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UAE AND ARGENTINA DISCUSS FRESH INVESTMENT PROSPECTS

UAE-Argentina economic seminar explores trade and investment opportunities

TBG NETWORK
ABU DHABI

The Ministry of Economy, in collaboration with the Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce and Industry, has hosted a high-level UAE-Argentina economic seminar in Abu Dhabi, bringing together senior government officials and business leaders from both nations to explore new trade and investment opportunities.

The seminar was attended by Dr. Thani bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi, Minister of State for Foreign Trade, and Ahmed Jasim Al Zaabi, Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Department of Economic Development (ADDED), Chairman of the UAE Chambers, and Chairman of Abu Dhabi Chamber, alongside a distinguished



Argentinian delegation led by Gerardo Werthein, Argentina's Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship.

The event was held on the sidelines of an official visit by Argentina's Minister of Foreign Affairs and focused on Argentina's newly launched investment framework, the Incentive Regime for Large Investments (RIGI), and its benefits to international investors.

Speaking at the event, Dr. Al Zeyoudi emphasised the UAE's commitment to strengthening economic ties with Argentina and unlocking new opportunities for investment, stating, "Argentina is an important economic partner for the UAE, and we see significant opportunities to enhance trade and investment flows in sectors that will shape the future of both our nations. The introduction of RIGI

reflects Argentina's ambition to create a world-class investment environment, and we believe UAE businesses are well positioned to benefit from this new framework."

Al Zeyoudi also took the opportunity to promote the UAE's own pro-business regulatory environment that, coupled with its global connectivity, advanced infrastructure and strategic location, offers Argentinian businesses an ideal platform to expand internationally.

Further, Al Zeyoudi highlighted the UAE's expanding global trade relations via its Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, which make it an attractive gateway for South American companies seeking access to high-growth

markets in the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. On his part, Werthein emphasised the significance of strengthening economic and trade cooperation with the UAE, stating that the launch of the Incentive Regime for Large Investments (RIGI) is a pivotal step toward creating a more competitive and investor-friendly environment.

He said, "We are committed to deepening our strategic partnership with the UAE, a global hub for trade and investment. The RIGI framework presents a key opportunity to attract Emirati investments into Argentina's priority sectors, including mining, energy, infrastructure, and technology. We look forward to fostering sustainable,

■ P2

CoE Project Lab to serve as a hub for chip design innovation and collaboration

TBG NETWORK
NOIDA

The Centre of Excellence (CoE) Project Lab will serve as a hub for innovation and collaboration in chip design, providing researchers, startups, and students with access to industry-grade tools and infrastructure.

According to Ministry of Electronics & IT, the introduction of a Smart Classroom is set to transform semiconductor education by integrating advanced learning tools, simulation software, and interactive training modules.

With the global semiconductor market witnessing exponential growth, this initiative aligns with India's vision of becoming a key player in semiconductor design and manufacturing.

S Krishnan, Secretary of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, inaugurated the National Institute of Electronics and Information Technology (NIELIT) Centre of Excellence (CoE) in Chip Design



at its Noida campus on Tuesday.

This initiative, established in association with SoCTeamup Semiconductors Pvt Ltd, a DPIIT-recognized startup, marks a significant step toward advancing India's semiconductor design and development capabilities.

The launch of the NIELIT Centre of Excellence in Chip Design is in line with the government of India's vision of a semiconductor technology capabilities and furthering India's emergence as a global leader in Electronics and IT.

The new Centre of Excellence is poised to address

the growing demand for skilled professionals in the semiconductor and chip design industries by offering state-of-the-art facilities for research, innovation, and training in VLSI (Very Large-Scale Integration) and Chip Design.

With a vision to become a global leader in semiconductor innovation, it aims to advance VLSI and chip design while empowering India as a hub for cutting-edge electronics and IT.

By fostering world-class education, research, and industry collaboration, the Centre seeks to drive innovation and develop

■ P2

TOP OF THE DAY

NIFTY, SENSEX OPEN FLAT

New Delhi: Indian stock market opened on a positive note on Wednesday, with both benchmark indices trading in the green as Trump tariff threat seen as a negotiating tool.

The Nifty 50 index began the session at 23,801.75, gaining 62.50 points (0.26 per cent), while the Sensex surged 120.79 points (0.15 per cent) to open at 78,704.60. Positive cues from select sectors and investor optimism helped lift the market at the opening bell. Market experts highlighted concerns over global economic uncertainty, particularly regarding U.S. trade policies. Analysts noted that businesses and governments are closely studying the impact of Donald Trump's first presidency to assess the risks of a potential trade war.

FY26 BORROWINGS WELL PLACED

New Delhi: The government's market borrowing plans for the financial year 2025-26 (FY26) appear well-placed to support fiscal policy while complementing monetary policy, according to a report by the State Bank of India (SBI).

For FY26, the report noted that the government has budgeted gross market borrowing through dated securities at Rs 14.8 lakh crore, while repayments are estimated at Rs 3.3 lakh crore. This brings net market borrowing to Rs 11.5 lakh crore, which is about 73 per cent of the fiscal deficit. The net borrowing figure is higher than the Rs 10.5 lakh crore in the previous budget.

INDRANI MUKE-RJEA WINS AWARD

New Delhi: In a landmark moment in contemporary literature, celebrated author and former media entrepreneur Indrani Mukerjee has been awarded the prestigious Best Debut Non-Fiction Award for her memoir, *Unbroken*, at the Pragati Vichar Literature Festival (PVLFF) Author Excellence Awards 2025. The felicitation ceremony, held yesterday at the iconic Sunder Nursery Amphitheatre in New Delhi, was attended by luminaries from the literary world.

● Agencies

Women's stock market participation grows since 2022, Delhi leads with 30%: NSE

TBG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Women's participation in Indian stock markets is rising since year 2022 (CY22), says a report by the National Stock Exchange (NSE).

The report indicates that women's share in new individual investor registrations has been gradually increasing, reaching just below 25 per cent as of December 2024.

It said "Female participation in individual investor registrations has shown a gradual increase since CY22, to slightly shy of a quarter as of December 2024".

Among major states, the report noted that Delhi (30 per cent) has the highest female representation in stock market participation, followed by Maharashtra (28 per cent) and Tamil Nadu (27.7



per cent). These states have a higher share of female investors than the national average of 24.1 per cent in CY24.

However, some states still lag in terms of women's participation. Bihar (15.6 per cent), Uttar Pradesh (18.4 per cent), and Odisha (19.7 per cent) recorded a female investor base below 20 per cent of

total individual registrations in their respective regions.

Despite these regional differences, the overall trend suggests that more women are stepping into the financial markets, improving gender inclusivity in India's stock market ecosystem.

■ P2

e& and DE-CIX India collaborate to establish UAE-India Internet Corridor

TBG NETWORK
MUMBAI

Global technology group, e&, and the world's leading Internet Exchange (IX) operator, DE-CIX, have formed a strategic partnership to establish an Internet corridor between the UAE and India. This collaboration merges e&'s vast international connectivity infrastructure with DE-CIX India's unrivaled expertise in Internet exchange services. Together, they aim to provide seamless, high-speed Internet services across the Middle East and India, fostering greater digital innovation and delivering a superior online experience.

Nabil Baccouche, Group Chief Carrier & Wholesale



Officer, e&, expressed, "This collaboration marks a significant milestone in enhancing the capabilities of our SmartHub Internet Exchange in the UAE and the broader region. By leveraging DE-CIX India's world-class interconnection services, we are

committed to delivering unparalleled connectivity and enriching digital experiences for our customers. This mutually beneficial partnership not only fits with our vision of fostering a vibrant and interconnected digital ecosystem but also empowers

businesses and individuals across various industries to thrive in a seamless digital landscape. Together, we are paving the way for a more integrated and efficient connectivity framework that will benefit all involved."

Sundhir Kunder, Chief Business Officer at DE-CIX India, remarked, "I am thrilled that DE-CIX's unique solution is now available over e&'s Lowest Latency Network, underpinned by speed and quality in Mumbai. This will be a force multiplier for us in terms of faster international customer onboarding, bringing in the ease of doing business for them, and is very much in line with our Customer Delight and customer-first vision.

India's services growth hits 26-month low in January, but hiring rises

TBG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

India's services sector expanded at its slowest pace in over two years in January 2025, as new business growth weakened and demand momentum softened, according to the HSBC India Services PMI data released on Wednesday.

However, job creation saw a notable uptick and business sentiment remained positive despite heightened cost pressures.

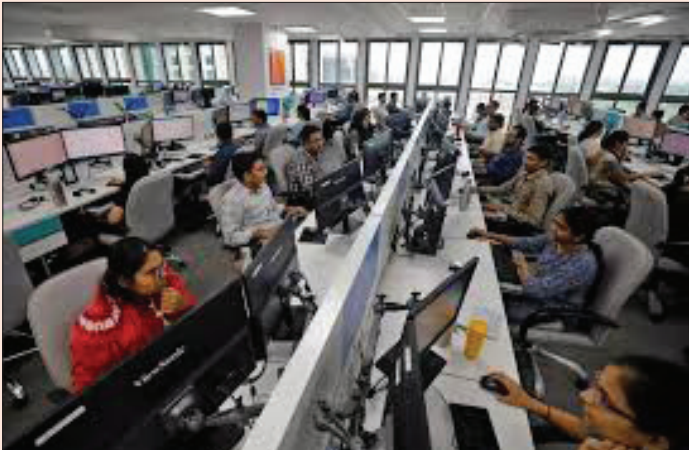
But, despite the slowdown, the HSBC Services PMI data suggests that India's services sector remains resilient, with solid job creation, strong export growth, and steady business confidence. However, inflationary pressures and rising competition could

act as headwinds in the coming months.

Pranjal Bhandari, Chief India Economist at HSBC, said, "India's services sector lost growth momentum in January, although the PMI remained well above the 50-breakeven level. The business activity and new business PMI indices eased to their lowest levels since November 2022 and November 2023 respectively."

Bhandari added, "That said, new export business partly countered the downturn and continued to rebound from a dip in late-2024, in line with official data which showed India's services exports shining in December and capturing a larger share of global trade."

With domestic demand still holding up and global services



trade rebounding, analysts expect the sector to maintain healthy, if somewhat moderated, expansion in the near term.

The seasonally adjusted HSBC India Services PMI Business Activity Index fell to 56.5 in January,

down from 59.3 in December, marking its lowest level since November 2022.

While this indicated a loss of momentum, the index remained well above the 50-breakeven level, signalling continued growth in

the sector.

The slowdown was driven by softer increases in sales and output, with new business inflows expanding at their weakest pace in 14 months.

Some companies attributed output growth to strong demand, new client wins, and investments in technology, while others noted that customer numbers had declined due to competitive pressures.

Despite the moderation in domestic orders, international sales rose at the fastest pace in five months, with demand strengthening from Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and the Americas.

Inflationary pressures persisted, with rising staff costs and higher food prices pushing up expenses for service providers.

However, cost inflation remained broadly unchanged from December. Companies passed on higher costs to consumers, resulting in a sharper increase in output charges.

However, India's services sector saw a positive acceleration in job creation, as companies responded to sustained demand and increasing workloads. The hiring rate was among the fastest recorded since data collection began in December 2005.

Outstanding business volumes grew for the 37th consecutive month, hitting the highest level since May 2024, indicating that demand conditions remained fundamentally strong.

Service providers remained optimistic about business prospects over the next 12 months, citing

DELHI ON VENTILATOR UNDER AAP: BJP'S DUSHYANT GAUTAM

BJP candidate Dushyant Gautam criticized the AAP government over unfulfilled promises during the Delhi Assembly elections on Wednesday.

TBG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Slamming the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government over unfulfilled promises, BJP candidate from Karol Bagh assembly constituency Dushyant Gautam on Wednesday said that Delhi, which is the heart of the country, is on the ventilator under this AAP government.

After casting his vote for the Delhi assembly elections, Gautam said, that the people of the national capital now want a change and they have seen examples of double-engine government.

“People want change. The people of Delhi have seen examples of double-engine gvt. Delhi - the heart of the country is on a ventilator under this (AAP) government... They have told they would make roads of Delhi like Paris. Do Paris have roads like this?... They told that they would clean the Yamuna. Sewers are overflowing, pollution



rates are inflating... The people now believe that he (Arvind Kejriwal) lies only and does nothing; hence they want the BJP govt this time,” Gautam told ANI.

Dushyant Gautam is contesting elections against AAP's Vishesh Ravi and Congress' Rahul Dhanak from Karol Bagh assembly constituency.

Meanwhile, a voter turnout of 33.31 per cent was recorded till 1 pm in the single-phase Delhi assem-

bly elections, according to the Election Commission of India.

The North-East district of the national capital continues to lead the way with the highest turnout of 39.51 per cent turnout among all districts.

The lowest turnout of 29.74 per cent was recorded in the Central district of Delhi.

According to the ECI, the South West district recorded a turnout of

35.44 per cent, New Delhi 29.89 per cent, East 33.66 per cent, North 32.44 per cent, North West 33.17 per cent, Shahdara 35.81 per cent, South 32.67 per cent, South East 32.27 per cent and West 30.87 per cent, as of 1 pm.

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Meanwhile, a voter turnout of 33.31 per cent was recorded till 1 pm in the single-phase Delhi assembly elections, according to the Election Commission of India.

BJP MP Manoj Tiwari cast his vote at a polling booth in Yamuna Vihar for the Delhi Assembly election on Wednesday. He slammed AAP, accusing them of looting Delhi.

These elections are high-stakes elections for AAP, BJP and Congress, as, AAP is hoping to retain its power for the next term while the BJP is eyeing to regain power after almost 27 years.

Congress which once ruled the state for 15 years has struggled to claim even a seat in the 2015 and 2020 elections. In this election, the party is hoping for a return.

AAP, which currently holds more than 60 seats in the 70-seat assembly, seeks re-election based on its previous terms' achievements.

Polling for 70 assembly seats of Delhi began on Wednesday morning. Voting commenced at 7:00 am today. Voters cast their ballots amid tight security in all seats.

The counting of votes will take place on February 8.

2,500-Year-Old negev burial site reveals ancient trade routes

TBG NETWORK
TEL AVIV

Archaeologists uncovered a 2,500-year-old burial site in the Negev Highlands, shedding light on ancient trade routes that connected cultures from Yemen, Phoenicia, Egypt, and beyond, the Israel Antiquities Authority announced on Wednesday.

The site, south of Beer-Sheva, contains dozens of tombs believed to belong to individuals from caravans that passed through the region, highlights the Negev's role as an international crossroads during the 7th to 5th centuries BCE.

Archaeologists found copper and silver jewelry, alabaster items used for incense preparation, amulets, beads, and vessels likely used to transport incense resins.

“The discovery is unique and it points to wide-reaching cultural interchange between southern and northern Arabia, Phoenicia, Egypt and southern Europe,” said excavation director Martin David Pasternak.

They also found arrowheads made of flint, a material associated with ancient trade from Yemen and Oman, with traces of ochre.



“The presence of ochre on these arrowheads may indicate their religious or cultic significance as having special value,” explained Jacob Vardi, an Antiquities Authority specialist in flint tools.

The tombs raise intriguing questions about their purpose and the nature of the trade caravans that used the route.

Pasternak said the tombs could have served as a long-term burial site for caravans passing through the area, or they may mark the mass burial of a caravan that came under attack. Despite their location at a remote junction in the desert, the site's strategic position along key trade routes makes it a plausible resting place for travelers engaged in long and perilous journeys across difficult terrain. These traders were likely involved in the transport of valuable goods such as frankincense and myrrh, prized commodities from southern Arabia.

Delhi BJP Chief: voters reject corrupt government

TBG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

As Delhi assembly polls are underway, Delhi BJP President Virendraa Sachdeva on Wednesday claimed that people are voting against the ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), asserting a wave of change.

Sachdeva further claimed that some people are casting fake votes in the Kasurba Nagar constituency.

“There is a wave of change in Delhi. People are voting against the corrupt govt. Now, this ‘AAP’ da’-the ‘farzi’ govt-has come to the extent where it is facilitating fake voting. The information that we have is that people were caught casting fake votes in the Kasurba Nagar constituency,” Sachdeva said.

“I appeal to the people of Delhi to remain vigilant of their (AAP) tactics and vote in large numbers to fulfil the resolve of PM Modi to have a Viksit Bharat and Viksit Delhi,” he added.



Earlier, AAP leaders alleged that the Delhi Police were trying to stop people from casting their votes at a polling station in Chirag Delhi.

“You have been standing here since morning to influence the elections. Why are the barricades being put up? Which senior officer of the Delhi Police has instructed them to do so? This is all being done to disturb the poor villagers. Malviya Nagar ACP and SHO are openly doing this wherever there is a stronghold of AAP. The SHO even

raided our private premises last night,” Saurabh Bhadraraj said.

“21,000 people cast their votes here. The police are doing this in all 17-18 polling booths in Chirag Delhi. People can't come from the metro or the roads to cast their votes. Did Virendra Sachdeva or President Murmu get out of the car 200 meters away from the polling station? There are no guidelines,” the AAP leader added.

Meanwhile, Congress Parliamentary Party Chairperson Sonia Gandhi cast

her vote in the Delhi Assembly Elections 2025 on Wednesday at the Nirman Bhawan polling centre in the national capital.

She was accompanied by her daughter, party MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, and Congress candidate for the New Delhi constituency, Sandeep Dikshit.

Aam Aadmi Party national convener Arvind Kejriwal, along with his family, also cast his vote today.

Polling for 70 assembly seats began on Wednesday morning in Delhi, as voters cast their ballots for the 8th Assembly amid tight security. Voting commenced at 7:00 am and will continue till 6:00 pm.

Delhi has 1,561,400 registered voters, including 837,617 males, 723,656 females, and 1,267 third-gender voters. The electorate also includes 239,905 first-time voters aged 18-19, 109,368 elderly voters aged 85 and above, and 79,885 persons with disabilities.

Amit Shah leads security review on J&K

TBG NETWORK
SRINAGAR

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday chaired a high-level security review meeting to assess the security situation in Jammu and Kashmir. The meeting focused on counter-terrorism efforts, security challenges, and measures to maintain peace in the Union Territory. Discussions covered the prevailing security scenario, ongoing counter-terrorism operations, and the future roadmap to curb terrorism in the region.

The meeting, which lasted over two hours, emphasized the need for enhanced coordination among security agencies in their fight against terrorism. Officials provided detailed briefings on the latest security developments in Jammu and Kashmir, including intelligence reports on the activities of terror groups and insurgent elements. The session also addressed new challenges emerging from terrorist activities and insurgency,



underscoring the importance of a proactive approach to tackling security threats.

This was the second security review meeting in as many days, following a similar discussion with Army officials on Tuesday. The meeting was attended by key officials, including Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, Director General of Police (DGP) Nalin Prabhakar, Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan, and the Director of the Intelligence Bureau. Senior officers from central and state security agencies were also present to provide insights and recommendations for strengthening security measures in the region.

ity to the region.

Over the past few years, the government has intensified counter-terrorism measures, dismantling terror modules, neutralizing threats, and preventing radicalization efforts. Increased surveillance and intelligence-sharing mechanisms have led to a significant reduction in terrorist activities. Additionally, security forces have been conducting targeted operations to eliminate threats posed by terror outfits operating in the region.

The recent security meeting gains significance in light of ongoing counter-terror operations and recent incidents that have posed security challenges. The government remains committed to ensuring peace and stability in Jammu and Kashmir by addressing both security concerns and developmental needs. Efforts have been made to integrate local communities into the development process while maintaining a strong security apparatus to prevent any resurgence of militancy.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

UAE and Argentina

fruitful partnerships that drive mutual growth and further strengthen our economic ties.”

The RIGI programme, which offers the global investment community access to projects in key sectors of the Argentinian economy, is designed to attract large-scale international investments by offering significant incentives across key sectors, including mining and energy, infrastructure and tourism, technology and advanced industries and manufacturing. It provides regulatory stability, tax incentives, and long-term predictability for foreign investors, ensuring that businesses operating in Argentina can expand with confidence and access high-growth opportunities.

The UAE-Argentina seminar concluded with a commitment from both nations to continue strengthening economic collaboration, exploring joint investment projects, trade partnerships, and new areas of cooperation in the years ahead. It builds on growing non-oil trade that reached USD 537.1 million in 2024, a 68 per cent increase from 2019. Major Argentinian exports to the UAE include corn, iron pipes, and soybean products, reflecting Argentina's strength in agricultural and industrial goods. Meanwhile, the UAE exports high-value machinery and tools, supporting Argentina's growing manufacturing and technology sectors.

In 2018, the two nations took a significant step towards deepening investment ties by signing a Bilateral Invest-

ment Treaty (BIT), reinforcing a shared commitment to fostering a transparent and secure investment environment for businesses in both countries.

The UAE also continues to explore closer engagement with South American countries, including Argentina, through direct discussions with Mercosur, the South American trade bloc, to enhance market access and trade flows across the region.

CoE Project Lab to

a highly skilled talent pool to meet global semiconductor demands, strengthening India's position in the global electronics and IT sectors. During the inauguration, S Krishnan toured the Centre's cutting-edge facilities, including the Project Lab and Smart Classroom.

The Project Lab will serve as a hub for collaboration on innovative chip design projects among students, professionals and researchers. Meanwhile, the Smart Classroom, equipped with advanced teaching aids, will provide an immersive learning experience for students. A special demonstration of VLSI-based Intellectual Property (IP) was also conducted, underscoring the Centre's commitment to advancing the design and development of intellectual properties in the semiconductor sector.

The demonstration highlighted the Centre's role in building a strong knowledge base in VLSI and cultivating a pool of talent to meet the growing needs of the industry.

Women's stock market

Another key observation from the report is the growing dominance of young investors in the Indian stock market. The proportion of investors aged below 30 years has risen significantly from 22.7 per cent in 2018 to 39.9 per cent in 2024, making them the largest investor group.

This increasing participation of young individuals has changed the demographic pattern of the stock market. The share of mid-aged investors (40-49 years) has dropped from 20.1 per cent in 2018 to 15.6 per cent in 2024. Similarly, the percentage of investors over 50 years has declined from 26.2 per cent to 15 per cent in the same period.

Even the 31-39 age group has seen a decline, though less significant compared to older age groups. The findings of the NSE report suggest that India's stock market is becoming more inclusive, both in terms of gender participation and age diversity. More young people are taking an interest in financial markets, and women are steadily increasing their participation, contributing to a more diverse and balanced investment environment in the country.

e& and DE-CIX India

It will simplify access for customers on DE-CIX India's IXs over an existing connection, reducing cost and time to provision while enabling greater control and reach.”

This strategic alliance between e& and DE-CIX India is set to revolutionize the digital landscape by bringing content closer to users and driving the growth of Internet traffic across the Middle East and India. By leveraging their combined strengths, both companies are committed to delivering faster, more reliable connectivity for their customers.

About e& Carrier & Wholesale Services: As an enabler of connectivity, e& Carrier & Wholesale stands as a vital and dynamic business unit, playing a pivotal role in e& - one of the leading technology groups in the world.

With a commitment to extending its reach to all subscribers by acting as a driver for innovation and ensuring agility across all its solutions, e& Carrier & Wholesale is the largest internet, mobile and regional hub for international cable systems. Globally acclaimed as the “Best Wholesale Provider”, e& Carrier & Wholesale encompasses region's most extensive international network that links more than 160 international carriers with its international mobile network reaching 800 + destinations.

Through a whole range of strategic partnerships and a global footprint across 16 + countries e& Carrier & Wholesale offers a comprehensive range of advanced solutions for mobile operators, carriers, ISPs, wholesalers and OTTs worldwide to fulfil their ever-growing connectivity needs. This mainly includes mobile, data, voice and satellite services.

NSURE HEALTHY SPINE INTEGRATES NORDIC HEALTH MSK TECH TO TRANSFORM SPINE CARE IN INDIA

nSure Healthy Spine partners with Nordic Health Finland to introduce advanced musculoskeletal health technology at India’s first Center for Spine and Sports Health in Hyderabad.

TBG NETWORK
HYDERABAD

nSure Healthy Spine proudly announces the adoption of an advanced data-driven Musculoskeletal Health Technology Platform in exclusive partnership with Nordic Health Finland. The state-of-the-art biomechanically optimized exercise therapy devices for Spine, Shoulder, Hip & Knee Health will be incorporated at upcoming India’s 1st Center for Spine and Sports Health (CSSH) located at Kotak Pallela Gopichand Badminton Academy, Hyderabad, India.

As part of a strategic collaboration to introduce cutting-edge spine and sports health technology platform for the first time in India, nSure Healthy Spine has recently hosted Technology Inventors from Nordic Health, Finland - Arno Parviainen and Sirkka Parviainen at CSSH, Hyderabad. Their visit marks a significant milestone in integrat-



ing advanced assessments, targeted muscle-strengthening training programs for Injury prevention, and preventive musculoskeletal care solutions, aimed at enhancing the performance and well-being of athletes and individuals seeking proactive health management. With Finland being one of the top innovative health technology ecosystems, the expertise of Nordic Health leadership has become instrumental in training our

team to leverage advanced technology effectively and deliver world-class care at CSSH, Hyderabad. During the visit, Arno and Sirkka conducted comprehensive training & educational programs for the nSure Healthy Spine team. The sessions focused on the clinical use of biomechanically optimized exercise therapy devices to ensure precise assessments and evidence-based exercise therapy programs. Throughout the training sessions,

they emphasized the latest techniques in movement health, rehabilitation, and performance enhancement, to make our team remain at the forefront of spine and sports health. Being enthusiastic about the collaboration, Arno, CEO of Nordic Health Finland and expert in movement and rehabilitation technology, stated, “The integration of this technology at nSure Healthy Spine is going to be a game-changer for spine and sports health in India. We are excited to

support the team in utilizing these cutting-edge solutions and assisting athletes with injury prevention and perform better.”

Sirkka, a specialist in preventive healthcare, added, “This technology is not just about rehabilitation but also about proactive-driven preventive spine & musculoskeletal (MSK) care. By focusing on muscle strength and functional movement, we are helping individuals prevent injuries and enhance their overall well-being.”

nSure Healthy Spine’s CEO, Naresh Kumar Pagidimarri, highlighted the long-term vision behind this collaboration, stating, “Bringing this revolutionary technology to India is a testament to our commitment to advancing spine and sports health. With the guidance of Arno and Sirkka, I am positive that our team is equipped with world-class knowledge and expertise catering the best possible care to the clients in need.”

Indian Businesses Boost Software spending in 2025, capterra study finds

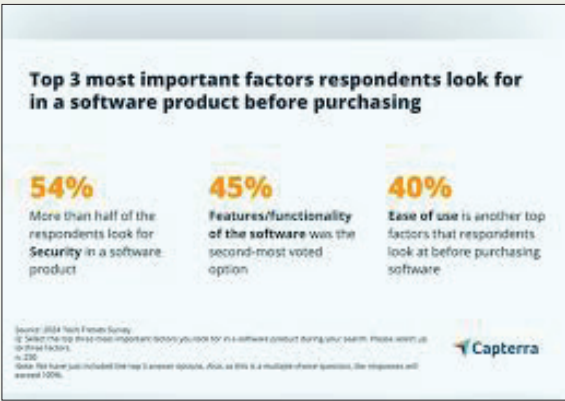
TBG NETWORK
GURGAON

A new study conducted by Capterra reveals that Indian businesses are significantly increasing their software spending in 2025, fueled by the nation’s rapidly evolving tech landscape. The study, part of Capterra’s 2025 Tech Trends Survey, examined the technology investment plans of 3,500 decision-makers across nine countries, including 350 in India.

Significant Spending Increases: 89% of Indian respondents surveyed plan to increase their software spending by at least 5% in 2025, with 40% anticipating a substantial increase of 15% or more.

SME Confidence: Indian SMEs are demonstrating strong confidence in software investments, with 86% planning to increase spending. Notably, 33% of SMEs are expecting to raise spending by 15% or more, significantly higher than the global average.

Customer reviews: the most influential factor in software shortlisting



The study also revealed that customer reviews are the most influential source of information for Indian businesses when researching software vendors, with 45% of respondents citing them as crucial. Other key sources include Google/search (42%) and product review websites (41%), highlighting the significant impact of online research.

Furthermore, 42% of respondents emphasised the importance of recommendations from industry experts in their decision-making process.

Cybersecurity and AI Top Investment Priorities for 2025

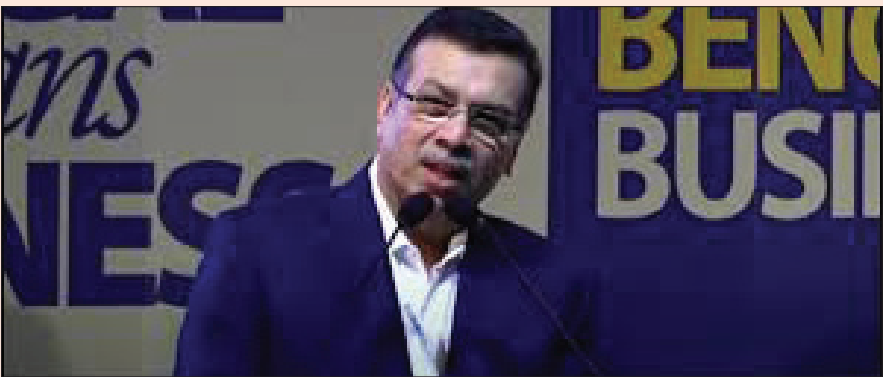
The top priorities for in-

vestment for Indian companies are IT security (44%), with a focus on cybersecurity and data protection, followed by artificial intelligence (AI) (42%). The survey also revealed significant interest in enhancing IT management (38%), improving IT architecture (36%) with a focus on VPN authentication and cloud storage, and strengthening marketing efforts (32%).

Commenting on the survey, David Jani, analyst of the study, said: “As seen in our data, Indian companies look set to prioritise software investment in 2025 to take advantage of technological shifts, especially in fast-developing areas like IT and AI.

RP-Sanjiv Goenka Group plans Rs 10,000 cr investment in Bengal

TBG NETWORK
KOLKATA



RP-Sanjiv Goenka Group, which has big investments in West Bengal, is planning for another Rs 10,000 crore worth investments in the fields of energy, healthcare, and education in the eastern state.

Speaking at the Bengal Global Business Summit 2025, the tagline of which is ‘Bengal means business’, in Kolkata, the RP-Sanjiv Goenka Group Chairman Sanjiv Goenka said, they now have assets of close to Rs 40,000 crores across the state.

“We’ve been investing steadily. Rs 20,000 crores of this (Rs 40,000 crore) has come in the last few years, and I must say, we’ve had no issues whatsoever. Things have moved fast, clinically, and in a business-like manner,” he said, praising Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee who was on the dais while he was speaking.

Goenka said his Group has another Rs 10,000 crore worth investments in the pipeline under implementation -- in the fields of energy, healthcare, and education.

“We live in a different Bengal today. We live in a Bengal that is transformed, transformed by the vision and action of our honorable Chief Minister,” Goenka added.

Decision-making is quick, transparent,

and clear, Goenka praised the chief minister. “She gives access and any issues get resolved in a jiffy,” he continued.

He said “Bengal means business” and went on to invite investors to be part of the state’s growth story.

“Come experience what Bengal has to offer. And I can promise you, you will not be disappointed,” he concluded.

The 8th edition of Bengal Global Business Summit is scheduled on February 5-6, 2025 in Kolkata.

With a combination of strategic geographical advantages, proactive government policies, skilled human resources, and a vibrant business environment, West Bengal has emerged as a key player in India’s economic growth story, the Summit’s website read.

West Bengal has been consistently among the fastest-growing States in terms of economic growth with a GSDP expected to reach Rs 18.79 lakh crores in 2024-25. Bengal is a hub for a wide range of industries, including manufacturing, IT, cement, leather, iron and steel, textiles. As the largest economy in eastern India, West Bengal ranks as the 4th largest state in India in terms of Net Value Added, the Summit’s website claimed.

Vijay Mallya seeks loan recovery accounts from Banks in Karnataka High court

TBG NETWORK
BENGALURU

Fugitive businessman Vijay Mallya has filed a petition in the Karnataka High Court seeking loan recovery accounts from banks. Senior advocate Sajjan Poovayya appeared on behalf of Mallya.

According to Mallya’s counsel Rs 6,200 crore was to be repaid, but Rs 14,000 crore has been recovered. Mallya’s counsel claimed that this was informed to the Lok Sabha by the Finance Minister.

Mallya’s counsel has argued that the loan recovery officer stated that Rs 10,200 crore has been recovered. He claimed that even though the full loan amount has been cleared, the process is still ongoing. Therefore, a request has been made to direct the banks to provide a statement of the recovered loan amount.

Based on Mallya’s petition a notice was issued to banks and loan recovery officers by the High Court bench led by Justice R Devadas.

Mallya is currently living in London and he is the subject of extradition efforts from the Government of India for alleged loan defaults.

Earlier on December 18, 2024, Vijay Mallya had



claimed that banks have recovered Rs 14,131.60 crore from him “against the judgement debt of Rs 6203 crore” but he continues to be “an economic offender”.

He said in a post on X that unless the Enforcement Directorate and banks can legally justify how they have taken more than two times the debt, he is entitled to relief.

“The Debt Recovery Tribunal adjudged the KFA (Kingfisher Airlines) debt at Rs 6203 crores including Rs 1200 crores of interest. The FM announced in Parliament that through the ED, Banks have recovered Rs 14,131.60 crores from me against the judgement debt of Rs 6203 crores and I am still an economic offender. Unless the ED and Banks can legally justify how they have taken more than two times the debt, I

am entitled to relief which I will pursue,” Mallya said.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had listed several major cases where the Enforcement Directorate has from time to time attached properties of individuals and companies connected to economic offence cases.

Replying to the debate on Supplementary Demands for Grants - First Batch for 2024-2025, she apprised the Lok Sabha Tuesday evening that the central enforcement agency has successfully restored properties worth around Rs 22,280 crore -- only the major cases included. Of those restored, the complete attached property worth Rs 14,131.6 crores of fugitive businessman Vijay Mallya has been restored to the public sector banks, the minister said.

Cargo Handling at Indian ports up 3.5% CAGR since 2014-15

TBG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The cargo volumes handled by Indian ports year-over-year have been rising, with a growing economy and in line with its exports.

The cargo handled at major Ports has increased from 581.34 million tonnes in 2014-15 to 819.23 million tonnes in financial year 2023-24, a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 3.5 per cent which is comparable to global standards, Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, Sarbananda Sonowal said in a written reply to the Rajya Sabha during the Budget session.

During 2023-24, the cargo handled consisted of 33.8 per cent liquid bulk, 44.04 per cent dry bulk, and 22.16 per cent container cargo.

Infrastructure development and capacity augmentation of major ports is a continuous process.

It involves the construction of new berths and terminals, mechanization of existing berths and terminals, capital dredging for deepening of drafts for attracting larger vessels, development of road and rail connectivity, the minister said in his written reply.

Further, Vadhavan Port in

Maharashtra has been approved to be developed as the mega container port in the country catering the requirement of handling new generation mega size container vessels, he apprised the Parliament.

Based on consultation with major ports, state maritime boards, Ministry of Railway and Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, 107 road and rail connectivity infrastructure gaps for major and non-major ports have been identified and included in the Comprehensive Port Connectivity Plan (CPCP) prepared by Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) in September 2022.

These projects aim to enhance connectivity between ports and domestic production / consumption centres.

The government has taken various steps to streamline logistics for export-oriented industries such as the construction of new berths, terminals and parking plazas, mechanization / modernisation / optimisation of existing berths and terminals, streamlining of processes through digitalisation, expansion of hinterland connectivity through rail and road.

Nargis Dutt Foundation hosts World Cancer Day awareness event

TBG NETWORK
MUMBAI

The Nargis Dutt Foundation, established in 1981 in memory of the late actress Nargis Dutt, hosted a special event on World Cancer Day at Carter Road Amphitheatre, Bandra West. The foundation, under the leadership of Chairperson and Trustee Priya Dutt, has long been dedicated to cancer awareness, patient support, and healthcare initiatives. Nargis Dutt Foundation is a GIVE

Assured and Guide Star Certified NGO.

The evening began with a musical performance by Som Prem and his band, creating an uplifting atmosphere. Priya Dutt, in her welcome address, reiterated the foundation’s commitment to supporting cancer patients and spreading awareness about early detection and treatment.

Dr. Anil D’Cruz, Director: Oncology Apollo Hospitals Mumbai, Chennai and Delhi, a leading oncologist, has often

emphasized that “cancer is not a death sentence if detected early. Advances in medicine, coupled with awareness, have significantly improved survival rates.”

Dr. Sewanti Limaye, Director of Medical and Precision Oncology at Sir H.N. Reliance Foundation Hospital, has stressed the importance of cancer awareness and cancer screening, noting that “enhanced cancer awareness and screening is a way of life that we all need to adapt to. A revolution



that should be owned by the people, by communities and society at large. We must routinely ask each other if we have participated in cancer screening this year?!”

Similarly, Dr. Sampada Desai, Consultant Gynaecological Cancer and Robotic Surgeon at PD Hinduja Hospital, has also highlighted the emotional and psychological impact of cancer, stating that “a strong support system and mental well-being play a crucial role in a patient’s recovery

journey.”

Acclaimed Bollywood actress Sonali Bendre, emphasized that “each day brings its own challenges and victories, reminding us that we’re stronger than we know. Even when the journey feels tough, fight it with hope, switch on the sunshine, and take one day at a time.”

Celebrated actress Hina Khan, the event’s chief guest, applauded the foundation’s efforts and encouraged people to take charge of their

health. The evening concluded with another soul-stirring musical performance, leaving the audience both reflective and motivated.

With its ongoing efforts in healthcare, patient welfare, and awareness campaigns, the Nargis Dutt Foundation continues to be a beacon of hope for many. The event served as a reminder that while the fight against cancer is challenging, collective awareness and timely action can make a difference.

KERALA SECURES RS 2,424 CRORE WORLD BANK LOAN FOR HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

Cabinet meeting chaired by CM Pinarayi Vijayan granted approval

TDG NETWORK
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Kerala government on Wednesday approved the Kerala Health System Improvement Programme by availing a loan of Rs 2,424.28 crore from the World Bank.

The state Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, which granted approval, decided to implement the project under the Programme for Results (P for R) model.

According to a CMO release, the main objective of the programme is to ensure an excellent standard of living and life expectancy while helping the people of the state build a life free from preventable diseases, accidents, and premature deaths.

"All interventions under the programme will focus

KEY POINTS

- Implemented under the Programme for Results (P for R) model.
- Expanding public health funding & digital health applications.
- Special focus on providing efficient healthcare services to those below the poverty line.
- Strengthening inter-departmental coordination for better healthcare delivery.



on ensuring the welfare of the poor. The project aims to establish resilient healthcare systems that provide value-based healthcare while addressing the state's evolving demographic and epidemiological challenges," it said.

The government said the project will also enhance coordination between various state departments to effectively respond to emerging threats, including climate change, and improve the efficiency of healthcare delivery systems in Kerala.

Key objectives include developing a comprehensive ecosystem to prevent non-communicable diseases, strengthening healthcare infrastructure, adopting better approaches to tackle climate-related health risks, and effectively responding

Mahindra, Birla among 75+ industry icons to take part in Invest Karnataka 2025

TDG NETWORK
BENGALURU

Large and Medium Industries Minister M.B. Patil, under whose leadership Karnataka is setting new benchmarks for industrial growth, announced on Wednesday that the state is set to host its most ambitious Global Investors Meet (GIM), Invest Karnataka 2025. This premier investment summit will bring together 75+ marquee global leaders across 25+ thought-provoking sessions. Taking place from February 12-14, 2025, with an inaugural event on February 11, the summit will be a powerhouse of insights, networking, and opportunities.

With the theme "Reimagining Growth", and driven by the vision of M.B. Patil, GIM, Invest Karnataka 2025 will focus on technology-driven, sustainable, and inclusive development, reinforcing Karnataka's position as a premier global investment hub.

Under M.B. Patil's leadership, the event will feature an unparalleled lineup of visionary leaders from diverse fields who are shaping the future of business, finance, and innovation:

Global Business Visionaries - Anand Mahindra, Chairperson, Mahindra & Mahindra, Kumar Mangalam Birla, Chairperson, Aditya Birla Group, Sajjan Jindal, Managing Director, JSW Group, Geetanjali Kir-



loskar, Chairperson & MD, Kirloskar Systems, and Martin Lundstedt, President & CEO, Volvo Group will take part in the summit.

Policy & Governance Experts such as Shashi Tharoor, Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha) & Chairman, Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs, George Papandreou, Former Prime Minister of Greece, Montek Singh Ahluwalia, Former Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission of India will be present at the summit.

Tech & Innovation Pioneers like Oday Abbosh, Global Sustainability Leader, IBM, Akis Evangelidis, Co-Founder, Nothing, Ann Dunkin, Chief Information Officer, US Department of Energy, S. Somanath, Former Chairman, ISRO, Aravind Melligeri, Chairman & CEO, Aequs also will be a part of the summit.

Investment & Startup Leaders like Prashant Prakash, Partner, Accel, Nikhil Kamath, Co-Founder, Zerodha, True Beacon,

Gruhas, Vidit Aatrey, Founder & CEO, Meesho will be present.

Cultural & Social Change-Makers like Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, Chairperson & Founder, Biocon, Kiran Rao, Filmmaker, Indu Bhushan, Former CEO, Ayushman Bharat, and Parth Jindal, Managing Director, JSW Cement will be present.

GIM Invest Karnataka 2025, spearheaded by M.B. Patil, is set to be a transformative platform where global leaders, investors, and innovators converge to discuss the future of industries, economies, and technology.

The event, under his direction, is expected to drive investments worth Rs 10 lakh crore across key sectors such as aerospace, renewable energy, electronics, and advanced manufacturing. With collaborations spanning 18 countries and 9 dedicated country pavilions, the summit will foster critical technology and innovation exchange at a global scale.

A special Future of Innovation Expo, envisioned under M.B. Patil's strategic guidance, will showcase cutting-edge advancements in mobility, defense, biotech, R&D, and precision manufacturing. Karnataka's forward-looking New Industrial Policy (2024-29), launched under his leadership, will highlight incentives for businesses, focusing on EVs, semiconductors, aerospace, and sustainability, along with key green initiatives like Zero Liquid Discharge (ZLD) and renewable energy adoption.

Startups and SMEs will gain significant exposure through dedicated programs such as the Venture RISE Global Startup Challenge and the AI-powered SME Connect Portal, which will enable businesses to connect with investors and potential partners. Additionally, the introduction of an AI-Powered Single Window System, an initiative led by M.B. Patil, will streamline investor processes, including AI-driven land allocation, grievance redressal, and multilingual chatbot support, making Karnataka a benchmark state for ease of doing business.

With 75+ global business icons, 30+ thought leadership sessions, and over 5,000 senior delegates, GIM Invest Karnataka 2025 will be a landmark event for investment, innovation, and industrial growth.

to emerging health threats.

Additionally, the project seeks to reinforce emergency and trauma care services by creating an efficient 24x7 emergency response network, including ambulances and a trauma registry, the release said.

It further said in elderly care, the project will integrate local self-government institutions to address existing and emerging challenges by reimagining healthcare systems, enhancing human resource capabilities, increasing resource allocation, universalising digital health applications, and expanding public health funding.

Special emphasis will be given on providing efficient healthcare services to those below the poverty line, the CMO said.

Dy CM DK Shivakumar calls to withdraw 'flawed' NEP

TDG NETWORK
BENGALURU



Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Wednesday called for building pressure on the Union government and the University Grants Commission (UGC) to withdraw the flawed National Education Policy (NEP).

Addressing a conclave of higher education ministers from various states, Shivakumar stated, "The National Education Policy rolled out by the Union government has many flaws. The Karnataka government has gone ahead and brought in some amendments. The output from this conclave must reach the Centre."

YSRCP will live and rule Andhra for 30 years: Reddy

TDG NETWORK
AMARAVATI

Andhra Pradesh opposition leader YS Jagan Mohan Reddy on Wednesday exuded confidence that his party, YSRCP, will "live and rule the state for 30 years". Addressing an internal party meeting at his residence in Tadepalli, Guntur district, the former CM said the party, which suffered a humiliating defeat in the 2024 polls, will emerge again with redoubled enthusiasm. "YSRCP will live and rule this state. We will rule for another 30 years. Nobody can even touch YSRCP," said Reddy, according to a vernacular news channel. Further, the YSRCP supremo asserted that Jagan Anna 2.0 will be 'dierent', referring to the future course of time, which will emphasise the welfare of party activists. Remember one thing: This time Jagan Anna 2.0 will be dierent, and demonstrate how it will work for the party activists.

This I am telling you, certainly. Because, during Jagan



Anna 1.0, I couldn't do much for the party activists," he said. Elaborating on why he failed to 'focus' on YSRCP activists during Jagan Anna 1.0, hinting at his chief ministerial tenure between 2019 and 2024, Reddy asserted that he "only remembered the people" for every scheme, every matter, and every step he took "I have seen the difficulties the TDP supremo Chandrababu Naidu has subjected our party cadres to. I have seen the difficulties faced by the party activists. Your Jagan Anna will be with them (activists) rmly; I am telling you this strongly," he said. Turning philosophi-

cal, the opposition leader noted that "there will be no comfort without struggles", adding that difficulties are part and parcel of everyone's life.

"We will face difficulties when we are in the opposition. How we face those difficulties will make us leaders. If we sell our character when we face difficulties and lose our individuality, then we will become cheap (in people's eyes)," claimed Reddy. Remember my story, if any of you are facing difficulties, he said, observing that he was jailed for 16 months due to the 'fake' cases led by the Congress and TDP leaders just because he was "growing politically". "But what happened? Didn't I come out? Didn't I become the CM," asked Reddy, adding that "everyone should remember his story". "It's the same with everyone. What can they (ruling parties) do? At the most, they can le fake cases, threaten, and jail you for three months.

TTD takes action against 18 employees for non-compliance with Hindu religious practices

TDG NETWORK
TIRUPATI

According to a statement from TTD, the action was taken under the direction of TTD Chairman BR Naidu.

The Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) has initiated action against 18 employees for failing to adhere to Hindu religious practices while participating in TTD festivals and rituals.

According to a statement from TTD, the action was taken under the direction of TTD Chairman BR Naidu. "Following the directions of TTD Chairman BR Naidu, the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) has initiated action against employees adhering to non-Hindu religious practices while working in the institution," the statement read.

"Authorities have identified 18 employees who, despite being employed by TTD, are following non-Hindu religious traditions. Orders have been issued for disciplinary action against 18 identified employees who are participating in non-Hindu religious activities while also taking part in TTD

festivals and rituals," added the statement.

Apart from that, as part of the decision to preserve the spiritual integrity of TTD's operations, the Board has proposed transfers to other government departments or voluntary retirement for these employees.

"The TTD Board has recently resolved to either transfer such employees to government departments or facilitate their exit through the Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS). This decision aligns with TTD's commitment to preserving the spiritual sanctity of its temples and religious activities," mentioned the TTD statement. Earlier, in Novem-

ber 2024, the TTD board also passed another resolution which requires non-Hindus employed by the board to either take voluntary retirement or opt for a transfer to other government departments in Andhra Pradesh. Speaking to ANI, the TTD chairman said, "I moved the resolution in the Board yesterday. The Board has unanimously accepted. We have identified some people (staff at TTD), non-Hindus...I wanted to meet those people personally and I would request them to take VRS. If they are not interested, we will transfer or maybe grant deputation to other government departments, like Revenue or Municipality or any Corporation. So, that is our intention."

The board has also passed a resolution prohibiting political statements within Tirumala, stating that legal action will be taken against violators as well as those who propagate them. TTD maintains 12 temples and sub-shrines, and employs over 14,000 people.

Civilian killed by Maoists in Dantewada; investigation underway

TDG NETWORK
DANTEWADA

A civilian was killed by Maoists in the Dantewada district, as per police officials.

The villager, identified as Harma Hemla, was killed on accusations of being a police informer. The incident took place in the Kakadi village, within the PS Aranpur, ac-

cording to the Dantewada Police. The Maoists reportedly arrived at the victim's residence late Tuesday night and killed him after abducting him from his house. In the past two days, Naxalites have also killed three other villagers in the Dantewada and Bijapur districts, officials further said. The matter was

reported to the police by the villagers. An investigation into the matter is currently underway. On February 2, as per preliminary information, one civilian was murdered by Maoists on Sunday morning in Kiyer village, Bhamragad Tehsil in South Gachchiroli. The victim, identified as Sukhran Madavi, was stran-

gulated, leading to his death. According to Neelotpal, Superintendent of Police (SP) Gachchiroli, "In the pamphlet found near the body, Maoists have falsely alleged that he was a police informer and has helped police to open up new camps like Pengunda in the area and was providing information to police.

Surya Kiran Aerobatic Team to dazzle the skies of Bengaluru

TDG NETWORK
BENGALURU

The majestic city of Bengaluru is all set to witness a breath-taking spectacle in the skies. From 10-14th February, the skies over Bengaluru will come alive as the prestigious Surya Kiran Aerobatic Team (SKAT) performs an extraordinary air show, promising to leave spectators in awe.

The SKAT, better known as the "Ambassadors of the IAF," is renowned for its precision, skill, and teamwork. This elite team, flying the striking red-and-white Hawk Mk-132 jets, will showcase a series of jaw-dropping manoeuvres.

From the graceful loop and the thrilling barrel roll to the gravity-defying inverted flying and the crowd-favourite DNA manoeuvre, every performance is a testament to the pilots' unmatched expertise and coordination.

SKAT was established in the year 1996. The team holds the coveted title of being the only nine-aircraft aerobatic team in Asia, and is one of the elite few aerobatic teams in the world. This exceptional team has performed over 700 displays across India, while also representing the professionalism of the IAF at international air shows in countries such as China,



Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, Singapore, and the UAE.

Surya Kiran team com-

prises 9 Hawk Mk 132 aircraft license manufactured in India flying in extremely close proximity at a distance

of less than 5 meters. There are 14 pilots in the team. The team leader is Group Captain Ajay Dasarathi,

a Su-30 MKI pilot. The Deputy Leader is Group Captain Sidhesh Kartik. The other pilots are Squadron Leader Jasdeep Singh, Squadron Leader Himkush Chandel, Squadron Leader Ankit Vashisth, Squadron Leader Vishnu, Squadron Leader Divakar Sharma, Squadron Leader Gaurav Patel, Squadron Leader Edward Prince, Squadron Leader Lalit Verma, Wing Commander Rajesh Kajla, Wing Commander Arjun Patel who is a native of Bengaluru, Wing Commander Kuldeep Hooda and Wing Commander Allen George. Their technical team is led by Wing Commander Abhimanyu Tyadi, Squadron

leader Sandeep Dhayal and Flight Lieutenant Manil Sharma. The team's commentator and administrator is Flight Lieutenant Kanwal Sandhu and the team's doctor is Squadron Leader Sudharshan. All members live by the team's motto "Sadaiva Sarvottam" meaning Always the Best! SKAT embodies the spirit of excellence. The pilots undergo intensive training to master complex aerobatic manoeuvres, with their expertise and flawless coordination forming the foundation of the close formation flying.

The recent integration of smoke pods with the Hawk Mk 132 aircraft, capable of producing colored smoke,

is a significant indigenous modification developed in India at an IAF's Base and allows the team to display the three colors of the national flag across the sky during their aerial performances. This enhancement not only adds visual impact to the displays but also serves as a powerful symbol of national pride, celebrating India's achievements in aerospace engineering and innovation.

The residents of Bengaluru and visitors alike can look forward to this rare treat as the skies transform into a canvas of spectacular formations, celebrating the spirit of teamwork, discipline and excellence that defines the IAF.

DOMESTIC ABUSE: NEED TO PROTECT MALE VICTIMS

OPINION

ABHINAV PANDEY



Justice consists not in being neutral between right and wrong, but in finding out the right and upholding it, wherever found, against the wrong.”. This pursuit of true justice demands that we examine our legal frameworks and societal structures to ensure they serve all members of society, regardless of gender. The alarming rise in male suicides in India, often linked to untreated mental

health issues and the feeling of being trapped in abusive situations without legal recourse, compels us to confront a silent crisis. National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data reveals a disturbing trend: suicide rates in India are alarming, with men disproportionately affected. In 2022, approximately 72% of suicide victims were men, roughly 342 men each day. This escalating trend reflects lives lost, families devastated, and a failure to address the unique pressures men face. Traditional expectations of men play a significant role. Men are often pressured to be providers, strong, and stoic. Showing emotion is perceived as weakness, and seeking help is considered a sign of failure. This toxic environment discourages men

from expressing emotional pain, leading to silent suffering that can culminate in suicide. Men facing mental health issues like depression and anxiety often encounter judgment and ridicule instead of support. They are told to «toughen up» instead of receiving necessary help. This pressure is frequently compounded by financial worries, relationship problems, and job stress. While various factors contribute to suicide, the gender aspect cannot be ignored. Societal expectations for men, coupled with a lack of accessible mental health support, create a dangerous situation. Legal frameworks, while often well-intentioned, can overlook men’s struggles, particularly with domestic abuse. While laws rightly protect women, men can also be victims of physical, emotional, and psychological abuse. Current laws often fail to recognize this, leaving male victims without recourse. This lack of legal protection can amplify feelings of helplessness and despair, contributing to high suicide rates. Furthermore, its of-

ten seen that even relatives of the husband, who don’t even reside in the shared household, are implicated in cases of harassment. This misuse of the law further complicates matters. Therefore, gender-neutral laws are crucial. This does not diminish the importance of laws protecting women. It means acknowledging that both genders face unique challenges and ensuring the legal system addresses them equitably. We need laws that explicitly recognize male victims of domestic violence, providing the same protections and support as women. This includes access to shelters, counseling, legal aid, and protective orders. A gender-neutral domestic violence law is not about minimizing women’s struggles; it is about acknowledging men’s suffering and ensuring equal access to justice and support. Beyond domestic violence, we need laws recognizing male victims of sexual assault and false accusations, providing legal recourse and support. We need laws addressing men’s needs in family matters, promot-

ing shared parenting and recognizing fathers’ vital role in their children’s lives. Workplace harassment and discrimination laws should also be gender-neutral. Enacting these laws is only the first step. Effective implementation and enforcement are crucial. Law enforcement, legal professionals, and judges must understand the unique challenges men face, especially abuse victims, and be trained to handle cases with empathy. This requires training that addresses biases and promotes a nuanced understanding of gender. Legal aid and mental health services should be accessible and affordable for everyone. Beyond legal changes, a cultural shift is essential. We must dismantle the notion that men should not seek help, especially when abused. We need a society where men feel safe to report domestic violence without judgment, where showing vulnerability is seen as strength, and where mental health is a priority for all. This requires open conversations, challenging traditional gender roles, and

promoting emotional understanding from a young age. Schools, families, and communities must foster a supportive environment for men. Increased funding for mental health research and awareness campaigns specifically for men, including those experiencing domestic abuse, is also vital. The rising rate of male suicides, often linked to untreated mental health issues and feeling trapped in abusive situations without legal help, is a national tragedy. The misuse of laws, where even relatives of the husband are implicated in harassment cases despite not living in the shared home, adds another layer of complexity. We must act now. Gender-neutral laws, especially a gender-neutral domestic violence law, along with changing attitudes towards men and mental health, are crucial to prevent further loss of life and build a more equitable society. The time for silence is over. We must act, together. The author is Legal Researcher, Columnist and Fourth Year Law Student at University of Lucknow.

Janata ka Budget: A paradigm shift for neo middle class

OPINION

DR.S.SUKANYA IYER



MAJOR ANNOUNCEMENTS

Prime Minister Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana: This initiative will cover 100 districts with low productivity, aiming to help 1.7 crore farmers through enhanced credit parameters. Mission for Aatmanirbharta in Pulses: A 6-year mission focusing on increasing domestic pulse production, particularly Tur, Urad, and Masoor, to improve productivity and farmer income while promoting climate-resilient seeds.

ANALYSIS

Taxation Reform: The proposed tax changes are clearly aimed at providing relief to the middle class by lowering the effective tax rate for lower income brackets and offering substantial rebates. This could increase disposable income, potentially boosting consumption and economic activity.

Agricultural Focus: The announcements regarding agriculture reflect a strategy to enhance productivity and self-reliance in key crops, which could have long-term benefits in terms of food security, reducing import dependency, and supporting rural economies.

Economic Impact: Forgoing Rs 1 lakh crore in direct taxes might be a significant fiscal decision, potentially offset by increased economic activity due to higher disposable incomes. It’s a gamble on economic growth leading to higher indirect tax collections or other revenue sources.

Sustainability: The mission for pulses and the focus on climate-resilient seeds show an understanding of sustainable agricultural practices, which is crucial for long-term environmental health and agricultural productivity.

SUMMARY OF BUDGET

- No Income Tax on average monthly income of up to Rs 1 lakh; to boost middle-class household savings & Consumption
- Salaried class to pay Nil Income Tax up to Rs 12.75 lakh per annum in the New Tax Regime
- Union Budget recognises 4 engines of development – Agriculture, MSME, Investment and Exports
- Benefitting 1.7 crore farmers, ‘Prime Minister Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana’ to cover 100 low agricultural productivity districts
- “Mission for Aatmanirbharta in Pulses” with a special focuses on Tur, Urad and Masoor to be launched.

I will give you all A Simple Analysis of How Union Budget Estimates have been Progressive over the years

No income tax up to Rs 12 lakhs.

Here is how income tax exemption limits have moved over the few last years.

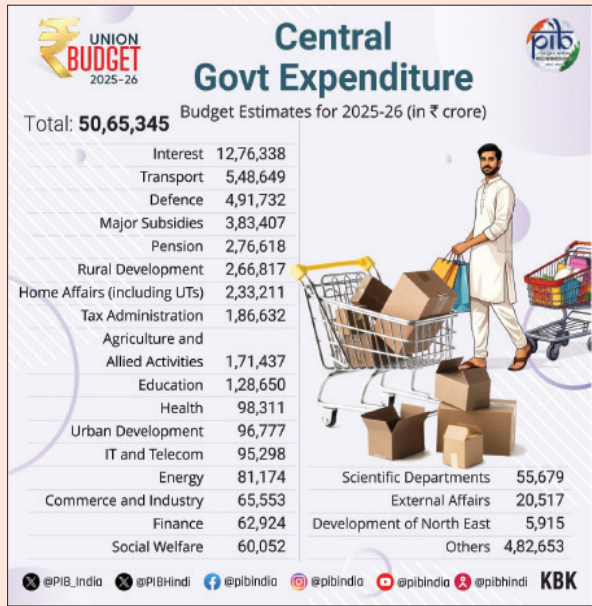
- 2005: Rs 1 lakh
- 2012: Rs 2 lakhs
- 2014: Rs 2.5 lakhs
- 2019: Rs 5 lakhs
- 2023: Rs 7 lakhs
- 2025: Rs 12 lakhs

ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS Increased disposable income:

The removal of tax liability for incomes up to Rs 12 lakh is expected to increase disposable income, which could lead to higher consumption, thereby stimulating economic growth. This is particularly important in sectors like FMCG and retail, which have been facing demand challenges.

Fiscal Impact: The government anticipates a revenue loss of 1 lakh crore due to these tax cuts. However, this is balanced against the potential for increased economic activity and indirect tax collections from higher consumer spending.

Investment and Savings: By reducing the tax burden, the budget encourages savings and investments. The new tax regime allows individuals more flexibility in how they use



their income, potentially leading to investment in personal development, real estate, or financial markets, which could have long-term benefits for economic growth.

Social and Sectorial Focus:

Education and Healthcare: The budget includes significant investments in education with plans to expand medical seats and establish new AI research centres, aiming at long-term human capital development. Healthcare investments are also emphasized, likely to improve public health infrastructure and services.

Agriculture and Rural Development:

Initiatives like the PM Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana target 100 districts with low agricultural productivity, aiming to improve yield and credit access for farmers. This sectorial focus is intended to bolster rural economies, which are crucial for overall economic stability.

Urban Development and Housing:

Although not detailed in the provided sources, typically, budgets with a middle-class focus might also include measures for affordable housing or urban infrastructure development to support middle-class living standards.

Political and Public Perception:

Government’s Stance: The government, through this budget, is positioning itself as pro-middle class, emphasizing economic empowerment and growth through tax relief. Prime Minister Narendra

Modi has referred to it as a «peoples’ budget,» highlighting its focus on the common citizen’s welfare.

Here are some quotes from various industry experts on the Union Budget 2025:

On Electric Vehicles and Sustainability:

“The exemption of basic customs duty on lithium-ion battery scrap is another commendable move. It promotes a circular economy by making battery recycling more viable, reducing reliance on fresh raw material imports, and decreasing production costs and environmental impact.” - Industry Experts (Source: Hello Entrepreneurs)

On Real Estate:

“The recent budget introduces significant measures poised to invigorate the real estate sector. Allowing taxpayers to claim two self-occupied properties and increasing the TDS threshold on rent to 6 lakhs from 2.4 lakh per annum are commendable steps in the real estate sector.” - Mr. Amit Jain, Chairman and Managing Director of Arkade Developers Limited (Source: Hello Entrepreneurs)

On Healthcare:

“The 2025 budget presents a series of promising initiatives that will significantly impact cancer care in India. The full exemption of customs duty on 36 life-saving drugs, including cancer medications, is a key highlight.” - Mr. Raj Gore, CEO, Healthcare Global Enterprises Limited & Lead FICCI Cancer task force

(Source: Hello Entrepreneurs)

On Manufacturing and Digital Infrastructure:

“The Union Budget 2025-26 is forward-looking and growth-centric, reinforcing the government’s commitment to strengthening India’s manufacturing sector and driving the transition to cleaner mobility solutions.” - Ms. Shradha Suri Marwah, President, ACMA (Source: electronicsera.in)

On Taxation and Economic Growth:

“The Budget 2025 delivers a comprehensive vision for India’s future. It focuses not only on driving economic growth but also on ensuring that this growth is inclusive and sustainable.” - Analysts (Source: groww.in)

On Affordable Housing and Startups:

“The budgetary announcement on affordable housing will lead to improved demand supply equilibrium, clearing the path for India’s affordable housing demand to reach 31.2 million units by 2030 and a market valuation of Rs 67 trillion.” - Lalit Beriwal, Director, Shyam Steel Industries Ltd. (Source: businessnews-thisweek.com)

These quotes reflect a broad spectrum of reactions from sector-specific impacts to overarching economic strategies outlined in the Union Budget 2025.

The budget is tailored to benefit the middle class by significantly reducing their tax burden, which aligns with the government’s narrative of promoting growth through increased consumer spending and savings. While there are criticisms regarding the depth of economic reform, the immediate financial relief to a significant portion of the population could have positive economic ripple effects. The focus on education, healthcare, and agriculture also suggests a long-term vision for sustainable growth and development. This is Budget for Pro Middle class, Consumption and Start-ups.

PERSPECTIVE LAW BREAKERS

ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS DO NOT DESERVE SYMPATHY

Now that US military aircraft have started bringing to India those Indian nationals who were staying in the United States illegally, it needs to be made amply clear that there is no scope for sympathy for such people. Anyone who takes what is known as the “donkey” route to sneak into foreign countries illegally—be it the US, the UK or any other country—is participating in an act of crime. Illegal immigration is a criminal activity and if these immigrants have been treated like criminals in the US, it is because they are criminals. There is no softer way of putting it. Hence, it is surprising that Punjab government’s NRI affairs minister, Kuldeep Singh Dhaliwal is of the view—according to media reports—that these returnees should have been treated better by the US as they have contributed to the US economy—which is a ridiculous argument. The minister concerned is also of the view that the youths who are being sent back should be counselled, rehabilitated, jobs found for them and in case they have taken huge loans from banks to fund their misadventures, the interest on such loans should be written off. It seems it never struck the minister that all this amounts to legitimising rank illegalities. People who break the law do not get any privileges. While there may be strong support for illegal immigration among sections of the minister’s voters, but not everything can be about vote bank politics. These returnees have not only broken the law, they have also given a bad name to the country by their disgraceful behaviour. Most of them have pushed their families to penury by sucking out their savings to pay unscrupulous agents who have helped them reach the foreign shores. If they have taken bank loans they would have done it under false pretext, for banks would not give any loans for the purpose that they have sought it. So the whole process is mired in corruption and illegalities. In fact, they deserve exemplary punishment so that no one dares to follow in their footsteps.

It is surprising that Punjab government’s NRI affairs minister, Kuldeep Singh Dhaliwal is of the view—according to media reports—that these returnees should have been treated better by the US as they have contributed to the US economy—which is a ridiculous argument.

The message must go out that any attempt to move to another country illegally is fraught with hazards. Illegal immigration always involves human trafficking, with all its attendant problems, including death. Being undocumented, such immigrants are at the mercy of crime syndicates, who use them for drug trafficking and other criminal activities. There are also cases when criminals wanted by India flee to other countries using these illegal routes. India has always been against illegal immigration, the reason why it doesn’t have any problem taking back these returnees, provided it is established that they are Indians. But it can do a better job of spreading awareness among the target public about the risks involved in illegal immigration—for it is known from which demography in which state most of the illegal immigrations take place. It also needs to do a better job of cracking down on the criminal networks that facilitate such illegal immigration. Tracking them down is not that tough, what’s needed is the will. And for this action needs to be taken even against elements of the local police and politicians some of whom are involved in these rackets.

Most importantly, there has to be a change of mindset at the level of the society, for which education is necessary, to inculcate a sense of optimism and belief in one’s own country. A country like India understands the problems associated with illegal immigration, thanks to the porous borders it shares with some of its neighbours. India’s border with Bangladesh is like a sieve, as a result of which rapid demographic changes have been taking place in Assam and West Bengal in particular. The situation is so precarious in Assam that there is fear that inside the next couple of decades Assamese speaking people will be in a minority in that state, because of the illegal Bangladeshis. West Bengal’s border districts too are witnessing demographic changes. Illegal immigrants are spreading all over India, taking away jobs and posing a security threat to the country. Many of these illegals have even an electoral impact because of the papers they have obtained from some local politicians. This has to change. If it is acceptable for Donald Trump to throw illegal immigrants out, the same is true for India as well. It is just that the process of identifying the illegals may be time consuming and will require painstaking work. But the resolve to deport illegal immigrants to their respective countries must be there.

JOYEETA BASU

BIG CATS, BIGGER COMEBACK

Established in 2025 with its secretariat in India, the International Big Cat Alliance fosters global collaboration to protect and restore big cat populations.

In 1967, a 19-year-old Ullas Karanth wandered through the forests of southern India, his senses assaulted by the cacophony of gunshots and the stark sight of decimated woodlands. The tiger, India's regal predator, was teetering on the brink of extinction. Fast forward to today, and India's tiger population has witnessed a remarkable resurgence, climbing from approximately 2,000 to nearly 3,000 individuals. This resurgence is not merely a tale of numbers but a testament to relentless conservation efforts, scientific innovation, and the indomitable spirit of individuals like Karanth.

THE GENESIS OF A CONSERVATIONIST

Originally trained as an engineer, Karanth's journey into wildlife conservation was unconventional. He even ventured into farming before his passion for wildlife led him to the forests. Mentored by the legendary Dr. George Schaller in the United States, Karanth transformed into a leading tiger researcher and conservation zoologist. He pioneered reliable tiger population estimation techniques in India and became a role model for many young, conservation-oriented minds.

INNOVATIONS IN TIGER RESEARCH

In 1988, Karanth embarked on rigorous fieldwork in the Western Ghats, a biodiversity hotspot in India. By 1990, he was radio-tracking five tigers and three leopards, delving deep into their secretive lives. Later, he introduced camera traps to census tiger populations, leading the way in both endeavors and spearheading subsequent conservation efforts. His work provided unprecedented insights into tiger behavior, ecology, and population dynamics. Karanth's studies revealed that a single tiger kills about 50 prey animals annually, necessitating a prey base of 500 to sustain one tiger.



A majestic Bengal tiger carefully stepping over rocks in a river, highlighting its grace and adaptability in the wild. File photo

This finding underscored the critical importance of preserving prey populations and their habitats. He also documented that female tigers hold territories of about 20 km², reach reproductive age at 3–4 years, and can bear 10–15 cubs over their lifetime. However, with a 20% annual mortality rate among adults, maintaining a stable population requires meticulous management.

India doubled its tiger population in a little over a decade by protecting the big cats from poaching and habitat loss, ensuring they have enough prey, reducing human-wildlife conflict, and increasing communities' living standards near tiger areas, a study published Thursday found. The number of tigers grew from an estimated 1,706 in 2010 to around 3,682 in 2022, according to estimates by the National Tiger Conservation Authority, making India home to roughly 75% of the global tiger population. The study found that some local com-

munities near tiger habitats have also benefited from the increase in tigers because of the foot traffic and revenues brought in by ecotourism.

The study in the journal Science says India's success "offers important lessons for tiger-range countries" that conservation efforts can benefit both biodiversity and nearby communities.

"The common belief is that human densities preclude an increase in tiger populations," said Yadvendradev Jhala, a senior scientist at Bengaluru-based Indian National Academy of Sciences and the study's lead author. "What the research shows is that it's not the human density, but the attitude of people, which matters more."

Wildlife conservationists and ecologists welcomed the study but said that tigers and other wildlife in India would benefit if source data were made available to a larger group of scientists. The study was based on data collected by Indian government-supported institutions.

Arjun Gopalaswamy, an ecologist with expertise in wildlife population estimation, said estimates from India's official tiger monitoring program have been "chaotic" and "contradictory." He said some of the figures in the study are significantly higher than previous estimates of tiger distribution from the same datasets. But he added that the paper's findings seem to have corrected an anomaly flagged repeatedly by scientists since 2011 related to tiger population size and their geographic spread.

Tigers disappeared in some areas that were not near national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, or other protected areas, and in areas that witnessed increased urbanization, increased human use of forest resources, and a higher frequency of armed conflicts, the study said. "Without community support and participation and community benefits, conservation is not possible in our country," said Jhala.

Tigers are spread across around 138,200 square kilo-

meters (53,359 square miles) in India, about the size of the state of New York. But just 25% of the area is prey-rich and protected, and another 45% of tiger habitats are shared with roughly 60 million people, the study said.

Strong wildlife protection legislation is the "backbone" of tiger conservation in India, said Jhala. "Habitat is not a constraint, it's the quality of the habitat which is a constraint," he said.

Wildlife biologist Ravi Chellam, who wasn't part of the study, said that while tiger conservation efforts are promising, they need to be extended to other species to better maintain the entire ecosystem.

"There are several species, including the great Indian bustard and caracal, which are all on the edge," Chellam said. "And there is really not enough focus on that."

CHALLENGES AND SETBACKS

Karanth's conservation journey was fraught with challenges. He faced bureaucratic hurdles that prevented him from tracking his animals for over six months, leading to lost data and time devoted to litigation. His work was ransacked by a mob, his field station and vehicle set ablaze, and 8 km² of prime



Dr. Ullas Karanth, a pioneering tiger conservationist and researcher, who has played a crucial role in India's tiger population resurgence. File photo

habitat destroyed. These setbacks stemmed from strict limitations on reserve exploitation that had stopped locals from entering the forest or consuming wild animals, but the immediate cause was the death of a poacher.

Despite these adversities, Karanth remained undeterred, driven by a thirst for knowledge and a near-mystical connection to the wilderness. He once remarked on the "near mystical feeling of anticipating a tiger while soaking up myriad other sounds, smells and sensations," capturing the profound allure that kept him tethered to his mission.

A BROADER CONSERVATION VISION

Karanth's vision for tiger conservation extends beyond individual animals. He emphasizes the need for reserves with minimal human presence, advocating for the relocation of communities to create inviolate spaces for wildlife. Over the past two decades, he has worked with other dedicated conservationists to make impressive strides in human relocations. He has also taken on big business, contributing to the removal of a large mining operation from one reserve, and influencing government policy,

such as in methods of tiger censusing.

Karanth also underscores the importance of economic incentives, suggesting that land-use change could favor habitat restoration to advance tourism, thereby benefiting both local communities and wildlife. He notes, "When given the real chance to escape their forced coexistence with tigers to reach towards modernity, people grab it."

INDIA'S CONSERVATION MILESTONES

India's commitment to big cat conservation has yielded significant successes:

Asiatic Lions: Once teetering on the brink of extinction, the Asiatic lion population in Gujarat's Gir National Park has rebounded to 674 individuals as of 2020, marking a 28.87% increase from the previous count.

Tigers: Through initiatives like Project Tiger, India's wild tiger population has risen to 3,682 as of 2022, accounting for nearly 75% of the global wild tiger population.

Cheetahs: In a historic move, cheetahs have been reintroduced to India after being declared extinct in 1952. The reintroduction began in 2023, with individuals imported from

Namibia and South Africa to Madhya Pradesh's Kuno National Park.

Leopards: The Indian leopard population has shown a positive trend, with numbers increasing from 12,852 in 2018 to 13,874 in 2022.

Snow Leopards: The elusive snow leopard, residing in India's high-altitude regions, has an estimated population of 718 individuals, accounting for 10–15% of the global population.

THE ROAD AHEAD

While these achievements are commendable, challenges persist. Habitat loss due to urbanization and infrastructure development, human-wildlife conflicts, poaching, illegal wildlife trade, disease outbreaks, and climate change continue to threaten big cat populations.

The establishment of the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) in 2025, with its secretariat in India, marks a significant step toward global collaboration in big cat conservation. The IBCA aims to facilitate cooperation among stakeholders, promote conservation best practices, and strengthen transnational initiatives to halt and reverse big cat population declines.

Compiled by Ruchira Talapatra



Tiger



Lion

Context: India has proposed to launch a mega global alliance to protect big cats and assured support over five years with guaranteed funding of \$100 million (over Rs 800 crore)



Leopard



Snow Leopard



Jaguar



Puma

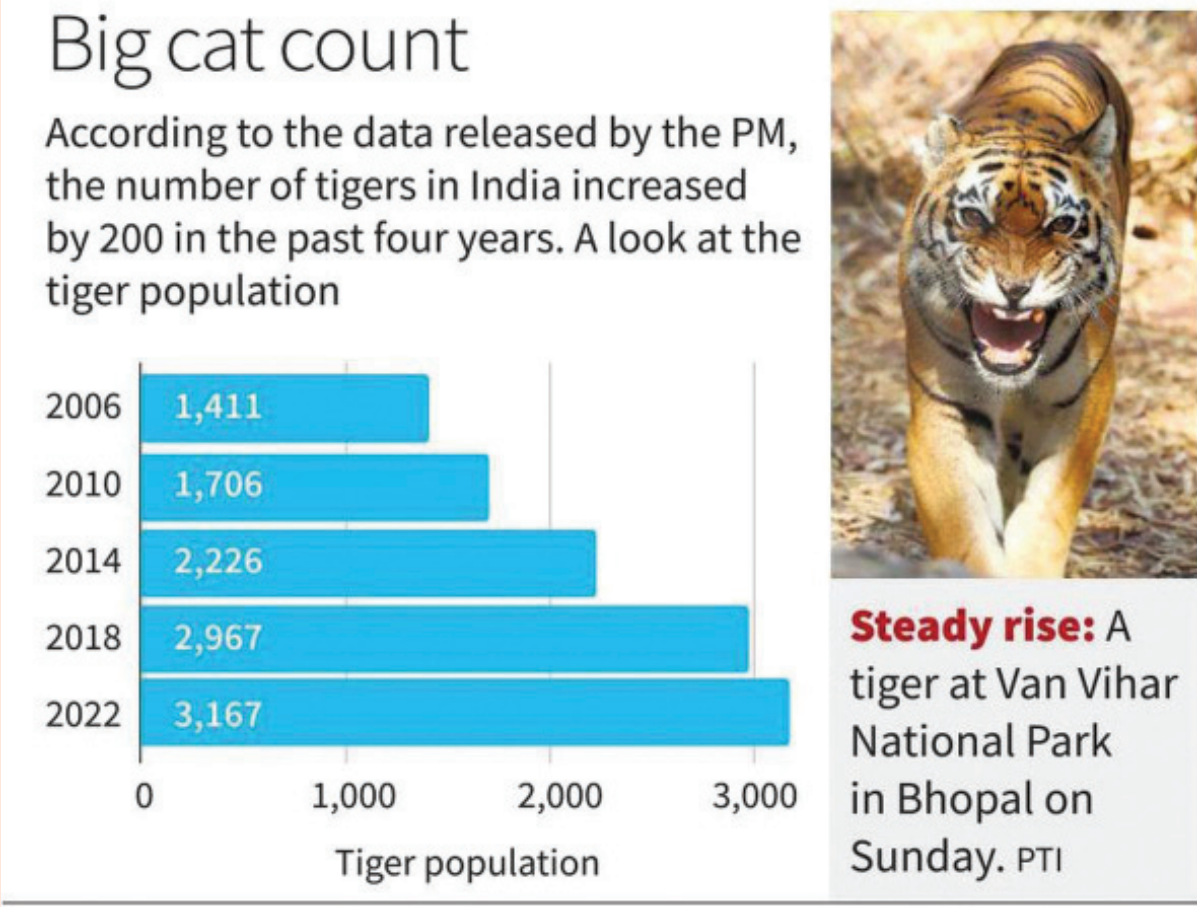


Cheetah

About International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA)

	Description
Purpose	Protection and conservation of the 7 major big cats- tiger, lion, leopard, snow leopard, puma, jaguar and cheetah
Member countries	97 range countries and other interested nations and organs.
Activities	Advocacy, partnerships, knowledge portal, capacity building, eco-tourism, expert groups and finance tapping
Governance structure	General Assembly, Council, and Secretariat
Funding	\$100 million grant assistance by India for the first 5 years; later through membership fees, contributions from bilateral and multilateral institutions, and the private sector
Previous initiatives	India had in 2019 called for an Alliance of Global Leaders to curb poaching and illegal wildlife trade in Asia.
Importance of saving the tiger	India is the only country in the world to have 5 big cats in wild (all except pumas and Jaguars). Big cats are umbrella and flagship species whose loss can set off a "trophic cascade," (prey populations may explode, resulting in overgrazing and degrading the health of the landscape). India is home to 75% of global tigers.

An overview of the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA), India's initiative to protect the seven major big cat species worldwide. File photo



A statistical representation of India's tiger population growth from 2006 to 2022, reflecting the success of conservation efforts. File photo

DELHI HIGH COURT: EMPLOYER CANNOT INDEFINITELY WITHHOLD VOLUNTARY RETIREMENT WITHHOLD VALID GROUNDS

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court in the case Sandeep Gupta v. Union of India & Ors observed and has ruled that an employer cannot indefinitely withhold voluntary retirement under Rule 56(k) of the Fundamental Rules.

The court in the case held that pending vigilance clearance or mere potential inquiries are not valid grounds for withholding retirement.

Further, the court clarified that the employer must communicate any rejection before the notice period expires; else, it would amount to deemed acceptance.

The Division bench comprising of Justice Navin Chawla and Justice Shalinder Kaur was hearing the present matter.

Background of the Case:
Sandeep Gupta joined the General Reserve Engineer Force with BRO in the year 1995 as an Assistant Executive Engineer and was promoted to Superintending Engineer in 2017. After nearly three decades of service, he sought voluntary retirement citing health issues and family responsibilities.



Sandeep Gupta applied for it under Rule 48 of the Central Civil Services (Pension) Rules, 1972, the CCS Pension Rules and Rule 56(k) of the Fundamental Rules FRs. However, his request was not processed despite multiple reminders.

Aggrieved with the same, Sandeep Gupta filed a writ petition, wherein he argued that his voluntary retirement should be made effective on the expiry of the mandatory notice period. However, the union argued that the Legal Department has to first conduct a 'vigilance clearance', and that pending inquiries against him justified withholding his retirement request.

Arguments before the court:

Sandeep Gupta argued before the court that he had satisfied all conditions under Rule 56(k) of the FRs.

Sandeep Gupta submitted before the court that under the rule, an employee's right to retire can only be withheld in specific circumstances (such as being under suspension or facing a charge sheet).

Sandeep Gupta also argued that none of these circumstances applied to his case. Further, citing State of Arunachal Pradesh v. Tai Nikio, and State of Haryana v. S.K. Singhal, wherein he argued that once the notice period ends without the employer's objection, retirement takes effect automatically.

On the other hand, the Union argued that voluntary retirement required 'vigilance clearance' from their Legal Department. They stated that Gupta had been a defense witness in an inquiry against another officer and was also subject to corruption allegations that could lead to a departmental

inquiry. Thus, a Court of Inquiry, COI had been initiated regarding irregularities in his House Rent Allowance, HRA claims. They argued that until these issues were resolved, processing the retirement request was not feasible.

Court Findings:
The court in the case explained that Rule 56(k) of the FRs allows a government employee to retire after giving three months' notice. It noted that the rule permits withholding retirement only if the employee is under suspension, facing a charge sheet, or involved in judicial proceedings for grave misconduct. The court in the case ruled that none of these conditions applied to Gupta. It has been held by the court that pending vigilance clearance or a potential inquiry does not automatically justify withholding voluntary retirement.

Further, the court noted that an employer must communicate any decision to withhold retirement before the notice period expires.

The court while referring to the case Tai Nikio held that a failure to issue a formal rejection within the notice period

results in deemed acceptance.

The court also reiterated that if an employer intends to withhold permission, it must issue a written order before the expiry of the notice period. Since this was not done, the court ruled that Sandeep Gupta's voluntary retirement had already taken effect.

It has also been held by the court that the union's reliance on pending inquiries was misplaced. The court noted that the Court of Inquiry, HRA irregularities, and corruption allegations were not grounds under Rule 56(k) to withhold retirement. It clarified that the absence of a charge sheet meant that Gupta could not be denied his right to retire. The court while considering the facts and circumstances of the case observed and has directed the union to release Sandeep Gupta's pensionary and retiral benefits within two months.

Accordingly, the court allowed the writ petition.

The counsel, Mr. Tapas Das appeared for the petitioner. The counsel, Mr. Sahaj Garg, SPC for UOI, with Mr. Shyam Singh Negi, HQ DGBR represented the Respondents.

Kerala High Court flags exponential rise in cases of outraging a woman's modesty, says it includes her 'moral and psychological' modesty

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Kerala High Court in its recent judgment in the case Biju Abraham and Another v State of Kerala expressed concern over the exponential rise in cases relating to outraging a woman's modesty.

The bench headed by Justice A. Badharudeen in the case stated that though the law has been strengthened in the matter of sexual offences, the effective implementation of the same should be ensured.

The court stated that, "The legislature has taken steps to strengthen laws against sexual offences, with stricter deterrents for rape and sexual assault. However, the offences against women continue to be a major problem in India and efforts are still needed to ensure that laws are effectively implemented."

Adding to it, the court stated that the Indian Society places greater emphasis on modesty of women and any act that seems to insult the modesty is a matter of serious concern. The court also stated that offence of outraging the

modesty of woman is not limited to physical acts of violence but also includes verbal or non-verbal conduct that is intended within the ambit of assault or criminal force.

The court in the case stated that these acts take a toll on the women and cause them mental and physical agony. Thus, it went on to describe that modesty is not just physical, but there are moral and psychological attributes of it. The sense of bashfulness or shame a woman feels when she is subjected to an act that outrages her modesty is moral modesty. The psychological modesty is her innate sense of self-respect and dignity.

The petitioner in the case was convicted under Section 354 (assault or criminal force to women with the intent to outrage her modesty) read with Section 34 (acts done by several persons in furtherance of common intention) of the Indian Penal Code, IPC and was sentenced to 6 months of rigorous imprisonment. The allegations were that the petitioners got into the autorickshaw in which the victim and her kid was travelling. In the auto while

travelling, one of the accused pressed on her left breast and other caught her belly. While the victim was screaming, she got a call from her mother. She pressed the call button and her mother heard her cry.

The petitioner appealed the verdict and their sentence before the Appeal Court.

The Appeal Court affirmed the order of the trial court. The petitioners subsequently approached the High Court.

The main argument of the petitioner was that the conviction was based mainly on the evidence given by the victim and her mother.

The petitioner submitted before the court that there were no independent witnesses.

The court rejected the said argument by saying that the testimony of an injured witness, if wholly reliable, can be accepted and the absence of an independent witness is not fatal to prosecution.

The court while considering the facts and circumstances of the case observed that the victim's version was consistent and was not shaken during cross-examination.

Delhi High Court upholds dismissal of Pay Clerk (CRPF) charged with financial misconduct and forgery

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court in the case Sunil Kumar Singh v. Union of India observed and has upheld the dismissal of a Pay Clerk (Central Reserve Police Force) who was charged with financial misconduct and forgery.

The court in the case found that tampering with government records and misappropriation of funds constituted grave offenses that warranted his dismissal from service. The court rejected the petition filed for compassionate allowance under Rule 41 of CCS (Pension) Rules, 1972, wherein it is held that acts involving moral turpitude disqualified the employee from such benefits.

The Division bench comprising of Justice Navin Chawla and Justice Shalinder Kaur was hearing the present matter.

Background of the Case:
Sunil Kumar Singh was a Pay Clerk in the 103rd Battalion of the Rapid Action Force, Central Reserve Police Force. He was initially recruited as an Assistant Sub-Inspector in 1994, he worked at several locations before being posted in the 103rd Battalion in 2004. Therefore, he had faced disciplinary action multiple times in his service.



In 2006, he was suspended and was subjected to an inquiry for alleged misconduct, but the charges were dropped. However, in 2009, he was charged again for financial irregularities and misuse of official authority. Six charges were leveled against him, which includes misappropriation of funds, tampering with government records, falsifying muster rolls, etc. This

led to his dismissal from service on December 22, 2009. The court dismissed his appeals and revision petitions. Therefore, he also applied for compassionate allowance under Rule 41 of the Central Civil Services (Pension) Rules, 1972. This request was denied due to his dismissal on the grounds of moral turpitude. Aggrieved with the same, he filed a writ petition seeking reinstatement and compassionate allowance. Arguments made before the court: Sunil Kumar Singh argued before the court that the dismissal of him was disproportionate. He also claimed that the financial irregulari-

ties were unintentional and caused by mental stress, including personal issues such as his wife's medical treatment.

He argued before the court that they were minor errors and did not amount to a misconduct that warranted dismissal. It has also been argued by him before the court that the inquiry process was biased, as it ignored his long service record.

The court referred to the case State of Jharkhand v. Jitendra Kumar Srivastava, wherein he argued that he is entitled to compassionate allowance despite dismissal. On the other hand, the Union of India argued that Sunil Kumar Singh had committed severe financial misconduct, that included misappropriation of funds and tampering with official records.

The Union of India also submitted that the inquiry was conducted fairly, and followed the principles of natural justice.

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Punjab and Haryana High Court in the case Gurmail Singh v. State of Punjab and another observed and has stated that to establish the offence of mischief under Section 425 of Indian Penal Code, IPC there must be an intention to cause damage to property and that should result in diminishing its value. The bench headed by Justice Manisha Batra in the case stated that, "It being clear that the main ingredient of offence of mischief is that there must be intent to cause wrongful loss or damage to the property and with that intent, destruction and damage should be caused resulting in diminishing the value or utility of some property. therefore, the mere causing of loss is not enough and criminal intention to cause such loss should also be established. In the instant case, however, there are bald al-



legations in the complaint that the petitioner had set the paddy waste or stubble on fire without producing any material on record to show so.' Adding to it, the court stated that, "The mere causing of loss is not enough and criminal intention to cause such loss should also be established." The court made the said observations wherein the court was hearing the petition filed to quash the First Information Report, FIR lodged against one Gurmail Singh under Section 427 and Section 447 read with Section 511 of the Indian Penal Code, IPC for allegedly entering and

damaging a paddy field by setting stubble on fire. The court noted that there are bald allegations in the complaint that the petitioner had set the paddy waste or stubble on fire without producing any material on record to show so. Adding to it, the court stated that, "Neither any photograph, video nor report of the Halqa Patwari regarding damage of the crop/paddy waste has been produced on record nor there is any other material on record to show that the alleged damage had been caused or attempted to be caused on the particular part of land having fallen to the share

of the granddaughters of the petitioner. The court in the case stated that the petitioner was a co-sharer in the area of property hence the offence is not made out. The bench headed by Justice Batra in the case stated that the complainants have also taken recourse to civil remedies pertaining to the disputed land and "it is explicit that a dispute, which is of civil nature, has been given colour of an offence of criminal trespass, which amounts to abuse of process of law and should not be allowed." Accordingly, the court quashed the First Information Report, FIR under section 482 of Code of Criminal Procedure, CrPC. The counsel, Mr. Harpar-teek Singh Sandhu, Advocate for the petitioner. The counsel, Ms. Swati Batra, Deputy Advocate General, Punjab. The counsel, Mr. Ishan Gupta, Advocate for respondent No. 2.

Punjab and Haryana High Court seeks Jalandhar Commissioner's explanation in POC SO case: Sorry state of affairs, Punjab police unable to nab accused

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Punjab and Haryana High Court in the case XXXXX v. State of Punjab and others observed and has expressed displeasure over the police's failure to arrest a man accused of raping a minor girl, despite the dismissal of his pre-arrest bail plea in August 2024.

The bench headed by Justice Namit Kumar in the case stated that, "The present case shows the sorry state of affairs of the State machinery, where the police is unable to nab the accused, who has been prosecuted for committing heinous crime against a minor girl of 13 years, despite the fact that anticipatory bail application filed by him has been dismissed by the learned Additional Sessions Judge, Jalandhar, vide order dated August 29, 2024 and thereafter

by this Court vide order dated October 04, 2024."

The court in the case noted that the alleged victim's plight due to delay by Police in registration her FIR.

Adding to it, it has been stated that the victim being a minor girl of 13 years, who was victimized by the accused. Despite the fact that on the basis of serious allegations FIR has been registered and statement of the victim was recorded yet no action is being taken by the police to apprehend the accused. The police in a status report has submitted before the court that the investigation is being conducted, non-bailable warrant is issued and proceeding for issuing Look Out Circular has been initiated against the accused.

The court stated that, "Perusal of both the status reports shows that the police has failed to take effective steps after

the registration of FIR on July 26, 2024."

The court in the case observed and has found that the procedure provided under Section 193(2) of the BNSS, 2023, which mandates that investigation in relation to an offence under Section 64, Section 65, Section 66, Section 67, Section 68, Section 70, Section 71 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 or Section 4, Section 6, Section 8 or Section 10 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 shall be completed within two months, has not been complied with by the police, since the investigation has not been completed within stipulated period of two months and till date the accused has also not been apprehended.

Adding to it, the court stated that reluctant conduct of police in the investigation and apprehending arrest of the accused, leads the Court to infer that the

jurisdictional police authorities and senior officers of the police are shying away to perform their duties to ensure arrest of the accused, who has committed a heinous crime against a minor girl of 13 years and the society at large. The court also noted that "no tangible efforts have been made to ensure arrest of the accused, since the status report dated January 16, 2025 reflects that after presentation of the Challan before the trial court on January 16, 2025", the Court said that "writing a letter to the passport authorities on January 23, 2025 and fetching Bank Account details of the accused just to cover the irregularities in the investigation, whereas, such steps, which have now been taken at this stage, should have been taken at initial stage of investigation to ensure arrest of the accused and not after presentation of Challan."

Karnataka High Court rejects PIL seeking direction to govt to protect life, property and religious places of Hindus in Bangladesh: 'Misconceived'

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Karnataka High Court in the case Rooda Veershetty And Union of India & Anr observed and has dismissed a public interest litigation, PIL filed seeking a direction to the Union and State Government, to protect the life, property and other religious places of Hindus and other Minority Community people, residing in Bangladesh. The Division bench comprising of Chief Justice N V Anjaria and Justice M I Arun was hearing the present matter. The bench while dismissing a petition filed by Rodda Veershetty stated that, "The subject matter

The bench while dismissing a petition filed by Rodda Veershetty stated that, 'The subject matter and the prayer are based on the news item dated August 13, 2024 in Kannada newspaper Prajavani titled "Communal unrest in Bangla".

and the prayer are based on the news item dated August 13, 2024 in Kannada newspaper Prajavani titled "Communal unrest in Bangla". The court while considering the facts and circumstances of the case stated that not only is the petition 'peculiarly vague', it is "thoroughly misconceived"

and cannot be entertained in the public interest jurisdiction. Accordingly, the court dismissed the petition. The counsel, Rooda Veershetty party in person. The counsel, Deputy Solicitor General H Shanthi Bhushan appeared for R1. The counsel, AGA Niloufer Akbar represented for R2.

BJP's Ramvir Singh Bidhuri calls Kejriwal's allegations baseless

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

BJP MP Ramvir Singh Bidhuri on Wednesday slammed AAP National Convener Arvind Kejriwal, saying he has a history of making baseless allegations and apologizing in court. Bidhuri cited dozens of cases against Kejriwal, accusing him of hypocrisy.

"There have been dozens of cases against Arvind Kejriwal. He has apologised in court multiple times. He makes baseless allegations day and night and then apologises in court..." he told ANI.

He also demanded strict action against anyone violating the Model Code of Conduct, regardless of their affiliation. "Whether it is Atishi's PA or anyone else, strict action should be taken against those who violate the Model Code of Conduct (MCC)," said Bidhuri.

KEY POINT

- He cited multiple legal cases against Kejriwal and called for strict action against any Model Code of Conduct (MCC) violators.
- Kejriwal was booked for alleging that the Haryana government had "poisoned" Yamuna water.
- FIR registered under Bharatiya Nyay Samhita (BNS), 2024, at Shahabad Police Station, Kurukshetra, on court orders.
- Polling for 70 Delhi Assembly seats and by-polls in Tamil Nadu & Uttar Pradesh began on Wednesday.
- As of 11 AM, voter turnout in Delhi was 19.95%.
- Highest turnout: North East district (24.87%), Lowest turnout: Central district (16.46%).



Earlier on Tuesday, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener Arvind Kejriwal was booked in connection

with his remarks alleging that the Haryana government had "poisoned" the Yamuna water, police said.

'Need to keep Delhi safe from double-engine disaster': CPI (M)

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Communist Party of India (Marxist) leaders Brinda Karat and Prakash Karat on Wednesday cast their votes in the Delhi Assembly polls.

Speaking to ANI, citing her concern about the city's governance, Brinda Karat emphasised the need to protect Delhi from what she called a "double-engine disaster," implying the BJP's central and state governments. "We need to keep Delhi safe from the double-engine disaster and we have voted keeping that in mind," she said.

Her husband, Prakash Karat, echoed similar sentiments, stating that the only issue in Delhi is that the elected government is not allowed to function due to interference from the central government and the Lieutenant Governor. He asserted that the elected government should have the right to function without hin-



drance.

"There was only issue that the elected government in Delhi was not allowed to function. We have voted against the centre's and the LG's interference... The elected government should have the right to function," he said.

Polling for 70 assembly seats of Delhi and by-polls for two seats, one each of Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh began on Wednesday morning. Voting commenced at 7.00 am today.

A voter turnout of 19.95 per cent was recorded till 11 am on Wednesday in the

single-phase Delhi assembly elections, as per the Election Commission of India.

According to the ECI, the highest turnout was recorded in the North East district with 24.87 per cent among all districts of the national capital followed by the Shahdara district with 23.30 per cent while the Central district recorded the lowest turnout of 16.46 per cent.

A total of 699 candidates are in the electoral fray on the 70 assembly constituency seats of the national capital.

In Delhi, the prominent contested constituencies include New Delhi, Jangpura, Kalkaji, Okhla, Mustafabad, Bijwasan, Kasturba Nagar, Greater Kailash, Patparganj, etc.

These elections are high-stakes elections for AAP, BJP and Congress, as, AAP is hoping to retain its power for the next term while the BJP is eyeing to regain power after almost 27 years.



Voters wait in queues to cast their votes for the Delhi Assembly election, in Delhi on Wednesday. (ANI Photo/Ishant)



Pakistani refugees who have been living in Delhi show their ink-marked fingers after casting their vote for the first time after being granted citizenship under the Citizenship Amendment Act for the Delhi Assembly elections, in New Delhi on Wednesday. (ANI Photo)



A first-time voter shows her ink-marked finger after casting her vote for the Delhi Assembly elections, at Atal Adarsh Vidyalaya school in New Delhi on Wednesday. (ANI Photo/Jitender Gupta)



An elderly voter being assisted as she arrives to cast her vote for the Delhi Assembly elections, in New Delhi on Wednesday. (ANI Photo/Ritik Jain)



Voters show their ink-marked fingers after casting their vote for the Delhi Assembly election, at MCD co-ed primary school, Nizamuddin West in New Delhi on Wednesday. (ANI)



Specially abled voters show their ink-marked fingers after casting their vote for the Delhi Assembly elections, at Vikas Nagar in New Delhi on Wednesday. (ANI Photo)

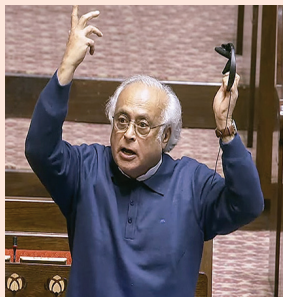
'Most disturbing statistic': Jairam Ramesh on faculty vacancies at AIIMS

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Congress MP Jairam Ramesh raised alarm over the reported significant faculty shortages at AIIMS institutions across India, pointing out that the vacancies were "staggering."

In a post on social media platform X, Ramesh highlighted the figures revealed in a recent response to a question asked in the Rajya Sabha.

"Yesterday, an answer to a question asked in the Rajya Sabha of the Minister of Health & Family Welfare revealed a most disturbing statistic relating to the seven fully operational AIIMS institutions in the country," Ramesh said, listing the vacancy rates



for AIIMS New Delhi, Bhopal, Bhubaneswar, Jodhpur, Raipur, Patna, and Rishikesh, all ranging from 24% to 39%.

Ramesh also noted the faculty shortages in twelve cities with partially operational AIIMS-type institutions, listing vacancy percentages as high as 59.5% in Rajkot and 54% in Bilaspur. He pointed out that these numbers not only highlight the challenges in faculty

recruitment but also question the quality of faculty at these institutions.

Ramesh emphasized that while concerns about faculty quality persist, the sheer extent of these vacancies demands immediate government attention.

He wrote, "Quality of faculty apart - although questions have been raised about it - the extent of vacancies in faculty positions is staggering. What is most surprising is the position in the most prestigious AIIMS New Delhi itself, which in many ways is the mother institution. The health minister must give this the highest priority without diluting standards."

The Ministry of Health &

Family Welfare, in its response, had stated that creation and recruitment is a "continuous Process".

The response states, "In order to expeditiously fill vacant sanctioned positions in various AIIMS, steps have been taken by the Government."

These include conducting the Centralized Nursing Officer Recruitment Common Eligibility Test (NORCET), the Common Recruitment Examination (CRE) for Group Band C non-faculty positions, and the Institute of National Importance Combined Entrance Test (INI-CET) and Super Speciality (INI-SS) exams to recruit Junior and Senior Residents across AIIMS.

Police register FIR against AAP candidate Amanatullah Khan over MCC violation

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police have registered an FIR against Aam Aadmi Party candidate Amanatullah Khan for violating the Model Code of Conduct.

The Police took action after

a video surfaced where the AAP leader was allegedly seen roaming in his constituency (Okhla) along with his supporters after the campaigning period ended.

The DCP South East Delhi on the official handle on

X posted, "In this matter, FIR No 95/25 under section 223/3/5 BNS & 126 RP Act against Amanatullah has been registered at Police Station Jamia Nagar for violating MCC."

Meanwhile, polling for

70 assembly seats began on Wednesday morning in Delhi, as voters cast their ballots for the 8th Assembly amid tight security. Voting commenced at 7.00 am and will continue till 6.00 pm, officials said.

Bomb threat emails spark panic in Noida schools, police confirm hoax

TIKAM SHARMA
NOIDA

Several schools in Noida experienced a wave of panic on Wednesday, February 5, 2025, after receiving bomb threat emails. However, Noida Police later confirmed that these threats were hoaxes. The affected schools included Step By Step School, The Heritage School Noida, Gyanashree School, and Mayoora School. Upon hearing about the threats, concerned parents rushed to these institutions to retrieve their children, but authorities assured them that there was no real danger and that the situation was under control. Although the local police and cyber team within just 12 hours identified a minor who sent the fake mails to these schools

Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Noida, Ram Badan Singh, informed The Sunday Guardian that the police received reports about the threats on the emergency helpline number on Wednesday morning.

Police constable contesting as Independent candidate

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Constable and Independent candidate from the New Delhi constituency, Pankaj, on Wednesday said that his symbol for the Delhi assembly elections was a shoe which he says represents a "powerful tool against corruption".

Speaking to ANI, Pankaj said that if he won he would go to Vidhan Sabha and if lost would return back to his duty.

"I am a Constable in Delhi Police, and I am contesting this poll as an independent candidate... My symbol is a shoe, which is a very strong thing for all the corrupt people... they run away when they see this... This day will be written in golden words in the history of Democracy..." he said speaking to ANI.

"This day will be written in golden words in the history of Democracy... If I will win, I will go to the Vidhan Sabha, if I will lose, I will return to my duty..." he further stated.

The independent candidate, who has served



in the Delhi Police for 22 years, said he was deeply familiar with the issues and challenges faced by the people of Delhi and would work for the public and serve their issues.

"I have been living in Delhi for the past 40 years and serving in Delhi Police for the past 22 years... I know about all the problems and challenges which the public of Delhi is facing... I will work for the public and will solve their issues..." he added. Meanwhile, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is poised to form the next government in Delhi with the ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) falling behind, most exit polls predicted on Wednesday and said that Congress is likely to continue its dismal run in the assembly polls.

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