe



and Grammy to his credit, said it was important to have rules for ethical use of the AI technology. "There are both good and bad aspects, and the good things should be used to empower people who never had the chance to put their vision into action. But overusing it in a bad way is bad for us. It's like mixing poison with oxygen and breathing it in. There should be rules, like certain things you

can't do. Like, how they talk about ethics or behaviour in a society, this is also behaviour in the software and digital world," he added.

Rahman is currently working on his much-anticipated *The Wonderment Tour*, to be held on May 3 at the DY Patil Stadium. The concert was conceptualised by the composer himself in collaboration with Percept Live and co-produced by Percept Live, Fair Game and Jo Entertainment.

The global premiere of 'The Wonderment Tour' is said to be a grand concert under the aegis of the WAVES summit taking place from May 1 to 4. Tickets are now available on Zomato app.

The 58-year-old musician has a slew of projects in the pipeline, including the romantic film, *Tere Ishq Mein*, with his frequent collaborator, filmmaker Aanand L Rai, Mani Ratnam's *Thug Life*, Rajkumar

Santoshi's *Lahore 1947*, Meena Kumari biopic, and the Hansal Mehta-directed *Gandhi* series.

He is also reuniting with Imtiaz for his next after *Chamkila*. "The more you see people loving *Vida Karo* and *Mirza*, it forces us to look back and get that beautiful aura of that era in your way. So that's a good thing to see," he added.

Rahman is also excited about the upcoming *Hansal Mehta* series on *Gandhi*, which is headlined by Pratik Gandhi. "The *Gandhi* series is unexpectedly beautiful; I never expected that to be such a beautiful experience. Working with Hansal Mehta and Sameer Nair was fascinating. Even Gandhi ji's life... I feel that's like a textbook, and it's a fantastic textbook for the previous or the future generations to see the father of the nation," he said. Meanwhile, Rahman attended the MAMI Film Festival 2025, in Mumbai, on Tuesday.

Talking Points Narvijay Yadav



Unplanned flight delays and cancellations spark chaos at airports nationwide. Furious passengers clog gates, venting at staff, as systems buckle under storms, exposing the fragile dance of aviation's limits.

The dust storm hit like a rogue wave, swallowing IGI Airport Delhi in a haze of chaos this weekend. At Gate 30, departure area, Terminal 3, Mona, a ground duty manager of a premier airline, braced herself as the wind howled outside, rattling the glass walls. Screens flickered, announcing delays for 250 flights, and the lounge swelled with stranded passengers. Suitcases toppled, coffee cups spilled, and voices rose in a crescendo of frustration. "This is unacceptable!" a man in a suit bellowed, jabbing a finger at Mona. Her earpiece crackled with updates: cancellations, rerouting, zero visibility. The storm didn't care about her title or the airline's five-star rating.

Mona, 32, had seen delays before, but this was a beast unleashed. Her navy blazer felt like armor, yet it couldn't shield her from the onslaught. A woman clutching a toddler screamed about a missed wedding; an elderly couple fretted over a hospital appointment. "Why no warning?" a tech bro demanded, as if Mona had personally summoned the storm. Her team of four scurried, distributing water bottles and apologies, but the crowd's patience was thinner than the

airport's Wi-Fi. Mona's phone buzzed, her boss demanding updates while she dodged a thrown boarding pass.

Breathe, Mona. You've got this, she whispered, but her pulse disagreed. The truth stung: she was powerless. Aviation wasn't a vending machine spitting flawless luxury for a premium ticket. It was a juggernaut of tech, manpower, and nature's whims. Friday's storm had grounded planes, scrambled radars, and choked runways with debris. Airline's heavy investments in fleets, infrastructure, AI scheduling, and trained crews meant nothing when bad weather blinded pilots. Mona's job was to manage the fallout, not the weather. Yet passengers saw her as the villain, not the victim of a system stretched to breaking. "Fix this now!" a voice roared, and her smile wavered. If only I could control the clouds, she thought bitterly.

Gate 30 was a warzone of crumpled coffee mugs and frayed tempers by midnight. Mona's voice hoarse, she announced a flight rescheduling, only to face a chorus of groans. A young man filmed her shouting, "This'll go viral." Her stomach knotted; would this cost her job? She pictured her widowed mother,

Anger Won't Clear Airport Storms



dependent on her salary, and steeled herself. "Sir, I'm doing my best," she said, dodging his phone. Hours blurred; her heels ached, but she kept moving — rebooking passengers, calming her team, ignoring the lump in her throat. At 3 am, a caretaker offered her chai. "You're tougher than this storm," he said. Mona smiled, her first real one in hours.

By Saturday, the haze lifted, but the lesson lingered. Passengers weren't wrong to expect service; they paid for it. But rage at ground staff, like Mona, was like cursing a doctor for a heart attack. Airlines weren't gods but complex machines, fallible under nature's fists. Mona's stress wasn't just hers; it was the system's, stretched thin by expectations of perfection. Mona clocked out at dawn, the airport quieter but her mind loud. Storms pass, she thought, stepping into sun-

light. So will this. Gate 30 would hum again, and she'd be ready, blazer on, heart steady.

Points to Ponder:

Chaos exposes cracks in any system, and aviation is no exception. Passengers should channel frustration into calm questions to help find solutions, while airlines must prioritize proactive updates and crisis training to ease tensions. Staff like Mona need mental health support to endure high-pressure roles, and regulators should fund resilient tech to minimize disruptions. Empathy, preparation, and shared responsibility can turn tempests into moments of collective strength. Together, we soar through storms!

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

An Author with a Mission, Often Felt Disillusioned; Refuses to Yield

AT THE AGE OF 96 SERVES AS A LIGHTHOUSE FOR GENERATION-NEXT



Ved Prakash Vatuk, a sole warrior, a loner, fighting for India's rich heritage, her plural society, and engaged in promoting Hindi, as the voice of our nascent democracy and a nation, during his active years, travelled worldwide, quietly completes 96th spring of his life on the auspicious Vaisakhi Day, 13, April, this year in Meerut, which had faced genocide after the 1857 uprising against the unrestricted loot of a British business house, East India Company.

There was no hustle-bustle in the city of Meerut, a historical city from the Mahabharata times, no shouting of the muscle-flexing security men or the police sirens creating a passage in the busy streets or lanes indicating any movement of the men in power, often witnessed, when men in power decide to honour a well-known legend or a celebrity. The quiet birthday celebrations in this revolutionary town of Mangal Pandey, who had ignited the spirit of freedom in 1857, however, reaffirmed the

growing chasm between the today's rulers and the eminent persons of our society engaged in reasserting India's 'tryst with destiny'. Pandit Nehru's historical speech always inspires and even haunts people like us, who were educated and groomed in the much-revered academic environs of the Allahabad University. Allahabad, now renamed



Prayag, was the hometown of Jawaharlal Nehru, Mahadevi Verma, Sumitra Nandan Pant and also Urdu poet, Firaq Gorkhpuri, and this author's close bond with the city could not be diluted despite my long innings in the service. Therefore, it was natural for people like us to be bonded with the creativity of Meerut, where I have decided to live after my superannuation. For this author joining Vatuk's birthday, perhaps, could be reinventing the unforgettable past of the Allahabad town, which has not only been the confluence of the holy rivers, Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati, it was also the centre of the country's political and literary movements. The presence of young writers such as Eeshwar Chand, Satyapal Satyam, Bhagwan Dikshit, Sabhir Choudhary, and Ghanshyam Das Verma and many other prominent people at the birthday celebrations was like the rekindling of the Meerut spirit for revolution.

opting to live in the US, Vatuk lives all alone, looks after himself, uses magnifying glasses to continue his writings, a task he had begun when he was just 19. Later, this soldier of pen travelled across the continents to foist India's intellectual flag. His first essay had appeared in the Sunday supplement of the *Navabharat Times*, a *Times of India* publication, during the golden era of Indian journalism under the leadership of Rama Jain, who had also initiated the publications of the famous Hindi weeklies such as *Dharmayug* and *Dinaman*. These publications could be compared with the top magazines in the West, however, her scions, Sameer and Vineet, dwarfed intellectually by getting some management education in the US, not only closed down the Hindi magazines, but also converted the classical Hindi used in the *Navabharat Times* to Hinglish. Vatuk, however, had embarked upon his solo mission with an advanced degree in

Hindi from the Punjab University, and did post-graduation in Sanskrit from Agra University in 1954. A few months later, he began his voyage to England to work for his Ph.D. dissertation at London University. In 1959, Vatuk migrated to the US, where he served as the director of the Berkeley Institute of Folklore in America. His two books, the *Diary of Baba Hari Singh Usman*, one of the founders of the *Gadar Party*, and *Uttar Ram Katha*, have received international attention.

Kiara Hall's tribute enabled the scholars across the world to describe him as an influential poet and activist, reflecting on his life, work, and impact on social justice. She had presented a document at the launch of the "Studies in Inequality and Justice: Essays in Honour of Ved Prakash Vatuk". In this document presented at the University of California at Berkeley, she has offered an insight in the context of Vatuk's unique contribution in highlighting the anguish and challenges on the South Asian regions, his activism against the practice of hiring practices in academia and his role in fostering inclusive dialogues in the field. The tribute also underscores Vatuk's lasting legacy in promoting human rights and addressing social inequality, as well as the connections fostered among scholars through his work.

(Author has post-graduated in economics and also earned a Ph.D., served the government as a commissioner. He is the general secretary of the Goodwill Society)