With India to chair BRICS summit in 2026, PM Modi's Ethiopia visit historic moment: Indian Envoy Rai

(Gns).
With India set to chair the BRICS summit in 2026, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's upcoming visit to Ethiopia marks a "very historic moment" that will strengthen bilateral ties and deepen cooperation on international issues, including UN reforms and BRICS agendas, said India's Ambassador to Ethiopia, Anil Kumar Rai.

Speaking ahead of the Prime Minister's two-day state visit to the African country from December 16 to December 17, Ambassador Rai on Sunday highlighted the two countries' "long-standing, deep and friendly relationship" and their status as important partners on international issues, noting that both are members of the BRICS grouping.

"India and Ethiopia are two civilisational countries, and we have a very long-standing, deep and friendly relationship. PM Narendra Modi will be the first Indian Prime Minister to visit Ethiopia in the last 15 years. So this is a very historic moment for us and we see that there is a big and rich agenda on which the discussions will take place. It will strengthen the cooperation at the bilateral level. Both countries are members of BRICS. And we are very important partners when it comes to cooperating on international issues, such as UN reforms and regional issues, and also there are agendas which we discuss at the regional level, particularly at the level of BRICS. India is going to be the chair of BRICS in 2026, with Ethiopia being an important member. So all those issues will come up during the discussions," the Ambassador said.

India is one of the founding members of the formal grouping. The organisation was first formalised at the BRIC Foreign Ministers meeting on the sidelines of the UNGA in New York in 2006, with the first summit taking place in Russia in 2009.

Following South Africa's inclusion in the organisation in 2010, the group was expanded to BRICS. Ethiopia officially joined BRICS in January 2024, following an invitation in August 2023 under South Africa's chairmanship. Along with Ethiopia, Egypt, Iran, and the UAE became the full members of the grouping.

Rai further stated that multiple sectors are under discussion, and the visit's outcomes are expected to be shared with the media on the evening of December 16.

"We are under discussion in multiple sectors, and we expect a good outcome from this visit, which will be conveyed to the media on the evening of the 16th," he added.

PM Modi will be in Ethiopia for a two-day state visit, during the second leg of his three-nation visit following his visit to Jordan.

He will be in the African nation at the invitation of Ethiopia's Prime Minister, Abiy Ahmed Ali.

According to the Ministry of External Affairs, this will be PM Modi's first visit to Ethiopia, duirng which he will be holding wide-ranging discussions with Prime Minister Ali on all aspects of India-Ethiopia bilateral ties.

"As partners in the Global South, the visit will be a reiteration of the shared commitment of the two nations to advance close ties of friendship and

Chief Minister Shri Bhupendra Patel Leads the Governance Performance Index (GPI) Initiative Through CM Dashboard

Chief Minister Chairs Review Meeting of GPI Across Departments

Gandhinagar, 15 December 2025: To improve the ease of living for citizens, various government departments ensure the effective implementation of schemes through citizen-centric services, development works, infrastructure projects, and grievance redressal. For this, the key operational parameters of various departments have been integrated on a single platform, the CM Dashboard.

Gujarat, recognised nationwide as a model of good governance, has operationalised the CM Dashboard under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi to promote citizen-centric governance and facilitate real-time monitoring of scheme implementation. The CM Dashboard has also set a benchmark for other states in public interest-oriented, planned performance evaluation and implementation.

Building on this tradition of good governance, the CM has developed a holistic Governance Performance Index (GPI) through the CM Dashboard. The CM held a review meeting in Gandhinagar to evaluate the progress and provided necessary guidance.

Chief Secretary Shri Manoj Kumar Das; Principal Advisor to the CM Dr Hasmukh Adhia; Advisor Shri S. S. Rathore; Chairman of the Sardar Sarovar Narmada Nigam Ltd Shri Mukesh Puri; Additional Chief Secretaries of Agriculture, Energy, and Narmada Water Resources; Principal Secretaries of Tribal Affairs and Labour and Employment; Additional Principal Secretary to the CM Smt. Avantika Singh; Secretary Dr Vikrant Pandey; Roads & Building Department Secretary Shri P.R Patelia; and Secretaries of other concerned departments remained present in the meeting.

Controversy erupts after Nitish Kumar pulls woman doctor's hijab at official event

(Gns).
Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Monday distributed appointment letters to 1,283 AYUSH doctors at a function held in Patna. Of the total appointees, 685 are Ayurvedic practitioners, 393 Homeopathic, and 205 Unani doctors.

The ceremony was intended to highlight the NDA government's commitment to strengthening the healthcare system in the state, expanding medical education, and ensuring the delivery of quality healthcare services. However, the event soon drew controversy after the Chief Minister pulled down the hijab of a woman doctor who had come wearing it to receive her appointment letter.

In a video that has since surfaced, the woman doctor is seen approaching the stage to receive her appointment letter. After handing over the letter, the Chief Minister, smiling, asks, "What is this?"

The doctor responds, "Sir, it is a hijab." Before she could finish her reply, the Chief Minister was seen pulling it down.

Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary is visible in the video attempting to stop the Chief Minister, but by then the incident had already occurred.

The Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) shared a video clip of the incident on its official social media page, accompanied by the caption, "What has happened to Nitish ji? Has his mental condition deteriorated completely, or has Nitish Babu now become 100% Sanghi?"

Reacting to the incident, Bihar RJD spokesperson Ejaz Ahmed said that removing the hijab from the face of a Muslim woman while handing over an appointment letter amounted to an insult to women.

He alleged that the NDA government's attitude towards the Muslim community had become evident and accused Chief Minister Nitish Kumar of engaging in politics to please the BJP and the RSS.

"The Constitution of India grants people of all religions the freedom to follow their own religious traditions and practices. When a person holding the office of Chief Minister forcibly commits such an act, it appears that Bihar is now being run entirely on the ideology of the Sangh," Ahmed said.

Fadnavis mocks Former Maha CM Prithviraj Chavan after he repeats prediction about 'change of PM'

(Gns).
Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis made fun of senior Congress leader Prithviraj Chavan's claim that India will soon get a different Prime Minister who will be a native of Maharashtra.

Fadnavis told media persons here on Monday, "Prithviraj Chavan should not bother himself with such thoughts. This is my advice to him. Till now, different people were sharing visions, dreams and prophecies. We have seen all this. However, if senior leaders like Prithviraj Chavan, who has been the Chief Minister of Maharashtra, also start having visions like this, I think there must be something wrong. Prithviraj Chavan is a very good leader. We wish him good health. But I advise him not to bother himself too much by thinking like this".

Significantly, Fadnavis chose to react after former Maharashtra Chief Minister Prithviraj Chavan repeated his claim that a "Marathi man" will become the new Prime Minister of India after a "political earthquake" after December 19, speaking to media persons at a book release function at Pimpri Chinchwad on Monday.

Speaking to the media after the launch of social worker Manav Kamble's book 'Jan Gan Man', Chavan said that his claim was linked to the much-awaited disclosure of the Epstein files in the United States (US) that could trigger political turmoil in India as well.

"The biggest political earthquake in the country will happen on December 19. The Prime Minister of India will change and a Marathi man will become the Prime Minister. I had tweeted something about it, and it went viral. I said that a Marathi man will become the Prime Minister of India within a month. I received many calls, asking what does your statement mean? How will this happen? Many people asked me such questions. Now, if a Marathi man is going to become the Prime Minister, the person currently holding that position should step aside. I see the possibility of change.

Six-month deadline set as CM Sukhu reviews Himachal Niketan construction

(Gns).
Chief Minister Thakur Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Monday inspected the ongoing construction work of Himachal Niketan at Dwarka in New Delhi and directed the officers concerned to ensure its completion within the next six months.

Being constructed at an approximate cost of Rs 145 crore, the Himachal Niketan is designed as a state-of-the-art facility to cater to the needs of people from Himachal Pradesh visiting the national capital.

The complex will comprise 107 well-equipped rooms along with a restaurant, banquet hall, multipurpose hall, meeting hall, dormitories, adequate parking facilities, landscaped gardens and electric vehicle charging stations, besides other modern amenities.

The Chief Minister said that the Himachal Niketan, offering almost five-star facilities, would provide comfortable accommodation to Himachalis visiting New Delhi for purposes such as medical treatment, education and other official or personal engagements.

He added that the state government remains responsive to the needs of the people and, keeping in view the growing influx of visitors to the capital, an additional building has been constructed to enhance accommodation capacity.

Emphasizing the importance of timely execution, Sukhu directed the officers to expedite the remaining work while ensuring high-quality standards.

Speaker of the Himachal Pradesh Vidhan Sabha, Kuldeep Singh Pathania, appreciated the initiative of the state government, stating that students and patients from Himachal Pradesh visit Delhi in large numbers, and the new facility would offer them a convenient and comfortable stay.

Principal Secretary, Public Works Department, Devesh Kumar, briefed the Chief Minister about the project details and the current status of the construction work.

Nitin Nabin assumes charge as BJP national working president in presence of Nadda, Shah

(Gns).
Newly appointed BJP national working president Nitin Nabin on Monday assumed charge at the party headquarters in New Delhi. BJP national president JP Nadda and Union Home Minister Amit Shah were present at the event.

Congratulating him on taking charge as the new BJP national working president, Shah exuded confidence that the saffron party will expand even further under his leadership

'I am confident that under your leadership, the organization will expand even further, and you will take the policies of the Modi government and the party's ideology to every individual. I pray to God for your successful tenure," the Home Minister said on X.

Nabin received a grand welcome by party leaders as he arrived at the BJP headquarters.

The newly appointed BJP national working president paid floral tributes to party ideologues Dr Shyama Prasad Mukherjee and Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya.

Earlier in the day, he was accorded a warm welcome at Indira Gandhi International Airport by Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, BJP National General Secretary Vinod Tawde and other senior party leaders.

Nabin, who currently serves as a minister in the Nitish Kumar-led Bihar government, was appointed as the national working president with immediate effect on Sunday.

The move is seen within the party as part of a generational transition and is expected to place him in line to eventually succeed BJP president JP Nadda, whose term has already been extended beyond 2024.

At 45, Nabin is said to be the youngest leader to be elevated to the post of party's national working president.

Editorial

India's AI Opportunity

India has suddenly become the centre of global attention in artificial intelligence, not for producing the next OpenAI or DeepSeek, but for the sheer scale of opportunity it represents. Recent commitments by major tech players to invest tens of billions of dollars into India's AI ecosystem signal more than corporate ambition ~ they underscore the country's strategic importance in a world increasingly defined by AI capabilities. Yet these investments also raise a pressing question: can India keep pace in the global AI race, or will it chart a different path that leverages its unique strengths? The country possesses one undeniable advantage: human capital.

India produces a high concentration of AI-skilled professionals, with a developer base 2.5 times the global average. Indian engineers and data scientists are actively contributing to research, publications, and start-ups, often punching above their economic weight. Despite these strengths, India's AI ambitions are constrained by systemic limitations. Computational infrastructure is still sparse, semiconductor access is limited, and the scale of public and private R&D investment pales in comparison with the United States and China. Even the government's sovereign AI mission, though commendable in its intent, represents a fraction of the resources committed by nations that aim to dominate the field. But focusing solely on building large foundational models may miss India's real opportunity. Unlike markets where the primary goal is technological prestige or dominance, India can harness AI to solve pressing social and economic problems. Already, AI-driven applications are reshaping the everyday lives of millions.

Tools delivering agricultural guidance in regional languages, platforms improving access to healthcare, and localised educational solutions illustrate how AI can create tangible impact. In these contexts, India does not need to outspend the global giants; it only needs to innovate in ways that are culturally and socially relevant. The challenge lies in creating an environment that retains talent, fosters entrepreneurship, and builds the infrastructure necessary to scale solutions nationally and globally. Visa restrictions abroad and the mobility of AI professionals present an opportunity: India could become a magnet for domestic and diaspora talent, but only if policy, incentives, and research opportunities are aligned.

The downstream potential ~ AI-powered start-ups, consumer applications, and sector-specific solutions ~ may well define India's comparative advantage in the coming decade. India's AI journey is therefore unlikely to mirror that of the US or China. It will not be about owning the biggest models or commanding the most computing power, but about embedding intelligence into the real-world problems that matter most. If India can play this role effectively, it may not just keep pace in the AI age ~ it could redefine what it means to leverage technology for inclusive growth, demonstrating that innovation is not only about scale, but also about relevance.

Ayodhya's Daughter, Anshika, Shines at National Shooting Championship, Qualifies for Indian Team Trials

Anshika, a talented young woman from Ayodhya, has brought pride to her district and state with her remarkable achievement at the national level. At the 68th National Shooting Championship held at the Dr. Karni Singh Shooting Range in Delhi, Anshika qualified for the 10-meter air pistol Indian team selection trials. With this success, she is now just a few steps away from wearing the Indian shooting team jersey.

At the young age of 13, Anshika has achieved this milestone and has also been an ISSF shooter for the past two years, which is considered the highest category in national-level shooting competitions. Anshika is a resident of Ayodhya and is currently a Class 7 student at Seth M.R. Jaipuria School in Lucknow.

Anshika's success is largely due to her hard work and disciplined routine. She practices shooting for approximately four hours every day. Her day begins at 5 AM with exercise, and practicing before going to bed at night is also a part of her daily routine.

Seeing his daughter's dedication and commitment, her father, Anshu Mishra, a businessman by profession, has built a small shooting range at home to ensure that her practice is uninterrupted.

Anshika's mother is a homemaker, and the support of her entire family is playing a crucial role in her success.

Anshika receives professional shooting training from Surjan Singh, a former Indian Navy officer, at the Shri Ram Shooting Range in Gomti Nagar. The guidance of her coach, the support of her family, and Anshika's tireless efforts are giving her a new identity at the national level and raising strong hopes for future success on the international stage.

INDIA bloc has nothing to do with Congress rally against SIR, 'vote chori': Omar Abdullah

(Gns).

A day after the Congress party's massive 'Vote Chor, Gaddi Chhod' rally at Ramlila Maidan in Delhi, Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Monday appeared to have distanced his party from the issue of "vote theft", which is being aggressively pushed by the grand old party.

Despite his party, the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference (J&KNC), being a part of the Congress-led INDIA bloc, Abdullah clarified that the Opposition alliance has nothing to do with the issues of Special Intensive Revision (SIR) or "vote theft".

"The INDIA alliance has nothing to do with it. Every political party has the freedom to set its political agenda. Congress has made SIR, vote chori as its main political issue…We will choose our issues," the Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister told reporters in Srinagar.

Earlier on Sunday, Rahul Gandhi launched a blistering attack on the BJP-led central government and the Election Commission of India, asserting that a future Congress government would amend the new law that he claims grants immunity to the Chief Election Commissioner and would take action against them "if required."

He accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of introducing the law and alleged that the Election Commission was operating "in tandem with the BJP government" in what he described as a battle between "truth and untruth." Concluding his address, Gandhi declared, "It may take time, but truth will ultimately win. We will work with truth and non-violence to defeat Modi and Shah," while cautioning the poll body to be the country's Election Commission, "not Modi's EC."

The rally, attended by thousands of party workers and leaders, saw the Congress leadership intensify its campaign against what it described as the systematic weakening of democratic institutions and electoral processes.

However, Abdullah's remarks distancing the INDIA bloc from these issues show differing priorities within the Opposition's alliance. INDIA bloc has nothing to do with Congress rally against SIR, 'vote chori': Omar Abdullah

Abdullah clarified that the Opposition alliance has nothing to do with the issues of Special Intensive Revision (SIR) or "vote theft".

The Congress has been prominently raising the issue of the "vote theft" in elections. Its leader, Rahul Gandhi, has addressed three major press conferences, sharing purported evidence in a bid to prove his "vote chori" charge.

Similarly, the Congress has also raised objections over the hasty SIR exercise, alleging that it is a BJP attempt to influence the electoral rolls and remove Dalit and backward-class voters.

IndiGo regulatory capture: How India's biggest airline bent the system and hurt passengers

(Gns).

IndiGo regulatory capture is not a slogan. It is a description of how power really works in Indian aviation today.

In early December, India watched its largest airline unravel in real time. Flights vanished from departure boards. Passengers slept on airport floors. Students missed exams, patients missed appointments, workers missed job interviews and weddings. Call centres looped, apps showed "operational reasons", and the standard promise was: "Refund as per DGCA rules."

At the heart of this slow-motion crash was IndiGo, the country's dominant airline. Standing behind it were two institutions meant to protect the public: the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) and the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA).

This was not just one carrier's "internal mess". It exposed a deeper structure:

Abuse of dominant position in ticketing and pilot training

Regulatory capture of the aviation regulator

And a meek ministry, more interested in managing headlines than defending citizens

Beneath the surface, India is also quietly redesigning how pilots are trained and work, through the Multi-Crew Pilot Licence (MPL) and a highly flexible Fatigue Risk Management System (FRMS). In the wrong governance environment, these become tools that hard-wire airline control from classroom to cockpit.

This is the story of how power in Indian aviation is being rearranged, and what must happen next.

Architecture of Control

Market dominance over routes and slots

Control of the pilot pipeline (cadet programmes + MPL)

Manipulation of fatigue and safety rules (FDTL → FRMS via a captured regulator)

1. The meltdown that told the truth

The immediate trigger was Phase 2 of new Flight Duty Time Limitations (FDTL) – the rules that limit how long pilots can work and how much rest they must get.

These updated rules, implemented in stages, were meant to reduce fatigue and bring India closer to international best practice. They tightened definitions of night duty, increased weekly rest, and limited the number of landings and consecutive night duties.

On paper, everyone knew this was coming. Airlines were consulted, schemes were submitted, and approvals were granted. By 1 November, Phase 2 was in effect.

Within weeks:

IndiGo began cancelling flights across the network.

The airline cited "crew non-availability" and "operational reasons".

Passengers scrambled for last-minute tickets on other airlines at huge mark-ups, or abandoned travel.

Publicly, the Civil Aviation Minister said there were cancellations in November but that operations "stabilised" later in the month. He then admitted that on 1 December IndiGo and DGCA met the ministry to "seek clarifications" on the new FDTL norms, and "all clarifications were given".

Soon after, the system collapsed.

Obvious questions arise:

If operations had stabilised, why did they implode days later?

If the rules were clear enough for a "clarification meeting", why did the largest airline fail so completely to roster within them?

Why is a political ministry "clarifying" scientific fatigue rules that are supposed to be enforced by an independent regulator?

Those questions sit at the core of IndiGo's regulatory capture.

2. How dominance works: from tickets to training

To understand the scale of IndiGo regulatory capture, you have to see beyond a single wave of cancellations.

2.1 Dominance in the sky

On many domestic routes and time bands, IndiGo is not just another airline. It is the airline:

It controls a large share of slots at key airports.

It offers the highest frequencies on major city pairs and peak times.

For many passengers, "domestic flight" effectively means "IndiGo or nothing reasonable".

In that position, when IndiGo publishes an ambitious schedule and sells heavily, it shapes the entire market:

Competitors price around it.

Airport operations bend around its waves.

Passengers plan their lives around the assumption that if IndiGo sells it, IndiGo can operate it.

When that assumption fails, the damage is systemic.

2.2 Dominance in the classroom

The same pattern is emerging where pilots are produced.

IndiGo runs multiple branded cadet pilot programmes with selected training partners. These are marketed as the "preferred" or "safest" route into an IndiGo cockpit.

Independent DGCA-approved routes – train in India (CPL + IR + multi-engine) and then do a separate A320/B737 type rating – typically cost substantially less than these branded ed pipelines. Yet families are nudged into the expensive programmes because they appear to guarantee access to IndiGo.

Across a planned intake of a few thousand cadets, the extra premium paid over independent training options runs into thousands of crores of rupees. This is a recurring revenue stream tied not to flying tickets, but to controlling the training funnel.

When an airline is this dominant in both passenger services and pilot training, its incentives and political weight grow far beyond those of a normal commercial operator. Regulation starts to feel negotiable.

3. A regulator that bends, and a ministry that shields

Regulatory Capture: Who's Flying the Plane?

DGCA's job should be simple: write clear safety rules, enforce them uniformly, and stand between commercial pressure and public safety.

What we see instead is classic IndiGo regulatory capture behaviour.

3.1 Tough on paper, soft in practice

The revised FDTL CAR looks good:

Higher weekly rest (48 hours).

Sharper definition of night duty.

Limits on night landings and consecutive night duties.

But when the largest airline fails to plan for these rules, DGCA's first instinct is not strict enforcement. It is selective flexibility.

3.2 Bespoke relief for the biggest player

After the cancellations surge, DGCA grants limited FDTL relaxations specifically for IndiGo's A320 operations:

Night duty is redefined more favourably.

Limits on night landings relaxed.

Scope to count certain leave as a weekly rest.

The stated justification is "network stability" and passenger interest. In practice, the safety margin is quietly diluted for the very airline that already demonstrated it could not manage within the original limits.

3.3 A ministry that mediates instead of overseeing

The minister's narrative is revealing:

He recounts the 1 December "clarification meeting" between IndiGo, DGCA and MoCA.

MoCA, which is a political and policy ministry, effectively steps into the role of interpreter for a technical fatigue rule.

MoCA is not staffed or structured to interpret circadian science, fatigue models, or pilot workload. Its involvement signals that safety regulation itself is being mediated through political calculus.

This is how regulatory capture works in the real world:

The dominant airline expects understanding and relief when rules pinch.

The regulator feels pressure to "manage" the situation rather than enforce its own standards.

The ministry acts as a broker of compromises, not an independent guardian of the public.

The cost is pushed onto those with the least leverage: passengers and young pilots.

4. The long war over FDTL: three abeyances and a backdoor FRMS

The bitter truth is that the current crisis did not start in November 2025. It is the latest round in a long war over FDTL, in which scientifically stronger limits on pilot fatigue have been put under abeyance twice before – and effectively a third time now (2007, 2012, 2024).

Each cycle has looked similar:

Fatigue-safe FDTL norms are drafted or notified.

Operators protest they "cannot manage" within those limits.

Implementation is postponed, diluted, or buried under "temporary" relief.

When the revised FDTL finally came back in 2024–25, it was already the third attempt to introduce meaningful protections for Indian pilots. On paper, the message was that this time, the regulator was serious. In practice, the old reflexes resurfaced immediately.

Instead of enforcing the new limits cleanly, DGCA opened a side door: Fatigue Risk Management Systems (FRMS).

The pitch to airlines was simple: you can come under the stricter, prescriptive FDTL, or you can propose an "equivalent or better" FRMS that uses your internal data and models to justify more flexible patterns.

While the public was watching cancellations and chaos, DGCA quietly, away from the public eye, issued a draft FRMS Operations Circular, aimed to be implemented by December 2025. This was handled as a technical exercise, not as a public policy question with safety and labour implications.

This time, however, civil society pushed back. NGOs like Safety Matters, the Federation of Indian Pilots (FIP), and ALPA opposed the way FRMS was being positioned as an alternative to hard FDTL protections, rather than as a tightly supervised complement. They warned that in the Indian context, FRMS could become a backdoor to once again weaken fatigue limits for the benefit of large operators.

Cornered by this resistance, and facing real operational strain under FDTL Phase 2, IndiGo did what a dominant player in a captured system does: it went upstairs.

On 1 December, IndiGo, DGCA and MoCA met in a tripartite "clarification" meeting. This meeting is the smoking gun in the IndiGo regulatory capture story.

We know it happened. We know IndiGo sought "clarifications". We know "all clarifications were given".

What we do not know is what was actually said.

The minutes of that 1 December meeting have never been made public. They are where the public trail goes dark. Those minutes almost certainly contain:

The precise "difficulties" IndiGo raised with the new FDTL.

Any verbal assurances or "interpretations" DGCA and MoCA offered.

Any informal understanding that FRMS or future relaxations would be used to ease pressure.

In other words, the minutes hold the key.

Without them, IndiGo's subsequent collapse and the selective FDTL relaxations it received look less like an accident and more like the predictable result of a third effective abeyance of fatigue limits, negotiated in a closed room.

5. MPL and FRMS: turning influence into architecture

The highly visible side of IndiGo's regulatory capture is cancellations and exemptions. The quieter side lies in how India is redesigning pilot licensing and fatigue rules through MPL and FRMS.

5.1 MPL – airline-tied licensing

The Multi-Crew Pilot Licence (MPL) is an ICAO-designed licence that trains a student from zero directly for the right seat of an airliner.

Unlike the traditional route (private licence, commercial licence, instrument rating, then hours building and type rating), MPL:

Is airline-specific from day one.

Relies heavily on simulators and competency-based assessments.

Is integrated with one airline's operating procedures and fleet.

DGCA has constituted a committee, heavily populated by DGCA officials and airline representatives, to build the MPL framework for India.

Potential benefits exist, but in this context, MPL can:

Tie cadets financially and professionally to a single airline ecosystem.

Make switching employers or converting to a conventional licence path difficult.

Give airlines disproportionate influence over who enters the profession and on what terms.

For a dominant carrier already shaping the cadet market, MPL is a way to encode IndiGo's regulatory capture into the licensing architecture itself.

5.2 FRMS – flexibility for whom?

The draft Fatigue Risk Management System (FRMS) circular is presented as a modern solution:

Airlines may stick with fixed FDTL, adopt FRMS, or use a hybrid.

FRMS must be "data-driven" and "equivalent or better" than fixed rules.

DGCA will create an internal FRMS cell to vet and monitor schemes.

In theory, FRMS can improve safety by tailoring controls to actual risk.

In a captured environment, FRMS can also:

Turn hard caps into negotiable parameters, justified by in-house models.

Give powerful airlines customised fatigue envelopes that align with their business plans.

Outrun DGCA's ability to meaningfully audit, especially if DGCA already struggles with basic FDTL enforcement.

Put bluntly: if DGCA cannot hold the line on simple, fixed numbers, there is little reason to trust it with supervising complex, airline-designed fatigue systems.

6. The five "whys" – tracing IndiGo regulatory capture to its root

A basic 5-Why analysis illuminates the pattern.

Why were thousands of passengers stranded?

Because a dominant airline cancelled huge numbers of flights after failing to align its crew and rosters with known fatigue rules.

Why did the airline fail to align?

Because it chose to maintain an aggressive schedule, assuming that discretion, last-minute fixes or negotiated relief would be available if the rules became inconvenient.

Why was it confident that rules could be bent?

Because, historically, scientifically safer FDTL norms have been put under abeyance whenever they threatened established commercial patterns. When that became harder, a backdoor FRMS escape route was created through a draft circular, floated quietly with a December 2025 target.

Why does this airline have such leverage over that process?

Because it dominates routes and time bands, dominates cadet training pipelines through expensive branded programmes, and operates in a system where airlines sit at the centre of committees that design MPL and FRMS frameworks.

190th birth anniversary of eminent astronomer Pathani Samanta observed at SOA

(Gns).

The singular scientific achievements of eminent Indian astronomer, mathematician and scholar Mahamahopadhyay Chandrasekhar Singh Samanta, who could measure the distance between celestial bodies using a bamboo pipe and traditional instruments, were highlighted at his 190th birth anniversary at the SOA Deemed to be University here on Monday.

As a 14-year-old boy, Samanta scanned the sky and measured the length of the shadows throughout the day using equipment made of bamboo and wood to measure distance, height and time, speakers who attended the event said.

Dr. Subhendu Patnaik, former Director of the Pathani Samanta Planetarium in Bhubaneswar, who was the chief guest at the program, said the birth anniversary of the great astronomer was being observed on different days at present which was not correct. The birth anniversary of Pathani Samanta should be universally observed on December 13, he said.

Dr. Patnaik said Pathani Samanta, after studying the planets for ten years, could identify errors in the lunar calendar and wrote his findings in his astronomical treatise 'Siddhant Darpan'.

Prof. Pradipta Kumar Nanda, Vice-Chancellor of SOA, who presided over the program, said the astronomer who had no formal education was taught Sanskrit, Mathematics and Astronomy by his father.

"He never studied in a university but achieved great things," he said.

Citing the example of eminent theoretical physicist and cosmologist Stephen Hawking, Prof. Nanda said he could achieve greatness in spite of his physical constraints.

Prof. Manjula Das, SOA's Controller of Examination, and Prof. Ayasa Kanta Mohanty, Dean of Institute of Business and Computer Studies, SOA's faculty of management sciences, also addressed the gathering of students. Prof. Jyoti Ranjan Das, Dean (Students' Welfare) conducted the meeting.

As Pathani Samanta came from the princely family of Khandapada, Mr. Siddhartha Sekhar Singh Mardaraj, former legislator and a scion of the family, had conducted the birth anniversary of the astronomer two years ago at Khandapada in association with SOA. In a message read on the occasion, Mr. Mardaraj thanked the university for taking up the cause of astronomy.

CPI(M) demands withdrawal of VB-GRAMG Bill, calls it an attack on MGNREGA

(Gns).

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) on Monday strongly opposed the Union government's move to introduce the Viksit Bharat – Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin) Bill, 2025 (VB-GRAMG Bill), which seeks to replace the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA).

In a statement, the CPI(M) said the proposed Bill "completely negates the basic character of the MNREGA, which is a universal demand-driven law providing a limited right to work". The party claimed that the government's claim of increasing guaranteed employment from 100 to 125 days is "merely cosmetic".

The CPI(M) raised concerns over several provisions of the Bill, including the shift in funding pattern, which reduces the Centre's responsibility for wage payments from 100% to a 60:40 sharing arrangement for major states. The party also objected to the provision allowing governments to suspend employment for up to 60 days during peak agricultural seasons, saying it would deny work to rural households when they need it most.

"CPI(M) demands that the VB-GRAMG Bill be withdrawn immediately. The Union government must instead engage in consultations with political parties, trade unions and organisations of the rural poor to strengthen MGNREGA and ensure its effective implementation as a universal and rights-based employment guarantee," said Muralidharan, a central committee member of CPI(M).

Rechristening MGNREGA betrays deep-rooted hatred for Gandhi: Stalin

(Gns).

Accusing the Modi government of attempting to destroy the MGNREGA scheme and turning it into smithereens by slashing financial allocation, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and DMK president MK Stalin on Monday alleged that rechristening the programme with a difficult to pronounce Sanskritised nomenclature was out of spitefulness for the father of the nation.

In a hard-hitting post on 'X', the chief minister, urging the Union government to give up dismantling the MGNREGA programme, said, "Drunk on hubris, the BJP-led Union Government is out to destroy a scheme that has lifted crores of people from the clutches of poverty and enabled them to lead a life of dignity."

According to him, the resentment over naming Union government programmes in Sanskrit-Hindi, the scheme has been named as Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozga and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin).

Till now, the programme is 100% sponsored by the Union government. But, henceforth only 60% will be Central allocation with the states forced to bear the remainder from out of their resources. Stalin expressed apprehension that Tamil Nadu, a state which has eradicated poverty, will be punished because of this. The irony is punishment for successful poverty eradication and for this reason the state would be getting the lowest benefits out of this scheme, he noted.

BJP's deep-rooted hatred for the Mahatma is evident in changing the very nomenclature. "It is out of spitefulness for Gandhiji, the father of the nation, that a difficult to pronounce Sanskritised nomenclature has been imposed."

When there is already "Just like how you backed off on #ThreeFarmLaws, #CasteCensus, people will force you to backtrack on the attempt to destroy MGNREGA as well. Hence, I request you to abandon the #VBGRAMG immediately instead of facing the wrath of the people," he said.

Goa nightclub fire case: Luthra brothers likely to be deported to Delhi tomorrow; Goa Police to secure custody

(Gns).

The much-anticipated deportation of Saurabh and Gaurav Luthra, owners of the 'Birch by Romeo Lane' nightclub in Goa, from Thailand to India is now in its final stage. As per multiple media reports, the accused are likely to be deported to Delhi on Tuesday, from where they will be handed over to the Goa Police. Officials have clarified that the Goa Police will not be travelling to Thailand.

A team of the Goa Police is scheduled to leave for Delhi tonight to formally take custody of the Luthra brothers from central agencies in Delhi once they land in the national capital.

As per the schedule, the Luthra brothers are expected to be brought to Goa late tomorrow night. Upon arrival, they will be taken directly to the Anjuna Police Station for questioning. The accused are likely to be produced before the Mapusa Court on 17 December.

Final court procedure awaited, say Sources

As per Sources to ANI, Indian authorities have completed all required documentation. Thai immigration authorities are coordinating closely with Indian officials and are preparing to present the case before a local Bangkok court. Sources to ANI further confirmed that all relevant documentation has been submitted to Thai authorities and the case is now awaiting its final legal review by a Bangkok court.

Earlier in the day, a legal team representing the Luthra brothers met them in Thai custody at the detention centre. The meeting lasted around 30 minutes, during which the lawyers briefed their clients on the legal procedures ahead.

According to Thai Immigration officials, Luthras were arrested under Section 12(7) of the Thai Immigration Act. The club owners were then transferred to the Immigration Detention Centre (IDC) at Suan Phlu, Sathon, Bangkok. Their legal status in the country was also cancelled as officials at Phuket Immigration revoked their VISA permission to stay in Thailand.

Details of the legal proceedings

The Goa government has formed a special legal team to ensure effective prosecution of the case. The police have registered a case under Section 105 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), which carries a provision for maximum imprisonment of 10 years.

The probe is underway with Investigating Officers collecting evidence relating to alleged violations committed by the Luthra brothers.

Birch-Goa partner Ajay Gupta remains in 7-day police custody

On 11 December, accused Ajay Gupta was sent to seven days' police custody by the Judicial Magistrate First Class (JMFC) Court in Mapusa for further investigation.

Gupta is one of the four owners of the 'Birch by Romeo Lane' nightclub. He was arrested in Delhi by the Goa Police. He was brought to Goa to face legal proceedings in the ongoing investigation, following a 36-hour transit remand by Delhi's Saket Court on 10 December.

Massive nightclub fire tragedy

Twenty-five people were killed in a devastating fire that broke out late on December 6 at the 'Birch by Romeo Lane' nightclub. Following the incident, the Luthra brothers had flown to Thailand. The two brothers booked their flight at around 1.15 a.m., shortly after the fire accident, and left for Thailand at 5 a.m. on 07 December.

Punjab govt sanctions Rs 1.61 crore for water study in collaboration with IIT-Ropar

(Gns).

In a significant step towards addressing Punjab's water woes, Finance Minister Advocate Harpal Singh Cheema announced in-principle approval for a Rs 1.61-crore micro-level study on water resources and seepage patterns.

The study, to be conducted by the Punjab State Farmers' & Farm Workers' Commission (PSFFWC) in collaboration with IIT Ropar, will help develop effective solutions to manage the state's subsoil water levels.

Highlighting the importance of this initiative, Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema said as an agrarian state, Punjab faces serious challenges concerning water availability and its sustainable usage. He emphasised that this project represents a crucial step towards the revival of the state's agrarian era.

"The initial macro-level study, conducted by the PSFFWC in collaboration with the National Institute of Hydrology (NIH), Roorkee, was formally acknowledged by the Punjab Vidhan Sabha Committee on Agriculture Reforms. Subsequently, the Committee decided a more detailed micro-level study," he added.

Elaborating on the scientific depth of the investigation, Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema said that the micro-level study will employ advanced techniques, including Carbon Dating and isotope analysis of sub-soil and repository water, as well as a comprehensive examination of seepage patterns across the state.

The study's objectives encompass a range of critical aspects, including profiling all types of available water resources, characterising aquifers to inform policy decisions, conducting heliborne surveys, exploring alternative water resources, and conducting micro-level studies to determine seepage rates

Providing details on the financial allocation for the study, the finance minister said that the project would be funded with a total outlay of Rs 221.65 lakh. Of this amount, IIT Ropar will contribute Rs 60.00 lakh from its own resources, leaving a requirement of Rs 161.00 lakh for the Punjab State Farmers' and Farm Workers' Commission.

In exchange for the funding, IIT Ropar will provide comprehensive technical support, including design and execution expertise, field investigations. sample collection, deployment of portable instruments, infrastructure and laboratory facilities, and technical training and capacity-building initiatives.

The study comprises five detailed phases, scheduled for completion within 12 months of receiving the required funds. Phase 1 will conduct a field survey to determine sampling sites, Phase 2 will develop a hydro geological framework of the state's aquifer systems, Phase 3 will involve hydro-chemical characterisation and isotopic analysis to assess contamination levels and identify source areas, Phase 4 will identify areas for canal network expansion, and Phase 5 will provide recommendations for management measures

Finance Minister Cheema said that the collaboration with IIT Ropar is a testament to the state government's commitment to science-driven policy-making.

Akhilesh calls assault on unemployed youth reflection of BJP govt's arrogance

(Gns).

Samajwadi Party (SP) national president Akhilesh Yadav has strongly condemned the inhumane treatment meted out to the students and youth protesting alleged corruption at the Uttar Pradesh Public Service Commission in Prayagraj.

He said assaulting and humiliating unemployed youth by grabbing their hair reflects the BJP government's arrogance of power, which has now taken an inhumane form. In a statement issued by the party on Monday, Akhilesh Yadav said here on Monday that educated young people do not want to fight; they are only demanding a clean and transparent recruitment process.

He clarified that the Samajwadi Party stands as a moral force with competitive students and hence strongly demands a Special Investigation Report (SIR) regarding allegations of the Uttar Pradesh Public Service Commission's flawed examination system and corrupt selection process.

He asserted that future generations will never forgive the BJP for its brutal treatment of youth. He said employment is not on the BJP's agenda and as the saffron party remains in power in the state, finding a job will remain difficult. After making false promises to students and youth, the party has completely failed to fulfill them.

Akhilesh Yadav, alleging that corruption is rampant in every department, said students and youth are bearing the brunt. He demanded that the government, instead of suppressing the voices of the youth, address their problems and ensure a fair recruitment process.

Confluence of Spirituality, Culture and Artistic Expression – Grand Conclusion of BharatKool Adhyay–2

Graced by the presence of Hon'ble Chief Minister Shri Bhupendra Patel, Deputy Chief Minister Shri Harsh Sanghavi, Pujya Brahmavihari Swamiji, Pujya Dr. Gyanvatsal Swamiji, Shri Parimal Nathwani, Speaker Shri Shankarbhai Chaudhary, Padma Shri Shahbuddin Rathod and Shri Dwarkeshlalji Maharajshri

Ahmedabad, 15 December 2025 : BharatKool Adhyay–2, a grand celebration of India's rich cultural heritage and the timeless values of Sanatan Dharma, was successfully held from 12 to 14 December 2025 at Gujarat University, Ahmedabad. Over three days, the festival offered an immersive experience through art, literature, music, spirituality, and meaningful dialogue, showcasing the depth and vibrancy of Indian culture.

The festival was inaugurated by Hon'ble Chief Minister Shri Bhupendra Patel, who stated that BharatKool Adhyay–2 is not merely a cultural festival but a powerful emotional journey that touches the soul of India. He emphasised that balancing development with culture defines India's true identity, and BharatKool serves as a vital platform to preserve this harmony. He also appreciated the initiative's efforts to connect the youth with their roots, traditions, and spiritual values.

Deputy Chief Minister Shri Harsh Sanghavi, in his address, emphasized that India's true "cool" identity lies in its values, culture, tolerance, and collective strength. He highlighted the importance of connecting youth to their roots, traditions, and cultural values, describing it as essential for both society and the nation. Shri Sanghavi elaborated on sports, youth empowerment, and modern infrastructure, noting that Ahmedabad's selection for the 2030 Commonwealth Games is a proud moment for Gujarat and India. This achievement reflects the city's world-class facilities, meticulous planning, and visionary leadership. He encouraged the youth to live life with discipline and cultural awareness, underscoring their vital role in India's economic, cultural, and social growth.

Providing spiritual insight, Pujya Brahmavihari Swamiji said that Indian culture teaches the art of living, where emotions, music, and thought unite to shape humanity.

Pujya Dr. Gyanvatsal Swamiji delivered an inspiring discourse on "The Art of Becoming a Genius." He explained that genius is not born but created through effort, discipline, and alignment with true values. Using the example of coal, graphite, and diamond, he showed that though they belong to the same family, their value differs due to structure and refinement. Key elements for life are an attitude of excellence, human relations.

Mr. Shahzad Qureshi, President of All India Jamaatul Qureshi, Lucknow, welcomed Mr. Shahabuddin Qureshi with warmth and respect on the occasion of the auspicious inauguration of the organization office.

Lucknow

Mr. Shahzad Qureshi, President of All India Jamaatul Qureshi, Lucknow, welcomed Mr. Shahabuddin Qureshi with warmth and respect on the occasion of the auspicious inauguration of the organization office. This occasion became a symbol of the unity and organizational strength of the society.

The presence of Afaq Ahmed, senior social worker, was also noteworthy in this dignified program. During the program, serious and positive discussions were held regarding the educational, social and economic upliftment of the society and the resolve to further strengthen the organization at the grassroots level was reiterated.

Shri Shehzad Qureshi in his address said that the newly constructed office will become a center for solving the problems of the society, giving direction to the youth and raising the voice of social justice. While congratulating on the inauguration of the office, Mr. Shahabuddin Qureshi appreciated the work of the organization and assured all possible cooperation in the interest of society.

The program concluded in a cordial atmosphere, which is being seen as a new energy and positive initiative for the society.

Mahatma Jyotirao Phule Vikas Samiti and All India Samata Foundation demonstrated, submitted memorandum

While handing over the demonstration and memorandum, All India Samata Foundation President Lukesh Kumar Rahi and Mahatma Jyotirao Vikas Samiti President Ramesh Saini.

Mathura. Under the joint aegis of Mahatma Jyotirao Phule Vikas Samiti and All India Samta Foundation, the Municipal Corporation Mathura Vrindavan Administration is collecting Rs 3000 from e-rickshaw auto drivers in the name of improving the traffic system and in the past too, an alleged company in Vrindavan Municipal Corporation is collecting Rs 3000 from e-rickshaw auto drivers for 1 yearTill now about 16 lakh rupees were recovered and that company had fled, due to which money is being recovered again in the name of route distribution. And a demand letter opened at the Mathura Collectorate regarding 11-point demands against the social harassment of e-rickshaw auto drivers in the name of traffic rules was handed over to Additional Sub-District Magistrate Suresh Singh in the name of the District Magistrate.

During this, Foundation President Lukesh Kumar Rahi and Committee President Ramesh Saini jointly said that the route should not be determined without taking the e-rickshaw auto drivers into confidence, parking stands should be arranged at the places where passengers are picked up and dropped off and e-rickshaw autos should be usedThere should be an immediate stop to the mental harassment and exploitation of drivers by the police and illegal recovery in the name of challan. Strict and punitive action should be taken against the goons who

indulge in illegal extortion at stations and other places and abuse and beat people on refusal. Also, keeping in mind the interest of the travelers coming to visit the important places of Braj, special arrangements should be made for e-rickshaw auto drivers and special permission should be issued. SP leader Shabnam Qureshi and Mukesh leader said that provident fund, government loan, education system, health care for their children should be provided to the e-rickshaw auto drivers and the recovery done by the alleged company and others from the e-rickshaw auto drivers in the past should be investigated and the culprits should be booked against the culpritsStrict action should be taken by filing a report. On this occasion, President of All India Samata Foundation Lukesh Kumar Rahi, President of Mahatma Jyotirao Phule Development Committee Ramesh Saini, State Secretary of Mahila Sabha Shabnam Qureshi, Abhimanyu Saini, Chitrasen Maurya, Brijlal Comrade, Mukesh Netaji, Rajgabbar, Akash Babu, Sumit Kumar, SagarShabbir Qureshi, Siraj Shah, Krishna Saini, Saudan Singh etc. were present.

J&K terminates 103 Firemen on charges of securing appointment by 'fraudulent manipulation'

(Gns).

Lt Governor Manoj Sinha on Monday ordered the termination of 103 firemen of the Fire and Emergency Services Department after an official inquiry and Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) investigation established that their recruitment was "illegal and fraudulently manipulated".

An order issued by Chandraker Bharti, principal secretary, Home Department, said that "the appointments of these 103 individuals were not made on merit and were secured through fraudulent manipulation".

He declared the appointment of these firemen as "illegal, void ab initio" and terminated them with immediate effect.

The action follows the findings of an Enquiry Committee constituted in December 2022, which examined allegations of serious irregularities in the selection process. The committee recommended a criminal investigation after detecting evidence of paper leakage, manipulation of results, and tampering with official records.

Subsequent investigation by the Anti-Corruption Bureau, Jammu and Kashmir, led to the registration of an FIR on January 2, 2025. The ACB, in its verification and investigation reports, confirmed large-scale tampering of OMR answer sheets, fabrication of scanned answer images, manipulation of merit lists, and alteration of digital records. The probe established that at least 106 candidates were awarded marks far in excess of what they had actually secured.

The government order notes that the appointments were secured

through criminal conspiracy and fraudulent means, rendering them legally unsustainable. It further states that constitutional protections under Article 311 are not applicable in cases where appointments are illegal from inception, citing multiple judgments of the Supreme Court and the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh.

Of the 106 candidates identified as illegally selected, the appointment of three individuals had already been cancelled earlier by the Fire and Emergency Services Directorate for failing to meet mandatory appointment formalities. The remaining 103 were terminated through the present order.

The government held that continuation of such appointments would perpetuate illegality, undermine public trust, and compromise the sanctity of the recruitment process. All terminated individuals have been directed to cease association with the department from the date of issuance of the order.

The list of terminated appointees includes candidates from multiple districts across the Kashmir.

Opposition wants key Bills referred to Standing Committees for detailed

(Gns).

The Opposition parties collectively want the government to refer three significant Bills to the respective Standing Committees of Parliament, Congress General Secretary Jairam Ramesh Monday said, emphasizing the need for comprehensive examination and broader consultations.

The Bills in question are the Higher Education Commission Bill, the Atomic Energy Bill, and the Viksit Bharat — Guarantee For Rozgar And Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB G-RAM-G) Bill.

Ramesh highlighted the importance of upholding parliamentary conventions, stating, "The entire

Opposition is demanding that these far-reaching Bills be referred to the Standing Committees concerned. We are hopeful that the government will agree to this demand."

Earlier on Monday, the government introduced three major Bills in the Lok Sabha, reflecting its legislative agenda focused on legal reform, higher education, and nuclear energy development. The Bills presented were the Repealing and Amending Bill, 2025; the Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill, 2025; and the Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India Bill, 2025.

However, the government opted not to proceed with the introduction of the VB G-RAM-G Bill, 2025, which seeks to replace the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), 2005. This decision came despite the bill being listed in the supplementary business for introduction in the Lok Sabha.

The Congress general secretary underscored the Opposition's insistence that such consequential legislation warrants thorough study and extensive stakeholder engagement, reaffirming their commitment to a transparent and inclusive legislative process.

Health of Tuberculosis patients will improve, 563 people got nutritious diet support

Programs were organized at Baldev, Govardhan and Nandgaon health centers in three blocks of Mathura including Farah.
CMO gave the message to take medicines on time and make nutritious diet a routine.

Mathura. A two-day awareness and nutritious food distribution program was organized by the District Tuberculosis Department in collaboration with Mandona Rural Development Foundation at Community Health Center Farah. Under the program, nutritious items were distributed to a total of 563 treated tuberculosis patients of Farah, Govardhan, Baldev and Barsana areas. Chief Medical Officer DrWhile addressing the patients, Radha Vallabh said that all tuberculosis patients should take medicines on time and make nutritious diet a part of their daily routine, only then complete treatment is possible. Medical Superintendent of Community Health Center Farah, DrRamveer Singh said that for a healthy life, along with a healthy body, a healthy mind is also necessary. District PPM Coordinator Alok Tiwari said that the identified tuberculosis patients from three blocks of Mathura district, Krifarah, Govardhan, Baldev and Community Health Center Barsana, have been adopted by Mandona Rural Development Foundation. Director of the organization, Laxmikant Gaur said that the objective of the founda-

CMO Dr. Radha Vallabh while distributing nutritious food to the people

tion is not only to distribute nutritional materials but also to provide complete social, mental and nutritional support to the tuberculosis patients. The aim is that after completing the treatment, every patient becomes a 'TB Champion' who inspires other patients. During the program, patients were motivated to maintain cleanliness, take medicines regularly, get their family members checked and spread awareness in the society by sharing their experiences. The officials appealed to financially capable individuals, institutions and groups to adopt a tuberculosis patient and contribute to his nutrition, medication and mental support. If symptoms appear, get tested and checkup immediately. Satyaveer, Anup, Rajesh, Pushpendra, Deepak, Manjeet, Pankaj Yadav, Dushyant, Nischal Diwakar, Shiv Kumar, Tejveer, Mukesh Kumar, Sanjay Sharma, Prem Kumar etc. were present in the program

Former IAS officer Raj Kumar Goyal takes oath as Chief Information Commissioner

(Gns).

President Droupadi Murmu administered the 'Oath of Office' to former bureaucrat Raj Kumar Goyal as Chief Information Commissioner in the Central Information Commission at a ceremony held on Monday at Rashtrapati Bhavan.

With Goyal's induction, the Central Information Commission is expected to regain full operational strength after a prolonged gap. His appointment was approved by a high-level committee, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, with Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi as members.

According to a Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions statement, "The terms and conditions of his appointment shall be regulated in accordance with the provisions of the Right to Information Act, 2005 and the Right to Information (Term of Office, Salaries, Allowances, and Other Terms and Conditions of Service of Chief Information Commissioner, Information Commissioners in the Central Information Commission, State Chief Information Commissioner, and State Information Commissioners in the State Information Commission) Rules, 2019."

Goyal has over 30 years of experience in public service and has held significant portfolios in the justice and internal security sectors.

Senior bureaucrat Goyal belongs to the 1990 batch of the IAS and is from the AGMUT cadre (Arunachal Pradesh-Goa-Mizoram and Union Territories). He has held several key positions during his tenure of more than three decades in the Union government, gaining wide experience in legal, administrative, and internal security matters.

Goyal served as Secretary in the Department of Justice under the Ministry of Law and Justice before his superannuation. He had also held the post of Secretary (Border Management) in the Ministry of Home Affairs, where he dealt with issues related to border infrastructure and internal security coordination.

The post of CIC had remained vacant since the retirement of former CIC Heeralal Samariya in September this year.

The CIC is the apex body responsible for hearing appeals and complaints filed under the Right to Information (RTI) Act, playing a crucial role in promoting transparency and accountability in public administration. The Commission is headed by a CIC and can have up to ten ICs. At present, Anandi Ramalingam and Vinod Kumar Tiwari are serving as Information Commissioners.

Ramesh Chennithala alleges wider conspiracy, international links in Sabarimala gold heist

(Gns).

Senior Congress leader Ramesh Chennithala on Monday alleged that the Sabarimala temple gold heist could be part of a larger conspiracy aimed at selling priceless temple antiques in Kerala and amassing huge wealth from them.

Speaking to media persons here, Chennithala said the LDF government was trying to protect influential individuals, including former ministers, in connection with the gold theft at the Sabarimala temple. He described the incident as one that has deeply hurt the sentiments of crores of devotees.

He claimed that the role of former Devaswom ministers in the gold heist had become clear.

"Even a child knows that if the two former Devaswom Board presidents were involved in this

theft, they must have had the knowledge and consent of the department ministers," Chennithala said, a day after recording his statement before the Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the case.

Questioning the progress of the investigation, Chennithala said that in criminal cases, once the accused are arrested, the next step is to recover the stolen property.

"Why has the stolen gold not been recovered yet? Where did it go and what happened to it?" he asked. He added that the search for answers points to possible links with the international antique black market, where antiques and sacred objects are illegally traded.

Stating that there was a "mysterious and massive fraud" behind the Sabarimala gold heist, Chennithala said that once efforts to recover the stolen gold begin in earnest, the real forces behind the crime would be exposed. "It is very clear that an international antiques mafia is working behind this. Efforts should be made to trace them," he said.

Chennithala further said that all information available to him in this regard had been mentioned in the statement he submitted to the SIT.

On December 7, Chennithala had raised serious allegations in the Sabarimala gold heist case and sought a probe into possible l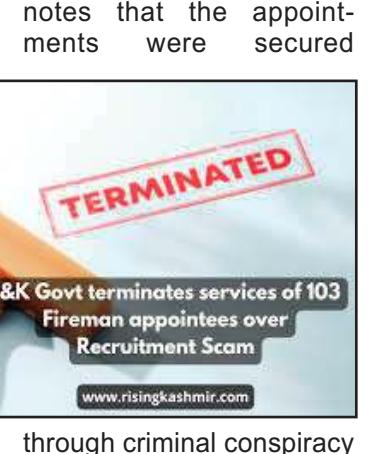inks with international antique smuggling rackets.