





# Delhi Government plans to deploy anti-smog guns in industrial areas, says Sirsa

**NEW DELHI:** The Delhi government’s Environment Department plans to deploy GPS-enabled hydraulic anti-smog gun vehicles, equipped with water sprinklers, to check air pollution in industrial areas, Cabinet Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa said on Friday.

Sirsa said that the initiative, to be launched in association with Delhi State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation (DSIIDC), will involve eight CNG-operated trucks equipped with advanced anti-smog guns capable of spraying mist over a horizontal distance of 30 meters and rotating 330 degrees.

This will ensure comprehensive coverage to effectively reduce airborne pollutants in all industrial areas, he said.

“Our government is fully committed to ensuring industrial growth while protecting the environment. We are taking concrete steps to minimise industrial waste and improve



infrastructure,” said Sirsa.

He said DSIIDC has already successfully deployed water sprinklers and anti-smog guns in the Bawana and Narela Industrial Areas to effectively mitigate air pollution.

Sirsa said the sprinklers will be operated in two daily shifts in early morning shift and a four-hour shift during non-peak afternoon hours.

He said this initiative has

been undertaken following the directive of Chief Minister Rekha Gupta.

The process of hiring GPS-enabled anti-smog gun vehicles has been successfully completed, and the government is now ready to deploy these vehicles across industrial areas to effectively combat air pollution.

The new smog guns will be deployed in Patparganj, Okhla

Phase-III, A Block and S Block Phase-II, Jhilmil, Nangloi, Udyog Vihar, Badli, and Bhorganh industrial areas starting from June 2025.

Two additional vehicles will also be reserved for industrial areas administered by the Delhi Development Authority (DDA), he said.

The trucks are also fitted with horizontal sprinklers spanning their width to spray water simultaneously on roads, consuming a minimum of 1, 500 liters of water per hour, he said. The Minister said the initiative is expected to significantly suppress dust particles and curb industrial pollution, contributing to cleaner air for Delhi’s residents.

This project, spanning 10 months excluding the monsoon period, underscores the Delhi Government’s commitment to deploying innovative, eco-friendly solutions for sustainable urban living.

# Delhi Police Nabs 121 Illegal B’deshi Immigrants, to be Deported



**NEW DELHI:** As part of the widespread crackdown to curb illegal immigration, a special team of the Delhi Police has apprehended 121 Bangladeshi nationals living illegally in the national capital and sent them to a detention centre.

The special team has completed the necessary legal procedures and issued deportation orders through the Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO). These individuals, including those who overstayed their visas or entered without valid documents, were apprehended

and placed in detention centres before the FRRO processed their cases. The FRRO, a government body responsible for managing foreigners in India, then issued deportation orders based on the verified information.

A media statement released by the Delhi Police on Thursday said that a special team was constituted under the supervision of Additional DCP-I Dr Chandra Prakash, led by ACP, Badli, Shashi Kant Gaur and SHO, Alipur, Shailender Kumar.

This team conducted an extensive drive, during which

documents of 831 suspected Bangladeshis were checked.

“The team, in the last one week found 121 persons residing illegally in India. Deportation orders for all these individuals have been issued through the Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO),” said the release.

The police have initiated legal action in this regard. A case FIR No. 345/2025 has been registered at Police Station Narela Industrial Area under Sections 336(2), 336(3), 340(2), 61(2) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and Sections 14 and 14C of the Foreigners Act, 1946 to investigate the syndicate responsible for facilitating illegal entry and residence of immigrants.

“Under the directions and guidance of Special Commissioner of police Law & Order (Zone-I), Ravindra Kumar Yadav, IPS, a special investigation team is headed by Additional DCP-I Dr Chandra Prakash and includes one ACP, one Inspector, two Sub-Inspectors, two Head Constables, and two Constables,” said the officials.

**CM Yogi Adityanath says ‘no need to worry’ about Covid-19 outbreak in UP**



**LUCKNOW:** Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has directed health officials to remain alert about the spread of Covid-19 in the state but also said there was nothing to worry as far as Uttar Pradesh was concerned.

During a review meeting with the health department on the Covid-19 situation, the CM on Wednesday said, “There is nothing to worry about given the present situation in Uttar Pradesh, but being alert is significant.” “The Indian government has not issued any guidelines on Covid-19 so far. But in view of the surge of cases of the JN.1 variant in Thailand, Singapore and Hong Kong, we need to remain alert. All teams at medical colleges and hospitals should remain alert,” the CM told officials in the meeting.

He added that personnel at hospitals should be kept alert to deal with emergency cases. He told officials to focus on the prevention of dengue, malaria and kala-azar or black fever.

“Ten-bed ICU, ventilator units, oxygen plants and other facilities made operational during previous Covid surges should be kept functional. The state’s health facility is capable of dealing with any situation,” the CM said. Highlighting the infrastructure developed during previous waves of the pandemic, the Chief Minister directed that the 10-bed ICUs, ventilators, and oxygen plants established in district hospitals must always remain operational.

He emphasised the importance of regular testing and timely maintenance of these critical facilities. He also called for the continued training and effective deployment of health workers, recognising their commendable contributions during the pandemic. Chief Minister Adityanath also instructed relevant departments to begin preparations to prevent seasonal communicable diseases such as dengue, malaria, and kala-azar.

He directed the Health Department, Medical Education Department, and local administration to work closely to ensure proactive measures are in place.

Concluding the review, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath reiterated that the Uttar Pradesh government is fully prepared and committed to addressing all potential health challenges, including Covid-19. He assured that the state’s healthcare system remains alert, capable, and equipped to safeguard public health.

# You Tuber Jyoti Malhotra was in contact with ISI during terrorist attack in Pahalgam claims Police



**SATISH HANDA**  
*Hisar*

Pakistani Spy Jyoti Malhotra, a YouTuber has been arrested on charges of spying for Pakistan. Police interrogation has revealed that she was in contact with Pakistani intelligence officers during the terrorist attack in Pahalgam and Operation Sindoor. Cyber and Economic Cell also has started investigating her huge expenses spent more than her income during travel and bank accounts. Information reveals, Jyoti Malhotra, a resident of New Agrasen Colony, who was arrested on charges of spying for Pakistan being investigated by police has clarified that during the terror attack on Indian tourists in Pahalgam and Operation Sindoor has also confirm that accused was in contact with Pakistani intelligence officers at the time of attack. Investigation is still going on as to what information she had shared with ISI during the terrorist attack in Pahalgam during that time. The police have not said anything yet about whether Jyoti Malhotra has shared information related to the army or not. Superintendent of Police Shashank Kumar Sawan said that so far the investigation has revealed that Jyoti Malhotra spent more than her income during travel and police are seriously investigating where she got this money from.

# Kejriwal launches AAP’s students wing for alternative politics

**NEW DELHI:** After 10 years of arriving on the national political scene, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Tuesday launched its students’ wing -- Association of Students for Alternative Politics (ASAP) -- aiming to attract young voters as part of its national ambitions.

In his rare public appearance after the Delhi Assembly elections in February, AAP National Convener Arvind Kejriwal told students from Delhi University, Indraprastha University and those from Punjab and Gujarat in the audience, “We will force people to rethink about the superiority of our brand of alternative politics over the mainstream politics of other parties.”

Sharing his blueprint for the ASAP, he said several student groups will be formed to conduct discussions, cultural and social activities for offering them a platform to connect with society.

“Today’s politics is responsible for the big national challenges which are peculiar and basic -- lack of food, health care, and education. Even after 75 years of Independence, the country is struggling to provide these facilities to citizens,” he said, highlighting AAP’s brand of alternative politics that treats the poor and the rich alike.

Calling the brand of Congress and BJP politics as harmful



ful “mainstream politics”, the former Delhi Chief Minister said, “The mainstream politics pursued by the new BJP government in Delhi has resulted in power cuts of 3-4 hours in the city, private schools have hiked fees and quality of government schools has also deteriorated.”

Urging youth and students to join politics, he said, “Politics touches every aspect of our lives.”

He also criticised the mentality of middle-class students

to keep themselves away from politics. Urging the youth not to look down upon politics, he said, “Even the power supply to your house is linked to politics. When AAP was in power in Delhi for 10 years, there was 24-hour electricity. Today, there are power cuts in Delhi. So, there is politics involved even in the issue of continuous and affordable power supply to your homes.”

“Your jobs -- whether government or private -- are also linked to politics. You cannot stay away from politics. You have to join politics and become a part of it,” said Kejriwal.

Recalling AAP rule in Delhi and highlighting the party’s rule in Punjab, Kejriwal talked about good quality government schools and improved health facilities, and hit out at the BJP government in Delhi for allegedly deteriorating the quality of schools.

# Centre Okays 10,900 electric buses for 5 cities



**NEW DELHI:** The Ministry of Heavy Industries on Thursday assured that approximately 4, 500 electric buses will be provided to Bengaluru, 2, 000 to Hyderabad, 2, 800 to Delhi, 1, 000 to Ahmedabad and 600 to Surat under the current phase of the PM e-Drive Scheme.

The decision was taken at a meeting chaired by Union Minister for Heavy Industries H.D. Kumaraswamy on the rollout of electric buses.

“The session focused on the states of Telangana, Karnataka, Delhi, and Gujarat—marking a strong step forward in advancing Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s vision for clean and inclusive urban transport solutions across India,” according to an official statement issued after the meeting.

“Thanks to the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India is now taking bold strides toward sustainable urban mobility. From Bengaluru to Delhi, cities are actively embracing electric buses to make public transport cleaner, smarter, and more efficient,” said Kumaraswamy.

“We are not merely allocating electric buses—we are shaping the future of India’s transport system with innovation and environmental consciousness,” the Union Minister said.

“With close coordination between the Centre and states like Telangana, Karnataka, Delhi, and Gujarat, we are determined to deliver on the PM e-Drive promise,” he added.

The PM e-Drive initiative aims to deploy 14, 028 electric buses with a total financial outlay of Rs 10, 900 crore over a two-year period from April 2024 to March 2026.

The minister said the scheme represents one of the world’s largest national efforts to electrify public transport at scale and the government was committed to timely delivery, operational readiness, and strategic partnerships with all participating states.

The Ministry of Heavy Industry (MHI) has also introduced E-vouchers for EV buyers to avail the demand incentive under the scheme.

Under the PM e-drive scheme an allocation of Rs 500 crore each has been done for the deployment of e-ambulances and e-trucks as well. This is new initiative of the Centre to promote the use of e-ambulances for comfortable patient transport.

Similarly, e-trucks have also been introduced under the scheme since trucks are major contributors to air pollution. To avail subsidy on e-truck submission of a scrapping certificate from Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) approved vehicles scrapping centres (RVSF) has been made mandatory.

# 174 Bangladeshis arrested in Jhajjar

**SATISH HANDA**  
*Jhajjar*



Under Haryana police’s rapid action, 174 Bangladeshis arrested in Jhajjar in 24 hours staying illegally and sent to detention centers after the terrorist attack in Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir and arrest of several persons working as ISI spies, Haryana Police has also tightened its grip on illegal Bangladeshis and 174 Bangladeshis have been arrested in 24 hours, including 58 are men, 52 are women and 64 are children as the Police Commissioner has given clear instructions that no illegal person will be allowed to stay. The

process of their verification is going on and Police team is interrogating Bangladeshis living illegally in Jhajjar. The search for other persons is still going on and in the past 24 hours, police teams kept bringing these people from brick kilns to the police line even at night and the process of their verification continued during the day as well. The process from medical to finger prints has been completed. Where the initial work related to their verification was done.

Amid the tension created after the terrorist attack in Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir, the police and intelligence units in Haryana have intensified action against illegal Bangladeshis living in the state. A special search operation was conducted by Jhajjar police. Under this operation, 174 Bangladeshis were identified within 24 hours, most of them found working in brick kilns. The process of their investigation is still going on. Jhajjar Police Commissioner Dr. Rajshree Singh has given clear instructions to all police stations and outpost in-charges that no one is allowed to stay here without authorization.

# Bengaluru Reels Under Heavy Rains: Roads, Traffic Chaos and Tragedy

**ARUN KUMAR RAO**  
*Bengaluru*



A relentless spell of heavy pre-monsoon showers has thrown normal life out of gear across Karnataka’s capital. Over the past three days, the city has been pounded by cloudbursts dumping 15 to 20 cm of rain, leading to widespread waterlogging, traffic snarls, and the tragic loss of life.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) reported that the city recorded 103 mm of rainfall in the last 24 hours alone. Many parts of Bengaluru resembled flooded zones on Monday, with visuals of boats being deployed in certain low-lying areas to rescue stranded residents. In a heart-wrenching incident, a 32-year-old woman lost her life after a wall collapsed on her in the Whitefield Industrial Area, one of the hardest-hit zones.

Chaos on the Streets---Major roads turned into rivers as rainwater inundated key junctions, including Silk Board Metro Station, Shanti Nagar Bus Stand, Kanteerava Stadium, and several neighborhoods like Sai Layout in Horamavu under the Mahadevapura zone.

Commuters waded through knee-deep water as vehicles broke down, tree branches fell, and traffic congestion worsened across the city. “I have never seen such a situation in May,” said a frustrated commuter stuck for hours in traffic near Silk Board. “We need action, not excuses.”

Official Response---Chief Minister Siddaramaiah is scheduled to visit rain-hit areas on Monday evening to assess the damage and interact with residents. Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar, who is also Bengaluru’s in-charge minister, said he is monitoring the situation closely.

“To my fellow Bengalureans – I am one among you. I understand your concerns, I share your frustration, and I

assure you of my commitment to resolving them. I stand with you,” Shivakumar posted on X (formerly Twitter).

Meanwhile, Home Minister G. Parameshwara stated that the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA), which recently replaced BBMP, is working on addressing the drainage and civic infrastructure failures that led to such severe waterlogging.

Residents Call for Urgent Civic Action---As visuals of flooded homes, stranded vehicles, and submerged roads went viral, residents voiced their anger at the city’s unpreparedness despite recurring rain-related issues every year. Calls for urgent investment in stormwater drains, better urban planning, and coordinated emergency re-

sponse grew louder. More Rain Ahead: IMD Issues Fresh Alerts---According to N. Puviarasu, Director, IMD Bengaluru Centre, a yellow alert remains in place for Bengaluru and surrounding districts through Tuesday. The city and coastal Karnataka are expected to receive more heavy rainfall over the next 48 hours due to an ongoing cyclonic circulation pattern. “Moderate to heavy thundershowers, lightning, and gusty winds reaching speeds of 50-60 km/h are expected throughout the week,” Puviarasu warned.

IMD Senior Scientist R.K. Jenamani further confirmed that orange and red alerts have been issued for parts of Karnataka for May 20 and 21, with the possibility of extremely heavy rainfall in North and South Interior Karnataka, coastal areas, and adjoining regions of Tamil Nadu and Goa. Statewide Impact---Apart from Bengaluru, the rain fury extended to several other districts, including Bengaluru Rural, Kolar, Chikkaballapura, Tumakuru, Mandya, Mysuru, Hassan, Kodagu, Belagavi, Bidar, Raichur, Yadgir, Davanagere, and Chitradurga.

# ISI spy used to send information about railway trains to Pakistan arrested from Panipat

**SATISH HANDA**  
*Panipat*



An ISI spy used to send information about the activities of railway stations and movement of the trains to Pakistan has been arrested as such the railways are on alert. According to information Panipat has a history of terrorist activities where as many as 68 people have died in explosions in the trains and buses and the Railways have suffered losses worth crores of rupees. On 18 February 2007, 66 people were killed in a blast in Samjhauta Express train from Delhi to Lahore caused a huge fire in two bogies in which 66 people including 12 children were severely burnt and died, of them even today 10-12 passengers have not been identified and most of those who died were from Pakistan. On the evening of 16 January 2016, a blast occurred in the bogie of a passenger train going from Panipat to Ambala. There were 20-30 passengers in the train at the time of the accident. On investigation, it was found to be a battery bomb. The police also recovered the cells here. The IB investigated the matter, till date no clue has been found about the person

who planted the bomb in the train. A young man was also captured in CCTV while carrying a battery towards the railway station.

According to information, Panipat has always been the target of terrorists and miscreants where terrorist activities have been carried out thrice in trains and once at the bus stand. In 1998, there was a blast in a private bus in which two people died. There was a blast in a passenger train on 12 May 2016 also when an explosion took place at around 8.05 pm in the 64,451 passenger train which arrived at Panipat railway station from Old Delhi. The train was being taken from platform number four to the yard. There was a blast in the front rack and a fire broke out. However, there was no loss of life but the bogie was completely burnt. Investigation revealed that the terrorists had placed a time bomb in the

train. On 29th January this year, an attempt was also made to overturn an express train by placing an angle on the railway track near Gohana bridge at 3:30 am and a major accident was averted, since the loco pilot saw this and informed the railway officials, stopped the Netaji Express train at around 3:50 am and a major accident was averted. In another incident the miscreants tried to overturn the train by placing a 20 feet long iron angle on the track near Gohana Road bridge on 29 January.

Preliminary investigation reveals that the ISI spy caught in Hali Colony of Panipat recently used to send information and videos of Panipat railway station and trains to Pakistan. The spy arrested by CIA One in Panipat used to send information about army movement and trains to terrorists. This spy named Nauman Ilahi (24) was sending information about the activities of the Indian Army and their movement of trains, press conferences of military officers and the situation in the country during ‘Operation Sindoor’ was in touch with Pakistani terrorists through social media and lived here with his sister.

# Two killed, 11 injured as thunderstorm, rain lash Delhi



**NEW DELHI:** A 22-year-old youth and a person with disability died, while at least 11 were injured in separate rain-related incidents in the national capital on Wednesday evening, the police said.

On May 21 around 7.50 pm, a high-beam electricity pole collapsed during a thunderstorm near the Lodhi Road flyover in southeast Delhi, close to the Nizamuddin area.

The pole fell in the middle of the road, hitting the disabled man who was passing by on a tricycle.

“He was rushed to Safdarjung Hospital in an ambulance but was declared dead on arrival,” a police officer said. The identity of the man is being ascertained.

According to an eyewitness, the wind was so strong that even trees and poles swayed dangerously. Suddenly, the electric pole snapped and fell, crushing the man beneath it.

In another incident, a 22-year-old man died after a tree fell on him and two motorcycles in northeast Delhi’s Gokulpuri area around 8.15 pm.



# HM Amit Shah lauds security forces’ effort to eliminate 27 Maoists in Chhattisgarh

**RAIPUR:** As security forces have neutralised 27 Maoists in Chhattisgarh, Union Home Minister Amit Shah has termed it as a “landmark achievement in the battle to eliminate Naxalism.”

Sharing the information on his X handle, Shah said, “Today, in an operation in Narayanpur, Chhattisgarh, our security forces have neutralised 27 dreaded Maoists, including Nambala Keshav Rao, alias Basava Raju, the general secretary of CPI-Maoist, topmost leader, and the backbone of the Naxal movement.”



He further said that this was the first time in three decades of Bharat’s battle against Naxalism that a general secretary-ranked leader has been neutralised by our forces. “I applaud our brave security forces and agencies for this major breakthrough. Also glad to share that after completion of Operation Black

Forest, 54 Naxalites have been arrested and 84 Naxalites have surrendered in Chhattisgarh, Telangana, and Maharashtra.”

HM Shah reaffirmed that the Modi government is resolved to eliminate Naxalism before March 31, 2026.

Speaking to IANS, Prabhat Kumar, Superintendent of Narayanpur, said the encounter

had been going on since Tuesday morning.

According to senior police officials, security forces eliminated 27 Maoists in the Abujmahad forest in Narayanpur district on Wednesday morning. All 27 bodies and weapons have been recovered. Basava Raju, who had a bounty of Rs 1.5 crore on his head, was also

among the Maoists killed. A DRG (District Reserve Guard) jawan was martyred in the firing.

An encounter is going on at the border of Dantewada, Narayanpur and Bijapur districts. The police had received information that Naxalite politburo member and Naxalite organisation general secretary Basava Raju was present in Boter of Abujmahad. On this basis, the force was dispatched. As soon as the jawans reached Boter of Abujmahad, the Maoists opened fire on them.

State Home Minister Vijay Sharma has described this operation of the security forces as a big success. HM Shah had earlier last month made an appeal in Bastar to Maoists to return to mainstream and partake in development activities. He also clarified that forces will not come back or make any conditional compromise.

# Supreme sacrifice of soldiers recognised with Kirti Chakra and Shaurya Chakra



**NEW DELHI:** President Droupadi Murmu honoured brave soldiers from the armed forces, Central Armed Police Forces, and state and Union Territory police at Rashtrapati Bhavan. Six soldiers were awarded the Kirti Chakra (including four posthumously) and 33 soldiers were honoured with the Shaurya Chakra (including seven posthumously).

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh among others were present on the occasion. The event took place

at Rashtrapati Bhavan on Thursday.

The bravery awards were given to personnel who exhibited unparalleled courage in counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency operations. The honours also recognised military personnel who performed their duties with exemplary bravery, without concern for personal safety. The recipients included soldiers who displayed valour in operations against terrorists in Jammu & Kashmir and the Northeast. Several notorious terrorists were killed or captured, and a large quantity of weapons was seized. Officers of the Indian Navy led anti-piracy operations that rescued hostages and led to the surrender of pirates, while

also showing exceptional courage in firefighting operations on a burning oil tanker. The honoured officers of the Indian Air Force took significant risks to ensure the safety of the public by flying aircraft into secure zones during emergencies. Officers and soldiers of the CRPF demonstrated courage during operations in areas affected by left-wing extremism, where several Maoists were captured, and weapons were seized. Among the recipients of the Kirti Chakra were Major Malla Rama Gopal Naidu, Maratha Light Infantry, Major Manjeet, Punjab Regiment, and Rifleman Ravi Kumar of Jammu & Kashmir Light Infantry (posthumously). Colonel Manpreet Singh, Deputy Superintendent Himayun Bhatt of Jammu & Kashmir Police, and Naik Dilawar Khan of the National Rifles were also awarded the Kirti Chakra posthumously.

# Supreme Court of India issues notice to Centre on plea to ban betting apps



**NEW DELHI:** The Supreme Court on Friday agreed to examine a plea seeking a complete ban on “illegal” betting apps.

The petitioner also sought strict regulations on online gaming and fantasy sports, and the enactment of a comprehensive law.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N.K. Singh issued a notice to the Centre and sought its response, but refrained from issuing notices to the state governments at the present stage.

The petitioner, claiming himself “a prominent social activist, humanitarian, and President of Global Peace Initiative, which is dedicated to promoting peace and justice globally”, said the Public Interest Litigation (PIL) was filed in the interest of millions of people and to protect the sanity and democracy in India by banning “illegal” betting apps.

The petition referred to an FIR registered in March this year in Telangana against 25 Bollywood celebrities, cricketers and influencers for misleading the public by promoting betting apps.

Further, it referred to a news article regarding the suicide of 24 people from Telangana after they were unable to pay debts incurred due to online betting.

It said that the petition was filed directly before the Supreme Court to safeguard Indian youth and vulnerable citizens from the perils of unregulated online betting and gambling, often disguised as fantasy sports and skill-based gaming.

The petitioner said the plea was filed in “the larger public interest to safeguard the youth of India from the unregulated, exploitative, and dangerous online betting industry operating under the garb of fantasy sports and skill-based gaming”.

“That betting, both online and offline, is inherently a game of chance, not a game of skill, and hence falls within the ambit of gambling, which is prohibited in many states under the Public Gambling Act, 1867,” said the petition, adding that there is no uniform central legislation to regulate online betting.

Further, the petitioner claimed that he is a globally recognised Peace Ambassador, nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize by many countries, including the US, Norway, Sudan and India, for stopping several major wars through his peace efforts and rescuing 310 orphans and street children around the world.

# Rahul Gandhi to visit families affected by Pak shelling in Poonch



**JAMMU:** Senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi will visit the families affected by Pakistan shelling in Jammu and Kashmir’s Poonch district on May 24.

Congress leader and MP Jairam Ramesh said on X, “Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Shri @RahulGandhi will be visiting Poonch tomorrow May 24th to meet the families bereaved during the shelling by Pakistan very recently. Earlier, on April 25, he had visited Srinagar where he met the injured people and other concerned parties in the barbaric terrorist attack in Pahalgam. He also met the Lieutenant Governdar the Chief Minister.”

Poonch, Rajouri, Baramulla, and Kupwara districts of Jammu and Kashmir suffered the worst damage to civilian lives and property due to heavy mortar shelling by Pakistan in retaliation for India’s targeting of terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK).

Operations against terrorists were intensified after April 22, when Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terrorists segregated tourists on the basis of religion and killed 26 civilians, including 25 tourists and a local, in Baisaran meadow of Pahalgam.

# Are you LoP or Nishan-E-Pakistan: BJP to Rahul Gandhi on Operation Sindoor remarks

**NEW DELHI:** The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Friday hit back at Rahul Gandhi over the latter’s repeated questioning about ‘losses’ during the Operation Sindoor, the government’s ‘silence’ on Trump’s repeated assertions that his administration brokered truce between India and Pakistan.

BJP spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia, addressing a press conference at the BJP Headquarters here on Friday, said that the Indian Army is being praised across the country as well as the world for eliminating terrorists and teaching Pakistan a lesson but the Congress leaders, including Rahul Gandhi, finds it hard to believe in the Army’s action and country’s resolve to take on terror.

“Every citizen is happy with the Armed Forces and is stand-



ing with them. But Rahul Gandhi continues to make careless statements. Today, the country is asking Rahul Gandhi about his abusive language against the Prime Minister. Your statements are being supported in Pakistan, also the statements of Congress leaders are being used by Pakistani Parliament to defame India,” he said.

Further, taking a direct jibe at the Congress leader, Bhatia said, “Rahul Gandhi should decide which side he

is on? Are you the leader of the opposition (LoP) of India or the Nishan-e-Pakistan of Pakistan?”

Earlier in the day, Rahul Gandhi took to X and again demanded that the government give answers on who allowed the US President to ‘mediate’ between India and Pakistan.

The BJP leader further said Rahul continues to carelessly raise questions over the number of jets being shot down by the Indian Air Force.

He stated that the DGMO as well as Air Marshal gave detailed account of operation on May 11 briefing, but the Congress MP deliberately ignores the facts and keeps asking about losses that India suffered, ‘for weakening the morale of security forces’.

He said that Mariam Nawaz, a senior leader of Pakistan, has publicly admitted that the neighbouring nation suffered huge losses because of India’s military action.

“Today, a senior leader of Pakistan, Mariam Nawaz, gave a statement that on the night of May 6 and 7, and on May 9, Pakistan had to face huge losses because of India’s military action. Pakistan is admitting that India destroyed their 11 airbases, decimated nine terror centres. But, the Congress party continues to remain in denial,” he said.

# Congress continues to corner Jaishankar over informing Pakistan ahead of strike

KAVITA SHARMA  
New Delhi

The Congress continued to corner the External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar for his open admission that the government of India had informed Pakistan at the start of the ‘Operation Sindoor’ that it was going to strike the terrorist camps there.

Addressing media persons party spokesperson and Chairman of the Media and Publicity Department Pawan Khara said, this clearly proves that this sensitive information that was shared with Pakistan helped the dreaded terrorists like Hafiz Saeed and Masood Azhar escape ahead of the strikes. Earlier, the Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi questioned Jaishankar’s silence remarking, “EAM Jaishankar’s silence isn’t telling-it’s damning”.

“So I’ll ask again: How many Indian aircraft did we lose because Pakistan knew”, he wrote on ‘X’, adding, “this wasn’t a lapse. It was a crime. And the nation deserves the truth”. Lashing out at Jaishankar for this betrayal, Khara remarked, “this is not diplomacy, but espionage and betrayal” to forewarn Pakistan about the strikes on terror camps.

He sought the answers not only from Jaishankar, but also from the Prime Minister Narendra Modi over this betrayal with the country. “Sindoor ka sauda hota raha, aur PM chup rahe” (PM kept quiet while ‘Sindoor’ was being traded off), he remarked, while adding,



“sindoor se sauda manzoor nahi hai, desh ke prati gadari manzoor nahi hai” (we will not tolerate a deal made at the cost of Sindoor, we will not tolerate betrayal to our nation).

Pawan Khara also took a jibe at Prime Minister Modi over his remark made during his tenure as the Gujarat CM that, “Samasya border pe nahi hai, Dilli mein hai” (problem is not at the borders, but in Delhi). He said, that was exactly the situation now that the problem was not at the borders, but in Delhi, to the extent that Pakistan was forewarned about the strikes from Delhi. Khara pointed out, by forewarning Pakistan about the strikes, the BJP government protected Masood and helped him escape just as they had escorted him to Kandahar during the hijack of IC 814 flight in the year 1999.

Stating that the BJP, RSS and their supporters have a long history of espionage, he referred to some instances of the last few years where active BJP supporters had been arrested for spying for Pakistan.

# India’s Capital Markets Pave the Way to Viksit Bharat @2047

TANVIR KAUR  
New Delhi

The 16th Capital Market Conference, organized by ASSOCHAM, brought together industry leaders, policymakers, and financial experts to discuss the evolving role of capital markets as a key catalyst for achieving India’s vision of Viksit Bharat by 2047.

Delivering a comprehensive vision, Tuhin Kanta Pandey, Chairman, SEBI, detailed how capital markets are powering long-term investments, in-



novation, and infrastructure development. With Rs 93 lakh crore raised over the last decade and 13 crore unique retail investors, capital markets are a major engine of financial

inclusion. He also spotlighted the rapid growth of AIFs, REITs/InvITs, and PMS, and the rising global confidence in India’s economy.

Pandey further outlined SEBI’s key initiatives to deepen markets and strengthen investor protection, including reforms in IPO listing timelines, the introduction of Flexicap derivatives, and growth in municipal bonds and the corporate bond market. SEBI’s tech-driven regulatory supervision is helping ensure market integrity while fostering inno-

vation and accessibility.

In his welcome address, Manish Singhal, Secretary General, ASSOCHAM, emphasized that India’s capital markets are central to the country’s transformation into a developed economy. He highlighted the need to expand retail investor participation beyond Tier 1 and Tier 2 cities and integrate capital market education into school and university curricula to unlock India’s demographic dividend. He also called for a more transparent and simplified regulatory framework.

# India will not tolerate Terrorism: Operation Sindoor Echoes at Seol



JAG MOHAN THAKERN

“India has adopted a proactive and pre-emptive counter-terrorism doctrine, demonstrating a clear willingness to conduct cross-border strikes against terrorist infrastructure. Operation Sindoor wasn’t just a military operation. It was a message: India will not tolerate terror. We do not seek conflict. But we will never shy away from defending our people. Time now for all of us to form a Global Alliance Against Terror: India believes terrorism anywhere, is a threat to peace everywhere.”

While speaking in Asia Leadership Conference at global forum in South Korea about success of Operation Sindoor, and against Pakistan-sponsored terrorism, on May 21, AAP MP Raghav Chadha called for united global front against Pakistan-sponsored terrorism and claimed that Operation Sindoor proved India strikes deep, destroys terror safe havens and zero tolerance is India’s new doctrine.

Addressing the Asia Leadership Conference (ALC) in South Korea, AAP MP Raghav Chadha declared that Operation Sindoor was not just a military strike—it was a mes-

sage. “India does not seek conflict, but will never shy away from defending its people,” Raghav Chadha said, calling for a united global front against Pakistan-sponsored terrorism. Hailing the operation as proof that India can strike deep and dismantle terror safe havens, he asserted, “Zero tolerance is India’s new doctrine.”

Stressing upon his stand at the Asian Leadership Conference—Asia’s premier global forum dubbed the “Davos of the East”—MP Raghav Chadha emphasized the need for global solidarity in the fight against terrorism. “India, for the last several weeks, has been mourning the tragic loss of 26 innocent civilians who were brutally killed in a terrorist attack in the state of Jammu and Kashmir, in a place called Pahalgam. But even as we mourn these lives lost, India has emerged as a decisive, resolute nation, demonstrating a paradigm shift in the way we deal with terrorists, terror infrastructure, and rogue nations,” he said, reports a press release shared to media on May 21.

Referring to the recent military operation, Raghav Chadha declared: “What the Indian government and the Indian armed forces demonstrated through the military operation called Operation Sindoor is that we stand for peace. But if anyone attempts to disturb



the peace within our country—causing injury or death to our people—we will not spare the terror infrastructure, wherever it may be. Accordingly, cross-border strikes were carried out, and as a result, terror infrastructure across the border was destroyed.”

Echoing India’s dual legacy of peace and courage, the Rajya Sabha MP said, “We come from the land of Mahatma Gandhi, who taught us non-violence and peace. But we also come from the land of Shaheed-e-Azam Bhagat Singh and Subhash Chandra Bose, who shook the very foundations of the British Empire during colonial rule.”

He continued, “Therefore, I believe this is the right forum to call for the organisation of a global alliance to ensure that the world becomes free from terror and that no safe

havens exist for terrorist infrastructure. That, I believe, is the message that has gone out loud and clear from Operation Sindoor and other military operations.”

Sharing a video from his address at the ALC on his ‘X’, Raghav Chadha stated: “At the global stage, I called upon the world to join hands and build a united global front against Pakistan-sponsored terrorism. Today, at the prestigious Asian Leadership Conference in South Korea, where leaders from more than 47 nations come together, I put forth India’s message loud and clear: We are not the nation that absorbs attacks—we respond with cross border strikes and precision. Operation Sindoor proved that India will strike deep, destroy terror, and dismantle terror safe havens.”

AAP’s Rajya Sabha MP Raghav Chadha has been invited to serve as a distinguished keynote speaker at the prestigious Asian Leadership Conference (ALC) 2025, scheduled to take place on May 21-22, 2025 in Seoul, South Korea. The ALC, co-hosted by Chosun Media and the Centre for Asia Leadership, referred to as the “Davos of the East”, is widely recognized as Asia’s premier platform for global dialogue. The conference brings together more than 320 global leaders

and over 2,500 delegates from politics, business, academia, and civil society to engage in conversations around the most pressing challenges and opportunities facing Asia today.

As a speaker and attendee, Raghav Chadha joins an illustrious lineup of global figures who have graced this event in the past. This list includes names such as former U.S. Presidents Barack Obama and George W. Bush, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, former U.K. Prime Ministers Boris Johnson and David Cameron, Netflix CEO Reed Hastings, and Blackstone CEO Steve Schwarzman, among others who have graced past editions of the conference.

This year, Raghav Chadha will be sharing the same global stage as the former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Rishi Sunak; President & CEO of The Asia Foundation, Laurel E. Miller; former Prime Minister of Australia, Tony Abbott; Executive Vice President of Milken Institute International, Laura Lacey; former Secretary of State for the U.S., Mike Pompeo; Director of Economic Strategy and Operations Unit at RAND, Daniel Egel; Founding Member of Harvard Centre for Public Leadership, Dean Williams; and Executive Director

of The Canada International Scientific Exchange Program, Shawna Novak, among others.

The theme for ALC 2025, “The Rise of Nations: Pathways to Great Prosperity,” marks a historic moment as Korea commemorates the 80th anniversary of its liberation and the 75th anniversary of the Korean War. The event will explore strategies to build resilience in the face of the poly-crises era, including health, climate, and geopolitical conflict. Raghav Chadha has been invited to speak on: The New Political Vanguard: Young Leaders Reshaping Governance in Asia and Crisis-Proofing Nations: Health, Climate, and Conflict in a Poly-crisis Era.

Notably, Raghav Chadha was recently selected as a Young Global Leader (YGL) by the World Economic Forum—a distinction awarded to the world’s most promising leaders under the age of 40, recognized for their contributions to shaping a better future. His inclusion in the WEF YGL community reinforces his growing stature as a global voice for democratic governance, youth leadership, and cross-border cooperation.

# Army Jawan killed, 2 injured in ongoing Kishtwar encounter



**NEW DELHI:** Army jawan was killed and 2 others injured during a gunfight with terrorists in the Kishtwar district of Jammu and Kashmir on Thursday. The operation is still on.

The encounter broke out in the Singhpora locality near Chatroo after security forces launched a cordon-and-search operation based on intelligence inputs about the presence of around five terrorists in the area.

The martyred soldier has been identified as Sepoy Gaykar Sandeep Pandurang, a native of Maharashtra. He was critically injured during the exchange of fire and later succumbed to his injuries. The two other injured personnel have been evacuated to the military hospital in Udhampur for treatment.

The Army’s White Knight Corps said in a statement: “One of our bravehearts sustained grievous injuries in the exchange of fire and has succumbed despite best medical efforts.”

# Beating Retreat ceremony begins at Indo-Pak Attari border



JAGMOHAN SINGH  
Amritsar

Nearly after the gap of twelve days, the Beating Retreat Ceremony resumed at the Joint Check Post (JCP) of the Punjab Frontier, Attari in Amritsar on Tuesday.

Today the ceremony was held exclusively for media personnel; whereas the general public was not allowed to watch the ceremony. The decision to scale down the ceremony was taken last month after the Phelgam terror attack on April 22 calming the lives of 25 Indian nationals besides one foreign national.

During the flag lowering ceremony in the evening there was no handshakes exercise between BSF and Pakistani Rangers, even international gates on both sides remained shut.





International trade tensions, especially tariff disputes, will also add uncertainty. The latest data strengthens the case for another rate cut in June. But the RBI will also consider GDP figures due later this month. One area where action is overdue is fuel pricing. Crude oil inflation is now at a 22-month low, yet domestic fuel prices remain unchanged. If oil marketing companies refuse to cut prices, the government must admit that its so-called dynamic pricing policy is fiction. Inflation is easing, but trust in economic policy must not be undermined by selective implementation. Transparency, consistency and caution are essential in the months ahead.

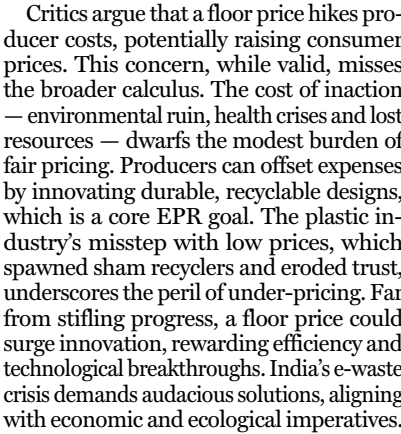
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## Formalising e-waste sector



to prolonged exposure to toxic substances. Additionally, India forfeits over Rs 80,000 crore annually in lost critical metal value due to rudimentary extraction methods in informal recycling. In addition, at least \$20 billion in annual tax revenue is lost as informal recycling is largely cash-based and unaccounted for.

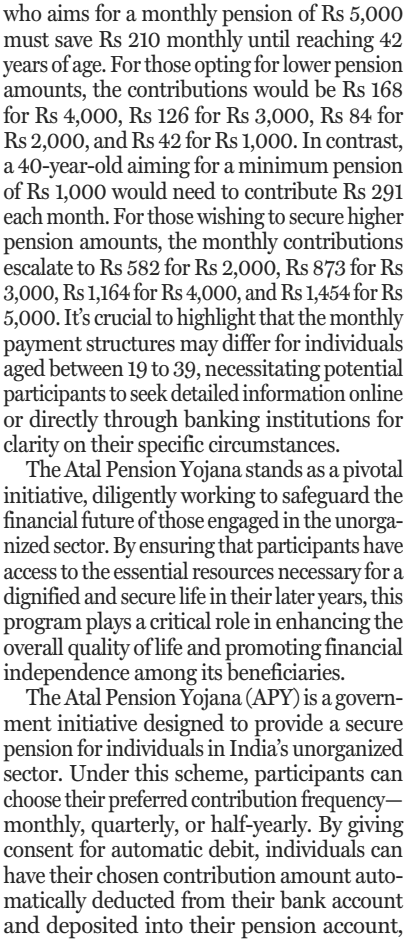
## Importance of stable pricing

The E-waste (Management) Rules, 2022 introduced a floor price for EPR certificates, a game-changer for India's e-waste management. This provision ensures fair returns for registered recyclers, curbing informal, hazardous recycling (practices that dominated 95% of the sector). Without a strong floor price, India may miss the chance to lead in sustainable waste management. Stable pricing incentivises formal recyclers to adopt safe, advanced technologies, unlocking e-waste's valuable materials such as gold and copper. It prevents chaos seen in sectors such as plastic waste and drives investments in infrastructure, turning e-waste into a resource and supporting a circular economy.

This economic pivot carries profound environmental benefits. Fair compensation motivates recyclers to prioritise material recovery over disposal, shrinking landfill burdens and halting the seepage of toxins such as lead and mercury into



## *A Decade of Economic Empowerment and Social Transformation*



who aims for a monthly pension of Rs 5,000 must save Rs 210 monthly until reaching 42 years of age. For those opting for lower pension amounts, the contributions would be Rs 168 for Rs 4,000, Rs 126 for Rs 3,000, Rs 84 for Rs 2,000, and Rs 42 for Rs 1,000. In contrast, a 40-year-old aiming for a minimum pension of Rs 1,000 would need to contribute Rs 291 each month. For those wishing to secure higher pension amounts, the monthly contributions escalate to Rs 582 for Rs 2,000, Rs 873 for Rs 3,000, Rs 1,164 for Rs 4,000, and Rs 1,454 for Rs 5,000. It's crucial to highlight that the monthly payment structures may differ for individuals aged between 19 to 39, necessitating potential participants to seek detailed information online or directly through banking institutions for clarity on their specific circumstances.

The Atal Pension Yojana stands as a pivotal initiative, diligently working to safeguard the financial future of those engaged in the unorganized sector. By ensuring that participants have access to the essential resources necessary for a dignified and secure life in their later years, this program plays a critical role in enhancing the overall quality of life and promoting financial independence among its beneficiaries.

The Atal Pension Yojana (APY) is a government initiative designed to provide a secure pension for individuals in India's unorganized sector. Under this scheme, participants can choose their preferred contribution frequency—monthly, quarterly, or half-yearly. By giving consent for automatic debit, individuals can have their chosen contribution amount automatically deducted from their bank account and deposited into their pension account.

## BOOKS: REVIEW

In the quiet of a kitchen,  
a memoir finds its voice

In *Learning to Make Tea for One*, Andaleeb Wajid sets down her pen not to entertain or instruct, but to remember. What begins as a simple domestic gesture—preparing three cups of tea—becomes a haunting emblem of absence. The author, whose prolific career spans over 50 novels, has written what may be her most restrained and most resonant work: a memoir of bereavement in the age of COVID-19.

Launched on 10 May at Bengaluru's Champaca Bookstore, the book marks a departure from Wajid's usual fare of romance and family fiction. It is not a departure in voice—her prose remains instinctive and unpretentious—but in purpose. Here, fiction is set aside for fact, though the memories are no less shaped by narrative force. In con-

versation with journalist Shrabonthe Bagchi at the launch, Wajid explained the impulse behind her writing: "I wanted to hold onto the pain." This admission lays bare the paradox of grief. It wounds, yet we clutch at it; it recedes, and we panic at the thought of forgetting. For Wajid, grief is not a chapter to close but a presence to tend. She lost both her husband, Mansoor, and her mother-in-law to COVID-19. The experience left her unmoved, and the act of writing became both a form of mourning and a refusal to let go.

That act was not cathartic in the usual sense. Wajid says she dreaded returning to the manuscript. It grew in fits and starts, often interrupted by work on other stories—an admission that speaks not of distraction, but of survival. Grief, she suggests,

must sometimes be rationed. It is not a burden one can shoulder all at once.

The title itself is disarmingly domestic. Making tea for one is not a metaphor in this book; it is an action that carries the full weight of loss. The ritual – once shared – becomes a solitary reminder of those who are no longer present. Wajid recounts measuring for three cups even after the others were gone, until she stopped herself. It is in this moment of pause, of realisation, that the book finds its shape. What makes this memoir stand apart from the flood of pandemic narratives is its quiet refusal to generalise. There is no appeal to the collective. No sweeping declarations about what the virus taught us. This is a personal story, and it does not pretend to be anything else. Yet in its specificity lies its power.

**Learning to Make  
Tea for One  
By Andaleeb  
Wajid;  
Speaking Tiger;  
232 pages; Rs499**

Wajid's grief is particular, but it invites recognition in others.

In India, conversations about grief are often hurried along or avoided altogether. Wajid hopes the book will give readers the permission to acknowledge what they feel. That is a modest aim, and all the more persuasive for it. She does not promise healing, or even understanding—only honesty.

There is, in the background, an indictment of silence. Wajid kept her writing private for a long time, unsure how her family would respond. She feared breaking down, she says, or worse, giving up. But writing gave her

something else: control. In her words, “a space to clear my thoughts about my life’s experiences.” It is a telling phrase. The thoughts were there; it was space that was scarce.

The launch of *Learning to Make Tea for One* is not likely to dominate bestseller lists or spark bidding wars for translation rights. Nor should it. Its value lies elsewhere. It is a book that resists spectacle. At a time when grief is often flattened into hashtags or performative mourning, Wajid offers something rarer: a carefully observed account of loss that neither pleads nor preaches.

Published by Speaking Tiger and priced at Rs 499, the book is available both online and in shops. Readers may come to it expecting sorrow, and they will find it. But they will also find grace, and above all, resolve. Wajid does not pretend that writing heals. It steadies. That, in the end, may be enough.

In learning to make tea for one, she has learned something harder still: how to sit with absence, and carry on.



# Operation Sindoor Boosts Indian Drone Industry with ₹4,000 Cr Orders Expected

**NEW DELHI:** The successful execution of Operation Sindoor has opened new avenues for India's domestic drone industry.

With increasing reliance on drones by the Indian Armed Forces and Defence Ministry, indigenous drone manufacturers are likely to receive orders worth up to Rs 4,000 crore in the near future. Operation Sindoor demonstrated the strategic importance and effectiveness of drones, prompting the military and defence departments to actively engage with local companies for procurement.

Over 70 companies are set to participate in demonstrations scheduled for May 26, showcasing various drone technologies to defence officials. Currently, India's drone sector is valued at USD 2.7 billion, and projections suggest it will reach USD 13 billion by 2030. Encouraged by government initiatives and growing demand, domestic drone production is expanding rapidly. Industry experts believe the sector will witness strong growth in the coming years.

Speaking about the development, Deepak Bhardwaj, Director at a leading drone manufacturer, noted, "Post Operation Sindoor, the defence sector has shown keen interest in local drone technologies. Our company has also ramped up production capacity to meet this demand."



These efforts have successfully fostered entrepreneurship and created numerous employment opportunities. To effectively capture SME market sentiment, the report introduces two indices: the SME Business Activity Index (SME-BAI) and SME Business Outlook Index (SME-BOI). The SME-BAI measures current

expansion in manufacturing activities compared to the previous quarter.

This growth is primarily driven by a strong New Orders Index of 71.7, reflecting high demand and a healthy work pipeline, along with an Output/Production Index of 66.7, indicating business activities are gaining substantial momentum. Employment indicators remain positive with an index reading of 55.0, aligning with rising economic activity. The Inventories Index stands at 60.0, suggesting firms are actively restocking to meet anticipated future demand. Looking ahead, the SME-BOI stands at 60.3, signaling strong confidence in the economy for the upcoming quarter.

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# India Gears Up for \$20 Billion Satellite Telecom Boom: Jyotiraditya Scindia

**NEW DELHI:** India is set to witness the fastest global rollout of satellite communication (satcom), Union Minister of Communications and Development of North Eastern Region Jyotiraditya Scindia said on Tuesday.

Speaking at a seminar hosted by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), the minister projected a tenfold expansion of India's satcom market—from USD 2.3 billion currently to USD 20 billion by 2028.

Scindia emphasized that satellite telecom would complement existing communication services and enhance digital connectivity across the nation. His remarks coincided with Elon Musk's Starlink launch-campaign, proposing a 4 per cent annual spectrum usage charge



clearance from India's Department of Telecommunications (DoT), it still awaits final approval from IN-SPACe.

Other players like Eutelsat OneWeb and Jio Satellite Communications have already secured GMPCS licences, giving them a head start in the competitive satcom space.

Scindia also highlighted TRAI's recent recommendations on space spectrum allocation, proposing a 4 per cent annual spectrum usage charge

based on adjusted gross revenue, with a five-year licensing term, extendable by two years.

Meanwhile, he urged telecom companies to prioritize quality of service (QoS), not just market size. "We must go beyond international benchmarks in QoS," he said.

India's 5G rollout has been the fastest globally, covering 99 per cent of districts and 82 per cent of the population in just 22 months, Scindia added.

The minister praised the Sanchar Sathi app for enhancing telecom safety, noting it had helped block 3.4 crore fake mobile connections and recover 17 lakh stolen phones.

A recent KPMG report noted India ranks fourth globally in telecom investments, with USD 2 billion pumped into 110 firms last year.

## Corporate Investments Surge to Rs 28.50 Lakh Crore in FY25



**NEW DELHI:** There has been a steady increase in corporate investments during 2024-25, with core infrastructure industries playing a lead role in the growth, according to a report compiled by the Bank of Baroda's economic research department.

The report, based on data from 1,393 companies across 122 industries, estimates that gross fixed assets, including capital work in progress, increased by 7.6 per cent to Rs 28.50 lakh crore in FY 25 compared with Rs 26.49 lakh crore for FY24.

Refineries accounted for the largest share of fixed assets at 31 per cent, followed by telecom services with 8.6 per cent, iron and steel products (5.9 per cent), cement (5.4 per cent), and power (4.8 per cent).

These five sectors constituted 56 per cent of the total fixed assets, the key contribution of core infrastructure industries to capital formation.

"Most of the leading sectors in terms of being those that drive investment in the country are in the infrastructure space and have registered impressive growth rates," the report states.

The next five industries by share of fixed assets — public sector banks, private sector banks, chemicals, industrial gases, and non-ferrous metals — collectively accounted for another 14.5 per cent.

Passenger cars, FMCG, pharmaceuticals, IT software, and sponge iron made up another 10.4 per cent of fixed assets.

These five industries represented close to 81 per cent of corporate fixed assets in FY25, indicating their key role in driving capital expenditure.

"The picture is diverse for consumer-oriented industries, which should show more traction in the coming year (FY26) when consumption shows a revival. Demand in some of these sectors has been mixed, especially in urban areas, and the measures announced by the government, as well as declining inflation, should help to reverse the same," the report said.

## NSE IPO Issues to Be Resolved Soon and We Will Move Forward: SEBI Chief

**NEW DELHI:** The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) Chairman, Tuhin Kant Pandey, on Thursday said that the pending issues surrounding the National Stock Exchange (NSE) initial public offering (IPO) will be resolved soon, and the regulator will move forward with the process.

Speaking to the media on the sidelines of Assocham's event here, Pandey said, "We will soon go ahead with it. NSE and SEBI are in discussions. They are resolving the issues. I am very hopeful that it will be done soon and we will move forward."

When asked about a specific timeline, the SEBI chief said he couldn't commit to a date but added, "All the outstanding issues will be resolved, and we will move forward. Can't give you the timeline, but I think we should soon be doing it."

He also mentioned that SEBI and NSE are working closely to address regulatory concerns and ensure a smooth IPO process.



# PHDCCI report shows Strong Q4 Growth, Positive Outlook for Indian SMEs in Q1 FY2026

**NEW DELHI:** A new report released by the PHD Research Bureau of PHDCCI reveals positive momentum in business activity for Indian SMEs in Q4 FY2025 compared to the previous quarter, with a robust growth outlook projected for Q1 FY2026.

The findings are based on a comprehensive survey of 3,000 SME manufacturing firms across India. According to PHDCCI President Hemant Jain, government initiatives including credit support, technological assistance, infrastructure development, and skill training have transformed small and medium-sized enterprises into a vibrant and dynamic sector of the Indian economy.



These efforts have successfully fostered entrepreneurship and created numerous employment opportunities. To effectively capture SME market sentiment, the report introduces two indices: the SME Business Activity Index (SME-BAI) and SME Business Outlook Index (SME-BOI). The SME-BAI measures current

expansion in manufacturing activities compared to the previous quarter.

This growth is primarily driven by a strong New Orders Index of 71.7, reflecting high demand and a healthy work pipeline, along with an Output/Production Index of 66.7, indicating business activities are gaining substantial momentum. Employment indicators remain positive with an index reading of 55.0, aligning with rising economic activity. The Inventories Index stands at 60.0, suggesting firms are actively restocking to meet anticipated future demand. Looking ahead, the SME-BOI stands at 60.3, signaling strong confidence in the economy for the upcoming quarter.

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## Adani Electricity empowers its 'Power Warriors' with advanced Mobile Thermal Imaging Tools

**MUMBAI:** As Mumbai's energy demand grows rapidly, Adani Electricity has taken a major step toward enhancing power reliability by equipping its frontline teams — "Power Warriors" — with advanced mobile infrared (IR) imaging tools.

These compact, smartphone-enabled devices are transforming how power infrastructure is monitored and maintained across the city. Mumbai's fast-paced redevelopment and climate shifts place growing pressure on power assets like transformers, switchgear, and distribution panels. To stay ahead of potential faults, Adani Electricity has rolled out mobile thermal imaging devices that allow on-the-spot detection of equipment stress or overheating—often before any outward sign of failure appears.

"Our field teams can now identify and address developing issues during their first site visit — preventing power interruptions before they happen," said the company. With this innovation, the teams can detect and act on faults instantly and there is no need for return visits or delays. Potential failures are caught early, ensuring power remains stable even during peak loads. Consumers experience fewer unplanned outages and



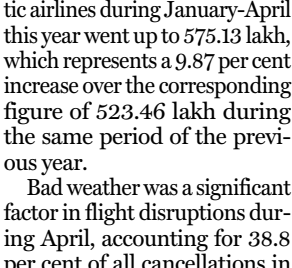
faster resolution of service issues. Field decisions are data-driven, visual, and shared in real-time across teams. An Adani Electricity spokesperson said, "This shift marks a transition from reactive maintenance to a predictive model. The new IR tools are being fully integrated into Adani Electricity's digital operations platform". "Soon, every thermal image captured in the field will trigger intelligent workflows, using AI and machine learning to flag issues, allocate resources, and track trends across the grid. This creates a virtuous loop — smarter diagnostics, faster interventions, and stronger system resilience," the spokesperson added. Adani Electricity's vision is to deliver a power supply that's not just reliable but anticipates challenges before they reach your doorstep. By giving field teams cutting-edge tools to act faster and smarter, we're reinforcing our promise to every Mumbaikar — a city that stays bustling, no matter what, the company said.

# India's Airlines record 8.5 % rise in Domestic Flyers during April

**NEW DELHI:** The number of passengers flown by India's domestic airlines during April this year crossed the 1.43 crore mark, which represents an 8.45 per cent increase compared to the same month of the previous year, despite bad weather impacting operations during the month, figures released by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation on Wednesday showed.

Passengers carried by domestic airlines during January-April this year went up to 575.13 lakh, which represents a 9.87 per cent increase over the corresponding figure of 523.46 lakh during the same period of the previous year.

Bad weather was a significant factor in flight disruptions during April, accounting for 38.8 per cent of all cancellations in air tickets by passengers. This directly impacted 20,840 passengers, as a result of which airlines had to shell out Rs 41.69



lakh in compensation and facilities, marking a 117 per cent increase month-on-month.

Beyond cancellations, delays also affected a large number of travellers, with 96,350 people experiencing delays in April, a 68 per cent jump compared to March. As many as 70 per cent of these passengers were hit by "reactionary" delays, primarily due to the late arrival of planes from earlier journeys.



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# Joint Ventures: Experience of Indian Pharmaceutical Companies

**DR. ANIL KUMAR ANGRISH**

Companies keep on reviewing ways to increase Shareholder Value by changing the composition of Equity, Liabilities, Assets, and Operations. Through Strategic Alliances, companies form relationships to combine resources, capabilities, and core competencies for certain business purposes. All major Indian pharma companies have their experiences in formation, running and termination of joint ventures (JVs). It is interesting to understand motivations behind these JVs as considerations such as cost reduction, technology sharing, product development, market access or access to capital play important role. JVs add value to collaborating entities without affecting their independent existence. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) policy has dictated the formation of joint ventures in India, along with other business considerations. In the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century, there were significant ongoing changes in India's pharmaceutical industry which changed the direction of JVs.

Recent data shows that significant number of top Indian pharmaceutical companies seem less inclined to form joint ventures. By March-end of 2024, at least top 12 pharmaceutical companies figuring among top 25 (excluding pharma companies of foreign origin such as AstraZeneca, Merck, Pfizer, and GSK) in terms of market capitalization had no joint venture, and the list included names such as Ajanta Pharma, Alkem Labs, Emcure Pharma, Gland Pharma, Glenmark

Pharma, J. B. Chemicals and Pharma (majority owned by Tau Investments, an affiliate of KKR, a Private Equity firm), Suven Pharma, Piramal Pharma, Eris Lifesciences, Divi's Labs, Torrent Pharma and Wockhardt Limited.

Subsidiaries have been preferred by these pharma companies as evident from the fact that Eris Lifesciences had four wholly owned subsidiaries, two subsidiaries, and one step-down subsidiary. Divi's had two subsidiaries (one based in the US, and another in Europe). Wockhardt Limited had 28 subsidiaries, Ajanta Pharma had 4 subsidiaries, and Suven Pharma had two subsidiaries. Torrent Pharma had 17 subsidiaries, out of which 3 were step-down subsidiaries, and had no joint venture as on March 31, 2024. One wholly owned subsidiary – Farmaceutica Torrent Colombia SAS was also incorporated recently on January 3, 2024. But none of these pharma companies had any joint venture.

Among top pharma companies, Sun Pharma had one Joint Venture – Artes Biotechnology GmbH (Germany) with 45.0 per cent equity holding. Cipla's subsidiary Cipla (EU) Limited has one joint venture – MKC Biotherapeutics Inc., USA which is also a recent one, as this JV was formed on February 27, 2024, with equity proportion of 45.4 : 35.2 : 19.4 among MNI Ventures Mauritius, Cipla (EU) Limited and Kemwell Biopharma UK Limited (Aspergen Inc.) to develop and commercialize novel cell therapy products for major unmet medical needs in the USA, Japan and EU regions.

Lupin Limited had just one JV through one of its

Table 1: Joint Ventures of Aurobindo Pharma		As on March 31, 2024
Joint Venture	Percentage of Shares held by Aurobindo Pharma in JV	
Novagen Pharma (Pty) Ltd.	50	
Purple Bellflower (Pty) Ltd.	48	
Luoxin Aurovitans Pharm (Chengdu) Co. Ltd., China	30	
Novagen BBBEE Invest Co (Pty) Ltd.	24.5	
Raidurgam Developers Limited	40	
Tergene Biotech Limited (formerly known as Tergene Biotech Pvt. Ltd.)	80	

Source: Compiled from <https://niray.gov.in/>

subsidiaries as on March 31, 2024. This JV, 'YL Biologics, Japan' is of Lupin Atlantis Holdings SA, Switzerland with Yoshindo Inc., Japan. Lupin Atlantis held 45.0 per cent stake whereas Yoshindo held 55.0 per cent share of interest in the JV. In March 2025, Laurus Labs entered a JV with KRKA d.d., Novo mesto, Slovenia, the renowned European pharma giant to form Krka Pharma Pvt. Ltd which is based in Hyderabad, India. KRKA holds 51.0 per cent stake and Laurus Labs holds 49.0 per cent stake in this JV. The investment made by both companies is to support the establishment of a cGMP finished dosage form (FDF) facility in Hyderabad.

Zydus Lifesciences had reported four Joint Ventures by the end of FY24, namely Zydus Takeda Healthcare Private Limited (for API with 50.0 per cent stake), Zydus Hospira Oncology Private Limited (for Human Pharma formulations with 50.0 per cent stake), Bayer Zydus Pharma Private Limited (for Human Pharma formulations with 24.99 per cent stake), and Oncosol Limited (for Human Pharma formulations with 50.0 per cent stake). Dr. Reddy's Labs had two joint ventures namely Kunshan Rotam Reddy Pharma Company Limited, China in which DRL

held 51.33 per cent stake, and DRES Energy Private Limited, India in which DRL held 26.0 per cent stake.

Ipsca Laboratories had two Joint Ventures – Avik Pharmaceutical Limited (India) with 50.0 per cent holding, and Lyka Labs Limited (India) with 36.34 per cent holding (up from 31.36 per cent in FY23). Ipsca had acquired 49.02 per cent shares in Avik Pharma in 2013-14 which is manufacturing APIs, primarily Cortico Steroids and Hormone since 1980, and is considered a pioneer in the manufacturing of steroids in India with two manufacturing units in Vapi (Gujarat). Further, the stake of Ipsca went up in 2018-19 due to Rights Issue, and subsequently, Ipsca's stake increased to 50.0 per cent in 2021-22. Lyka Labs Limited was incorporated in 1976 in which Ipsca Labs acquired 26.58 per cent stake in 2021-22, and another 4.78 per cent stake in 2022-23. Lyka Labs is engaged in the business of manufacturing and marketing of injectables, lyophilized injectables and topical formulations with manufacturing facility in Ankleshwar (Gujarat).

Aurobindo Pharma had the highest number of joint ventures totalling 6 in number by March-end of 2024.



Aurobindo Pharma acquired remaining 52.0 per cent shares from the Joint Venture Partners of Purple Bellflower Pty Limited, South Africa, on April 30, 2024, and it became a wholly owned step-down subsidiary of the company. In this JV, Aurobindo Pharma became 100% owner by making it a step-down subsidiary. In contrast to this, in a recent example of October 2024, Aurogen South Africa (Aurogen), a wholly-owned step-down subsidiary of Aurobindo Pharma sold and disposed of its entire remaining holding to Rene Glyne Family Trust in Novagen BBBEE Invest Co (Proprietary) Limited, a JV. In JV, Aurogen owned 24.5 per cent share, Clinigen SA Pty Ltd owned 24.5 per cent share, and Rene Glyne Family Trust owned 51.0 per cent stake.

One notable characteristic of these JVs remained the focus of pharmaceutical companies which primarily pertained to Drugs & Pharmaceuticals except for Mankind Pharma. Mankind Pharma had three joint ventures namely Superba Buildwell (Partnership firm), Superba Developers (partnership firm), and Superba Buildwell (South) (partnership firm) in which it had

ownership interest to the extent of 60.0 per cent, 70.0 per cent, and 70.0 per cent respectively as on March 31, 2024. Principal activities of these JVs involved Leasing Business.

Top Indian pharmaceutical companies had mixed experience regarding JVs in the first quarter of 21st century. Many joint ventures of Indian pharma companies have shown success but there are failures too. Failures have not stopped co-venturers to come together.

In January 2002, Torrent Pharma sold its 50 per cent stake in an equal JV with the then Sanofi-Synthelabo. The transaction was attributed to 'ongoing changes' in pharmaceutical industry in India. Another reason for exit from JV was the feeling by co-venturers that the JV was 'not fit for their future strategies'.

Zydus Lifesciences Limited and Bayer Pharma came together to form a joint venture – Bayer Zydus Pharma Private Limited (BZPPL) on January 28, 2011 in which each party held 50 per cent stake. JV was formed for the sales and marketing of pharma products in India as Zydus had strong Indian marketing, sales expertise, wide distribution reach and rich industry

network, and Bayer had global expertise in commercializing novel products. This JV made progress in various therapies including cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, women's health, oncology, and ophthalmology. In April 2018, Bayer increased its ownership interest to 75 per cent. On May 2, 2024, Bayer secured full ownership of the entity as per pre-agreed JV terms.

Parties to a JV may not be on same page while exploring a collaborative opportunity as it was evident when Dr. Reddy's Labs (DRL) and Fujifilm Corporation signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on July 28, 2011 with stated objective of an exclusive partnership in the generic drugs business for the Japanese market. For this purpose, both parties agreed to establish a JV in Japan. In pursuance of this MoU, both parties conducted detailed studies for setting up of a JV for developing and manufacturing generic drugs in Japan. In the meantime, priorities changed as Fujifilm realigned its long-term growth strategy for their pharma business. This led to a mutual agreement to terminate the MoU in June 2013. Both parties kept the option to explore alliance opportunities in areas such as active pharmaceutical ingredient (API) development and manufacturing, and development and marketing of super-generics open.

Sun Pharma and Merck Sharp & Dohme (MSD) formed a JV in 2011 to develop, manufacture, and commercialize new combinations and formulations of innovative and branded generics for emerging markets. In February 2016, both parties decided to dissolve the JV. Dissolution

was attributed to the changes in the strategic priorities of both the parent companies. Sun Pharma and MSD continued their collaborative arrangement of co-marketing for sitagliptin and the licensing deal on MSD's experimental skin disease drug tildrakizumab.

Jubilant Biosys, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Jubilant Life Sciences had formed a JV namely 'Vanthys Pharmaceuticals' with Eli Lilly in late 2008 with each party holding 50 per cent stake. JV Partners came together to develop molecules from the 'pre-clinical to phase II stage' across various segments such as oncology, cardiovascular and diabetes. In January 2012, JV partners agreed to call off their drug-discovery partnership.

Netherlands-based Cipla Holding BV, a wholly owned subsidiary of Cipla announced a JV agreement in December 2016 with Ahran Tejarat Company of Iran in which Cipla's subsidiary was to hold 75 per cent stake. Regulatory approvals could not be obtained by March 29, 2017, and due to lapse of this condition, the JV agreement was terminated with mutual consent of the parties.

To conclude, it can be said that the real trick in constructing a successful JV is to increase the payoffs to co-operative behaviour. When companies do not find it happening then their choice is to part ways.

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**DISCLAIMER:** Views are personal and do not represent the views of the Institute.



# India’s GDP Growth Projected At 7.2 Pc for Q4 of FY 25: Report

**NEW DELHI:** The Indian economy is projected to expand by 7.2 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2024-25, due to an improvement in the agriculture sector and a sharp increase in net indirect tax, according to Barclays.

“We think the agriculture sector growth is likely to show improvement year-on-year, as suggested by advance estimates of crop production, which show record high wheat production. Accordingly, we estimate agriculture GVA growth at 5.8 per cent in Q4, accelerating from 5.6 per cent in Q3,” Barclays’s India Chief Economist, Aastha Gudwani, said.

Meanwhile, Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan announced on Monday that India’s foodgrain production has increased by over 106 lakh tonnes to 1,663.91 lakh tonnes in 2024-25, which represents a 6.83 per cent increase over the corresponding figure



of the previous year. “The production of the rabi crop was 1,600.06 lakh tonnes in 2023-24, now it has increased to 1,645.27 lakh tonnes,” the minister said. Barclays expects GDP growth in the fourth quarter of the fiscal at 7.2 per cent due to a sharp rise in net indirect tax and real GDP growth at 6.4 per cent for the full financial year.

High indirect tax collections reflect strong economic activity in the manufacturing and services sectors. Moody’s Ratings had, earlier this month, pegged

India’s GDP growth at 6.3 per cent for 2025 and expects the economy to pick up momentum in 2026 to record a 6.5 per cent growth rate. Moody’s forecast is in line with the IMF outlook, which sees India as the only major economy in the world to record an over 6 per cent growth rate in 2025. The estimates are lower than the second official estimate by the National Statistical Office of 6.5 per cent for FY25, with an implicit forecast of 7.6 per cent for the fourth quarter of

the financial year. Economists estimate the economy to have grown anywhere between 6.4 per cent and 7.2 per cent in the January to March 2025 quarter and expect GDP to have expanded by 6.3 per cent to 6.4 per cent in FY25.

ICRA has projected the year-on-year expansion of the GDP to rise to 6.9 per cent in the fourth quarter of FY2025 and full year GDP growth at 6.3 per cent. “Both private consumption and trends for investment activity were uneven in Q4 FY2025, with the latter partly owing to tariff-related uncertainty. Services sector exports continued to show double-digit growth, while merchandise exports contracted in YoY terms in the fourth quarter of FY2025 after expanding in the third quarter of the fiscal,” its Chief Economist, Head-Research & Outreach, Aditi Nayar, said. The government will come out with data for Q4 and the full FY25 on May 30.

# RBI spent USD 398 Bn to defend Rupee in FY25



**NEW DELHI:** The Reserve Bank of India reported record foreign currency sales of USD 398.71 billion on a gross basis during the 2024-25 financial year, as the central bank intensified efforts to defend the rupee against global market volatility.

The sales figure, released in central bank data on Wednesday, represents a significant increase from USD 153.03 billion in 2023-24 and surpasses the previous record of USD 212.57 billion set in 2022-23. Despite substantial pur-

chases of foreign currency during the same period, the RBI recorded net sales of USD 34.51 billion for the twelve months ending March 2025.

This marks only the seventh instance in three decades of available data where the central bank sold more foreign currency than it purchased.

The net sales figure ranks as the second-highest on record, trailing only the USD 34.92 billion sold during the 2008-09 global financial crisis.

The rupee experienced significant pressure during

the latter half of 2024-25 following increased speculation about Donald Trump’s return to the U.S. presidency.

Market interventions by the RBI reached their peak in December 2024, when the central bank sold USD 69.05 billion in foreign currency, representing the highest monthly total in its history.

The second half of the financial year proved particularly challenging, with the RBI selling USD 291.03 billion during this period, accounting for 73 percent of total annual gross sales.

Market concerns over anticipated protectionist trade policies under the Trump administration contributed to the rupee reaching an all-time low of 87.95 per dollar in early February 2025.

The currency defence operations came at considerable cost to India’s foreign exchange reserves, which declined by approximately USD 80 billion between late September 2024 and mid-January 2025, falling below USD 625 billion.

# India Increasingly Positioned to Function as a ‘Connector Country’: RBI



**NEW DELHI:** In the midst of global trade realignments and industrial policy shifts, India is increasingly positioned to function as a ‘connector country’ that can become a key intermediary in sectors such as technology, digital services, and pharmaceuticals, according to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

Indian economy continues to be ring-fenced by stability encompassing monetary, financial and political stability; policy consistency and certainty; congenial business environment; and strong macroeconomic fundamentals along with a policy ecosystem that is transparent, rule-based, and forward-looking, said the ‘State of the Economy’ report by the central bank. According to IMF projections of April 2025, India is projected to remain the fastest-growing major economy this year and is likely to surpass Japan this year to become the world’s fourth-largest economy.

Inflation pressure has eased significantly and is poised for a durable alignment with the target in 2025-26. Consumers and businesses remain confident, supportive for a strengthening of economic activity. Moreover, the measures undertaken by the Reserve Bank since January 2025 have significantly eased liquidity conditions and calmed financial markets. System liquidity has remained in surplus since end-March 2025. Amidst uncertainties on global capital flows, it is noteworthy that domestic institutional investors (DIIs) have surpassed FPIs in ownership of Nifty-500 companies in March 2025. This marks a structural shift in Indian equity markets as DIIs, including mutual funds and insurance companies, increasingly offset the volatility caused by FPIs, with retail and systematic investment plan (SIP) flows providing a steady long-term investment base. Domestic financial markets sentiments have witnessed a turnaround amidst easing India-Pakistan tensions, an improvement in the global trade scenario, and softer domestic inflation, said the Reserve Bank. According to the RBI, in this scenario, the recent completion of a free trade agreement with the UK points to a strengthening of bilateral trade linkages.

# RBI set to Transfer Bumper Rs 2.5-3 Lakh Crore Dividend to Govt, Short-Term Bonds Rally



**NEW DELHI:** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is likely to transfer a bumper dividend to the Central government — in the range of Rs 2.5-3 lakh crore — which has led to a rally in short-term bonds, analysts said on Wednesday. The RBI dividend would represent a sharp jump from last year’s dividend transfer which was at Rs 2.1 lakh crore. “The dividend is also likely to be higher than the FY26 budgeted amount of Rs 2.6 lakh crore (Rs 2.6 trillion) expected from the RBI, nationalised banks and financial institutions collectively. The key determinant likely for such a huge dividend could be the upbeat gains from dollar sales,” said Rajani Sinha, Chief Economist, CareEdge Ratings. The gross dollar sales rose notably to \$371.6 billion up to February in FY25, compared to \$153 billion in the full-year FY24. Higher quantum of dollar sales along with the increased margin between the historical price of dollar purchases vis-a-vis the sales price is anticipated to have driven large gains from dollar sales throughout FY25.

# Federal Bank anchors the Savings Narrative with ‘Savings Ki Vidya’ Campaign

**MUMBAI:** Federal Bank, a leading private sector Bank, launches its latest integrated marketing campaign titled, Savings Ki Vidya, to prime up its deposit books. The new campaign ‘Savings ki Vidya’, featuring acclaimed actress and brand ambassador Vidya Balan in a refreshing new role, carves out a Category space in the Consumer’s mind by setting up a refreshing narrative for savings aka deposit mobilization.

The campaign elevates the Rishta Aap Se Hai, Sirf App Se Nahir storyline, reinforcing that when it comes to smart saving, great service and meaningful relationships create lasting value. It



captures slice-of-life moments, where “it skips our mind,” and someone who loves us nudges us to save smart in each of those moments.

The campaign stars the versatile Vidya Balan, who brings her

signature authenticity, charm and wit to guide her friends toward smart saving choices. The humour in the campaign cuts across demographics and geographies. The unambiguous takeaway is, all good things begin with savings, the inception of which is in a “Rishta” with Federal Bank.

“Savings Ki Vidya, shifts the narrative to long-term relationships with Federal Bank, which is known for its great service. Opening a savings account with us is the beginning of all things you may want to do thereafter. The campaign steps aside from tactical conversations around product features or interest rates

and owns the “act of saving”. This allows for an origami kind of a model, where at different points in time, sprint runs of specific aspects of savings/current account or card features or interest rates for specific segments can be amped up. You simply can’t miss “The Vidya” for a moment in this warm, witty, and winning narrative. The campaign is a tributary to Federal Bank’s core essence, ‘Rishta Aap Se Hai, Sirf App Se Nahir’, and reflects on the strength of the Bank’s team and their ability to deliver service excellence - that’s the calling card to opening accounts with the Bank.

# India’s GDP growth in Q4 FY25 to remain robust around 6.4-6.5 pc: SBI



**NEW DELHI:** Despite weathering effects precipitated by global upheavals, Indian economy stays largely resilient and is projected to clock a GDP growth around 6.4-6.5 per cent in Q4 FY25, an SBI report said on Wednesday.

To estimate GDP statistically, the State Bank of India’s Economic Research Department has built a ‘Nowcasting Model’ with 36 high frequency indicators associated with industry activity, service activity, and global economy. The model uses the dynamic factor model to estimate the common or representative or latent factor of all the high frequency indicators from Q4 of FY13 to Q2 of FY23.

“As per our ‘Nowcasting Model’, the forecasted GDP growth for Q4 FY25 should come around 6.4-6.5 per cent,” said Dr Soumya Kanti Ghosh, Group Chief Economic Advisor, SBI. Assuming there are no major revisions in Q1 to Q3 estimates in the upcoming data release by NSO, “we expect FY25 GDP to stand at 6.3 per cent,” Ghosh mentioned.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has said the southwest monsoon is likely to arrive in Kerala within the next four to five days — well ahead of its normal onset date of June 1. If the monsoon arrives in Kerala as anticipated, it would mark the earliest onset over main-

land India since 2009, when it began on May 23. “India is targeting 354.64 million tonnes of foodgrain production in the 2025-26 crop year starting July on the forecast of better monsoon rains. In the current 2024-25 crop year, the government had set a target of 341.55 million tonnes of foodgrain production (so far: 332.3 million tonnes),” the SBI report mentioned.

Further, taking a cue from household survey, slowdown in current household inflation expectations encourages higher discretionary spending and drives demand-led growth while status quo in consumer confidence suggests that households are uncertain about the global developments and economic prospects — caution somewhat writ large on sustainable growth from a short-term perspective. The swift escalation of trade tensions and extremely high levels of policy uncertainty are expected to have a significant impact on global economic activity. AS per IMF, global growth is projected to drop to 2.8 per cent in 2025 and 3 per cent in 2026.

# Business activity in India surges to 13-month high in May: HSBC Composite PMI

**NEW DELHI:** The HSBC Flash India Composite Output Index — which measures the month-on-month change in the combined output of India’s manufacturing and service sectors — on Thursday reported robust business activity in May in the country, climbing to a 13-month high of 61.2, compared with 59.7 in the previous month.

At 61.2 in May, the HSBC Index showcased a sharp rate of expansion in private sector



activity. “The increase was the most pronounced since April 2024. There was a mild loss of growth momentum in the manufacturing industry but service providers reported the fastest rise in output in 14 months,”

according to a HSBC Flash India PMI note. The HSBC Flash India Manufacturing PMI was little changed from April’s reading of 58.2. At 58.3 in May, the latest figure was consistent with a sharp improvement in the health of the sector.

Private sector growth in India moved up a gear during May, boosted by an acceleration in the service economy. Strong influxes of new business, both from domestic and international markets, induced quicker ex-

pansions in business activity and employment. There was also an improvement in business confidence for the first time since January, said the HSBC.

“India’s flash PMI indicate another month of strong economic performance. Growth in production and new orders among manufacturing firms remains robust, despite a marginal cooling from the rates of increase observed in April,” said Pranjul Bhandari, Chief India Economist at HSBC.

# Apple’s Exit and Its Economic Implications for India



**DR P S VOHRA**

These days, Indian society is increasingly perceiving a significant rise in the interference of American President Trump. Initially, on the evening of May 10, he announced a ceasefire between India and Pakistan on social media platforms. Two days later, he issued a peculiar statement that could potentially impede the growth of the Indian economy: advising that Apple Inc. should not substantially expand its production in India. Following this pronouncement, considerable confusion has emerged within the Indian industrial sector and society, as there was a mutual consensus between Apple and the Indian economy that by the end of the June quarter of the current fiscal year, approximately over 10% of Apple’s global sales would be produced in India. Trump’s recent statement now casts doubt on this agreement. The question arises: why did Trump make such a statement? Does he not consider India a friend? Numerous such questions are being raised. Amidst all this, it is crucial to view the mutual agreement on tariff rates between the United States and China on May 12 as a significant diplomatic development. This suggests that Trump may have covertly assured China that Apple would not relocate

more than 50% of its production from China to India to facilitate mutual improvements in tariff policies. It is noteworthy that during his second term, President Trump consistently astonished the world with his tariff policies. Adhering to the ‘America First’ policy, he initially targeted China, imposing a 145% tax on imports from China. In retaliation, China levied a 110% tax on American imports. However, on May 12, Trump appeared to reverse his stance, and an agreement was reached between the Presidents of the United States and China to reduce tariff rates. Consequently, the American tariff rate on Chinese goods decreased from 145% to 30%, while the Chinese tariff rate on American goods dropped from 110% to just 10%. In this context, should we interpret that President Trump’s directive for Apple to limit its production expansion in India was influenced by China’s persuasion?

However, Apple Inc. has not yet issued any official statement regarding this development, indicating whether it will reduce its production in India in accordance with President Trump’s directive. Nonetheless, there is a palpable apprehension that the Indian economy is increasingly becoming ensnared in Trump’s policy maneuvers. Trump did not stop at Apple’s statement; subsequently, he claimed that India had proposed a 0% tax on American imports. Although India’s



Foreign Minister, Jaishankar, promptly refuted this claim, it remains true that, similar to the tariff rate agreement between the United States and China, discussions between India and the United States are also proposed. In these discussions, will India be able to persuade the United States regarding its stance on tariff rates? Can India convince President Trump to reconsider his statement concerning Apple? These questions are currently entangling both Indian politics and the economy. It is imperative to clarify that the essence of Trump’s recent statement regarding Apple does not imply that Apple is ceasing its operations in India. In 2017, when the ‘Make in India’ initiative was prioritized within the Indian economy and proposed as a visionary project aiming for significant advancements in the manufacturing sector, Apple was encouraged by various tax exemptions and numerous other incentives under the PLI scheme for electronic products introduced by the

Modi government. Consequently, Apple commenced its operations in India. Currently, Apple manufactures products at three locations in India: two in Tamil Nadu and one in Karnataka. Indian company Tata Electronics officially acquired Wistron and Pegatron, initiating production for Apple, while Taiwan’s Foxconn had already been operating in Tamil Nadu. Additionally, there is a proposal underway to establish a new unit on 300 acres of land along the Yamuna Expressway in North India, aimed at expanding Apple’s production. Following Trump’s recent statement, it is plausible that Apple may immediately halt the expansion of its new units. It is also essential to clarify that, although Apple is an American company, its largest production occurs in China, followed by India. In the current scenario, the ratio of Apple’s mobile and laptop sales in the American domestic market is 4:1, meaning that for every four products manufactured in China sold in

the U.S., one product manufactured in India is sold.

Established in 1976 in California, USA, Apple Inc. is currently among the top three largest global brands. Presently, approximately 164,000 employees work for the company. Apple’s current networth exceeds \$3 trillion, while India’s GDP is approximately \$4 trillion. This statistic underscores the necessity of having companies like Apple to provide global recognition to India’s domestic market. Although India’s domestic market already holds a significant share in Apple’s global profits, which Apple itself would be reluctant to forgo. According to some reports, the testing unit for the iPhone 17, Apple’s latest product, was to be transferred to India so that by the end of the June quarter or around the upcoming Diwali, 15% of it could be produced in India. However, behind the scenes, China refused to send that testing unit to India.

Apple entered China around the year 2000 when China’s economy was undergoing significant transformation. At that time, Apple was not receiving substantial encouragement to expand in the U.S., and due to the incentives provided in China, it considered expanding its business there. Factors such as reduced tax rates, financial support, land availability, and a large workforce available at low costs contributed to approximately 18-20% of Apple’s production now oc-

curing in China. However, it is important to remember that the COVID-19 pandemic originated in China, which suffered the most globally and experienced prolonged 100% lockdowns. Another aspect is that China’s economy has established a strong foothold in the American domestic market, diminishing America’s global position compared to China as opposed to other countries. In this context, when Trump began his second term, it was anticipated that he would target China. This can also be understood as Apple planning to transfer 50% of its production from China to the Indian market due to this agreement. However, amidst all this, Trump’s reversal has positioned the Indian economy as an innocent party caught in the economic diplomacy trap between the U.S. and China, with no clear path currently visible to extricate itself.

In conclusion, if Apple does not proceed with its proposed production expansion in India, it will have several adverse effects on the Indian economy in the future. Primarily, it will diminish the global reputation of India’s ‘Make in India’ project. The lack of expansion by Apple will also reduce employment opportunities for Indian youth, and the dream of the Indian economy reaching the third position in the GDP race will be further delayed.

*Dr. P.S. Vohra is a Writer, Columnist and Financial Thinker. Views are personal*

# UN report sees India as bright spot amid global slowdown

**NEW DELHI:** At a time when the global economy is facing what the United Nations calls a “precarious moment”, India has emerged as a rare bright spot.



The UN’s mid-year update of the World Economic Situation and Prospects projects India’s growth at 6.3 per cent in the current fiscal year, the highest among large economies. This momentum is expected to continue into 2026, with growth estimated at 6.4 per cent.

In contrast, the global outlook remains subdued amid rising trade tensions, policy uncertainty, and a decline in cross-border investments.

Global economic growth is now projected to slow to 2.4 per cent in 2025, down from 2.9 per cent in 2024, and 0.4 percentage points below the January forecast, the report states.

Amid global headwinds, India stands out not just for its headline growth figures but for the depth and breadth of its progress, from buoyant capital markets and robust manufacturing to record-breaking exports and a fast-expanding defence sector. These gains are rooted in sound policy choices, strong domestic demand and growing global confidence in India’s economic trajectory.

The report released in mid-2025 updates the earlier World Economic Situation and Prospects 2025, which came out on January 9, 2025. It is prepared by the Global Economic Monitoring Branch within the Economic Analysis and Policy Division of UN’s Department of Economic and Social Affairs

(DESA).

India’s growth is being driven by strong domestic demand and consistent government spending. These factors have supported stable employment and helped contain inflation, which is expected to fall to 4.3 per cent in 2025, staying within the Reserve Bank of India’s target range.

Financial markets are also reflecting this optimism. Stock indices have shown solid gains, backed by sustained investor confidence. Manufacturing activity is picking up, helped by favourable policies and resilient external demand. Exports, especially in strategic areas like defence production, are expanding steadily. Together, these indicators show that India’s economy is not only holding firm but also making headway in an uncertain global environment.

India’s capital markets have played a key role in driving economic growth. By channelling domestic savings into investments, they have strengthened the financial system. As of December 2024, the stock market hit record highs. It outperformed many emerging markets despite geopolitical tensions and domestic uncertainties.



# INTERNATIONAL

## India Likely to ask for More Security for Diplomats after 2 Israeli Staffers Killed in US

**NEW DELHI:** In the wake of killing of two Israeli embassy staffers in the US capital, India is expected to urge US authorities to ramp up security for its diplomats and embassy in Washington D.C., top sources said.

"The security of our diplomats is a sensitive matter. We are having a close look at the issue after what happened to the two Israeli embassy officials," one source said. The matter has gained urgency as an all-party delegation led by Congress MP Shashi Tharoor is set to visit Washington in the first week of June, and Khalistani separatists have levelled threats against the team, they added. The all-party delegation is going to the US as part of New Delhi's global outreach to highlight its new approach towards terrorism sponsored by Pakistan and to



explain the rationale behind Operation Sindoor, which targeted terrorist infrastructure in territories controlled by Islamabad. External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar condemned the killing of the Israeli diplomats in a social media post.

"Our thoughts and prayers are with their families and

colleagues. The perpetrators must be brought to justice," he said. The victims, a male and a female staff member of the Israeli Embassy in Washington, were fatally shot by an unidentified assailant as they exited the Capital Jewish Museum on Wednesday night (local time). US Homeland Security con-

firmed the deaths with authorities, saying that the lone suspect has been taken into custody. Currently visiting Denmark, EAM Jaishankar took to X to convey India's solidarity with Israel and called for swift justice. Asked about the killings at a weekly media briefing, External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said: "This is deeply shocking. We condemn the attack... Those responsible for this heinous act must be brought to justice. Safety and security of diplomatic staff is paramount." Israeli embassy staffers Yaron Lischinsky and Sarah Lynn Milgrim were shot dead by a man outside a Jewish museum in Washington D.C. on Wednesday evening, according to police.

The suspect, Elias Rodriguez, shouted "Free, free Palestine" after he was arrested.

## US House of Representatives passes sweeping tax-cut bill amid warning from budget group

**WASHINGTON:** The Republican-controlled US House of Representatives has narrowly passed a sweeping tax and spending bill, despite prior warnings from budget groups that the legislation would significantly increase federal debt.

The bill was approved by a vote of 215 to 214, Xinhua news agency reported.

All Democratic lawmakers and two Republican lawmakers voted against it, while one Republican lawmaker voted "present," neither for nor against the bill.

The bill extends the corporate and individual tax cuts enacted during US President Donald Trump's first term in 2017, while adding new tax breaks for tips, overtime and car loans.

It also increases defence spending and allocates additional funds for deporting immigrants.



Additionally, the bill repeals many green energy policies championed by former US President Joe Biden and raises the eligibility thresholds for low-income individuals to access healthcare and food assistance programs, in an attempt to reduce federal expenditures.

The bill is sent to the Republican-controlled Senate, where it will likely face modifications.

"THE ONE, BIG, BEAUTIFUL BILL has PASSED the House of Representatives! This

is arguably the most significant piece of Legislation that will ever be signed in the History of our Country!" Trump wrote on his social platform Truth

Social.

Meanwhile, budget groups have expressed deep concern.

"The House's reconciliation framework has been an insult to fiscal responsibility, adding more than \$3 trillion to the debt and setting up a massive cliff of tax cuts and spending expirations that could cost trillions more to extend," Maya MacGuineas, President of the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, said in a statement on Wednesday.

## India, UN chief voice concern over maritime terrorism, piracy



**UNITED NATIONS:** Countering terrorism on the seas and ensuring maritime safety are central to India's national security and economic interests, India's Permanent Representative P Harish said.

"India views maritime security and countering terrorism as central to its national security and economic interests," Harish said. But "India's maritime security strategy is broad and multifaceted", he said, as it takes on "both traditional threats from state actors and nontraditional threats" from terrorism, piracy, hybrid threats, smuggling, human trafficking, and illegal fishing.

The threats from terrorism and piracy were of concern also for others who spoke at the Security Council open debate on strengthening maritime security. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said no country is spared from the scourges "from piracy, armed robbery, trafficking and organised crime, to destructive acts against shipping, offshore installations and critical infrastructure, to terrorism in the maritime domain".

"And the problem is getting worse", he warned. Presiding over the session, Kyriakos Mitsotakis, the prime minister of Greece, which holds the Council presidency this month, sounded a similar warning about "asymmetrical maritime threats, such as smuggling, terrorism, piracy, but also hybrid attacks which equally affect ships, connections, but also ports". Harish said, "India's maritime security strategy focuses on strong surveillance, effective coordination, and quick response capabilities to protect its long coastline and sea routes". At the same time, he said, New Delhi's "approach balances robust defence capabilities, regional diplomacy, international cooperation and domestic infrastructure development".

## Cancer touches us all, says Joe Biden after being diagnosed with 'aggressive' form of disease



**WASHINGTON:** Former US President Joe Biden on May 19 released his first statement hours after his office announced that he has been diagnosed with a relatively aggressive form of prostate cancer.

"Cancer touches us all. Like so many of you, Jill and I have learned that we are strongest in the broken places. Thank you for lifting us up with love and support," wrote the 82-year-old in a social media post while sharing a picture with wife.

Biden's office stated on Sunday that the former President was last week seen for a new finding of a prostate nodule after experiencing increasing urinary symptoms.

"On Friday, he was diagnosed with prostate cancer, characterised by a Gleason score of 9 (grade Group 5) with metastasis to the bone. While this represents a more aggressive form of the disease, the cancer appears to be hormone-sensitive, which allows for effective management," the statement went on to say.

"The President and his family are reviewing treatment options with his physicians," it added.

Biden was the oldest US President when he left office earlier this year, making way for President Donald Trump to return to the White House for a second term, defeating Vice-President Kamala Harris.

## Japan Reaffirms Unwavering Support to India in Fight Against Terrorism

**TOKYO:** The Indian all-party parliamentary delegation led by Janata Dal (United) MP Sanjay Jha interacted with the Japan-India Parliamentary Friendship League in Tokyo on Friday, conveying India's resolute stance of zero tolerance towards terrorism under the global outreach campaign of Operation Sindoor.

During the talks, the Japanese side, led by league chairman Yasutoshi Nishimura, expressed full support for India's resolve to counter cross border terrorism.

The Indian delegation also held a meeting with Fukushima Nukaga, Speaker of the House of Representatives of Japan, continuing with the momentum of Nukaga's recent visit to India, during which he voiced Japan's unwavering support for India



in its fight against terrorism.

"All-Party Delegation from India met with Fukushima Nukaga, Speaker of the House of Representatives of Japan, building on the momentum of Mr. Nukaga's recent visit to India, where he expressed Japan's full support for India's fight against

terrorism. Nukaga reiterated his support for India's unified national resolve to combat terrorism," the Embassy of India in Japan posted on X.

Earlier in the day, the Indian delegation also held a fruitful interaction with Minoru Kihara, Former Defence Minister of

Japan, and Shinako Tsuchiya, the Director General of the International Bureau, Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), reiterating India's strong resolve to fight every form of terrorism.

The delegation also met Yasuhiro Hanashi, Acting Chairperson of the Research Committee on Counter-terrorism of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and Former Minister of Justice, highlighting India's unified and determined stance against terrorism in all its forms. Both sides reiterated their zero-tolerance approach to terrorism.

Furthermore, the delegation actively engaged with the Diplomatic Corps in Tokyo at the Indian Embassy, reaffirming India's steadfast commitment to combating terrorism.

## Very productive exchange: Prez Putin on talks with Donald Trump

**MOSCOW:** Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday described his two-hour-long phone conversation with former US President Donald Trump as "substantive" and "productive," raising fresh hopes for a potential breakthrough in the prolonged Russia-Ukraine conflict.

The call, which focused on reviving stalled peace negotiations, marks a significant diplomatic development in the three-year-long war.

"This conversation has effectively taken place and lasted more than two hours. I would like to emphasise that it was both substantive and quite candid. Overall, I believe it was a very productive exchange,"



Putin told the media following the conversation.

The talks come amid renewed efforts by the United States to facilitate direct negotiations between Moscow

and Kyiv.

While discussions between the Russian and Ukrainian sides were initially expected to resume through a high-level meeting between Putin and Ukrainian

President Volodymyr Zelensky in Turkey last week, the Russian leader did not attend. Trump, who was on a tour of West Asia at the time, had signalled he might visit the summit but did not make the trip either.

Putin expressed gratitude to Trump for the United States' support in helping restart direct talks between Russia and Ukraine.

"The President of the United States shared his position on the cessation of hostilities and the prospects for a ceasefire. For my part, I noted that Russia also supports a peaceful settlement of the Ukraine crisis. What we need now is to identify the most effective ways towards achieving peace," he said.

### POPE SCRIPTS A PEACE ROLE

## Trump-Putin Talks May End Russia-Ukraine War, Vatican May Help in Negotiations



**GOPAL MISRA**

Between the two world leaders, the President of the Russian Federation, for ending the ongoing conflict between Ukraine and Russia are expected to end the unnecessary fratricide between the two powerful countries having close historical, religious and deep social ties. The leaders of the two estranged neighbours might soon begin negotiations in the Vatican.

Trump has endorsed that Ukrainians and Russians should directly negotiate peace; and in this effort for peace the Pope may play a significant role.

The talks between the two top leaders of the world are expected to end the three-year old Russian aggression against Ukraine, which had begun on 24 February 2022. Earlier, Russia had annexed Crimea in 2014, a territory gifted by the USSR in 1954 to Ukraine. It was done under the leadership of Nikita Khrushchev, First Secretary of the USSR, who had decided to honour Ukrainians for their

fight and supreme sacrifices against the German invasion. During the ongoing conflict, it is estimated that Russian troops have occupied 20 percent of the Ukrainian territories. Eight million Ukrainians have been internally displaced and more than 8.2 million have taken refuge in other European countries.

Earlier, Pope Leo XIV, the newly elected leader of the Catholic Church, had expressed interest in hosting peace talks. Ukrainian President, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, had met Pope Leo XIV after the pontiff's inaugural mass for his kind intervention for peace.

**An Effort for Christian Unity :** It is hoped that if the peace could be arrived at under the peace initiative of the Vatican, it might also end the petty differences between the two powerful religious cults. It may be noted that the main difference between Roman Catholicism and Russian Orthodox could be traced to their understanding of the papacy. Roman Catholics believe in the Pope's supreme authority, while Orthodox Christians believe in the primacy of Bible and tradition. Interestingly, Roman Catholic masses are primarily in Latin or local language, Orthodox Church conducts prayers in



Old Church Slavonic. However, in recent years, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church has discontinued its ties with the Russian Orthodox Church.

Currently, there are about 1.34 billion baptized Catholics worldwide (according to the statistics provided by the Holy See) and about 220 million baptized members of the Eastern Orthodox Church. In the latter, Russian Orthodox Church is the largest autocephalous (self-governed) church, which comprises over 112 million members worldwide, thus being second only to the Roman Catholic Church, in terms of numbers of followers. It is being apprehended that the Ukrainians might find the Roman

Catholic cult more suitable for them to disconnect with the Russian Orthodox Church.

**Trump's Optimism:** It goes to the credit of Trump that as soon as he learned that Putin would not be coming to Turkey, he postponed his visit to the country, where under the US supervision of the peace talks were taking place last week. He, however, did not lose his sense of optimism about the prospect for peace, posting on social media that the combatants would "immediately start" negotiations for a ceasefire and an end to the war.

Initially, this sentiment appeared to be somewhat at odds with the Russian view. Putin only said that his country is

ready to work with Ukraine to craft a "memorandum on a possible future peace agreement", but the two-hour talks between the two leaders have paved the initial road map for peace.

Meanwhile, there are doubts that Putin's talks about memorandums and a "possible future" of peace does not seem to be the basis for a solid ground on which lasting deals could be quickly built.

Meanwhile, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio stated before the media in Rome on May 17 that the Russia and Ukraine might soon begin at Vatican for the forthcoming negotiations for peace negotiations by taking up the Holy See's long standing offer after Pope Leo XIV vowed to personally make "every effort" to help in ending the war. Rubio also had a detailed discussion with Cardinal Matteo, the Vatican point man on Ukraine, Rubio said that he would be discussing potential ways the Vatican could help, "the status of the talks, the updates and the path forward."

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

## Mexican Navy ship collides with Brooklyn Bridge, two dead



**NEW YORK:** A Mexican Navy training vessel, the Cuauhtemoc, collided with the iconic Brooklyn Bridge during a ceremonial goodwill tour along the East River resulting in two fatalities and left at least 19 others injured, including two in critical condition, according to official statements from New York City Mayor Eric Adams.

The Cuauhtemoc, a 297-foot-long ship known for its majestic presence and towering masts, was carrying 277 individuals, many of them naval cadets, as it sailed beneath the historic bridge. The vessel was adorned with lights and flags as part of its festive visit to New York. However, tragedy struck when the ship's 147-foot-tall masts failed to clear the bridge's understructure. Videos circulating widely on social media captured the moment when the upper sections of the masts slammed into the bridge and snapped, causing parts of the structure to collapse onto the deck of the ship. Eyewitness footage shows the alarming impact and subsequent chaos on board as the masts crashed down.

## Iran's President says agreement possible if US stops coercion



**TEHRAN:** Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian said that reaching an agreement with the US is possible if it refrains from applying coercion on Tehran.

Pezeshkian made the remarks on Sunday, in a meeting with visiting Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani in Tehran, according to a statement published on the website of the president's office.

"Reaching an agreement with the United States is achievable. However, making that happen requires a fundamental condition that the American side refrains from the approach of coercion," Pezeshkian said when talking about the ongoing indirect talks between Iran and the United States.

For his part, Al Thani voiced Qatar's support for Iran and its rights, saying that pressure and

coercion had proven ineffective when dealing with Iran, "as shown by experience," Xinhua news agency reported.

In a separate meeting with visiting Omani Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad bin Hamood Albusaidi in Tehran on the same day, Pezeshkian praised Oman's "committed and constructive" role in hosting the indirect talks between Tehran and Washington, according to another statement from Pezeshkian's office. Pezeshkian expressed hope that the talks would lead to a fair agreement that would guarantee sustainable stability in West Asia.

Facilitated by Oman, the Iranian and US delegations have so far held four rounds of indirect talks on Tehran's nuclear program and the lifting of Washington's sanctions since April 12, three in the Omani capital Muscat and one in Italy's Rome.



# “PSLV-C61 Mission Aborted: Tracing India’s Third Rocket Glitch”

ARUN KUMAR RAO

In the cool predawn hours of May 18, 2025, the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle—ISRO’s celebrated “workhorse”—stood poised on its launch pad at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota. On board was EOS-09, an advanced Earth observation satellite destined to monitor our planet from a sun-synchronous polar orbit. This was the PSLV’s 63rd flight—and its 27th in the high-thrust XL configuration. Expectations ran high, but minutes after liftoff, the mission ground to an unexpected halt.

## A Remarkable Record, Bring Two Hurdles

Since its first flight in September 1993, the PSLV had earned a reputation for reliability and affordability. It had carried Chandrayaan-1 to the Moon in 2008, sent the Mars Orbiter Mission on its historic voyage in 2013, and in 2023 even set a world record by deploying 104 satellites in a single launch. Yet in its three-decade history it had stumbled twice before.

PSLV-D1 (1993): The very first flight ended in the Bay of Bengal. A programming error and a retro-rocket misfire during stage separation robbed the vehicle of attitude control, sending it off course. PSLV-C39 (2017): Poised to place the IRNSS-1H navigation satellite into transfer orbit, the vehicle failed to jettison its protective heat shield. Trapped inside its fairing, the satellite never achieved the required velocity and the mission was lost.



## A Third Hiccup in the Third Stage

On May 18, everything proceeded flawlessly through the first two stages. But during the third stage’s solid-propellant burn, telemetry revealed a sudden drop in chamber pressure. As ISRO Chairman V. Narayanan explained on the live web-cast, “The third stage motor started perfectly, but during its functioning we observed a fall in motor-case pressure—and the mission could not be accomplished.” Though precise details await the Failure Analysis Committee’s report, early signs point to a propulsion-system anomaly—perhaps a nozzle or valve misalignment—that interrupted the steady thrust needed to reach orbit.

## Turning Failures into Stepping-Stones

In rocket science, even a fraction of a percent in performance deviation can decide success or failure. Each PSLV setback has prompted rigorous self-

examination at ISRO: software safeguards were tightened after 1993, and fairing-separation mechanisms were upgraded post-2017. Now, lessons from the PS3 investigation will feed into design refinements—from pressure-sensor redundancies to enhanced stage-separation protocols.

The Next Chapter- Despite this rare stall, the PSLV’s legacy endures. Its modular design, proven flight history, and cost-effectiveness continue to attract both domestic and international payloads. Within weeks of the C61 anomaly, ISRO confirmed that the next PSLV mission remains on track, a testament to the agency’s agility and resilience.

In the unforgiving arena of space launch, every misstep is an opportunity for insight. As EOS-09’s story intertwines with two earlier failures, it joins a lineage of missions that have collectively propelled India to the forefront of affordable, dependable rocket launches—and will guide every successful liftoff yet to come.

# Talking Points

## Narvijay Yadav



In India, camera spying through hacked apps threatens smartphone users’ privacy. DIY fixes are rising, but scalable, affordable solutions are urgent as tech giants overlook built-in protections and user safety.

In an age where smartphones rarely leave our hands, a silent threat grows - unauthorized camera access. Across India, millions of people carry devices that could be spying on them, without a single click. As digital life deepens, basic privacy is no longer guaranteed. The question isn’t if someone’s watching, but whether users even realize they’ve left the door open.

Tara Nair’s fingers hovered over her smartphone, the Mumbai newsroom’s buzz fading as she read the leaked report. A cybersecurity firm had exposed vulnerabilities in popular apps, allowing hackers to activate front-facing cameras without user consent. As an investigative journalist, Tara knew India’s 1 billion smartphone users were at risk, their private moments potentially exposed. Her phone, perched on her desk, felt like an intruder. She tapped over its camera that night, a makeshift shield against an unseen eye.

Tara’s investigation revealed a growing privacy crisis. With 70% of Indians owning smartphones and cybercrime surging 40% annually, camera spying was no longer a distant threat. A

Colaba café owner told her of a customer whose intimate video call was hacked via a rogue app, sold on the dark web. A Delhi activist shared fears of state surveillance, and her phone camera was a potential spy during sensitive meetings. Tara’s readers, from Bengaluru techies to rural students, echoed the same worry; their phones were betraying them.

The market response was sluggish. Premium phone cases with sliding camera covers cost Rs 1500 to Rs 3000, which is unaffordable for most of India’s middle class. Tech giants prioritized flagship features over privacy add-ons, leaving users like Tara to rely on *jugaad*, DIY solutions. She cut opaque stickers from label sheets, sharing the trick with friends. Others used nail polish or electrical tape, costing Rs 10 to Rs 50, but these were clumsy, leaving residue or blocking sensors. Social media buzzed with hacks, yet no scalable solution emerged.

Tara saw an opportunity. She pitched her findings to a startup in Pune, urging them to develop affordable camera-hiding products. They launched “CamSafe,” a Rs 150 sticker pack with reusable

# Eyes Inside Your Phone



sliders, tailored for India’s diverse phone models. Sold at kirana stores and online, CamSafe tapped into the 70% of users concerned about surveillance, per 2023 surveys. Competitors followed, offering Rs 500 cases with built-in covers and Rs 100 plastic clip-ons, democratizing privacy. Mumbai’s accessory markets, like Heera Panna, buzzed with vendors hawk-ing these gadgets, creating micro-economies.

The economic impact was notable. By 2028, India’s privacy product market will be fueled by camera covers, growing to Rs 2 billion, employing designers and retailers. Small businesses will thrive, but big brands may lag, their Rs 20,000 phones lacking native camera shields. Tara’s articles sparked a privacy movement, with schools teaching teens to cover cameras and offices mandating tape during meetings. Still,

she worried. Cameras were just one vulnerability; microphones and apps posed equal threats. As she tapped her phone, Tara knew affordable solutions were a start, but vigilance was the true shield.

## Points to Ponder:

Affordable camera covers like stickers, clip-ons, or budget cases are vital, but smartphone privacy demands more to keep the users’ personal lives safe and private. Users must disable unused app permissions, update software regularly, use antivirus apps for further safety, and cover microphones with dummy plugs. Encrypt data, avoid risky downloads, and advocate for phones with built-in privacy features to safeguard India’s digital future are other safety precautions.

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

## Aishwarya Rai makes for a True Indian Beauty in an Elegant Saree at Cannes 2025



MUMBAI: Actress Aishwarya Rai Bachchan has been the face of true Indian beauty internationally for decades now. Going back to her roots, the former Miss World decided to walk the Cannes red carpet this year as a perfect Indian married woman in saree and sandoor. The ‘Guru’ actress left everyone stunned as she appeared in a classic ivory handloom saree with golden embellishment, which she paired with a matching full sleeves blouse, and a drape style dupatta. Aish matched the saree with a red choker, accompanying it with a stunning ruby necklace and matching earrings. We could also see a complimentary ring in her hand as she waved at the cameras on the red carpet. She was seen wearing a dark lipstick with a red tint, along with some light blush, eyeshadow, and a thick eyeliner. Aishwarya kept her hair open, with a thick layer of sandoor in the parting. Designer Manish Malhotra shared some pictures of Aish from Cannes on his Instagram handle and wrote, “The OG Indian Queen of Cannes @aishwaryarai Bachchan\_ arb embraces Classic White Handloom in a handwoven kadwa ivory Handloom Banarasi saree with a handwoven tissue drape and imperial heirloom of rubies from @manishmalhotrajewellery #mymmsaree.” With her latest appearances, Aishwarya has successfully paid tribute to her Indian roots. The “Dhoom 2” actress has managed to set trends with her Cannes appearances over the years. Aishwarya made her 22nd appearance at the film festival as the global ambassador for Loreal Paris. She made her Cannes debut in 2002 when Sanjay Leela Bhansali’s ‘Devdas’, co-starring Shah Rukh Khan and Madhuri Dixit premiered at the festival. While Aishwarya has received a lot of praise for some of her looks at the event, in the last few years, she has also been subjected to a lot of criticism for her choice of attire.

## Somy Ali donates 1000 \$ to PM Cares Fund to support victims of Kashmir Violence

MUMBAI: Former actress Somy Ali has extended her support to the victims of the recent violence in Kashmir by donating \$1,000 to the PM Cares Fund.

The actress and philanthropist made this contribution as a heartfelt gesture to honor the affected families and stand in solidarity with those impacted by the unrest. Ali described her donation as her way of paying tribute to the victims and families affected by the violence in Kashmir. Speaking about the same, she shared, “India has always been close to my heart. As someone who believes deeply



in justice, healing, and sacrifice, I wish to humbly contribute to the PM CARES Fund in support of our brave Jawans who put their lives on the line every day, and to honor the victims and families affected by violence in Kashmir.”

This gesture is small compared to their courage. But I hope it reflects the unity of humanity beyond borders, beyond religions, and beyond politics. I stand with India’s fight against terrorism and with every family mourning an irreparable loss. As the world watches, let India also lead not just with strength, but with compassion,” added Somy.

Somy Ali, a human rights advocate who leads the US-based NGO No More Tears and has launched a movement focused on truth and justice called Somyism, has donated \$1,000 to the PM Cares Fund.



People carry a huge tricolor flag as they participates in **Tiranga Yatra** to highlight the success of **Operation Sindoor** and to express solidarity with the Indian Army in Amritsar on Tuesday, May 20, 2025. PHOTO-PRABHJOT GILL

## Over One in Four Children Tested Positive for Blood Disorder, Study Warns of Growing Genetic Health Crisis in India

OUR CORRESPONDENT  
New Delhi

A new study has exposed the rising threat of inherited blood disorders among Indian children, revealing that more than one in four tested were found to carry a hemoglobin-related condition. The findings underscore a pressing need for early genetic screening, prenatal testing, and region-specific interventions to tackle what experts are calling a silent but escalating pediatric health crisis.

The landmark research, conducted by Metropolis Healthcare Limited, India’s second-



largest diagnostic chain led by Ameera Shah, screened nearly 20,000 children under the age of 12 between 2021 and 2024. All participants were clinically suspected of having hemoglobinopathies, a group of inherited disorders affecting red blood cells.

The results were sobering: 28.4% of the children tested

were found to have some form of hemoglobinopathy. The most prevalent conditions included the beta-thalassemia trait (38.7%) and sickle cell disease/trait (30%). While some children with these genetic traits may not show symptoms, they remain at risk of passing the condition on to future generations, especially if both parents are carriers.

More alarmingly, over 51% of the affected children were below the age of three, highlighting the urgent need for routine prenatal and newborn screening, as well as genetic counselling, in maternal and child healthcare services.

## Sushmita Sen celebrates 31st anniversary of ‘India’s first ever victory at Miss Universe’

MUMBAI: Actress and former beauty queen Sushmita Sen celebrated 31 years since her historic Miss Universe win, which made her the first Indian woman to be crowned Miss Universe on May 21, 1994, in Manila, Philippines.

Sushmita took to Instagram to share a nostalgic series of photos from the iconic moment she was crowned Miss Universe, including stunning shots from the pageant and her proudly posing with the crown.

She wrote: “21st May 1994 #Manila. A historical win that introduced an 18yr old Indian girl to the Universe!!! Opening up a world of possibilities, highlighting the strength of hope, the power of inclusion, the generosity of love... (sic).”

She added: “To travel the world & to have the privilege of meeting some of the most inspiring people...life defining for sure!!!!” She went on to thank God and her parents.



“Happy 31st Anniversary of India’s first ever victory at Miss Universe!!! To have the honour of representing my country, I will proudly cherish forever!!!” said Sushmita. She also wished her “loved ones” in the Philippines. “Happy 31st also to my loved ones in the #Philippines & to you my darling @carogomezfilm #thinkingofyouall and #celebratingyou Here’s to dreams, the impossible kinds...for I know, the UNIVERSE conspires in our favour!!” “I love you guys!!! #duggadugga #yourstruly #Mis-



sUniverse1994 #India @mis-universe” After winning the crown, Sushmita made her debut in Hindi cinema with “Dastak”, a Psychological thriller film edited and directed by Mahesh Bhatt. The film also had Mukul Dev with Sharad Kapoor. She was then seen in films such as “Biwi No.1,” “Sirf Tum” and “Filhaal...”. Her other commercially successful films were Aankhen, Main Hoon Na and Maine Pyaar Kyun Kiya? Sushmita also featured in web series such as Aarya and Taali.

# Amity University Online & Hockey India Sign MoU to Transform the Lives of Athletes

May 20th marks the 100th anniversary of Hockey India, celebrated nationwide as “Hockey Day” to commemorate a century of hockey excellence in India

KAVITA SHARMA  
Noida

In a landmark development that promises to reshape the future of Indian athletes, Amity University Online (AUO) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Hockey India to provide comprehensive educational opportunities to hockey players at the international, national, and state levels. This collaboration is a powerful step forward in supporting the holistic growth of sportspersons by enabling them to pursue higher education without compromising their sporting careers.

Through this strategic partnership, Amity University Online will offer a robust educational scholarship program designed specifically for athletes. The initiative recognizes the challenges players face in balancing sports with academic aspirations and aims to create a supportive environment where



both goals can be pursued simultaneously.

Along with offering athletes up to 100 % scholarship via the CHAMPS initiative (Celebrating Heroes with Amity Merit Program Scholarships), Amity University Online provides free access to a three-month Certificate Course in Sports Psychology to enhance their mental conditioning and performance.

The MoU was signed by Shri Bhola Nath Singh, Secretary General, Hockey India, and Ajit Chauhan, Chairman of Amity University Online, in the presence of Shri Sekar J Manoharan, Treasurer, Hockey India, along with Senior Official at Amity

University Noida.

The event also marked the formal enrollment of Indian Women’s Hockey Team Captain Salima Tete and defender Jyoti into Amity University Online’s Sociology and MBA Marketing programmes, respectively, making them the first two beneficiaries of this visionary collaboration.

Speaking at the ceremony, Salima Tete said, “Education has always been a dream I had to set aside to pursue hockey. With this scholarship and Amity University Online’s flexible online programs, I can now continue my education without compromising my training schedule

# POTPOURRI

## Kajol sends birthday love to Suhana Khan, predicts a ‘big year’ ahead



MUMBAI: Actress Kajol took to social media on Thursday to extend a warm birthday wish to Suhana Khan, daughter of Shah Rukh Khan.

In her heartfelt message, Kajol hinted at exciting times ahead for Suhana, calling 2025 a “big year” for the young actress. Showering Suhana with love on her special day, Kajol posted a radiant selfie of her, writing, “Happy Happy birthday@ suhanakhan2... I know this year is gonna be a big one for you.” In the image shared on the ‘Dilwale’ actress’ Instagram stories, Suhana Khan could be seen sitting and posing, looking at the camera.

Kajol shares a close bond with Shah Rukh Khan, her longtime co-star with whom she has delivered several iconic blockbusters over the years. Their on-screen chemistry is legendary, and off-screen too, their friendship remains strong. Together, they have delivered several beloved blockbuster films such as, ‘Baazigar,’ ‘Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge,’ ‘Karan Arjun,’ ‘Kuch Kuch Hota Hai,’ ‘Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham,’ ‘My Name is Khan,’ and ‘Dilwale.’ Kajol also shares a warm rapport with Shah Rukh’s children, Suhana and Aryan Khan, often expressing her affection and support for them during milestones and special occasions.

At public gatherings and industry events, the ‘Do Patti’ actress is often seen warmly greeting Shah Rukh Khan’s family, showcasing the deep bond she shares with them. Whether it’s exchanging smiles with Gauri Khan or sharing a warm moment with Suhana and Aryan, Kajol’s interactions reflect the long-standing friendship and mutual respect between the two families.

On May 22, Suhana Khan celebrated her 25th birthday, receiving heartfelt wishes from close friends and members of the film industry. Her best friends Ananya Panday and Shanaya Kapoor were among the first to shower her with love on social media.

Ananya shared a nostalgic moment on her Instagram Stories — a throwback photo from last year’s IPL, following the Kolkata Knight Riders’ big win. In the picture, Suhana is seen hugging her younger brother AbRam, while Ananya and Shanaya pose cheerfully beside them, all donning purple ‘Champions T-shirts.