

**GARVI GUJARAT**

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'India pacing towards third largest economy': PM Modi at India-Jordan Business Meet in Amman

(Gns).

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is on the first leg of his three-nation tour, took part in the India-Jordan Business Forum in Amman on Tuesday. The event aimed to explore opportunities for business-to-business partnerships, expand bilateral trade, and encourage joint investments in key sectors.

PM Modi and Jordan's King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein addressed the business forum jointly. At the meet, PM Modi highlighted that in the world of business, numbers have immense value, and building a long-term relationship holds significance. He said, "India is pacing towards the third largest economy in the world; India's growth rate is more than 8%; Doors are being opened for Jordan's

business and investors in India."

He also expressed that the revival of the old links shared between the two countries is crucial for future prosperity.

Ahead of the forum, King Abdullah II had highlighted its importance, saying it would serve as a platform to deepen economic cooperation and foster shared progress between the two nations. He had said, "We also look forward to the Jordan-India Business Forum as an opportunity to discuss business-to-business partnerships and the potential for joint investments in vital sectors."

Prime Minister Modi is also scheduled to visit the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Petra later in the day. From Jordan, the Prime Minister will travel to

Ethiopia at the invitation of Ethiopian Prime Minister Dr Abiy Ahmed Ali, marking his first official visit to the country. He will depart Jordan at around 3:30 pm IST for

of the Ethiopian Parliament. During his address, he is expected to highlight India's democratic journey and underline the role of the India-Ethiopia partnership

and at a time when Ethiopia has undertaken major economic reforms.

In the final leg of his tour, Prime Minister Modi will visit Oman.

Highlights from PM

Modi's Jordan visit. PM Modi arrived in Amman yesterday, where he was received by Jordanian Prime Minister Jafar Hassan and accorded a formal welcome. He later met King Abdullah II at Al

Husseiniya Palace, where the two leaders held detailed discussions on bilateral ties as well as regional and global issues of mutual interest.

As a special gesture, the Crown Prince Al Hussein Bin Abdullah II drove PM Modi to the Jordan Museum earlier today. The Crown Prince is the 42nd generation direct descendant of Prophet Mohammad. Crucial MoUs signed

India and Jordan yesterday signed multiple Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) aimed at strengthening bilateral cooperation in key areas such as renewable energy, water resources, digital transformation and cultural heritage, with Amman expressing its intent to join key Indian-led global initiatives, including the International Solar Alliance (ISA), during PM

Modi's two-day official visit to the kingdom.

Commenting on the outcomes, Prime Minister Modi posted on the social media platform X that the results marked a significant expansion of the India-Jordan partnership, particularly in the field of new and renewable energy, reflecting a shared commitment to clean growth, energy security, and climate responsibility.



Ethiopia.

In Addis Ababa, which also hosts the headquarters of the African Union, PM Modi will hold talks with Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and address a joint session

in strengthening the Global South.

The Indian Ambassador to Ethiopia, Anil Kumar Rai, noted that the visit comes 15 years after the last visit by an Indian Prime Minister

West Bengal Sports Minister Aroop Biswas Resigns After Messi Event Controversy, Mamata Banerjee Takes Charge

(Gns).

West Bengal Sports Minister Aroop Biswas resigned on Tuesday following controversy over the alleged mismanagement of football legend Lionel Messi's programme at Vivekananda Yuva Bharati Krirangan in Salt Lake on December 13, 2025.

West Bengal's Sports Minister Aroop Biswas resigned after the controversial mismanagement of Lionel Messi's program at Vivekananda Yuva Bharati Krirangan on December 13, 2025. Following a preliminary enquiry, Director General of Police Rajeev Kumar, Bidhannagar Police Commissioner Mukesh Kumar, and IPS officer Aneesh Sarkar faced actions, while Deb Kumar

Nandan, the VYBK CEO, from the state government, was removed, and a SIT

with multiple officials facing



was formed.

Biswas submitted his resignation to Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, who accepted it and assumed charge of the Sports Department.

The incident triggered swift administrative action

a show-cause notice. He was asked to respond within 24 hours regarding alleged mismanagement and lack of coordination with key stakeholders, including the private organizer of the event.

The Bidhannagar Police Commissioner, Mukesh Kumar, was also issued a show-cause notice and directed to explain within 24 hours the role played by his commissionate in handling the high-profile programme.

Departmental proceedings were initiated against Aneesh Sarkar, an IPS officer serving as Deputy Commissioner of Police. He has been suspended for alleged negligence of duty, pending completion of the enquiry.

scrutiny after a preliminary enquiry flagged serious lapses in coordination and event management.

Based on the preliminary enquiry report dated December 15, 2025, Director General of Police Rajeev Kumar was served

Big Relief For Sonia Gandhi And Rahul Gandhi In National Herald Case; Court Scraps ED Chargesheet

(Gns).

A Delhi court gives Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi relief in the National Herald case, as Special Judge (PC Act) Vishal Gogoi declines to take cognisance of the Enforcement Directorate complaint under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act on 16 December 2025, ruling that the money laundering case cannot proceed in its current form.

The Enforcement Directorate action targeted several Congress-linked figures and entities, but the order notes that the complaint under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act was based on a private complaint rather than a

First Information Report, which the court finds makes the present complaint not maintainable in law.



On December 16, 2025, Special Judge Vishal Gogoi of Delhi's Rouse Avenue Court ruled that the Enforcement Directorate's money laundering complaint against Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and others in the National Herald case was not maintainable, prompted by a private complaint instead of a First Information Report. The Enforcement Directorate plans to appeal the decision, while Congress MP Abhishek

Manu Singhvi has attacked the charges and the BJP's narrative around the investigation.

maintainability question on

16 December 2025 at

around 12:09 IST.

According to sources cited by India Today, Enforcement Directorate officials are expected to challenge the Rouse Avenue Court decision in a higher forum, with the legal team planning to study the complete judgment first and then design a fresh appeal against the ruling on the Prevention of Money Laundering Act complaint.

Internal Enforcement Directorate discussions, sources say, stress that the original private complaint was not a regular one because cognisance of alleged offences had already been taken.

The Enforcement Directorate named Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and other individuals along with corporate entities in the National Herald case complaint, which was heard at Rouse Avenue Court in Delhi, where the Special Judge (PC Act) delivered the detailed order on the

Seat sharing tussle between BJP, Shinde Sena complicates Mumbai Municipal Election plans

(Gns).

The BJP-led Mahayuti plans to contest 150 seats out of the total 227 seats in the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), but a seat-sharing tussle has begun between the BJP and the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena, sources said here on Tuesday.

The Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena is said to have demanded around 125 seats from the BJP. Shinde's Shiv Sena has 125 corporators, taking into account both serving corporators and former corporators. "The Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena leaders claim that the Shinde factor can be more effective than the Thackeray

cousins who have decided to contest together," a BJP leader said.

The Shinde Sena's demand of 125 seats is not acceptable to the BJP, which is also not in favour of giving seats held by former Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena to the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena.

"The matter came up at a meeting held on Tuesday in the Dadar office of the BJP, which was attended by senior BJP leaders, but nothing was finalised, and more meetings are expected," the BJP leader stated. "Our seat-sharing formula

has been decided. Our target is to elect 150-plus Mahayuti corporators. A joint meeting of the BJP and Shinde Sena for the upcoming municipal elections was held today. Both the parties reviewed the election seats in the presence of key leaders at the BJP office in Dadar,"

BJP leader and minister Ashish Shelar told media persons, but did not reveal any details.

BJP Mumbai President Amit Satam, election in-charge Ashish Shelar, BJP minister Yogesh Kadamb, former MP Rahul Shewale, and the BJP leader said.

and other leaders from the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena were present at the meeting.

"For the BJP, it is necessary to sort out differences with its allies before the crucial BMC elections because the BMC elections are a matter of prestige for us. This is because the BJP's central and state leadership wants to avenge the betrayal of 2019 by ending the three-decade rule of the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena in the BMC. We already took some revenge by splitting the Shiv Sena in 2022, but the BMC is the lifeline and identity of the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena, and that is our next target," the BJP leader said.

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Chief Minister Shri Bhupendra Patel Announces Historic ₹10,000 Crore Relief Package to Support Farmers

Gandhinagar, 16

December 2025: Chief Minister Shri Bhupendra Patel has announced a historic ₹10,000 crore relief package to support farmers affected by the recent unseasonal and unprecedented rainfall. So far, assistance exceeding ₹5,300 crore has been transferred through online DBT to affected farmers who applied on the online portal. Lauding this farmer-centric initiative, represen-

tatives of various APMCs, market yards, and farmer organizations from across the State met Chief Minister Shri Bhupendra Patel in Gandhinagar to convey their gratitude in person. Furthermore, by purchasing groundnuts and various other crops at minimum support prices, the State Government has strongly backed the farmers. Farmer leaders, representing farmers from

farmer-centric measures and swift actions, Chief Minister Shri Bhupendra Patel and the State Government have consistently remained responsive and supportive during times of crisis. Agriculture Minister Shri Jitu Vaghani, along with Ministers Shri Rushikesh Patel, Shri Kunvarji Bavalia, Shri Naresh Patel, Shri Arjun Modhwadia, and Dr. Pradyuman Vaja, were also present on the occasion.

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Editorial

Dashed Hopes

Lionel Messi's brief and chaotic appearance in Kolkata was not merely a case of crowd impatience or celebrity excess. It was a revealing moment about how India, and Bengal in particular, increasingly showcases global icons ~ with spectacle taking precedence over substance, and access over accountability. Kolkata is not a casual football city. Its relationship with the game runs deeper than marketing campaigns or fan zones, shaped by generations of club loyalties and packed derby days where passion, though intense, is also disciplined by familiarity. That is precisely why the anger at Salt Lake Stadium deserves to be understood, not dismissed.

What unfolded was less a riot of entitlement than a collapse of trust between organisers and an audience that felt misled. Thousands arrived believing they would see Messi in some meaningful way ~ perhaps a short exhibition, perhaps even a clear view unmediated by barricades of power. What they witnessed instead was a fleeting, tightly guarded circuit of the pitch, with the football icon visually consumed by a dense entourage of politicians, officials, and celebrities. The message, unintended but unmistakable, was that the event was designed for optics, not for fans. The problem began well before the stadium gates opened. A major public draw ~ the unveiling of a towering statue of Messi ~ was shifted to a virtual format for security reasons, yet the crowd was still directed towards a physical venue with little clarity on what would occur there.

In the absence of transparency, expectation filled the gap. When that expectation collapsed, frustration followed swiftly, and in some cases destructively. This was not about Messi himself. Global stars operate within strict security and commercial frameworks, and his conduct appears consistent with those constraints. Nor was it a failure of Kolkata's football culture, which has long managed vast, emotionally charged gatherings without descending into chaos. The fault lay squarely in event management that underestimated both the intelligence and the emotional investment of its audience. There is also an uncomfortable truth about how such events are curated in India. The reflex to surround international figures with political visibility, VIP access and performative proximity often overwhelms the central purpose of the occasion. In doing so, it sidelines the very people who give these moments meaning.

When fans pay high prices and travel long distances, they are not buying a glimpse of governance; they are buying a connection, however brief, to the sport they love. The chief minister's apology and the promise of an inquiry are necessary steps, but they should lead to something deeper than assigning blame. Kolkata's stature as a football city deserves better planning, clearer communication and a respect for the crowd that goes beyond crowd control. If global icons are to be welcomed here, the lesson is simple: do not overpromise, do not obscure the moment with power, and never forget who the event is truly for.

(Gns).

As India's GDP clocked 8.2 per cent in Q2, IMF gave a 'C' grading to our national account statistics. It also labelled the RBI's exchange rate regime a "crawl like arrangement". Both these have given fresh ammunition to the opposition to discredit the government, and social media is full of sarcastic comments about the quality of our data systems. A prominent opposition leader even described the timing of release of GDP data as "ironic", given the IMF's grading. This is a complete misunderstanding of the whole issue.

The IMF Articles of Agreement define the rules of supervision of the global monetary system by the IMF upon its creation in 1944, including its powers, rights and obligations, etc. Under Article 4 of this Agreement, IMF is mandated to conduct regular surveillance of each member's macroeconomic performance. In its 2025 report on India, it held that India's national account statistics, currently computed on the base year 2011-12, makes the GDP estimates unrepresentative of the reality, while retaining the grade 'C' for GDP data it gave in 2024. In the overall Data Adequacy Assessment, the Median Rating for India was 'B', same as in 2024. So, nothing has really changed and our data quality has not particularly worsened this year.

The Data Adequacy Assessment is based on a few parameters including statistics on price, public finance, external sector, monetary and fiscal statistics and intersectoral consistency, and median rating is given based on all these parameters. 'B' grade is given when IMF feels that the data provided are broadly adequate for surveillance, though with

Quietly hitting back at the US for its claims of Europe 'decaying' and its leaders 'weak'

(Gns).

Quietly hitting back at the US for its claims of Europe 'decaying' and its leaders 'weak', the EU indefinitely froze \$246 billion of Russian assets held by it. This offset President Donald Trump's Ukraine peace plan and prevented Hungary and Slovakia, nations close to Russia, from vetoing further rolling of the freeze. This decision has angered Moscow and Washington. The recently released US National Security Strategy (NSS) had mentioned, "We want to support our allies in preserving the freedom and security of Europe, while restoring Europe's civilizational self-confidence and Western identity."

Moving further, it blamed the EU for "undermining political liberty, sovereignty, migration policies, censorship, suppression of political opposition, loss of national identities and self-confidence," adding that "the continent will be unrecognizable in 20 years or less." This was not the end of the tirade. In an interview to The Politico, shortly after release of the NSS, Trump lambasted European leaders by stating, "I think they're weak," adding, "But I also think they want to be so politically correct. I think they don't know what to do. Europe doesn't know what to do." The President of the European Council, António Costa, responded by stating, "Allies do not threaten to interfere in domestic political choices of their allies." He believes that the US and EU do not have similar views on the inter-

national order.

Others generally ignored the comments. Trump is so caught up in his MAGA (Make America Great Again) campaign that he believes that he alone can 'Make Europe Great Again.' His assumption is that Europe is unlikely to increase its defence spending to 5 per cent of its GDP by 2035, of which 3.5 per cent would go towards military capabilities and the balance towards cyber and infrastructure. Spain was the first to turn down this demand. In retaliation, Trump threatened Spain with additional tariffs and expelling it from NATO. The anger of Trump is largely directed against the EU, rather than NATO, as it has displayed unity in standing alongside Ukraine against his peace plan for concluding the Russo-Ukraine conflict, thereby denying him the Nobel Peace Prize.

The US will covertly work to break the EU in the coming years, by cozying up to Italy, Hungary, Poland and Austria. In addition, there was the issue of frozen Russian funds. On the EU rejecting his peace plan, the NSS mentioned, "This lack of self-confidence is most evident in Europe's relationship with Russia," adding, "The Trump Administration finds itself at odds with European officials who hold unrealistic expectations for the war perched in unstable minority governments, many of which trample on basic principles of democracy to suppress opposition." Last week, leaders from Germany, France and UK

met with Zelenskyy, the Ukrainian president, and offered support against Trump's plan which involved Ukraine handing over territory to Russia as part of the peace deal.

A frustrated Trump mentioned in his Politico interview, "They talk, but they don't produce, and the war just keeps going on and on." After a joint call with heads of state of Germany, France and the UK, Trump tweeted, "we discussed Ukraine in pretty strong words." European leaders have sent an updated plan for ending the conflict to Trump. Zelenskyy subsequently held a virtual dis-

cussion with leaders and representatives of 30 nations (part of the coalition of the willing) to gain support against Trump's proposal. Facing corruption charges, Zelenskyy is under pressure from Trump to conduct elections, which he has banned under the pretext of the conflict.

On this, Trump mentioned, "they (Ukraine) talk about a democracy, but it gets to a point where it's not a democracy anymore." Zelenskyy offered to hold elections, provided it was provided guarantees by the US and Europe that elections would go unhindered by Russian actions. On

Russia's frozen funds, the US was pressurizing EU nations against utilizing these funds to back future loans to Ukraine. The US believes that such an action would prolong the conflict and reduce chances of a peace deal. Russia claims that the funds are approximately USD 300-350 billion, comprising of bank accounts, securities, real estate and yachts, but has not provided details. Most of it is in Europe with a majority controlled by Euroclear, a central securities depository in Brussels. The US controls just about \$5 billion. The EU believes that "the US can only decide about assets held in its own jurisdiction." Russia is also critical of the EU's plans.

Belgium believes that exploiting frozen assets to loan funds to Ukraine could result in litigation. There are already multiple cases, ongoing in Moscow, against the EU's freezing of Russian assets. Trump's counter proposal includes \$100 billion of frozen assets being employed for "US-led efforts to rebuild and invest in Ukraine".

Europe would contribute a similar amount from its own resources. The balance funds would be invested in joint US-Russia ventures aimed at "creating a strong incentive not to return to conflict." The US plan envisages benefitting US companies, its government and Russia. Europe's counter proposal is to exploit these funds for loans for sustenance of Ukraine as also its reconstruction.

An added irritant is EU imposing a \$140 million penalty on Elon Musk's X platform. Trump's initial reaction was that the fine was 'nasty.' He added, "Europe has to be careful. It is going in some bad directions." The EU is targeting Elon Musk's Blue checkmark system, which enables "manipulation by malicious actors." Other US tech giants are also on the EU hit list. Trump only responds to strength. He was forced to accept China as a peer basically because of its stranglehold on rare earth minerals. Trump seeks rapprochement with Russia and an economic rebalancing with China. On the contrary, he considers Europe as weak and hence attempts to bully it. The NSS also highlights, "We will no longer tolerate, and can no longer afford, free-riding, trade imbalances, predatory economic practices, and other impositions on our nation's historic goodwill that disadvantage our interests."

Evidently, under Trump, the US will link all relations with allies based on trade. Europe in Trump's opinion is incapable of defending itself and piggybacks on the US. By threatening Europe on security, Trump is able to push his agenda forcefully. European leaders are aware of reality and hence have little choice as their own military power is low, while they believe the Russian threat looms large. The EU will fight back but how firm it remains under Trump's threats is to be seen.

Where ignorance is bliss

Almost all (37 out of 38) OECD countries use what is called Chain Linked Estimates for real GDP rather than fixing a single base year. The chain linked estimate updates the weights each year on a continuing basis, unlike the fixed-base constant price series which may become outdated as relative prices change – which is why the chain linking that makes the real GDP measures reflective of current economic output is preferred over a fixed base system. It is to be noted that the IMF label is only a statistical judgement rather than a reflection on our GDP growth performance. The IMF agrees that our real GDP growth remains robust. Its World Economic Outlook, published in October/November 2025, has raised India's growth projection for FY 2026 from 6.4 to 6.6 per cent, reflecting resilient domestic demand and robust Q1 performance despite global headwinds from increased tariffs, making India globally the fastest-growing major economy, even as global growth moderates.

The "C" grading should rather be taken as a prompt to update and correct specific methodological or coverage inadequacies. As the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation tasked with the responsibility of preparing the national accounts has emphasized, the IMF grading alone should not be equated with economic malaise, especially in view of the overall median grading of B. It is not that the government is unaware of deficiencies in the national GDP data accounting process; in fact, as the Finance Minister has already stated in Parliament, India will adopt 2022-23 as the new base

businesses, EPFO/ESIC data for small-firm employment and E-Shram portal for unorganised-sector workers. To capture the impact of the digital economy and to integrate digital and platform-based informal work, especially the informal micro-enterprise activities that were not visible in 2011-12, the rebasing will integrate data from digital payments systems, gig-economy platforms (delivery, ride-hailing, home services), UPI-linked business accounts and e-commerce seller datasets. To improve the granularity of the data.

The upcoming new GDP series is expected not just to shift the base year, but also to incorporate more recent and comprehensive data sources ~ especially those that better capture informal economic activity and the digital economy. Under-representation of informal economy constitutes the major flaw in our GDP calculation; the new 2022-23 GDP Series will now incorporate the NSS 79th Round ~ Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises (ASUSE), 2021-22 data to capture unregistered manufacturing, trade services, informal proprietorships and partnerships and home-based work. It will also use the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) for improving labour productivity ratios, wage rate estimates, workforce participation, etc. and the Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES) 2022-23, for better measurement of informal retail and repair services, non-market household production and self-employment, as also data from MUDRA loan accounts as proxies for micro-enterprise activity. Udyam registration database for small and informal

businesses, EPFO/ESIC data for small-firm employment and E-Shram portal for unorganised-sector workers. To capture the impact of the digital economy and to integrate digital and platform-based informal work, especially the informal micro-enterprise activities that were not visible in 2011-12, the rebasing will integrate data from digital payments systems, gig-economy platforms (delivery, ride-hailing, home services), UPI-linked business accounts and e-commerce seller datasets. To improve the granularity of the data.

As regards IMF's "crawl-like" classification of India's exchange-rate regime, two years after branding it "stabilised", this reflects the observed central bank intervention to moderate excessive volatility of the rupee while permitting a

gentle drift aligned with macro fundamentals. As the IMF clarifies, a crawl-like arrangement is when the exchange rate remains within a "narrow margin of 2 per cent relative to a statistically identified trend for six months or more". The INR is actually pegged to a basket of currencies, but the exchange rate is allowed to fluctuate depending on economic indicators like inflation, current account deficit, forex reserves and interest rate differentials. This is a hybrid regime between a rigid fixed rate and a fully freely floating rate, and is a

managed float. This allows the rupee more flexibility to adjust to market forces while providing a reasonable degree of stability. The IMF's decision will not change the RBI's foreign exchange management system. It is rather an advisory to investors to hedge their exposures as the RBI may allow some amount of limited forex volatility. The rupee has declined about 4 per cent over the year so far, hitting all-time low of Rs 90 against the US dollar, in part due to the steep US trade tariffs which have dented trade and inward portfolio flows.

Heritage Reclaimed

(Gns). When Prada unveiled a pair of luxury sandals whose braided leather pattern mirrored the Kolhapuri chappal, it triggered an unusually sharp public reaction. For once, the charge of cultural appropriation did not drift through the usual academic channels ~ it went straight to the streets of Kolhapur and Athani, where artisans who have preserved this medieval craft for generations felt their work had been purloined without acknowledgment. Now, with Prada set to launch a "Made in India ~ Inspired by Kolhapuri Chappals" line produced in Maharashtra and Karnataka, the story has taken a far more interesting turn.

It offers India an opportunity to examine what global recognition truly means ~ and what it should mean ~ for traditional craftsmanship. Prada's new initiative is being framed as a partnership, complete with a five-year agreement, collaborative production, and training programmes. Around 200 artisans will reportedly be sent to Italy for three years of advanced instruction,

and local manufacturers will integrate their skills with the brand's high-end techniques. On paper, this is an extraordinary reversal: a global luxury house, criticised for erasing provenance, now embedding itself in the very regions

that shaped the design it once showcased without attribution. Yet, the moment demands a degree of healthy scepticism. International fashion brands have a long history of courting local heritage only as long as it suits their commercial narratives.

The Kolhapuri, meanwhile, is not a niche novelty. It is a living craft ecosystem, relying on thousands of families who work with hand-cut leather, natural

dyes, and slow, painstaking assembly techniques. A limited-edition line of 2,000 pairs priced at nearly Rs 84,000 each will do little by itself to shift the economic fundamentals of this ecosystem. The deeper question is whether this Who controls the intellectual property of the new designs? Will the artisans' names and clusters be visible in branding and communication? Will the training lead to sustainable livelihoods or merely temporary prestige? These are not peripheral concerns; they determine whether heritage is being honoured or simply repackaged. Still, it is worth acknowledging that this moment has been shaped by India's own assertiveness. Public criticism compelled one of the world's top luxury houses to engage directly with artisans and state institutions. In a global marketplace where cultural symbols can be copied and commodified in minutes, insisting on credit, context and compensation is not cultural defensiveness ~ it is cultural stewardship. If Prada's course correction evolves into a meaningful, long-term partnership, it could set a precedent for how global brands approach Indian craftsmanship. If not, the Kolhapuri will endure regardless, as it has for centuries ~ crafted by hands that do not need validation, but do deserve fairness.

partnership will evolve beyond symbolic inclusion. If artisans gain better incomes, technical upskilling and long-term employment stability, the collaboration could become a powerful model for how luxury brands engage with traditional crafts. It could also enhance India's soft power ~ demonstrating that global fashion can move from extraction to reciprocity. But genuine benefit depends on transparency.

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WESTERN RAILWAY TO RUN A SPECIAL TRAIN BETWEEN VALSAD - VELANKANNI

Mumbai,
For the convenience of passengers and to clear extra rush of passengers, Western Railway will run special train on special fare between Valsad - Velankanni station.

According to a press release issued by Chief Public Relations Officer, Western Railway, Shri Vineet Abhishek, the details of this train is as under:

Train No. 09047/09048

Valsad - Velankanni Special [02 Trips]

Train No. 09047 Valsad - Velankanni Special will depart from Valsad on Saturday, 20th December, 2025 at 17:45 hrs and will reach Velankanni at 07:30 hrs, on Monday. Similarly, Train No. 09048 Velankanni - Valsad Special will depart from Velankanni on Monday, 22nd December, 2025 at 22:00 hrs and will arrive Valsad at 13:30 hrs, on

Wednesday.

Enroute, this train will halt at Vapi, Vasai Road, Kalyan, Lonavla, Pune, Solapur, Kalaburagi, Wadi, Yadgir, Krishna, Raichur, Manthralayam Road, Adoni, Guntakal, Gooty, Tadipatri, Yerraguntla, Cuddapah, Razampeta, Renigunta, Katpadi, Tiruvannamalai, Villupuram, Cuddalore Port, Chidambaram, Mayiladuturai, Karaikal, Nagore and Nagappattinam stations in

both directions.

This train comprises of AC - 3 Tier, Sleeper Class and General Second Class Coaches.

The booking for Train No. 09047 will open from 18th December, 2025 at all PRS counters & on IRCTC website. For detailed information regarding timings of halts and composition, passengers may please visit www.enquiry.indianrail.gov.in.

Ayush Expo to Anchor Global Traditional Medicine Dialogue at Second WHO Summit in New Delhi

Expo to showcase India's Ayush systems alongside global practices
WHO Zone to feature traditional medicine systems from across regions
(Gns.)

The Ministry of Ayush, Government of India, in association with the World Health Organization (WHO), will organise the Ayush Expo as a central feature of the Second WHO Global Traditional Medicine Summit (GTMC), to be held from 17 to 19 December 2024 at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi.

The Expo is positioned as a key platform within the Summit, bringing together India's Ayush systems and traditional medicine practices from across the world. It aims to promote scientific exchange, policy dialogue and innovation, in line with the Summit's broader objective of advancing evidence-informed, safe and inclusive approaches to traditional medicine within global health systems.

The Ayush Expo will present a comprehensive and curated showcase of Ayurveda, Yoga,

Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, Sowa-Rigpa and Homoeopathy, using immersive exhibits, scientific explanations and digital interfaces. The exhibition seeks to translate India's traditional knowl-

edge systems into globally relevant narratives, aligned with contemporary public health priorities.

Prof. (Dr.) Tanuja Manoj Nesari, Director, Institute of Teaching and Research in Ayurveda (ITRA) highlighted "The Ayush Expo at the Second WHO Global Traditional Medicine Summit is designed to present India's traditional medicine systems in a scientifically grounded and globally relevant manner. By bringing together classical knowledge, evidence-based practices and emerging technologies on one platform, the Expo seeks to foster informed dialogue, strengthen research collaboration and support the responsible integration of traditional medicine into contemporary as Guest of

ecological foundations of traditional medicine. The Spices of India Pavilion will present the scientific basis of commonly used culinary herbs and their role in preventive health, while the Metallotherapeutics Zone will explain classical purification methods, bhasma preparation processes and safety validation practices.

The Expo will also feature exhibits on Dinacharya, Ritucharya and Panchakarma, illustrating preventive care principles, seasonal regimens and therapeutic practices through traditional instruments and explanatory formats. India's Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL) will be showcased as an internationally recognised initiative for protecting traditional knowledge

tured a diverse line-up of

Honour and Chief Guest, respectively.

"Ojas'25 was more than a cultural fest; it was a celebration of youthful spirit, artistic expression, and collaborative endeavours. The

immersive events, including Colours of Courage (Nukkad Natak on POSH), Voice Royale (solo singing), Rangmanch (dance fusion), Riff Riot (battle of bands), The PR Playoff, Guess It!, and Festival Fusion Mask, each reflecting the creative spirit and cultural richness of the festival.

With the onset of evening, an electrifying DJ Night featuring OnEdge unfolded, whose EDM and Bollywood fusion swept the audience off their feet. Day 2 of the event carried forward the flair with an array of activities such as Palette Parade (art showcase), No Heat Treats (culinary contest), Rang Rahasya (treasure hunt), Deal of the Dare (auction challenge).

Day 1 of the fest fea-

energy, participation, and performances we witnessed reaffirm our belief in the potential of student initiatives to inspire, engage, and elevate. Such platforms strengthen the institute's commitment to ensuring the holistic development of students," said Dr. Kavita Pathak, Director, Jaipuria Institute of Management, Lucknow.

Day 1 of the fest fea-

Jaipuria Institute of Management's Ojas'25 Concludes With Electrifying Performances and Enduring Memories

Lucknow, December 16, 2025: Jaipuria Institute of Management, Lucknow, concluded its flagship cultural fest, Ojas'25, on a high note, with two remarkable days of energetic performances, dynamic competitions, and carnival-style celebrations.

Organised on 15-16 December, the

event brought together students from leading institutions in the city and beyond to celebrate creativity, culture, and camaraderie under the theme "Rangtaal – The Indian Carnival."

The festivities commenced with a ceremonial lighting of the lamp, followed by inspirational addresses from Dr. Kumkum Dhar and Mr. Anil Rastogi, who graced the

ONDC Enables Fair, Transparent and Inclusive E-Commerce by Creating an Open, Non-

(Gns.) Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC), unlike traditional e-commerce platforms that operate in silos, creates an open ecosystem where sellers can reach customers across multiple platforms without being restricted by platform-specific terms and conditions. ONDC plays a big part in ensuring that small businesses, local traders and MSMEs are not digitally excluded in the emerging e-commerce environments by providing a fair, transparent, and non-discriminatory discovery within emerging e-commerce environments through open protocols that make all sellers equally visible across network regardless of size, scale or digital

sophistication. Seller-side apps make their full catalogues discoverable to all buyer-side apps, while buyer-side apps disclose key parameters used for sorting or listing search results, enabling sellers to understand and improve their ranking. Common open specifications adopted by all network participants further enhance transparency and prevent opaque or biased listing practices.

Further, Ministry of MSME's Trade Enablement and Marketing (TEAM) scheme promote adoption

of digital commerce by SMEs, small sellers including Self Help Groups (SHGs), Farmer Producer Organisation (FPOs), artisans, rural entrepreneurs and local retailers through the ONDC. Under this scheme, these small sellers are provided support in digital literacy, awareness, cataloguing, and onboarding, with a focus on inclusivity by targeting 50% of beneficiaries as women-led SMEs.

As of 9 December 2025, there are a total of 1.16 lakh+ retail sellers live on the ONDC from over 630+ cities and towns across India. Metropolitan business district-wise classifications of sellers is however not maintained.

The ONDC network lowers entry barriers for small and micro businesses by



Open Network for Digital Co

results, enabling sellers to understand and improve their ranking. Common open specifications adopted by all network participants further enhance transparency and prevent opaque or biased listing practices.

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(Gns.)

Senior Aam Aadmi Party leader and Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh on Monday accused the Centre of blocking debates in Parliament on Delhi's severe air pollution and other national concerns. Singh told reporters that the government refused discussion even as the Air Quality Index reportedly exceeding 1000, and other national concerns; meanwhile, Raj Kumar Goyal was

es, yet the issue still did not receive space for a structured debate.

Aam Aadmi Party leader Sanjay Singh accused the Centre of blocking parliamentary debates on Delhi's air pollution, with the Air Quality Index reportedly exceeding 1000, and other national concerns; meanwhile, Raj Kumar Goyal was

tern of avoiding tough questions. Singh asserted

According to Singh, the ruling side instead pushed what Singh labelled "fake issues" inside the House, which Singh alleged distracted from subjects such as Delhi air pollution and economic pressures. Singh connected this strategy with AAP's charge of "vote-chori", claiming that electoral manipulation influenced the recent Delhi Assembly polls and, according to Singh, was now visible in several other states.

To stress the scale of the Delhi air pollution Parliament concerns, Singh pointed to figures on deaths and air quality levels.



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Ministry of Corporate Affairs taking timely steps to ease compliance burden on the corporates under Ease of Doing Business 2.0 reforms

Thresholds for small company enhanced to reduce burden of compliances with effect from December 1, 2025; paid-capital criteria increased from upto Rs. 4 crores to upto Rs. 10 crores and turnover criteria increased from upto Rs. 40 crores to upto Rs. 100 crores (Gns).

The Ministry of Corporate Affairs has been taking the following key steps from time to time to ease the compliance burden on the corporates:

i. De-criminalization of technical & procedural violations under Companies Act, 2013 has been done in two stages (in the year 2018 and year 2020) through amendments in such Act. As a result, 51 offences under the Companies Act, 2013 have been decriminalised. Further, vide LLP (Amendment) Act, 2021, 12

offences have been decriminalised. Most of such offences have been converted into civil defaults to be adjudicated by levy of monetary penalties. This has reduced the burden on criminal courts & National Company Law Tribunal.

ii. The scope of fast-track mergers was expanded in February 2021 to allow mergers of Start-ups with other Start-ups and with Small companies. The ambit has been further broadened in September 2025 to allow more classes of companies to choose this route. Further, "deemed approval" has been introduced for fast-track mergers to ensure that approvals are given in

a time-bound manner.

iii. Direct listing of securities by Indian public companies in permissible foreign jurisdictions has been allowed. This is a boost for



"Brand India" and increases attractiveness to growing technology sector, stimulates efficiency & growth, provides alternative source of capital and broadens investor base.

iv. The Centre for Processing Accelerated Corporate Exit (C-PACE) was established in May 2023 enabling the stakeholders by providing a has-

sle-free filing, timely and process-bound striking off their companies' and LLPs' names from the Register.

v. The Central Processing Centre (CPC) was established in February 2024 for centralized processing of 12 non-Straight Through Process forms.

vi. With effect from 1st December 2025, the thresholds for small company have been enhanced. The paid-capital criteria has been increased from upto Rs. 4 crores to upto Rs. 10 crore and turnover criteria has been increased from upto Rs. 40 crores to upto Rs. 100 crores. This brings more number of companies under the definition of small company, which are subject to lesser compliance requirements in comparison to larger companies.

AFMS Launches India's First AI-Driven Community Screening Programme for Diabetic Retinopathy

Posted On: 16 DEC 2025 6:02PM by PIB Delhi

The Armed Forces Medical Services (AFMS), in collaboration with the Dr. Rajendra Prasad Centre for Ophthalmic Sciences (RPC), AIIMS, and the eHealth AI Unit of the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoHFW), has launched India's first Artificial Intelligence (AI)-driven community screening programme for Diabetic Retinopathy (DR) on December 16, 2025 in New Delhi. The initiative marks a significant step towards strengthening early detection of diabetic eye disease and building a real-time national health intelligence framework.

The programme was inaugurated at Army Hospital (Research &

Referral), New Delhi, by Director General Armed Forces Medical Services Surgeon Vice Admiral Arti Sarin along with Chief, Dr. Rajendra Prasad Centre for Ophthalmic Sciences Prof



developed by the Dr. Rajendra Prasad Centre for Ophthalmic Sciences (RPC). The platform facilitates automated screening, grading and triaging of retinal images captured using

As part of the pilot phase, the Armed Forces Medical Services (AFMS) will implement the initiative at seven locations—Pune, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Dharamshala, Gaya, Jorhat and Kochi—covering metropolitan, rural, hilly, coastal and remote regions. Personnel from each site will undergo intensive training at RPC, AIIMS, followed by large-scale community screening.

Patients identified with Diabetic Retinopathy will be referred for optimal diabetic management, while cases of vision-threatening Diabetic Retinopathy will be referred to vitreoretina specialists at designated District Hospitals. District Health Administrations will coordinate referral mechanisms and integrate DR management within exist-

Radhika Tandon. The collaboration brings together the clinical reach of AFMS, academic leadership of AIIMS and digital innovation capabilities of MoHFW to address a major public health challenge.

Anchored by MadhuNetrAI, the programme is a web-based Artificial Intelligence tool

handheld fundus cameras, enabling trained Medical Officers, Nursing Staff and healthcare assistants to undertake community-level screening. The system also generates real-time data on disease prevalence and geographic distribution to support evidence-based planning and policy formulation.

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Uttar Pradesh is taking

decisive steps to translate the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat in the semiconductor sector into reality.

The state's first semi-conductor assembly and testing project, proposed in the Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority (YEIDA) region, has reached a crucial stage.

Officials said on

Tuesday that soil testing and geotechnical surveys for the project have been completed, and the Groundbreaking Ceremony (GBC) is likely to be held in mid-January. The project is being seen as a major milestone in the roadmap of Developed Uttar Pradesh 2047.

The project, proposed

within the YEIDA area, will be set up on 48 acres of land. It will not only add a new dimension to Uttar Pradesh's industrial landscape but will also integrate the state into the global

Uttar Pradesh Announces Pink Job Fair in Jhansi for Women Job Seekers

Audyogik Prashikshan Sansthan Jhansi, focusing on employment for women

Limited, Team Plus HR Service, and Life Insurance Corporation of India, Jhansi,

helping them understand job roles, required skills, and future growth prospects in different sectors.

The organisers have clarified that the employment fair is completely free, and no fee will be charged from any applicant. Interested students can arrive at the Rajkiya Mahila Audyogik Prashikshan Sansthan Jhansi campus with a printed biodata and relevant documents, and then appear for interviews with the visiting companies.

Jhansi hosted a Pink Job Fair last year as well, and the response encouraged authorities to plan this second edition. Officials expect strong participation again, viewing the event as a useful platform for women candidates and students in the region to connect directly with employers.



and girl students; it includes on-spot interviews and career counseling.

The Regional Employment Office Jhansi and Rajkiya Mahila Audyogik Prashikshan Sansthan Jhansi are jointly organising the Pink Job Fair this year. Recruiters include Amas Skill Ventures Private Limited, Pukhraj Healthcare Private

All India Workshop of Trainers for Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises (ASUSE) 2026 and Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2026 on 17th December, 2025 at New Delhi

(Gns).

The National Statistics Office (NSO), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India is organizing an All-India Workshop of Trainers (AIWOT) for the Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises (ASUSE) 2026 and Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2026 at Manekshaw Centre, New Delhi on December 17, 2025. These surveys will be conducted for a period of one year starting from January 2026. The AIWOT

is a preparatory training programme prior to the launch of the field work of the surveys.

The Annual Survey of

Unincorporated Sector Enterprises (ASUSE) 2026

is devoted exclusively to economic and operational characteristics of unincorporated non-agricultural

establishments in manufacturing, trade and other services sector. The data capturing in the field would be done with Computer Assisted Personal Interview (CAPI) and data collected in this round will help in meeting the requirements of different Ministries, organization and users in general on unorganized sector enterprises, which constitute an important part of Indian economy. In addition, from 2026, inward transportation charges, like transportation charges paid for procuring raw material, other freight or cartage charges incurred for transportation by railways, road, water and air will also be collected.

The Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), conducted by the National Statistics Office, is the primary source of official data on labour force participation, employment, and unemployment in India since 2017. The survey plays a vital role in evidence-based policymaking, programme design, and labour market research. In addition to this, some modifications (comprising changes and introduction of new items like Questions on particulars of platform workers) have also been incorporated in PLFS Schedule 10.4 (FV) with effect from January 2026.

UP's semiconductor mission nears groundbreaking; first project likely to begin in January

(Gns).

Uttar Pradesh is taking

decisive steps to translate

the vision of Atmanirbhar

Bharat in the semiconductor

sector into reality.

The state's first semi-conductor assembly and testing project, proposed in the Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority (YEIDA) region, has reached a crucial stage.

Officials said on

Tuesday that soil testing

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for the project have been

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Groundbreaking Ceremony

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The project, proposed

within the YEIDA area,

will be set up on 48 acres

of land. It will not only add a

new dimension to Uttar

Pradesh's industrial land-

scape but will also integrate

the state into the global

network of high-technology

industries.

In line with the vision of

Chief Minister Yogi

Adityanath, the project is

expected to strengthen the

three-pillar model of invest-

ment, employment and

innovation.

According to semi-con-

ductor sector expert Sachin

Gupta, the ecosystem

developed by the

Uttar Pradesh government

will reinforce the

Government of India's

Semiconductor Mission.

He said the proposed

investment of ₹3,706 crore

under the Yamuna

Authority project would give

Uttar Pradesh a leading

position in the semiconduc-

tor sector at the national level.

The ambitious project is

being developed by Varma

Sundari Investments, a

joint venture between HCL

and Taiwan's Foxconn. The

partnership with Taiwan

reflects growing confidence

among global investors in

Uttar Pradesh.

Through this collabora-

tion, the state is directly

connecting with the interna-

tional value chain, which is

critical for long-term indus-

trial growth.

The project involves an

investment of ₹3,706 crore

and is expected to generate

around 3,780 employ-

ment opportunities, includ-

ing a large number of direct

and indirect jobs. This

aligns with Chief Minister

Yogi Adityanath's vision of

linking youth with modern,

technology-driven employ-

ment.

To attract investors, the Yogi Adityanath government has ensured industry-friendly policy incentives. These include nearly a 75 per cent rebate on land cost and a 100 per cent exemption on stamp duty and registration charges.

Under the Uttar Pradesh Semiconductor Policy 2024, facilities such as water and power banking have been provided to enable round-the-clock operations.

The project will manufacture display driver chips and power management chips, which are essential components for mobile phones and other electronic devices. This will enable Uttar Pradesh to meet domestic demand while also developing export capabilities.

IRDAI Strengthens Regulatory Framework for Motor Insurance Claim Settlement

Framework mandates board-approved claim policies, transparent assessments and time-bound settlements to safeguard motor insurance policyholders

Motor insurance complaints fall from 26.18% in FY 2023-24 to 24.8% in FY 2024-25

(Gns).

The sector regulator, Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has taken various regulatory measures for protection of policyholders' interests which require insurers to adopt transparent, time-bound and fair claim-settlement processes. The Regulations form the primary legal instrument to prevent arbitrary or coer-

cive practices during motor

claim settlement.

The IRDAI (Protection of Policyholders' Interests, Operations and

Allied Matters of

Insurers) Regulations,

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