



# Chief Minister pledges commitment to a developed Madhya Pradesh

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

During the inauguration of Global Investors Summit (GIS) by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chief Minister Mohan Yadav reiterated the state's commitment to accelerating industrial growth under PM Modi's leadership. The summit's theme, "Infinite Possibilities", reflects the state's unlimited potential for industry and investment. He emphasized that Prime Minister Modi's vision of "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, Sabka Prayas" aligns with the state's mission to create opportunities for all. CM Yadav stressed that Madhya Pradesh aims to double its economy within five years and contribute significantly to India's goal of becoming a \$35 trillion economy by 2047.



**Government Prioritizing Ease of Doing Business**  
CM Yadav detailed Madhya Pradesh's proactive efforts in attracting investment, including simplified policies, a robust single-window clearance system, and enhanced transparency. The state has declared 2025 as the "Year of Industry and Employment" to drive investment further.

**Favorable Ecosystem for Industrial Growth**  
Madhya Pradesh is preparing an ideal ecosystem for industrial expansion with ample land, water, surplus power, and a skilled workforce. The state has 300+ industrial zones, and

by next year, 13 new industrial parks will be completed, with 20 more in the pipeline. Projects like Plug & Play Centers, a Semiconductor Park, and new IT Parks will further attract investments and create employment. **Adani Group to Invest Rs 1.10 Lakh Crore in MP**  
Industrialists at the summit shared their investment experiences in Madhya Pradesh. Adani Group Chairman Gautam Adani announced that his company has already invested Rs 50,000 crore in the state and plans to invest Rs 1.10 lakh crore in cement, mining, and energy sectors, generating 1.20 lakh jobs by 2030. Discussions are also underway for multi-city and airport city projects. Avada Group announces plans to invest Rs 50,000 crore in solar and wind power projects. Apart from ITC

Group's Recognized MP as an agricultural powerhouse, Godrej Group Highlighted MP's rapid development as a smart investment destination, Sagar Group & Shakti Pumps Shared positive experiences of operating in the state. **Madhya Pradesh: A Land of Infinite Opportunities**  
Yadav concluded by emphasizing Madhya Pradesh's strong economic foundation, citing consistent GSDP growth, upcoming mega projects, and investor-friendly policies. He assured that MP is ready to welcome investors of all scales and provide them with a profitable and stable business environment. With a strong family-like culture, once someone comes to Madhya Pradesh, they feel at home, he said, inviting global investors to be a part of the state's growth story.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi launches new policies of the state government at the inaugural session of a two-day Global Investors Summit at Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya in Bhopal on Monday. Pioneer photo

## Court awards Rs 2.82 cr compensation in accident case

PNS ■ INDORE

Bhopal District Court has awarded a compensation of Rs 2.82 crore to the families of two victims who lost their lives in a tragic road accident in January 2022. The claim amount was determined based on the victims' salaries. The accident occurred on January 23, 2022, when Rajkumar Sisodia and Sanjeev Kant Bhagat were traveling to Multai with their relatives. At around 11:45 PM, a truck (registration number MP 12 H 1371) exiting a roadside dhaba suddenly halted on the road. Unable to stop in time, their car collided with the stationary truck, resulting in the deaths of Rajkumar and Sanjeev.

The families of the deceased later filed a claim against truck driver Sandeep Kakodia, truck owner Abdul Wahid, and Shiram General Insurance Company Limited. Principal District and Sessions Judge Manoj Kumar Srivastava ruled in favor of the victims' families, awarding a total compensation of Rs 2.82 crore. Rajkumar's family was granted Rs 1.20 crore, while Sanjeev's family was awarded Rs 1.62 crore. The compensation was calculated based on the victims' annual salaries and future financial prospects. Sanjeev Kant Bhagat, a senior engineer in the Railways Department, earned Rs 1,04,826 per month (Rs 12.57 lakh annually). Rajkumar Sisodia, a senior section engineer in the Railways Department, had a monthly

salary of Rs 51,416 (Rs 6.16 lakh annually). The court considered their earnings, future financial needs, and necessary deductions while finalizing the compensation. In a separate case, the Bhopal District Court directed the Municipal Corporation to correct the birth certificate of Ashwini Nariyani, a city resident. Ashwini was unable to renew her passport and pursue higher education abroad due to an incorrect date of birth on her birth certificate. The document mistakenly listed her birth date as August 27, 2002, instead of August 28, 2002. Based on hospital records, Chief and Sessions Judge Manoj Kumar Srivastava ordered the Municipal Corporation to rectify the error, ensuring Ashwini could proceed with her academic aspirations.

## Minister Bagri's nephew assaulted over a petty dispute

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

A case of assault involving Deepraj Bagri, nephew of Minister Pratima Bagri, has come to light in Bhopal's Number 6 Market. The incident, which occurred on the evening of February 22, came to public attention after a video of the attack surfaced on Monday. Following the revelation, the police registered an FIR and initiated an investigation. According to reports, the altercation began when Deepraj was unable to fulfill the demand of the accused, Arun Gurjar, to make his female friend speak with him over a phone call. This infuriated Arun, leading to a physical assault. Witnesses claim that the accused arrived at the scene in a Thar jeep and

launched an attack on Deepraj. The police are actively searching for Arun, who fled after the incident. Habibganj police stated that 28-year-old Deepraj Bagri hails from Nagaud, Satna district, but currently resides at 333 Neelam Chauraha, Sanjeev Nagar. He works as a doctor in CAPT. He recounted that during a recent trip to Pachmarhi with friends, he received a call from Arun Gurjar, who insisted on speaking to a female friend accompanying him. When the girl refused to engage in a conversation, Arun became enraged. On February 22, around 5 PM, Deepraj was in Number 6 Market with two female friends when Arun called again, verbally abused him, and pressured him to meet.

Upon meeting nearby, Arun physically assaulted Deepraj, misbehaved with his female friend, and pushed her. The situation escalated until bystanders intervened, prompting Arun to flee in his vehicle. Following the attack, Arun allegedly threatened to kill Deepraj if he reported the incident to the police and continued pressuring the girl to communicate with him. It was later revealed that the accused and the girl had known each other in the past. Deepraj reported that after the incident, he immediately went to the police station and underwent a medical examination. However, he was made to wait for nearly an hour and a half before an FIR was registered. Initially, the officers intended to file only a Non-

Cognizable Report (NCR). It was only after some of Deepraj's acquaintances intervened and made calls to higher authorities that the FIR was finally lodged. Deepraj clarified that he had no prior connection with the accused. He explained that his recent trip to Pachmarhi was with his fiancée and her sister. Arun, who had previously been in touch with his fiancée's sister, had been persistently calling her. When she ignored his calls, he turned to Deepraj and began pressuring him to facilitate communication. Upon refusal, Arun resorted to threats. During the attack, Arun was reportedly armed and accompanied by two or three associates. Deepraj emphasized that he had no past disputes with the accused.

## CS urges investors to invest in MP with confidence

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

On the first day of the Global Investors Summit-2025, several countries participated in discussions on expanding trade relations with Madhya Pradesh. The first country session was held with Germany, focusing on business collaborations through the Indo-German Innovation Corridor. The session saw participation from Stefan, Director General of Indo-German Commerce, Andre, Dr. Chana, and industrialist Nitesh Chaudhary. Representing the Government of Madhya Pradesh, Chief Secretary Mr. Anurag Jain participated in the discussions. Director General Stefan highlighted that Germany's trade relations with India are already at a remarkable level, and there is immense potential for business expansion in Madhya Pradesh. He emphasized investment opportunities in the state's mineral resources, green energy, and connectivity infrastructure, supported by investment-friendly policies. MD Andre Agol stated that the Global Investors Summit-2025 would strengthen the vision of "Made in India, For India." Industrialist Dr. Chana shared his positive business experiences in Madhya Pradesh, noting that in the last 15 years, the state has made significant progress in industrial development and investment growth. He highlighted that river-linking projects have further expanded industrial possibilities. Nitesh Chaudhary, a chemical industry expert, described Madhya Pradesh as the "Heart of India", emphasizing its strategic geographic location for industrial establishment. He pointed out that the state's well-developed road and rail connectivity enhances opportunities in healthcare, education, and mineral-based industries.



Delegates attend two-day Global Investors Summit at Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya in Bhopal on Monday. Pioneer photo

## Investing in MP is always wise: Godrej Chairman

PNS ■ INDORE

Madhya Pradesh is rapidly establishing itself as a major investment hub, with industry leaders expressing strong confidence in the state's economic potential ahead of the upcoming "Invest MP Global Investor Summit" (GIS) 2025. Prominent business figures, including Nadir B. Godrej, Chairman and Managing Director of Godrej Industries, and Sanjiv Puri, President of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and Chairman & Managing Director of ITC, have endorsed the state as a lucrative investment destination. In a video message, Nadir B. Godrej highlighted Madhya Pradesh's favorable business environment and reiterated Godrej Industries' long-term commitment to the state. "Madhya Pradesh is on the rise, and investing here is always wise. For quite some

time, we've been here, and your success, we'd like to cheer," he said. He praised the state's progressive leadership under Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, stating that Madhya Pradesh's transformation aligns with India's broader economic vision of fostering talent, trade, tourism, technology, and tradition. Godrej further emphasized the government's consistent support for businesses, noting that Madhya Pradesh is now "future-ready" for investors. Echoing similar sentiments, Sanjiv Puri underscored the state's strategic location and abundant natural resources, positioning it as a key industrial and agricultural powerhouse. "Madhya Pradesh has much to offer. It has rich natural resources and is an agricultural powerhouse. Over the years, the state has seen a significant transformation in the agricultural sector, and now, multiple industries are making their presence felt," Puri stated.

He credited CM Mohan Yadav's leadership for driving socio-economic progress and fostering a pro-investment environment. "Under the dynamic leadership of CM Mohan Yadav, Madhya Pradesh is ushering in a new paradigm of development, encouraging industries with strong policy interventions," he added. With India currently the fastest-growing economy in the world, business leaders see Madhya Pradesh playing a crucial role in the country's economic trajectory. The Invest MP Global Investor Summit 2025 is expected to draw significant investment and further solidify Madhya Pradesh's position as a preferred destination for both domestic and international investors. With endorsements from top industry leaders, the state is poised for substantial economic growth in the coming years.

## Dabur India plans to invest Rs 550 crore in Madhya Pradesh

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Dabur India CEO Mohit Malhotra on Monday said his firm intends to invest around Rs 550 crore in Madhya Pradesh over the next couple of years as he expressed satisfaction over the state's policies and governance. He was speaking on the sidelines of the Madhya Pradesh Global Investors Summit 2025. "We are heavily invested in MP. Our largest investment in India happens to be in MP. We have around Rs 1,000 crore already invested here. We have been invested in this state for almost 50 years. Our experience with MP has been fantastic, with the previous regime, and we hope that going forward with the new Chief Minister will be fantastic," he said. Malhotra said that over the last 3 years, the homegrown FMCG major has invested Rs 550 crore in the nation's heartland. As much as 25 per cent to 30 per cent of the company's all-India production happens from MP, from sourcing raw materials and man-

ufacturing to selling it to the region, he further said. "We want to increase our installed capacities in all the lines, filling lines, manufacturing lines that we have put. We will be putting around Rs 550 crore more in the next couple of years time," Malhotra said. Calling the government "double-engineered", he said it has been very helpful, with mega project schemes which give incentives of 25 per cent, besides the PLI scheme of the central government. He appreciated the state's for its abundant water and power availability. Government facilitation, single window clearance is up and incentives are very good to come by, he said. On category expansion plans, Malhotra said Dabur wants to keep itself to the core. "We don't want to diversify it too much, diversification happens in our group companies. In the company, we want to focus on our core capabilities, Ayurveda...herbal, natural trade, and that's catching up not just in India, but globally," he said.

## CM meets Start-up youth at Expo

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav visited the Auto Expo organized as part of the two-day Global Investors Summit. During the event, he met several young entrepreneurs associated with start-ups. Representatives from various automobile manufacturing institutions participated in the summit, benefiting from the state's initiatives to promote industries and businesses. The exhibition showcased multiple models of electric vehicles (EVs), including those from the Jabalpur Vehicle Factory. Several models of two-wheelers and four-wheelers, developed using innovative technologies, were displayed at the expo. Yadav reviewed these models and gathered technical information about them. At the request of a woman entrepreneur, he also visited the stall of City Ride. Many young participants at the summit praised Chief Minister Dr. Yadav's efforts and described the summit as a significant step forward. Some young attendees also took selfies with the Chief minister Yadav.

## Hindalco to invest Rs 15,000 crore in Madhya Pradesh

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Hindalco Industries- the flagship company of the Aditya Birla Group, has signed an MoU with the Madhya Pradesh government to invest Rs 15,000 crore over the next two years on day-1 of Global Investors Summit. Making the announcement at Bhopal's Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya (IGRMS) on Monday, Hindalco's Managing Director Satish Pai stated, "Over the next two years, we will invest around Rs 15,000 crore from Hindalco alone. Additionally, the group will be developing a major mine called Banda." Hindalco already has a strong presence in Madhya Pradesh, with investments worth Rs 25,000 crore, primarily in its aluminium smelter at Mahan in the Singrauli district. The investment aims to strengthen the company's operations and stimulate the local economy. Pai also discussed the impact of global trade policies, particularly in the United States, on Hindalco. "Hindalco has a very large American subsidiary called Novelis. So for the consolidated Hindalco, we believe that these tariffs are neutral to

positive because our American subsidiary benefits and Hindalco in India does not really export aluminium to the US. So for us, we are neutral to positive," he explained. Besides Hindalco, other Aditya Birla Group companies, including UltraTech Cement and Grasim's Viscose Staple Fibre (VSF) division, are also working on independent projects in Madhya Pradesh, reinforcing the group's commitment to the state's industrial development. The Madhya Pradesh government has welcomed Hindalco's investment, viewing it as a crucial step toward establishing the state as a leading hub for aluminium production and industrial growth. The expansion is expected to generate significant employment opportunities and drive economic progress in the region.



Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav with Chairman of Patanjali Ayurved Acharya Balkrishna during the Global Investors Summit, at Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya in Bhopal on Monday. Pioneer photo

## Another dog bite incident reported at Char Imli

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

A woman was bitten by a street dog in Char Imli. This is the second incident of street dogs biting people in a fortnight. However, in the first incident, the same dog had bitten 4 people including a 10-year-old child. In the last 15 days, the Municipal Corporation team has caught more than

5 thousand street dogs in the city. But after vaccination, a large number of dogs have also been released. Seema Bhardwaj, who lives in Char Imli, was walking on the road in front of the house at 6 am on Sunday. During this time some stray dogs pounced on her. Before she could control herself, the dog bit her left leg. With great difficulty,

she somehow fought with the dog and freed herself. She alleged that she had complained to the corporation several times to catch the stray dog, but the corporation did nothing. More than 20 cases of dog bites reach Hamidia and JP Hospital every day. The last action against the dog was taken on Thursday. During that time the team had caught 89 street dogs.

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It is time to invest in MP: PM Modi

BJP set up factory of 'jumlas' in Assam says Congress

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ BHOPAL
Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said with a strong talent pool and thriving industries, Madhya Pradesh is becoming a preferred business destination...



PM Narendra Modi with Madhya Pradesh CM Mohan attends the Global Investors Summit 2025 in Bhopal

ecosystem in the states. India is emerging as the top supply chain for global aerospace firms, he said, adding that textile, tourism and technology sectors will generate crores of jobs in the years to come.

Madhya Pradesh is becoming a preferred business destination, Modi said. "This is the time, and right time, to invest in the state," the prime minister said.

vehicles revolution. There are several opportunities in the health and wellness sector in the country, he said, adding, "The world is liking the 'heal in India' mantra."

difficult, he noted. But in the past 20 years, with the help of the people, the BJP state government focused on governance. Two decades ago, people used to stay away from investing here (in MP), and now it is among the top states in the country for investment, Modi said.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI
The Congress on Monday demanded answers from Prime Minister Narendra Modi over alleged corruption under the Himanta Biswa Sarma dispensation in Assam and asserted that the "double dhokha (betrayal) government" will be held accountable for its "sins" in the assembly polls next year.

illegal foreigners and the hypocrisy of the BJP are well known. "The state has lagged behind on every scale of development and economically. 3.5 Crore people of Assam are extremely angry, no slogan of Modi ji can cool their anger now. Change is certain in Assam and the North-East," he asserted.

Gogoi, Pradyut Bordoloi, Pawan Khera, among others. Singh also alleged that rat-hole mining was happening under the nose of Assam CM. If all this is happening, then are Narendra Modi's agencies investigating, he asked.

VIP darshan suspended at Kashi Vishwanath from February 25-27

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI
Anticipating a heavy rush of devotees during Mahashivratri, authorities have decided to suspend the VIP 'darshan' facility at the Kashi Vishwanath temple here from February 25 to 27.

Lakh. To manage the massive crowd, the number of queues at all four temple gates has been increased, and specific timings have been allocated for akharas and Naga sadhus, while the remaining time slots are reserved for general devotees, Sharma said.

Fadnavis approves 109 names as OSDs, PS to ministers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ MUMBAI
Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Monday said he cleared 109 out of 125 names referred by cabinet ministers for their appointment as personal secretaries or OSDs but didn't approve others because they are either facing inquiries or known as "fixers".

He also said the rest (16) are facing various types of allegations. "Even if it would hurt someone, I will not clear such names". Fadnavis also snubbed Agriculture Minister Manikrao Kokate, who belongs to the Nationalist Congress Party, over his remarks that even PS and OSDs are appointed by the chief minister, "leaving nothing in our hands".

perform now," Kokate said. When asked about the agriculture minister's remarks, Fadnavis said Kokate probably didn't know approving the appointments of PS and OSDs is the CM's prerogative. "A minister can propose candidates, but the final decision rests with my office," the CM added.

Irtiga Mufti's seeks support to ban liquor in J and K

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ SRINAGAR
Irtiga Mufti, the eldest daughter of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) chief Mehbooba Mufti, has taken a political stand against alcohol consumption in Jammu and Kashmir, and sought support from the public for the party's campaign to ban liquor in the Union Territory.

Electricity employees to go for nationwide strike against privatisation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NAGPUR
The CITU backed Electricity Employees Federation of India has urged central government and state government to stop further privatisation of power and energy sector and decided to protest against the implementation of Labour Codes. The national convention of electricity employees and engineers held in Nagpur on Sunday decided to go for strike on June 26 and blamed Central and State Government for "forcefully privatised its highly profitable, efficient and low tariff power utility in an irregular manner".

Yogi slams SP over remarks on Kumbh arrangements

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW
Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath slammed the opposition Samajwadi Party on Monday, saying that during its rule in the state, the chief minister did not have the time to review Kumbh arrangements and "a non-Sanatani was made its in charge".



UP CM Yogi Adityanath speaks as Finance Minister Suresh Kumar Khanna looks on during the Budget session of the UP Assembly in Lucknow

reviewing Kumbh and am still doing it. This is the reason that whoever went to the Kumbh in 2013 saw chaos, corruption, and pollution. There was no water fit for bathing in the Triveni of Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati. The prime minister of Mauritius is an example of this who refused

to take a bath," he said. Adityanath said that this time people are visiting the Maha Kumbh continuously. "The President, the prime minister and the vice president visited there. The King of Bhutan came, and heads of all other countries of the world — that is 74 nations — visited the place. All of them

participated in the event and made it successful. For the first time... everyone became a part of this event and made it successful," he added. Adityanath alleged that in the past one-and-a-half months, leftists and socialists made poisonous statements on social media about Maha Kumbh.

Gurugram police arrests 27 cyber criminals for defrauding ₹157.90 Crore

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM
Out of 611 cases, 28 cases were registered against them in Haryana including 4 in Gurugram. The accused revealed before the salutes that they used to commit fraud by creating fake IDs on Instagram and cheating people, committing fraud in the name of investment, digital arrest, KYC related fraud and task based fraud.

and organisations to counter these frauds. "We appealed to the public to steer clear of such dubious callers and advised caution in sharing personal details to strangers stalking them online," he added. "The cyber fraudsters commit fraud by luring people with good profits, investing in the stock market, reducing electricity bills, in the name of buying/selling cheap goods online, sextorting through video calls on WhatsApp, morphing, sending links through various means, posing as a customs officer/police officer in the name of implicating false case, in the name of issuing a No-Objection Certificate, digitally arresting people by showing the fear of implicating them in a criminal case, etc," he said.

Punjab Congress leader Partap Singh Bajwa Monday claimed that 32 AAP MLAs were in touch with him to switch sides. Hitting back, the ruling AAP's state unit president Aman Arora claimed that it was Bajwa who has made an "advance booking" to join the BJP. Speaking to reporters outside the Punjab Assembly, Bajwa also claimed that Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann was in touch with the BJP. "When (Arvind) Kejriwal decides to remove him, he (Mann) will pack his bags and join them (BJP)," he claimed.

earlier said the Congress does not have any intention to topple this (AAP) government," he said. "I am saying this again 32 MLAs are in touch with me. Not only MLAs, but even ministers are in touch with me. Aman Arora is also aware of this matter," claimed Bajwa. "They (AAP MLAs) all know that this is their last term. They are looking for new parties to get tickets. I am in touch with them (32 MLAs). We will see who is to be brought in, who is likely to win the polls and who is not. It will happen at an appropriate time." Lashing out at Mann, the Qadian MLA claimed that the chief minister remained "absent" from the House on the first day of the two-day session of the Punjab Assembly, which began here on Monday.

HC dismisses plea against Mahashivratri celebrations at Isha Foundation, Coimbatore

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ CHENNAI
The Madras High Court on Monday dismissed a petition seeking direction to authorities concerned from granting permission to conduct Mahashivratri celebrations at Isha Foundation in Coimbatore.

of alleged violations committed last year. The Court had last week directed the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB) to verify as to whether the rules and regulations are being followed by the foundation during Mahashivratri celebrations. TNPCB on Monday informed HC that Isha Foundation has adequate treatment facility to handle the sewage generated.

Ambient Noise Level was within the standards prescribed by the Board. In the premises of the Isha Foundation, seating capacity was only 60,000. He said no complaint petition has been received from the public regarding air, water and noise pollution. This yoga center has necessary infrastructure facilities to handle solid, liquid and noise pollution during Mahashivratri function. The Isha Foundation has also followed Noise Rules, he added. Following this, a division bench comprising Justices S M Subramaniam and K Rajasekar dismissed the petition filed by Sivagnanan.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

## German election Tik Toked

As Germany votes to elect its new chancellor, far right may make substantial gains thanks to its Tik Tok campaign

Germany votes in a snap federal election, a political shake-up triggered by the collapse of the three-party coalition government at the end of last year. With 59.2 million eligible voters, this election is set to reshape the country's political landscape, potentially heralding a shift towards conservatism and a stronger far-right presence. At the forefront of the race is Friedrich Merz, the 69-year-old leader of the conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU). Merz has emerged as the frontrunner to become Germany's next chancellor, advocating for economic stability, stricter immigration policies, and a reassertion of Germany's leadership in Europe. The far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) is poised to make historic gains, emerging as the second-largest political force. This comes at the expense of Chancellor Olaf Scholz's Social Democratic Party (SPD), which has suffered due to economic stagnation and dissatisfaction with the previous coalition government. The Green Party and the Free Democrats (FDP), both



part of the fallen coalition, have also struggled to maintain voter confidence. Meanwhile, the Left Party is fighting to remain relevant amid internal divisions and the broader shift in political sentiment.

This election is taking place at a critical juncture for Germany, with pressing domestic and international challenges shaping the national narrative. Germany, the EU's largest economy, is grappling with slow growth, rising inflation, and concerns about industrial competitiveness. Many voters are looking for a leader who can restore economic stability and drive innovation. Besides, the country has faced growing debates over migration policies, with many Germans expressing concerns about integration and border security. The AfD has capitalised on this sentiment, calling for stricter immigration controls. With growing geopolitical tensions, including relations with China, Russia, and the United States, Germany's next leader will need to navigate foreign policy challenges carefully. But the biggest factor that is being analysed is why the AfD is gaining ground? Indeed, the rise of the AfD can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, economic dissatisfaction has pushed voters towards populist rhetoric, with the AfD portraying itself as the party of change. Secondly, frustration with the previous coalition's handling of immigration and energy policy has bolstered nationalist sentiments. An interesting aspect of this election has been the role played by social media, particularly TikTok. The AfD has effectively leveraged TikTok to reach younger audiences, spreading populist messages through short, engaging videos, often laced with negative content. Meanwhile, mainstream parties have struggled to counteract misinformation and viral narratives that favor the far-right. This election underscores the growing influence of digital platforms in modern politics, raising questions about regulation and the impact of algorithm-driven content on democratic processes. Whatever the outcome, it will have far-reaching implications for Germany, the EU and beyond.

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### PICTALK



A parrot perches on a 'Palas' flower, in Bastar

## New VC appointment rules undermine State autonomy



K S TOMAR

The UGC's draft guidelines, while ostensibly aimed at ensuring uniformity in VC appointments, have opened a Pandora's box of political and constitutional concerns

The University Grants Commission's (UGC) draft guidelines proposing a shift in the appointment of Vice-Chancellors (VCs) have ignited a political storm. By granting Chancellors—predominantly Governors—the authority to constitute search-cum-selection committees for appointing VCs, the UGC has stirred concerns about federalism, state autonomy, and academic independence. Adding to the controversy, non-compliance with these guidelines could disqualify state universities from UGC funding schemes, creating a direct clash between the Centre and opposition-ruled states such as Tamil Nadu, Kerala, West Bengal, Punjab, and Himachal Pradesh. This move, seen as a veiled attempt to centralise power over state universities, places the spotlight on India's federal structure and the simmering tension between state governments and Governors, especially in opposition-led states. At the core of the debate is the growing role of Governors, often viewed as proxies of the Centre, in state governance.

Historically, state governments have played a central role in appointing VCs by constituting independent search committees. However, the UGC's draft proposes a shift, granting Governors—functioning as Chancellors of state universities—control over these committees. Governors, constitutionally expected to act as neutral figures, have increasingly been accused of serving partisan interests, particularly in states like Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and West Bengal. By formalizing the Governor's role in academic appointments, the UGC guidelines risk politicising the process, potentially undermining academic independence and turning universities into ideological battlegrounds. The fears of state governments are not unfounded. In Tamil Nadu, for example, the DMK has accused the Governor of deliberately delaying VC appointments to push candidates aligned with the ruling party at the Centre. Similarly, Kerala has witnessed repeated stand-offs between the Governor and the state government over academic



appointments. The new guidelines only add fuel to these already volatile relationships. The UGC's draft guidelines also raise significant constitutional questions. Education, as a subject under the Concurrent List, allows both the Centre and states to legislate on it. However, the Constitution also upholds federal principles, granting states substantial control over their universities. The new guidelines, by empowering Governors to dominate the VC appointment process, are being viewed as an encroachment on states' jurisdiction. Several states may challenge these guidelines in court, arguing that they violate the federal structure enshrined in the Constitution. States like Tamil Nadu have already passed laws to curtail the Governor's powers in academic governance, reflecting a broader pushback against what they see as an overreach by the Centre.

For opposition-ruled states, where educational institutions are often viewed as bastions of intellectual and political autonomy, the UGC's guidelines have deepened fears of central overreach. The ruling dispensations in states like Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and West Bengal have expressed strong apprehensions about Governors using this newfound authority as an extension of the Centre's political influence. In West Bengal, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's government has long accused the Governor of interfering in the state's affairs, particularly in



THE FEAR IS THAT SUCH INTERFERENCE COULD STIFLE INTELLECTUAL DIVERSITY, WITH UNIVERSITIES BECOMING VEHICLES FOR PROPAGATING THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT'S POLITICAL AGENDA

the educational domain. The UGC guidelines could exacerbate this friction, allowing the Governor to influence appointments to academic institutions. Such moves, critics argue, undermine the intellectual independence that universities in the state have historically enjoyed. In Kerala, where the Left Democratic Front (LDF) government has vociferously defended educational autonomy, the guidelines are being seen as an outright encroachment on the state's constitutional rights. The state government fears that politicised appointments could compromise the ideological neutrality and academic standards of its universities.

The DMK-led Tamil Nadu government has also repeatedly opposed the Governor's increasing interference in educational appointments. The state has even passed legislation to reduce the Governor's control over the VC selection process, only to have it stalled by the Governor. For Tamil Nadu, these new guidelines are a direct challenge to the state's efforts to safeguard its educational institutions from external political influence. Universities, as centres of higher learning, thrive on autonomy and academic freedom. The UGC's intervention threatens to compromise these principles by potentially turning VCs into political appointees. Critics argue that such appointments could erode academic independence, with VCs prioritising political allegiance over edu-

cational excellence. In opposition-led states, this concern is particularly acute.

The fear is that such interference could stifle intellectual diversity, with universities becoming vehicles for propagating the central government's political agenda. This interference also undermines the confidence of academicians and researchers. Scholars worry that political considerations will outweigh merit in appointments, leading to a decline in the quality of higher education. The resulting chilling effect could discourage free thought and innovation in academic institutions.

The controversy over VC appointments is emblematic of a larger tussle between the Centre and states over federalism. For states like Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and West Bengal, the guidelines represent an erosion of their autonomy in managing critical domains such as education. This growing centralisation also poses questions about the role of Governors in a federal structure.

A balanced approach, one that respects state autonomy while ensuring accountability in academic governance, is the need of the hour. Without such a resolution, the guidelines risk becoming another flashpoint in the Centre-state relationship, with significant implications for India's federal structure and the future of its education system.

(The writer is a senior political analyst and strategic affairs columnist)

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### FARMERS DESERVE FAIR PRICES

Madam — The Union Agriculture Minister talking about the government working out schemes (February 23) to prevent distress sale of farm produce is welcome. India continues to be predominantly an agrarian country. Its contribution to the country's GDP was around 51 per cent at the time the country got freedom. Still, we had to depend on aids like PL480 to feed the poor. Thanks to the green revolution taken up with all by the government as well as the farming community with all sincerity the country is upgraded to food surplus status. But due to the shifting of focus from agriculture to industry, agriculture is suffering the worst, facing all sorts of odds at every level.

Though every commodity's price is fixed by the producer, it doesn't hold good for the farm produce. The government doesn't volunteer to take the ground reality into account and fix the cost, leaving it to the market dynamics. This policy has allowed the middlemen to play havoc. This reality, coupled with the apathetic moves of the government, has resulted in millions of farmers resorting to committing suicide. Many small farmers are deserting their farming activities and migrating to cities seeking daily wage jobs for their livelihood. The government is still not sensitised to address the issues but comes out with plans to monopolise farming by a few private corporations. It is good that the minister has now talked about the woes of the farmers who fail to get reasonable returns and the consumers who fail to get the benefit of the plenty. It would be a meaningful act of the government to discuss with the farmers and address their woes without attaching any political strings. Farmers are the real wealth creators and providers of food security.

A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

#### MEDIA TARGETS KIIT UNIVERSITY

Madam — After the suicide of a Nepali student at Odisha's KIIT University following an unhealthy relationship, some sections of the media are targeting the university

#### Virat shines as India beats Pakistan



India has beaten its archrival Pakistan by six wickets in their group A match of the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 at the Dubai International Cricket stadium. Virat Kohli has once again proved his supremacy against Pakistan in the ICC tournaments, delivering a scintillating unbeaten century with a memorable knock off 111 balls. The win propelled India to the top of Group A with 4 points,

virtually securing a semifinal berth, while Pakistan faced the threat of an early exit, suffering their second consecutive defeat. Kohli's knock featuring seven exquisite boundaries dismantled Pakistan's hopes as their premier pacers Shaheen Shah Afridi and Haris Rauf struggled to make an impact after Afridi dismissed Rohit Sharma (20 off 15) early with a fiery yorker. It is Kohli's 51st ODI tonne by becoming the fastest batter to reach 14000 ODI runs during his innings. With 51 centuries in ODIs and 30 in Tests, with 7 double centuries in international cricket, Kohli is regarded as one of the greatest batsmen of all time. Kohli is often referred to as the King Kohli by his fans and supporters due to his achievements and contributions to the game.

P Victor Selvaraj | Tirunelveli

to satisfy their agenda. Now, the context of justice for the deceased girl has been diverted to their own vendetta. As a result, the last couple of days have been very dramatic for the student fraternity. Other students in KIIT who have come for higher studies from outside and their parents have been in a distributing mind state. They should not suffer from the media trial. Considering the incident, the state government formed a high-level committee to probe into it. Now it's become a political farce; every day different political outfits are staging protests in the evening in front of the main gate like a daily routine, which is ruining the academic environment on the campus. Amid all of this, we should not forget the contributions of this university to the sports and education systems of the state. Let's make a healthy environment for the other students of KIIT and have faith in the law.

Susant Pal | Bhubaneswar

#### TRUMP DISRUPTING WORLD ORDER

Madam — US President Donald Trump's economic and geopolitical decisions have

## Navigating differences: Lessons in collaboration from a life in leadership



SANJAY CHANDRA

My experiences have taught me that to find common ground one must show patience, open to dialogue and accommodate perspectives different from your own

I have been trying to set up a small library within my condominium complex. A lady was apprehensive about the criticism from a select few for the expenditure on this noble venture. Her sharp rejoinder that she could never stoop so low to my simple solution of inviting the critics to inaugurate the library left me seething.

In another instance, a lady unequivocally told me that she would not work with another lady in the Art and Literature Festival I am organizing within my society. I found their response irrational. I had worked in the government sector for more than 30 years out of the 35 years of an active professional life.

The initial 17 years were spent in handling big teams of literate or semi-literate staff. My success depended upon their performance. I could not achieve much without the support of subordinates, peers, and superiors. I did not have the luxury of going back to my seniors to shift a person if he did not perform. I also could not go back asking for a transfer if I felt overwhelmed by the people who



had strong unions, and who would not hesitate to run me down even at the slightest hint of weakness. I was taking stock of the previous day's performance with my senior supervisor in my very first posting in a maintenance shed that had more than 1,000 staff.

A group of staff and their leaders barged into the room to air their grievances. An unruly element from the crowd threw an earthen tea cup to landed right in front of me on the table. I had to gulp down the insult to present a brave face as I thundered in the most authoritative voice I could muster that the meeting was over and I would not discuss any further. It turned out that they were testing me and the leaders

tried their best to be on my right side. A senior visited my shop floor during lunch hours in another posting in a production unit a few years later.

A place where a lot of grease was used was usually quite gloomy with layers of the sticky substance accumulating over years. The shop floor would also not be the cleanest of the places at lunchtime. Railways was an extremely hierarchical organisation with the seniors considering themselves masters at insulting the subordinates, particularly the officers, who would not retaliate in front of the staff out of a sense of propriety.

This senior gentleman shouted at me that if the cleaning staff was not available, then I should have cleaned myself.

My supervisor and the staff showed more compassion as they rushed around. There were many such incidents when I felt degraded and insulted. I did not have the same options that the two young ladies wanted to exercise. To give credit to both, they are well educated, one of them having studied psychology in college, the other is a medical professional. I find a similar unwillingness in other younger professionals. They are rigid in their approach to daily problems and would rather not talk to a person with contrary opinions than sit down to resolve them. The attitude often spills into the personal lives also. There would always be some difficult times. There is a need to discuss and find a middle ground.

I would like to bring their attention to the famous words of Abraham Lincoln, "I do not like that man. I must get to know him better." It will take a lot of time and effort. But in the end, it will be worth it.

(The author is an electrical engineer with the Indian Railways and conducts classes in creative writing; views are personal)

Gopalaswamy J | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



## FIRST COLUMN

### THE HANDWRITING BLUES: A STORY OF DECLINE

Some see handwriting as a reflection of character, but it shifts, evolves and often declines beyond recognition



APS MALHOTRA

Some conjecture that a person's handwriting can give a glimpse into that person's character. But I am a sceptic in this regard, because, in my opinion, the handwriting of an individual is not a constant, but keeps on morphing as time goes by. A case in point is your humble friend, who has seen his handwriting deteriorate over the past few decades, till now, in my fifth decade, it is nothing more than a painstaking, almost illegible scrawl- although, with the advent of the now ubiquitous personal computer and other sundry devices, the negative impact of this deterioration has been minimised, especially in official work. Because today, when I write a note on any file with my hand, others find it rather difficult to 'decrypt'. Even filling simple financial documents like a cheque is a nightmare now, a stiff challenge, that is increasingly being left to my better half to handle, as bank people, on a few occasions, have raised doubts about the authenticity of my signature. But before the readers start commiserating about the sad and agonising state of my handwriting, I will share with them that this was not always the case. In the early years of school, I was the darling of my teachers because of my neat and clean handwriting, which made me the cynosure of my peers. Writing on four-line copies, I would get full marks in English handwriting.

The slide commenced from middle school onwards, when I shifted from writing with a pencil to writing with a ball pen, and the copy changed from one with four lines to that with two lines. But the hand was still steady, and teachers did not have any problem reading my answer sheets, as was evident from the good grades I continued to get in my exams. But I am sure, that as I entered college and the university in the mid-eighties, the good professors would have become



increasingly impatient in poring over my messy answer sheets, with scribbles galore. Throughout, my father, a diligent and thorough gentleman, with very precise and beautiful handwriting, kept counselling me to stem the rot, even as I secured a job in the public sector in 1991. He gently warned that it would adversely impact my prospects of growth in the corporate world, especially when this was the period when all office work was conducted on well-defined sheets of paper- which, in my case, were to be yellow pages.

Before leaving for Bombay (as Mumbai was then called), I scoffed at Dad's gentle, but consistent reprimands. It was only when I took my first, tentative steps in the company did I realise that what Dad had been emphasising over the years was not an iota away from the truth. I faced a mild, personal nudge from some bosses on this account, but others were not so kind, and their reaction bordered on outright contempt, reprimand and disapproval. But Dad was an eternal optimist. He still harboured a strong wish to get my handwriting back on track, even at this stage, for which he purchased a book- 'Techniques to improve your handwriting'. I was back in kindergarten.

So, whenever I came home to Delhi for a break, he would insist that I sit with him, at least for some time, and practice on ways to improve my, by now abominable handwriting. But by this point, my mind, like that of all young men, was engrossed in finer things of life than improving my writing ability, which, I realised, was destined to be an exercise in futility. This cat-and-mouse game continued even after I got married in 1993. It was only after I became a father in 1995 did Dad finally buried his desire to improve my handwriting to a decent level.

*(The author is a freelance writer; views are personal)*

# RBI should go for an 'accommodative' stance



UTTAM GUPTA

While inflation has been steadily declining, the RBI opted to retain its 'neutral' stance, signaling a measured approach rather than give push to boost liquidity and demand



On February 7, 2025, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Sanjay Malhotra announced the decisions taken by the six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) in its sixth bi-monthly meeting of the current financial year (FY). It has reduced the policy rate or the repo rate (the interest rate at which the RBI lends to banks) by 25 basis points to 6.25 per cent. This marks the first repo rate cut in nearly five years. Moreover, it has continued with a neutral stance which it shifted in its fourth bi-monthly review/announcement on October 10, 2024, from its earlier stance of "withdrawal of accommodation". In 2016, the Union Government put in place an institutionalized framework to enable the MPC to formulate monetary policy and determine the key interest rates including the policy rate for inflation targeting. It mandated the RBI to fix the policy rate in such a manner as to maintain the Consumer Price Index or CPI (it corresponds to a basket that includes food, fuel, manufactured goods, and select services) within the target range of 4 per cent (+/- 2 per cent).

The RBI decides the policy rates once in two months during each FY. The mandate initially given for five years ending March 31, 2021, has since been extended for a further period of five years. The current mandate will continue till March 31, 2026. The other crucial policy instrument the RBI uses for targeting inflation is Liquidity - jargon for the quantum of credit available in the banking system. Pumping more liquidity along with a reduction in the policy rate represents a scenario which in jargon is described as an 'accommodative' policy stance. The terminology was coined by the outgoing governor Shaktikanta Das in June 2019 when he started going for aggressive cuts in the policy rate and an increase in credit availability.

Since June 2022 the RBI changed its stance to "withdrawal of accommodation" and had stuck to it till October 9, 2024, when in the fourth bi-monthly review, the MPC decided to go for a "neutral" stance. A



THE PROBLEM IS RBI'S OBSESSION WITH INFLATION. MALHOTRA RECOGNISES THAT INFLATION IS ON A DOWNWARD TRAJECTORY. YET, HE DOESN'T WANT TO RELINQUISH HIS NEUTRAL STANCE CITING GLOBAL ECONOMIC CHALLENGES "PROGRESS IN GLOBAL DISINFLATION IS STALLING"

"neutral" stance connotes that the RBI has vowed to keep its options flexible meaning it will neither squeeze liquidity by restricting credit availability and keeping policy rates high nor go for unrestrained lending at low interest rates.

While inflation targeting is important, it is equally necessary to dovetail the monetary policy to sustain the momentum of high growth. During the second quarter of the current FY, growth in GDP plummeted to a low of 5.4 per cent down from a high of 8.1 per cent during the second Qr of FY 2023-24. For the current FY 2024-25, it is estimated at 6.4 per cent as against 8.2 per cent recorded during FY 2023-24. Seen in this backdrop and an overarching need to achieve a growth of 8 per cent on a sustained basis in line to make India a 'developed economy' by 2047, the RBI could have given the desired push. It could have gone for an 'accommodative' policy stance by opting for a significant cut in the policy rate and pumping sufficient cash into the banking system. However, it has stuck to a "neutral" stance while reducing the repo rate by a small 0.25 per cent. RBI's reluctance has to do with a mindset that was reflected in ex-Governor Das's observation while announcing the first bi-monthly policy of the current FY. He had said "The elephant has now gone out for a walk and appears to be returning to the forest."

We would like the elephant to return to the forest and remain there on a durable basis." Put simply, he meant there was no need to start reducing interest rates until inflation reached the target of 4 per cent and stayed at that level. The incumbent Governor has continued with this mindset. In February 2023, the policy rate was at a peak of 6.5 per cent. During FY 2022-23, the CPI inflation was hovering around 8 per cent.

In the following year, it started decreasing from 7.4 per cent in July 2023 to 5 per cent in September 2023, 4.8 per cent in October 2023 and 5.1 per cent during January/February 2024. For FY 2023-24, it was 5.4 per cent. During the current FY also, it has kept low; 5.08 per cent in June 2024 and 3.54 per cent in July of 2024. After a brief spurt of 6.2 per cent in October 2024, in January 2025, it declined to 4.3 per cent.

During FY 2024-25, the RBI has estimated it at 4.8 per cent. Given the above, from the third quarter of FY 2023-24, the CPI inflation has remained well within the target range of 4 per cent (+/- 2 per cent). This position continues during the current FY. For FY 2025-26, the RBI expects it to be 4.2 per cent. Thus, there was a strong case for a significant reduction in the repo rate besides the injection of sufficient liquidity. This would have helped in stimulating demand thereby giving a boost to economic growth besides helping millions of borrowers reduce their EMIs and helping industries, especially MSMEs reduce the cost of servicing their loans. But, this was not to be.

The problem is RBI's obsession with inflation. Malhotra recognizes that inflation is on a downward trajectory. Yet, he doesn't want to relinquish his neutral stance citing global economic challenges "progress in global disinflation is stalling". Put simply, he fears imported inflation impacting CPI hence, a "neutral stance will provide MPC flexibility to respond to evolving macro-economic environment." A major factor contributing to wide variations in CPI inflation is food inflation which has a weight of around 40 per cent and is impacted predominantly by supply side/seasonal factors whereas monetary policy instruments work on the demand side. Invariably, food inflation main-

tains an upward trend even as a small disruption in supply caused by seasonal factors can lead to spiralling prices.

As long as food remains a part of the CPI basket, inflation targeting will always remain a problem. There is an urgent need to exclude it while setting benchmark interest rates, an idea that was mooted by the Chief Economic Advisor in the Economic Survey (ES) for 2023-24. The CEA argued that monetary policy has no bearing on the prices of food items, which are dictated by supply-side pressures.

For instance, during 2021-22, wheat output was affected by unusually high temperatures. During 2022-23, rains accompanied by hailstorms acted as a spoiler. During the first half of FY 2023-24, food inflation went up due to a spike in the prices of vegetables caused by seasonal factors. The spurt in food prices during October 2024 also had to do with supply-side pressures only. The RBI can achieve little to control them by keeping the policy rate high. The RBI should take the idea mooted in the ES - 2023-24 on board. Meanwhile, it should consider reducing the weight of food inflation in CPI to reflect the contemporary reality. The current 40 per cent weight is based on the Consumption Expenditure Survey (CES) of 2011-12 whereas Summary Statistics from the 2022-23 CES point towards a significant reduction.

While formulating its monetary policy, the RBI's prime responsibility is to ensure macro-economic stability its pivotal focus being on keeping inflation within reasonable bounds. However, it can't be oblivious of the dire need to support economic growth which could be adversely impacted if it doesn't relax the credit environment.

*(The writer is a policy analyst; views are personal)*

## M23 rebellion and Rwanda's role: The escalating crisis in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo

At the heart of this conflict lies a web of ethnic tensions, political grievances, and economic exploitation, particularly vast mineral wealth of DRC

The recent escalation of violence in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is a stark reminder of the region's deep-rooted instability. The resurgence of the M23 rebellion, which led to the seizure of Goma and further advances into South Kivu, is not merely an internal Congolese crisis—it is a conflict with significant regional and international implications. Rwanda's involvement, whether direct or indirect, remains contentious, as accusations of its support for M23 persist. While Kigali denies these allegations, the sophistication of M23's operations raises serious questions about its backing. At the heart of this crisis lies a complex mix of ethnic tensions, political grievances, and



DEBASHISH JAINA

economic exploitation, particularly concerning the DRC's vast mineral wealth. For years, Rwanda has been accused of providing M23 with financial and military support, a claim reinforced by multiple UN reports and statements from Western governments. Kigali, however, insists that it is acting in self-defence, citing the threat posed by the Democratic Forces for the

Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), a Hutu militia operating in eastern DRC with historical ties to the perpetrators of the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Yet, Rwanda's actions go beyond border security. The conflict's economic dimension cannot be ignored, with Rwanda being accused of profiting from the illicit exploitation of Congolese minerals, particularly coltan, a key component in electronic devices.

The capture of Rubaya, a coltan-rich area, by M23 last year suggests that economic interests play a crucial role in shaping the rebellion's trajectory. M23 claims to be fighting for the rights of ethnic Tutsis in eastern DRC, arguing that the Congolese government has failed to protect them from persecution. While

there is historical evidence of ethnic violence against Tutsis in the region, M23's actions undermine its credibility. Rather than advocating for political rights through diplomatic means, the group has engaged in violence, forced displacement, and human rights violations. Its strategy of seizing key cities and resource-rich territories suggests an agenda extending far beyond self-defence.

The DRC, backed by the international community, has dismissed M23's claims, arguing that the group is acting as a proxy for Rwanda's regional ambitions. The latest attempt by regional leaders to broker peace, with the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the East African Community



(EAC) calling for an immediate ceasefire, reflects a growing recognition that the crisis cannot be resolved through military means alone. However, the reality on the ground tells a different story. M23 had briefly declared a ceasefire before resuming attacks, signalling that diplomatic efforts are struggling to keep up with battlefield developments. The DRC's call for UN sanctions against Rwanda, coupled with protests in Kinshasa

where demonstrators burned portraits of President Paul Kagame, indicates a deepening rift between the two countries. With diplomatic ties severed and hostilities intensifying, the prospects for a negotiated settlement remain bleak. A purely military solution is unlikely to yield lasting peace. The Congolese army has historically struggled to contain well-equipped rebel groups, and the presence of the UN peacekeeping mission, MONUSCO, has done little to prevent the latest wave of violence. Foreign military intervention, whether from regional actors or international forces, risks escalating the situation rather than resolving it. The most viable path forward is a combination of military containment and political

engagement. Strengthening the DRC's security forces to prevent further territorial losses is crucial, but diplomatic efforts must also address the root causes of the conflict, including ethnic grievances and economic exploitation. The global demand for coltan and other precious resources ensures that armed groups can sustain themselves through illegal mining operations. Without stronger international regulations and accountability measures, companies sourcing minerals from conflict zones will remain complicit in financing violence. Holding both state and non-state actors accountable for their role in resource exploitation is essential for breaking the cycle of conflict. The ongoing crisis in eastern

DRC is not just about M23 or Rwanda's alleged involvement—it is part of a larger geopolitical struggle that has plagued the region for decades. Unless regional actors commit to genuine peace efforts and the international community enforces stricter measures against illegal mineral trade, the conflict will persist. The path to stability requires addressing both security concerns and economic incentives that drive armed groups. Without meaningful action, eastern DRC will remain trapped in a cycle of violence, with its people bearing the brunt of a war that serves the interests of powerful actors far beyond its borders.

*(The writer is a foreign policy researcher; views are personal)*







# India, UK resume talks for trade pact

PTI ■ NEW DELHI



Union Minister for Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal meets UK Secretary of State for Business and Trade Jonathan Reynolds in New Delhi. Pioneer Photo

India and the UK on Monday announced the resumption of negotiations for the proposed free trade agreement (FTA), which is expected to double or even triple bilateral trade from the current \$20 Billion in the next 10 years.

The announcement was made by Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and UK Secretary of State for Business and Trade Jonathan Reynolds here.

"Today, the Republic of India and the United Kingdom (UK) have resumed negotiations towards a trade deal between our two countries," a joint statement issued after the meeting said.

Both sides have agreed to resume talks towards a balanced, mutually beneficial and a forward-looking deal that delivers mutual growth and builds on the strengths of the two complementary economies.

The strengthening of the trading relationship has the potential to unlock opportunities for business and consumers across both nations and build further on the already deep ties, it said. Briefing media, Goyal said the pact will be "pathbreaking" and would provide huge opportunities to grow "our current \$20 Billion bilateral trade in merchandise to probably twice or thrice in the next 10 years".

and "And all three are in parallel" Reynolds said it is the top priority of the UK and such agreements are about the long-term future.

Asked whether the negotiations for the bilateral investment treaty (BIT) would be concluded along with the FTA, Goyal said the two countries are actively negotiating at three different fronts - FTA, BIT, and a Double Contribution Convention Agreement.

Reynolds said it is the top priority of the UK and such agreements are about the long-term future.

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On this, Reynolds said that the UK welcomes "the huge and important relationship we have with people coming from India to UK whether to study, whether to be part of the businesses and obviously business mobility is a separate issue to immigration".

Goyal added that in several countries, including the US, UK, Canada, New Zealand and Australia, Indian students travel for education.

In almost all these countries, to incentivise education, business and attract more people, countries "do give a certain period of time for students to gain practical experience to work in their country but that is short-term business work visas . It has nothing to do with immigration as such," he

added. The India-UK FTA negotiations were launched on January 13, 2022. The agreement is aimed at boosting bilateral trade and investments.

In such pacts, two countries either eliminate or significantly reduce customs duties on maximum goods traded between them. They also ease norms for promoting trade in services and bilateral investments.

The bilateral trade between India and the UK increased to \$21.34 Billion in 2023-24 from \$20.36 Billion in 2022-23.

The United Kingdom is the sixth largest investor in India. The country has received \$35.3 Billion FDI during April 2000 and September 2024.

# India Inc expected to achieve seven-eighth per cent growth in Q4: ICRA

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Domestic rating agency Investment Information and Credit Rating Agency (ICRA) on Monday said Indian companies are likely to clock seven-eighth per cent revenue growth during the March quarter of the current fiscal year, led by revival in rural demand and uptick in government spending.

ICRA expects the private capital expenditure (capex) cycle to remain measured in view of the uncertainties around geopolitical developments and relatively subdued outlook on merchandise exports from India. Nonetheless, certain sunrise sectors such as electronics, semiconductors and niche segments within the automotive space like electric

vehicles (EVs) will continue to see a scale-up in investments, in line with various production-linked incentive programmes announced by the Government of India, it said.

# Indian tech sector revenues to grow 5.1 per cent in FY25

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Indian tech sector's revenues are set to grow 5.1 per cent to \$282.6 Billion in fiscal year 2025, and likely to climb up further to \$300 Billion in fiscal year 2026, lobby grouping Nasscom said on Monday.

The revenue growth is on the "right trajectory", the body's president Rajesh Nambiar told reporters here, pointing out to revenue growth of four per cent in fiscal year 2024, 5.1 per cent in fiscal year 2025 and the over 6.1 per cent needed to cross its expectation of crossing \$300 Billion in fiscal year 2026.

"It has been a good outcome broadly given everything happening around us, Nambiar said pointing to aspects like geopolitics, and tariffs which are dominating the worries at present.

Nasscom said the sector, which includes IT services companies, business process management companies, global capability centres and e-commerce companies, added 1.26 Lakh new jobs in fiscal year 2025 to take the

overall employment to 58 Lakh. Nambiar hinted that the industry will continue to add employees in the same pace that it did last year.

The Indian IT sector's fiscal year 2025 growth is likely to be faster than the 4.7 per cent growth in global tech services spending in the calendar year 2024, Nasscom said, adding that India's share in global sourcing stood at 58 per cent as of fiscal year 2025.

Among the segments, the IT services companies' revenues will grow 4.3 per cent to \$137.1 Billion while the BPM industry will see its revenues grow by 4.7 per cent to \$54.6 Billion.

Change of Name  
My old name was SHEERIN D/O MOHAMMAD RAFIQ. Written in my old Passport. I have changed my Name/Surname. Now in future, I will be known as SHREEN QURESHI D/O MOHAMMAD RAFIQ QURESHI.

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Chief Minister

**Narendra Modi**  
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**Amit Shah**  
Union Minister, Home Affairs  
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August Presence  
**Dr. Mohan Yadav**  
Chief Minister  
Madhya Pradesh

**25 February, 2025**  
4:30 PM–6:00 PM | Main Hall

**Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya, Bhopal**

### HIGHLIGHTS

- MP Mobility Expo
- Central India Fabric & Fashion Expo
- ODOP Village
- Country Sessions
- MP Pavillion
- Exhibitions & Expos
- MP Business Executive Meets (B2B Meetings)
- MP Government & Business Meets (B2G Meetings)



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# Destination Uttarakhand

EMERGING AYUSH & WELLNESS HUB

## Yoga & meditation in U'Khand, a sign of wellness & spiritual revival

The tranquil and spiritual terrain of the Garhwal Himalayas has evolved into a focal point for fitness lovers, thanks to PM Modi's future forward vision



PM Narendra Modi doing yoga at Parvati Kund district Pithoragarh during his visit to Kumaon

In June 2018, during the 4th International Yoga Day, Prime Minister Modi guided an estimated 50,000 enthusiasts in performing yoga asanas at the scenic Forest Research Institute, Dehradun. Emphasising yoga's international resonance, Modi remarked, "From Dehradun to Dublin, from Shanghai to Chicago, from Jakarta to Johannesburg, Yoga is everywhere." His focus on yoga as a unifying and therapeutic approach echoed profoundly, strengthening its position in boosting physical and mental well-being. "In Yoga, we have the perfect solution to

the problems we face, either as individuals or in our society," he said, highlighting the holistic advantages of yoga in promoting a peaceful, innovative, and satisfied life.

The Prime Minister's advocacy for yoga expanded beyond the International Yoga Day festivities. In May 2019, his visit to the Kedarnath shrine attracted considerable awareness, especially his meditation session in the 'Dhyan Gufa' (meditation cave). A picture of Modi covered in a saffron shawl, sitting in meditation inside the cave, went viral on social me-

dia, scintillating widespread appeal in the cave as a new traveller appeal. This scenic location at 12,500 feet in the Garhwal Himalayas encountered an exceptional wave in popularity, with bookings for the meditation cave soaring.

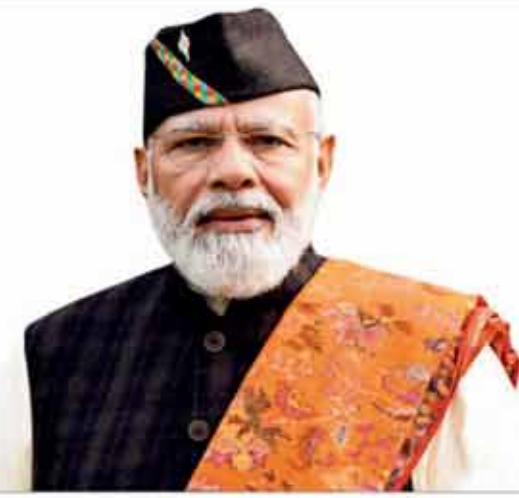
Garhwal Mandal Vikas Nigam Ltd (GMVN) recorded a swell in online bookings for the 'Dhyan Gufa,' which has been completely booked for months

**PM Narendra Modi's fondness for yoga and meditation has immensely increased the favour of these age-old traditions, especially in Uttarakhand**

ahead. This inflow of interest has encouraged local management to plan the building of three more meditation caves in the surroundings, improving the spiritual charm of the location.

Modi's many visits to Kedarnath have also contributed to a surprising rise in the temple's footfall. The temple has been witnessing record-breaking footfall since, becoming a historic landmark for Kedarnath.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi through his enthusiastic participation and promotion of yoga and meditation has boosted the international profile of these practices along with restoring spiritual tourism in Uttarakhand, attracting innumerable followers to the peaceful and hallowed surroundings of the Himalayas.



I congratulate the Uttarakhand government on the remarkable progress achieved in the last few years. This has been made possible by sustained policy push and focus on key sectors such as tourism and renewable energy. Alongside, the state has made significant strides in infrastructure development, setting new benchmarks for sustainable growth. Uttarakhand's commitment to harnessing its natural resources and promoting tourism has not only bolstered its economy but also showcased its potential on the global stage. I applaud the state's dedication to inclusive development and look forward to its continued success in the years ahead."

**Narendra Modi**  
Prime Minister

Under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Uttarakhand, known as Devbhoomi, has truly flourished as a global destination for yoga and meditation. His dedication, exemplified by his visits and meditation in Kedarnath and Adi Kailash, has inspired countless people worldwide to visit Rishikesh. Our government is committed to transforming Uttarakhand into a world-renowned hub for AYUSH health services, medicines, and consumer products, furthering his mission of holistic wellness."

**Pushkar Singh Dhami**  
Chief Minister

## CM Dhama Govt 245 appointed 245 Ayush Doctors in Uttarakhand

245 selected candidates got appointment in AYUSH department, after the approval of CM Dhama, the wait of AYUSH doctors waiting for appointment in the state of Uttarakhand for a long time is now over. The government has issued orders for the appointment of a total of 245 candidates including 242 Ayurveda medical officers, one Unani, one Yoga and Naturopathy and one Manager State Pharmacy.

Recruitment process was started for 257 medical officer posts.

Uttarakhand Medical Selection Board started the recruitment process for 253 medical officer posts of



Ayurveda and Unani Department on 11 March 2022. After completing the interview process, the final selection of 243 candidates was also done. While their appointment letters were being issued, complaints of irregularities in the recruitment process came in. On this, in August, the Chief Minister had ordered a detailed investigation of the matter.

All have been placed on probation for two years. On this, the government banned the appointment of selected candidates on the posts of Ayurveda medical officers and handed over the investigation to the Director of Ayurveda. Now after the completion of the investigation, the government has issued orders for his appointment after the approval of Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhama.

## 186 villages of the state identified by the name of herbs, Ayurveda department sends report to AYUSH Ministry

The state government has identified 186 villages of the state by the name of different herbs to promote Ayurveda treatment. The Ayurveda department distributed plants of the respective herbs to the people living in these villages. It has sent the report of these villages to the central government.

Dr Pankaj Kumar Pandey, secretary AYUSH, said that 35 villages in Almora district, 12 in Bageshwar, four in Chamoli, three in Haridwar, 15 in Nainital, 42 in Pauri, 23 in Pithoragarh, five in Rudrapur, 24 in Tehri, 10 in Udham Singh Nagar

**Ayurveda programmes will be started in 3900 schools in the state. Ayurveda doctors will visit schools and make the children aware**

and 13 villages in Uttarkashi were identified as Herbal Villages. This initiative of the department will promote environmental protection.

Along with this, people will be aware about Ayurveda herbs. He said that from next month, Ayurveda programmes will be started in 3900 schools in the state. Under this, Ayurveda doctors will go to schools and make the children aware. 13 villages in the state will be developed as Ayush Villages. Regular camps of Ayurveda, Yoga, and Homeopathy will be organised in these villages.

## Adi Kailash turns into a meditation hub

The Chief Minister's visit to Adi Kailash strived to boost the area as a noteworthy pilgrimage and visitor destination

On International Yoga Day, Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhama performed yoga at Adi Kailash, a venerated place situated about 15,000 feet above sea level in the sacred land of Lord Shiva. This occasion not only highlighted the importance of yoga in improving physical, mental, and spiritual well-being but also emphasized the cultural and religious legacy of the place.

In his address, Chief Minister Dhama highlighted the trans-

formation influence of yoga, defining it as a convergence of body, mind, and soul that brings contentment and calmness to humans. He extended an invitation to Shiva followers and visitors from around the globe to visit Adi Kailash, highlighting

**CM stressed that the idea of Prime Minister Modi has been instrumental in bringing about transnational acclaim to the location**

the significance of incorporating yoga into day-to-day routines for physical, mental, and emotional stability.

The Chief Minister's visit to Adi Kailash also strived to boost the area as a noteworthy pilgrimage and visitor destination. He stated that the idea of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been instrumental in bringing transnational acclaim to the location. The Prime Minister's visit to Pithoragarh and

Jyotikong last year has already extended the inflow of travelers and pilgrims, turning Adi Kailash, Om Parvat, and Parvati Sarovar into bustling locations of spiritual and cultural tourism.

The Chief Minister emphasized the financial advantages that improved tourism brings to the local residents. With more visitors and pilgrims visiting Adi Kailash and its surrounding neighborhoods, local enterprises, particularly

those involved in homestays and local food production, are flourishing. He backed the growth of 100% homestay-based tourism, which not only conserves the local architecture and culture but also provides sustainable job prospects for the locals.

In his speech, Chief Minister Dhama also addressed the necessity for enhancing infrastructure and establishments in the region. He called for the standardization of transportation amenities and the simplification of the procedure for allocating Inner Line Permits, assuring that tourists do not encounter any problems. He emphasised the significance of maintaining sensitivity and clarity in these procedures to evade any turmoil in this sensitive border region.

Environmental protection was another essential emphasis of the Chief Minister's address. He voiced concern over the pollution of the environment and the drying up of natural water sources. He informed strategies to restore traditional streams, springs, and ghats, encouraging everyone to contribute to this cause.



PIC: DIPR, UTTARAKHAND GOVERNMENT

## Uttarakhand's AYUSH Policy

Transforming healthcare landscape



Under the leadership of PM Narendra Modi and the guidance of Uttarakhand CM Pushkar Singh Dhama, Uttarakhand's AYUSH Policy outlines innovative strategies to integrate traditional healthcare practices with modern methods, aiming for holistic, wellness and economic growth

Known as the 'Devbhoomi' or 'Land of Gods', Uttarakhand is deemed to evolve as an international center for AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy) practices, leveraging its rich natural and cultural legacy. The AYUSH Policy of Uttarakhand summarises enterprising strategies to incorporate conventional healthcare procedures with contemporary methods, striving for holistic wellness and financial development.

With a terrain endowed by the Himalayas, Uttarakhand has long

been associated with Ayurveda and Yoga. The policy strives to capitalise on this legacy by enabling the cultivation of over 1,000 rare medicinal plants native to the area. Endeavours such as the Chief Minister Medicinal Plant Development Programme are set to involve 50,000 farmers in growing these plants, promoting sustainable farming approaches, and augmenting regional revenues.

In the domain of AYUSH production, Uttarakhand already has a strong drive, backed by ample raw materials and promising business necessities. The state hosts multiple GMP-certified manufacturing departments making a vast array of AYUSH medicines and consumer items. Under the new policy, more incentives and assistance will be offered to enable more units to attain WHO GMP certification and adhere to global quality norms. This action is anticipated to greatly improve the sector's contribution to the state's GDP, presently evaluated at Rs 4,000-5,000 crore. Healthcare constitutes another

cornerstone of Uttarakhand's AYUSH approach, with the state having one of the country's highest concentrations of AYUSH healthcare establishments. The policy summarises strategies to credit all specified government AYUSH healthcare centers under the NABH (National Accreditation Board for Hospitals & Healthcare Providers) within five years. This accreditation will not only improve service quality, but also incorporate AYUSH treatments with allopathic healthcare systems, assuring complete medical care for all citizens.

Wellness tourism, already thriving in Uttarakhand due to its natural magnificence and spiritual essence, is set to obtain additional growth. The policy proposes building health centers and resorts across the state, concentrating on places like Kasar Devi and Harsil known for their natural healing effects. Education and research are essential elements of Uttarakhand's AYUSH concept, with organisations like the Uttarakhand Ayurved University ushering the charge. The policy supports NAAC accreditation of all AYUSH academic colleges within five years, promoting educational superiority and assuring graduates are qualified to fulfill international norms.

Governance-wise, the department of AYUSH will spearhead policy undertaking, teaming closely with other state divisions and stakeholders. A single-window clearance system will facilitate investment processes, drawing private sector participation and promoting financial expansion across all AYUSH segments.

**AYUSH policy strives to capitalise on this legacy by enabling the cultivation of various rare medicinal plants native to the area**

## Milestones by AYUSH

With a strong infrastructure and strategic endeavours, Uttarakhand has arisen as a leader in reviving age-old medicinal approaches and assuring their accessibility to all

The Department of AYUSH in Uttarakhand has made noteworthy strides in elevating and incorporating conventional Ayurvedic and Unani methods of medicine into the state's healthcare framework.

**HEALTHCARE FACILITIES AND INSTITUTIONS**  
Uttarakhand has a network of 546 Ayurvedic and Unani hospitals, furnishing essential medi-

cal care mainly via conventional techniques. These include 541 Ayurvedic and five Unani hospitals, alongside specialised facilities in establishments like the Government Ayurvedic College in Rishikul and Gurukul Kangri, Haridwar. These organisations not only deliver treatment, but also act as hubs for teaching and research in Ayurvedic medicine. Under the National Rural Health

Mission (NRHM), Ayush wings have been established in 206 allopathic hospitals, further incorporating conventional approaches into mainstream healthcare. This endeavour advances to community health centers and primary health centers, assuring exhaustive healthcare services across rural and metropolitan regions.

**EDUCATION AND RESEARCH**  
Uttarakhand has five Ayurvedic

colleges, including two government institutions, committed to providing quality teaching in Ayurvedic medicine. Notably, Rishikul Government Ayurvedic College, Haridwar, provides postgraduate education in seven specialised topics, augmenting the collection of qualified Ayurvedic practitioners in the area.

The state also underscores training programmes for Ayurvedic nurses and pharmacists, enabling qualified healthcare specialists yearly. Private sector endeavours complement government measures, contributing greatly to the workforce in Ayurvedic medicine and corresponding domains.

**INFRASTRUCTURE AND MANUFACTURING**  
The Government Pharmaceutical Laboratory in Rishikul,

Haridwar, plays a key part in making Ayurvedic medicines to fulfill hospital needs. This establishment assures the availability of high-quality, standardized Ayurvedic formulations, that align with national health priorities.

**Under NRHM, Ayush wings have been established in 206 allopathic hospitals, further incorporating conventional approaches into mainstream healthcare**

**REGULATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE**  
Uttarakhand keeps strict benchmarks for Ayurvedic

and Unani medicines via its State Drug Licensing Officer. Licensing and supervision ensure compliance with Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP), with the majority of pharmacies already licensed. Measures are continuing to improve certification for all pharmacies, including well-known labels acknowledged nationally and globally.

**RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT**  
The establishment of a State Drug Testing Laboratory in Haridwar highlights Uttarakhand's dedication to promoting research and assuring the effectiveness and safety of Ayurvedic medicines. This establishment fosters strict testing and verification, boosting trust in conventional medicinal practices.